

Athletics: Women's Tennis

2011 Review

Not even Mother Nature's best backhand could keep the Muhlenberg women's tennis team from returning to the Centennial Conference playoffs.

In one of the rainiest springs in recent memory, the Mules did not know from one match to the next whether they would be playing inside, outside or both. But they adapted to each condition equally well and finished 10-6 overall and 7-3 in the CC.

That was good enough to get Muhlenberg, which ended the season 13th in the regional rankings, back into the postseason after missing out last year. Seniors **Caitie Druker**, **Sara Sutker**, **Lindsay Schmidt** and **Danielle Winston** closed their careers in fitting fashion by earning the school's first home playoff win in two decades.

The Mules dropped their opener to nationally ranked Vassar before posting back-to-back wins over Elizabethtown and Franklin & Marshall.

Muhlenberg then lost a tight match to Swarthmore in which four of the six singles matches went to third-set supertiebreakers. Wins over Gettysburg, Moravian, and Bryn Mawr followed before another setback at Washington.

The Mules were still in the thick of the CC playoff hunt, however, and they gave their chances a big boost by knocking off regionally ranked Haverford, 7-2, in a match that had to be moved inside and took more than six hours to complete. The Fords took two of three doubles matches, but Muhlenberg swept singles play to seal the win.

The Mules then claimed back-to-back wins over McDaniel and Ursinus before falling to another nationally ranked opponent, Johns Hopkins.

Needing a win over Dickinson in the CC finale to clinch a spot in the postseason, the Mules fell behind early as the Red Devils took two of three doubles matches. But once again Muhlenberg rallied in singles play. The Mules won five of six matches, including a pair of third-set supertiebreaker victories from Schmidt and freshman **Nina Sanders**, to win 5-3.



Sutker (top) ranks fourth in career singles wins (40) and fifth in combined victories (75). Druker (bottom) won 33 singles and 35 doubles matches during her career, good ninth and seventh, respectively, in Mule history.



Winston (top) ranks in the top 10 in Mule history in doubles wins (6th, 38) and combined wins (8th, 69). Schmidt (bottom) is fourth all-time in doubles victories with 40.

With a playoff berth secured, Muhlenberg dropped its final regular-season match at nationally ranked New Jersey before gearing up for the school's first home postseason match since 1992.

Taking on Haverford for the second time in three weeks, doubles play was moved inside as a sudden storm appeared just before the start of the match. Sanders and classmate **Emily Szulman** breezed to victory at No. 3 doubles, while the top two teams pulled out close wins to give the Mules a 3-0 edge as match headed back outdoors for singles play.

There, Muhlenberg wasted little time as a race broke out to see who could finish off their Ford opponent first. Sanders and Schmidt closed out quick, straight-sets victories to give the Mules a 5-0 sweep.

The win advanced the Mules onto the CC semifinals, where they fell once again to the eventual conference champion, Johns Hopkins.

Druker, Sutker, Schmidt and Winston all picked up at least seven singles wins on the year and finished their Mule careers in the top 20 on the all-time spring singles wins list and in top 12 in both doubles and combined wins.

They combined to finish as the two winningest doubles teams in school history. Winston and Schmidt won a record 38 doubles matches during their careers, while Druker and Sutker rank second on the all-time list with 35 victories. No other Mule doubles team has more than 21 spring wins.

Druker and Sutker were named to the all-conference first and second teams, respectively. They were also named to the second team for doubles.

Sanders finished with an 8-4 mark during the spring, including a 6-2 record in CC play, and Szulman went 7-2 overall and 5-1 in the conference. The two also combined to finish 6-3 in doubles play.

Freshman **Lauren Zakheim** picked up all three of her wins in CC matches, while classmate **Gabriela Con-tino** finished the spring 4-1, including a perfect 4-0 conference mark.