

Stephens College Tennis

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Stephens College tennis team splits pair of matches in Gateway City

ST. LOUIS —The Stephens College tennis team split a pair of matches on Saturday in St. Louis, defeating Fontbonne University, 7-2, and falling to Webster University, 8-1.

Against the Griffins, Stars players Dina Kaisi, Annie Pfeiffer, Courtney Mellinger, Vanessa Tuepker were all winners; Hanna Hessler stumbled in her match against Katy Buranda. In doubles play Kaisi/Mellinger, Pfeiffer/Tuepker garnered wins for Stephens.

Against Webster, Kaisi was the lone bright spot for the Stars with a 7-5, 6-1 decision over Lindsey Hays.

On the weekend, Stars coach Lexie Payne was pleased with the performance of Tuepker, who collected the first singles and doubles wins of her collegiate career since joining the squad this spring.

“The speed of her personal success is unheard of,” Payne said. “I’ve never seen a novice player excel so quickly. Obviously her years as a beach volleyball player while living in Hawaii as a teenager contributes to her newfound success in tennis. However, she is just a brilliant athlete. It is such a thrill to see her discover every new aspect of the game while also doing it exceedingly well.”

Payne also had praise for Ramirez’s play thus far in the season. Payne said Ramirez usually starts the season off “a bit slowly and ends with more gusto,” but this season is an exception.

“Natalia has played every match bursting at the gates,” Payne said. “I could describe her as easily as a somewhat safe and measured player in the past, however, this season she’s played with determination, frustration and angst from the get go of every match. It’s easy to tell when a player is excited about playing because they start to get to more balls than they thought were possible in the past. (This weekend) I saw Natalia run down a number of shots that would have passed her by not too long ago.”

The Stars, now 1-4 on the spring, return to action on Tuesday with a home match at 3:30 against Missouri Baptist.