The Grinnell College men’s tennis team is riding a strong tradition, and has plans on extending it in 2017.

The Pioneers, who have won 13 Midwest Conference titles in a row and have a streak of 127 consecutive wins against league foes dating back to 2002, open the season Sunday with home contests against Central College and Truman State University.

First-year coach Paige Madara, who was named the MWC Women’s Coach of the Year last fall after piloting the Pioneers to the regular-season league title, inherits players from a men’s squad that had a 30-6 record last year.

Leading the team is a strong senior class featuring Tommy Pitcher ’17, Cole Miller ’17, and Will Hamilton ’17. Miller has four MWC individual titles to his credit, including the No. 2 doubles title last year. He also has a championship at No. 2 singles in 2015 and No. 3 doubles in 2014 and 2015.

Pitcher was a double league champ last season, taking first at No. 6 singles and No. 1 doubles with Jose Coloma ’19. He also won a No. 4 singles title in 2014.

Miller was 16-13 in singles last season and 18-10 in doubles. Pitcher was 20-3 in singles and 22-7 in doubles, while Hamilton went 5-2 in singles and 9-5 in doubles.

“This season we will really rely on the seniors,” said Madara. “Tommy, Cole, and Will not only lead on the court, but off it. They’ve been a part of this program for a long time and understand the significance of working hard to compete at this level. They’ve done a wonderful job getting the first-years on board in terms of what they need to do.”

The sophomore class is also particularly strong for Grinnell and features Coloma, the team’s top player, who went 15-9 last season in singles and 18-7 in doubles.

Other key returnees are double conference champ Sam Stickels ’19, who was tops last year at No. 3 singles and No. 3 doubles with Tracy Johnson ’16, and Zach Lane ’19. Stickels was 16-4 in singles and 20-3 in doubles while Lane was 7-3 in singles.

“This sophomore class gained a lot of experience last season, and I expect to see a continuation of that, which should net strong results,” said Madara. “We also have a nice first-year class of nine players, and they’re all fighting to get in the lineup. Quite a few of them should see action this season.”

Madara added that depth will be a big factor for the Pioneers. “We’ve got an overall young, but deep, roster with plenty of players who will push each other,” she said. “That will especially help when we get deep into the season.”

Madara is hoping that mix means a 14th league title in a row. “That’s always in the back of everybody’s head,” she said. “But we are just taking things as they come and tending to the matches as we’re playing them.”

GC PRIDE

The term “GC Pride” was coined by Grinnell men’s soccer and men’s golf coach Brian Jaworski to express the honor and privilege involved in being a part of Grinnell College athletics.

The Grinnell student-athlete takes pride in committing to academic excellence, having a strong and healthy mind and body, being a passionate and accountable leader, exhibiting integrity in competition and in daily life, and embracing diversity and self-governance.

This is GC PRIDE!
2017 Roster

Front (l-r): Duncan Ward, Will Hamilton, Cole Miller, Philipp Gemmel, Sam Stickels, Lucas LeDoux

Middle (l-r): Assistant Coach Dan Key, Arlo Detmer, Hunter Antonisse, Nicholas Alex, Zach Lane, Tommy Pitcher, Raghu Inturi, Head Coach Paige Madara

Back (l-r): Jose Coloma, Pranjal Drall, John Lunn, Peter Sills, Edward Lopatto, Benjamin Cobin, Henry Johnson
Head Coach Paige Madara

Paige Madara took over the Grinnell College tennis teams after playing for and coaching highly-successful programs.

She got off to a successful start in the fall of 2016, leading the Pioneer women to the regular-season Midwest Conference title while being named the league’s Coach of the Year. Grinnell was unbeaten in league play and 10-1 in all matches during the fall.

Madara played collegiately at Washington University in St. Louis, which boasts tennis programs that are consistently among the best at the NCAA Division III level.

She then served as the assistant women’s coach for the Bears from 2013 through 2015, followed by a move to Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Va., where she was the assistant women’s coach.

Washington and Lee achieved a Division III top-15 ranking last season while claiming the Old Dominion Athletic Conference Tournament title and finishing with a 19-6 record.

The Generals advanced to the third round of the NCAA Tournament and had two players earn spots in the individual NCAA Tournament, one who earned All-America honors.

During her time coaching at Washington University, she helped the team to a No. 8 national ranking in 2013–14 and No. 13 ranking the following season. She guided three players to All-America honors.

As a player for the Bears from 2009 through 2013, Madara finished with 98 singles and doubles wins and propelled her team to the NCAA quarterfinals for the second time in school history.

A team captain, Madara was also an ITA scholar-athlete and a University Athletic Association selection while earning a spot on the league’s Presidents Council scholar-athlete squad.

She majored in psychology and minored in public health at Washington University and before earning her master’s in social work with a mental health concentration.

Assistant Coach Dan Key

Dan Key joined the Grinnell tennis coaching staff in 2015.

He played three years at the University of Sioux Falls, formerly Sioux Falls College, in South Dakota. He played No. 1 singles and doubles all three years, winning three conference titles in doubles and one in singles. He also earned a second-place finish in doubles play at the district tournament.

Key was head men’s coach at Buena Vista University for three years and also coached men’s tennis at Lyon College, formerly Arkansas College, for two years — one season as an assistant coach and the other as head coach.

He was also the head boys’ tennis coach at Eldora-New Providence High School in Eldora, Iowa, for two years.

Grinnell College physical education/athletic department mission statement

The Department of Physical Education (athletics, recreation and wellness) contributes to the liberal education of the campus community by offering intercollegiate sport and recreational, intramural, and wellness activities. Valuing and embracing all forms of diversity, the department provides opportunities that stimulate personal growth and awareness within an inclusive, gender-equitable environment.

Athletics

Sport practices, as well as competitive experiences, instill sportsmanship and fair play.

Participants benefit from an integrated, curricular experience that upholds the academic mission of the College as the department provides individualized and group instruction in a safe environment, celebrates academic excellence, and emphasizes experiential learning.

Physical Education

By offering group and individualized instruction through activity classes that promote skill development and physical fitness, the department aims to encourage members of the community to enjoy personal well-being and develop lifelong wellness.

Theoretical-based sport courses contribute to the College’s lively academic community, emphasizing written and oral discourse, critical thinking, and practical experiences. Coursework helps students gain new knowledge that equips them for life and work beyond Grinnell.

Wellness and Recreation

As part of physical education, wellness and recreation encourage both a sound body and sound mind. Live Well Grinnell, intramurals, outdoor recreation (GORP), and P.E. activity classes provide opportunities and support for all members of the Grinnell community (students, staff, faculty) as they seek their vision of optimal wellness in all dimensions. The Charles Benson Bear ’39 Recreation and Athletic Center provides accessible state-of-the-art spaces for a variety of wellness and recreation activities.