

# QUITE A RACKET

By Joe Vanden Acker



Left to Right: Beth Larson '12, Coach Kevin Girard, and Ryan Dunn '10

They took two different paths to get to Lawrence University but they quickly arrived at the same point. **Ryan Dunn '10** and **Beth Larson '12** provided a first for Vikings athletics, with Lawrence having the top tennis players in the Midwest Conference. Dunn won the men's No. 1 singles championship last spring, and Larson took the women's No. 1 singles crown this past fall. Both players made a big splash in their first seasons at Lawrence. "It's two things: their work ethic and dedication," Lawrence head coach Kevin Girard said of his stars players' reasons for success. "They both seem to want to get better, they both want to win, and they are great teammates. It's a great recruiting tool. They are the two best players in the conference, and that's pretty cool."

Dunn, a native of Fond du Lac, transferred to Lawrence from Gustavus Adolphus College after spending a year in Minnesota. "As I progressed through (my freshman) year I realized I wanted to do pre-med. I just started looking at Lawrence," said Dunn, who had considered Lawrence when he was in high school. "I didn't feel the academics at Gustavus were as good as they were here so it was a win-win." Dunn, who is a biology major, believes he is

finally at home. "I'm extremely happy with it," Dunn said. "I love it here at Lawrence. I don't think I could have made a better decision."

Larson's interests outside of tennis were critical to bringing her to Lawrence from her hometown of Maplewood, Minn. "I wanted a school that I could play tennis at, was strong academically, and had a strong music program. Lawrence fit all of that," Larson said. "I have lots of goals for my academic career, and hopefully I can fulfill all of those."

Planning to major in French and pre-medicine, Larson also is an accomplished bassoon player. Larson, who has been taking music lessons since before she could walk, is in Lawrence's bassoon studio, the symphonic band, and a woodwind quintet. "I just couldn't sacrifice the bassoon for anything. It's just as large a part of my life as tennis is," Larson said. "I don't think there's any other school out there for me that would be as good a fit for me." The fit with the tennis team was pretty good as well, with Larson moving right to the top of the lineup. She put together a 20-1 singles record and teamed with **Lisa Ritland '09** to go 15-6 at



No. 1 doubles. "Once the season got rolling, my confidence built with every match," said Larson, whose .952 season winning percentage is the best in school history. Her 20 wins was one shy of the record set by **Linda Tomtshak '89** in 1985. "I don't think I ever thought about winning the conference title." Larson won that title in convincing fashion, dropping only one game in two matches before beating Beloit College's Hannah Perwin 6-3, 6-2 in the final at the MWC Championships.

Dunn admits he picked up his game when he came to Lawrence, but he did it not by

pounding balls in practice but by simply relaxing a bit. "It was awesome. I had a really good season last year. I really enjoyed it," Dunn said. "I was more relaxed. I played better tennis last year than my freshman year." Dunn finished with a 15-3 singles record and teamed with **Dan Hertel '09** to go 13-5 in doubles. One of those singles losses was to Grinnell College's Dan LaFountaine when the teams met during the regular season. Dunn's revenge came in the No. 1 singles final at the MWC Championships when he beat LaFountaine 6-1, 7-6 for the title. "I lost to (LaFountaine) during the season, but I played the match of my life against him in the conference final," Dunn admitted. Dunn became the first Lawrence men's player to win the No. 1 singles title since **Pat Kenney '68** did it in 1968.

While they stand atop the Midwest Conference, both players have their sights set even higher. Larson and Dunn confess they would like to play in the NCAA Division III Championships. Dunn needed a good performance at the Intercollegiate Tennis Association Midwest Regional in the fall of 2008 to have a chance to play in the NCAA Championships this spring. His visit to Peru this past summer didn't afford him the opportunity to improve his game. Dunn volunteered in a 25-bed hospital and admitted he got a lot of hands-on experience. "It was a really good experience. I lived with a host family and practiced my Spanish down there," Dunn said. "It was the best summer of my life. I had a great time." Dunn's game suffered and he finished with a 1-1 record at the ITA regional. He has been working hard on his game and is still looking for that trip to nationals. "I think it would be awesome to do that. I have one year left," Dunn said. "I've had that goal ever since I've been paying tennis."

Larson said she was a bit jealous when she learned the men would have a chance to play at the ITA regionals. The women will get the same shot next year, according to Girard. "It's definitely a goal of mine to get there," Larson said of the NAAs. Girard believes his two stars have the game and the desire to reach the lofty goals they have set for themselves. "One of the best things they can do is stay focused," Girard said. "Individually they are extremely talented." ■



## HAVE A BALL!

**At the annual Viking Bench Golf Outing**

Thursday, June 18  
Royal St. Patrick's Golf Links  
Wrightstown, Wis.

**Join us and help support  
23 intercollegiate  
athletic teams  
at Lawrence  
University.**



**For more information:**  
[www.lawrence.edu/athletics/golf/golfouting.shtml](http://www.lawrence.edu/athletics/golf/golfouting.shtml)