GRINNELL, Iowa – The Grinnell College women’s tennis team is expecting more big things in the 2017-18 campaign.

The Pioneers, who won the Midwest Conference regular-season title last fall, return seven players – Sydney Banach ’18, Amelia Cogan ’19, Brenda Guan ’20, Lily Hamilton ’19, Shannon Hartstrings ’18, Anushka Joshi ’18 and Claire Padnos ’20.

“We have a nice mix of players who saw action at some point last year with three seniors, two third-years and two second-years,” said coach Paige Madara, who was named the MWCC Coach of the Year in her initial campaign last season. “They’re geared up for the season. Their experience in our conference and competition outside of it has had them ready to make another big run.”

The Pioneers won three individual league titles last year, including two by returnees as Hamilton claimed the No. 5 singles championship and Cogan was on the No. 1 doubles championship duo. Cogan posted 27 doubles wins last year, a Pioneer record, and 12 singles wins. Cogan, also a No. 1 MWCC doubles champ in 2015, has 49 career doubles victories which ranks 10th in program history.

Hamilton won 20 singles matches, 10th-best in school history, and 15 doubles contests in 2016. Joshi, a No. 5 MWCC singles champ in 2015, won 18 singles and 12 doubles matches last season. She has 47 career singles wins, eighth-best in program history. Guan had 22 combined wins last season, including 12 in singles play.

But things don’t end there for the Pioneers, as they have added Milica Cvrkota ’21, Ali Hickey ’21 and Abigail Nielsen ’21.

“We welcomed three first-years to campus and I’m excited about all of them,” said Madara. “So far in pre-season, they’ve bonded nicely with the team and have challenged the returnees on the court with high-level practices.”

Grinnell went 15-7 overall last season and completed an unbeaten run through MWCC play, going 9-0.

“Our depth is going to be huge again for us this year,” said Madara. “We relied on a lot of different people in the lineup last year and that will be the case again. All 10 players have the potential for a lot of success, and we’ll be able to use all 10 throughout the season.”

Madara pointed to Cogan among all the returning players as instrumental in helping the newcomers adjust to college doubles play. “Mrella has proven herself as an excellent doubles player with two No. 1 doubles conference titles in her first two seasons, and this year she has been helping the first-years. Learn the Grinnell system while teaching the ins and outs of doubles to them,” said the coach.

Madara said the team has another factor in its favor. “One thing you notice looking at our roster is we have quite a diverse group,” she said. “We have two players from Iowa and everyone else is from a different state or country. That’s exciting because it’s allowed players who have learned in different environments to come together as one family on the court.”

As for goals, the team has a few. “We definitely want to win the conference title again this fall,” said Madara. “And then we will have our sights set on the four-team NCAA qualifier in the spring. We are working on improving every day to reach our goals.”

The term “GC Pride” was coined in recent years by Pioneer men’s soccer and 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!
Head Coach Paige Madara

Paige Madara took over the Grinnell College tennis teams after playing for and coaching highly-successful programs. She was successful from the start at Grinnell, leading the Pioneers to the 2016 Midwest Conference title while earning League Coach of the Year honors. Grinnell was a perfect 9-0 in MWC play and finished 15-7 overall.

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 D-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.

Madara also coaches the Pioneer men's team and led the 2017 squad to its 14th MWC title in a row, as well as the league tourney crown and spot in the NCAA Division III National Tournament. Grinnell stretched its MWC winning streak to 81 matches while winning 135 in a row against all league foes, dating back to 2002.

Grinnell finished its season at 8-0 in the MWC and 18-10 overall.

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.

Dan 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 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, cocurricular 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.