

USTA TENNIS ON CAMPUS

SURPRISE, ARIZ.

As traditions go at the USTA National Campus Championship, it's been pretty much a foregone conclusion that a team from Texas will make the finals. After all, each of the nine previous years either Texas or Texas A&M had come to the event and finished as, at worst, a finalist. Six of those years the two Texas rivals had claimed campus supremacy as champion.



However, in 2009, that Texas stranglehold was broken, and it was Duke University that did it, en route to the school's first-ever USTA National Campus Championship crown. The Blue Devils shot down both Texas powerhouses in successive rounds, besting defending champ Texas 29-19 in the quarterfinals, then following that up with a 25-19 victory over Texas A&M in the semis. Duke completed its storied run with an overtime 26-21 final-round win over the University of Wisconsin.

"It was a little nerve-wracking this week," said Duke standout Greg Van Winkle of the Blue Devils' trip out to Surprise, and the school's tough opponents on their way to the championship. "But it was also one of the best events I've ever been to. It was a blast."

That seems to be the prevailing sentiment of the Tennis On Campus program for all involved. TOC is gaining traction and brand recognition on the nation's college campuses. For the 2008-09 academic year, there are more than 30,000 participants and over 500 schools involved. This year's Championship was bigger and better than ever, as 550-plus competitors from 64 of the country's top programs graced one of the nation's best public facilities, the Surprise Tennis & Racquet Complex in Surprise, Ariz.

Each player at the '09 event received a number of accessories from various program sponsors, including Wilson Sporting Goods, which distributed team shoes for championship team captains, offered a number of giveaways, and featured a demo booth with the latest Wilson gear all weekend. Participants also received accessories from program sponsor Tennis Warehouse and host section USTA Southwest. This year alone, 40 teams were on the waiting list just to compete in the field of 64.

As the growth of the Tennis On Campus program and the National Campus Championships have proven, the Tennis On Campus Program is an ideal outlet for high school players who may not find a home on a varsity tennis team, but still want to enjoy the camaraderie and competition gained from playing for their school. High school coaches across the country are encouraging their players to seek out Tennis On Campus programs, so that their players continue playing throughout college, with the hopes that their love for the game will carry on into their adult years.