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MEN'S TENNIS Championship Preview - April 22, 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PANTHERS IN SEARCH OF FOURTH-STRAIGHT NESCAC CROWN

Middlebury Hosts Three-Day, Six-Team Tournament Beginning Friday

HADLEY, Mass. - Four-time defending Men's Tennis Champion Middlebury College will pursue a fifth-consecutive NESCAC crown this weekend when the Panthers host the 2008 NESCAC Men's Tennis Championship in Middlebury, Vt. The three-day championship begins on Friday, April 25 with the first match featuring fourth-seed Bowdoin taking on fifth-seed Bates at 1:30 p.m., followed at 4:00 p.m. with third-seed Williams facing NESCAC rival and sixth-seed Amherst. Friday's winners will advance to Saturday's semifinals against top-seeded Trinity and second-seeded Middlebury. The 2008 NESCAC Men's Tennis Championship will conclude on Sunday, April 27, with the championship match at 1:00 p.m.

Fourth-seed Bowdoin (11-8, 6-3 NESCAC) will meet fifth-seed Bates (12-3, 3-3 NESCAC) on Friday for the second time in less than a month. The most recent battle between the Route 196 rivals went to the Polar Bears on April 3 in Brunswick, Maine by a hard-fought 5-4 score, as Bowdoin edged Bates 2-1 in doubles play before the two teams split the singles matches 3-3. Bowdoin Junior Garrett Gates (Fairway, Kan.), an All-NESCAC First Team Singles and Doubles selection a year ago, recovered from a first set deficit to upend Bates junior Ben Stein (Pelham, N.Y.), a Second Team honoree, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 in the No. 1 singles match. The Polar Bears have won seven of their last 10 matches, however the three setbacks have come at the hands of the top three seeds in this year's championship - Trinity, Middlebury and Williams. The Bobcats had a five-match winning streak snapped in their most recent outing, a 6-3 setback to Williams on April 20. During the 2007 championship, Bowdoin was upended in its lone match, a semifinal loss to Williams, while Bates last appeared in the NESCAC championship in 2006.

The team that advances out of Friday's first round will face top-seeded Trinity (12-1, 7-1 NESCAC) on Saturday at 1:30 p.m. When selections were determined by the tournament committee, Trinity, Middlebury and Williams each had one loss in conference play. Head-to-head, each team posted a 1-1 match record against the other two this season, however the committee awarded the Bantams the number-one seed based on secondary criteria. Trinity's lone loss this season came against Middlebury on April 6, as the Panther clawed their way out of an 0-3 hole after doubles play by winning 5-of-6 singles matches - four in straight sets - to edge the Bantams 5-4. Trinity has already faced Bowdoin once this season, earning a 5-1 decision over the Polar Bears on March 29, but Trinity has not squared off against Bates since the first round of the 2006 NESCAC Men's Tennis Championship, a match which the Bantams won by a 4-3 score. Senior co-captains Brett Ramsay (Glastonbury, Conn.) and Tom Dolan (Shrewsbury, Mass.) are looking to lead Trinity to its first NESCAC title this weekend. Ramsay, an All-Conference First Team Doubles selection in 2007, owns a 7-2 singles mark in 2008 and has teamed up with Dolan to post a 9-1 record in doubles play this spring.

Friday's other first round match will pit third-seed Williams (14-2, 6-1 NESCAC) against sixth-seed Amherst (9-8, 3-4 NESCAC). Both squads have reached the semifinals in each of the previous two NESCAC tournaments, with the Ephs making it to the championship match both times, however Amherst and Williams have never faced each other in championship history. The Ephs won the annual regular season meeting between the two by a 6-3 score on April 5 in Williamstown, Mass. to extend their winning streak over the Lord Jeffs that began in the spring of 1995. Williams has won a remarkable 14 NESCAC titles - the most by any conference team - including 11 in a row from 1993 to the Ephs' most recent crown in 2003. Senior Dan Greenberg (Chapel Hill, N.C.) hopes to guide his team to its first championship since the inception of the tournament format in 2006, as the 2005 NESCAC Rookie of the Year and a two-time All-NESCAC First Team honoree is 20-5 in singles play this season. Amherst will look to rebound this Friday from a rough finish to the regular season, having gone 3-4 since falling to Williams.

Second-seed Middlebury (14-4, 6-1 NESCAC) will take on the Amherst-Williams winner on Saturday afternoon at 4:00 p.m. The Panthers roll into this year's championship having won nine of their last 10 outings, including their last four. The only loss during that stretch came at Williams on April 9 (5-4) which snapped Middlebury's regular season unbeaten streak against NESCAC opponents at 43, a figure that dated back to April of 2002. The Panthers defeated the Lord Jeffs last Saturday 7-2 before closing out the regular season slate on Sunday with an 8-1 victory against the College of New Jersey. Senior captain Filip Marinkovic (Toronto, Ontario) and sophomore Andrew Thomson (West Bloomfield, Mich.) have combined to form a potent doubles team this season, going 21-4 together, while Marinkovic has earned a 10-3 singles record since March.

The format of the NESCAC Men's Tennis Championship changed in the spring of 2006 and features six teams vying for the NESCAC crown. Prior to 2006, the event was set up as an individual flighted tournament that included players from all 11 members of the NESCAC. Individuals and doubles teams were seeded in different classes, and a team score was determined on a points system that assigned a value for wins. The championship field is now chosen by a tournament selection committee, which seeds the six participating teams one-to-six, with the top two seeds receiving a first round bye. Results of each match and updated schedules will be available at the conclusion of each day at www.nescac.com.

2008 NESCAC MEN'S TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIP

First Round - Friday, April 25 at Middlebury

No. 5 Bates vs. No. 4 Bowdoin - 1:30 p.m.

No. 6 Amherst vs. No. 3 Williams - 4:00 p.m.

Semifinals - Saturday, April 26 at Middlebury

Winner No. 5/No. 4 vs. No. 1 Trinity - 1:30 p.m.

Winner No. 6/No. 3 vs. No. 2 Middlebury - 4:00 p.m.

Championship - Sunday, April 27 at Middlebury

Semifinal Winners - 1:00 p.m.