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Co-ed club tennis team travels to UTSA nationals in Tucson, AZ after starting back in 2011

- by [Ryan Hagerty](#)
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The co-ed club tennis team traveled to Tucson, AZ to compete in the 2015 US Tennis Association's on Campus Spring Invitational from April 17-19. The club was formed back in 2011, but has found great success in 2015. -Photo courtesy of Michael Kara

The Rowan co-ed club tennis team was formed in 2011, a year in which the team played one match against Penn State at Lehigh University, falling 30-3. Since then, the club has gradually transformed into a program that has earned outstanding achievements both on and off the court.

The most notable of all these accomplishments came this past weekend, when Rowan traveled to Tucson, AZ to compete in the 2015 United States Tennis Association in the Tennis on Campus Spring Invitational from April 17-19. The club finished the trip with a 2-4 record and a third place finish in their bracket.

But for Rowan, this tournament, comprised of the 48 top tennis club teams in the nation, went way beyond the wins and loss column. It signified how far the team has come since they first began. After going 0-3 on opening day against the University of Michigan (who went on to win the whole tournament), Arizona State University and the University of California Irvine, the club bounced back on Day Two with a 2-1 record, defeating New Mexico State University and Iowa State University.

“Those wins were huge, just to get a win under our belts on this national stage was a big step for the club I think,” senior club president Mike Kara said. “We can’t go home empty handed. That was the thought for all of us.”

Kara, who was recognized as the Middle States Tennis Campus “Leader of the Year” (which is comprised of 26 tennis club teams in NJ, PA and DE), has been competing with the club from the very beginning when there was only a few members.

Initially the team received no funding and played in just one tournament in 2011. Now, Kara says they have been given \$4,700 this year and competed in eight tournaments and twelve dual matches. Since 2013 the club has won three tournaments; The College of New Jersey Fall Invitational Silver Bracket Champions in 2013, as well as the St. Joseph’s University Spring Invitational Gold Bracket Champions and the University of Maryland Fall Invitational Silver Bracket Champions both in 2014. Along with the national tournament, they also attended a USTA regional tournament at the Sea Colony Tennis Center in Bethany Beach, DE, which was comprised of the four top teams in the Middle States, Mid-Atlantic, Eastern and New England Sections.

“I’ve seen this program transform right before my eyes,” Kara said. “Last year is the year where we kind of took a step up and had a lot of new, young members that really became dedicated to the club. This year has been another step up to where we’re one of the better teams in our region, and to where teams around here know who we were now.”

“Before, it was like, ‘Oh, where’s Rowan University?’ Now they know and we compete with everybody, really,” Kara said. “We’ve never really been blown out in a local match so we have really gotten better these last two years, and this year specifically.”

Not only has the squad made tremendous strides on the court, but the club has also garnered attention for their sportsmanship and camaraderie.

Outside of competition the club spends a great deal of time together, partaking in several different activities, such as attending the US Open this summer in New York, ice skating, making Rowan tennis gingerbread houses, hosting ugly sweater parties and Halloween parties. They have team movie nights a couple of times every month, team bowling nights, team dinner about four or five days a week at the café and rock climbing.

“Pretty much, you name it, we’ve done it,” Kara said.

The 2014 district president, Carol MacLennan, who also works at the Cherry Hill Health and Racquet Club (a place where Kara enters tournaments outside of Rowan) became friends with Kara on Facebook and saw all of the team activities. She decided to nominate them for the N.J. Team Spirit Award, and Rowan ended up earning the most votes. The club also won the 2014 Tennis on Campus “Holiday Team Spirit Award,” deeming them the most spirited of all the 630 club tennis teams available.

The team has molded itself into a family that will welcome anyone who wants to play with open arms. Freshman Callan Tweedie is a prime example of this. Tweedie, who played tennis at Glassboro High School, had a friend on the team who implored her to join. Tweedie said it was the best decision she has made in college up to this point.

“All of them were very welcoming, even the people who were seniors and were graduating, they were immediately like, ‘Hey, welcome to the club’,” Tweedie said. “I see people on the team who are really quiet and commute to Rowan. It’s harder for them to make friends, but they still come to our events like movie nights and whenever we hang out. It’s really nice to see, it really is.”

Sophomore Anna Osadchy, who will likely replace Kara as president of the club next year, has the same feeling as Tweedie about the team, saying she would have transferred to another school if it wasn’t for the team. She plans to continue the legacy that Kara will leave behind.

“We will advertise more throughout Rowan,” Osadchy said. “The Rec Center can give [students] our website and we actually have a few trophies in the trophy case in the Rec Center and they can see that and [our] name will be out there.”

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by [Justin Decker](#)

Rowan's Small Jazz Ensembles brought the semester to a swinging conclusion with their final concert of the spring semester, featuring songs from Roy Hargrove, John Dankworth and Van Heusen & Cahn. The concert consisted of one jazz seminar group and two small jazz ensembles under the direction of Rowan Jazz Studies professors Denis DiBlasio, Tom [...]

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