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By ROY ALLEN

- Seward assistant athletic director

It was a rough weekend for the Seward County Men's Tennis team in Salina as they matched up against a pair of NAIA schools in dual matches. A shorthanded Saints squad picked up two wins in singles in their first match of the day against Ottawa, but wasn't able to grab anything further as they fell 7-2 to the Braves and against the No. 7 ranked Bethany Swedes it was a tough go of things for the guys in green as Seward failed to win a set in a 9-0 defeat.

The Saints took on Ottawa in their first dual of the day. Seward just about pulled out a win in No. 1 doubles to get things going as Justin Pena and Daniel Alonte teamed up for the first time this season, but narrowly fell 8-6 to Chase Poppel and Jacob Meudendahl to give the Braves their first point of the day. In No. 2 doubles Donnersson Penna and Josh Hamilton took the court for Seward against Breuson Vile and Matthew Groom for Ottawa and once again the Saints came up on the short end of a close decision 8-5 to fall behind 2-0. The Saints had to forfeit the No. 3 doubles spot and went to singles down 3-0.

Ottawa picked up wins at No. 4 and No. 5 singles to go along with their default win at No. 6 to clinch the match with five wins, but the Saints kept fighting and Alonte put Seward on the board with a 6-2, 6-1 win over Vile at No. 3 singles to make it 5-1. Poppel defeated Penna 6-3, 6-1 in No. 2 singles to give the Braves a 7-1 lead and in the final, and best, match of the dual, Pena outlasted Meudendahl 2-6, 6-4, 10-6 to give the Saints their second point of the match as Ottawa came away with the 7-2 win.

Seward's next match of the day against the host Bethany Swedes was not nearly as close. The Swedes, whose only loss of the season in 15 outs came against Wichita State, had no problem with the Saints in the doubles round of play, downing Seward 8-2, 8-2 in No. 1 and No. 2 doubles before picking up the default win in No. 3 doubles to carry a 3-0 lead into singles play.

It was once again all Swedes in the singles portion of play. They notched a win for the No. 6 singles default and then sealed the match with wins at No. 4 and No. 5, dropping just one game in the process to take a 6-0 lead. Penna was forced to retire due to injury at No. 2 singles to give Bethany their 7th point of the dual and Marcelo Alecio won his 11th straight match against the Saints Justin Pena in No. 1 singles 6-1, 6-2 to make it 8-0 Swedes. The final match to finish was at No. 3 where Alonte put forth his best effort and came up just short, taking James Bragg to the brink in both sets before falling 6-4, 7-5 to end the day as Bethany swept the match 9-0.

The Saints dipped below .500 for the first time in nearly a month as they fell to 5-6 as a team with the two losses. The Saints record might be a little bit deceiving as 5 of their 6 losses have come to four year schools while they are 4-1 against fellow junior colleges this season. Next up for the guys in green is a weekend of Region VI action as Friday they will travel to Hesston to take on the Larks and on Saturday they will battle Johnson County with time and location to be announced.

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