

Guarachi named to college all-star team

By **BRANDON WALKER**

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Four years ago, South Walton High graduate Alexa Guarachi decided to accept a tennis scholarship at the University of Alabama with designs on starting something special.

Over the next four years, Guarachi did just that, becoming a three-time All-American, a four-time All-SEC performer and the most successful women's tennis player in Alabama history. On

Friday, Guarachi accepted the final award of her decorated collegiate career when she was named to the 2012-13 ITA Collegiate All-Star Game, the first such honor of her career. Traveling to the site of the U.S. Open in Flushing Meadows, N.Y., to receive the ITA recognition, Guarachi couldn't help but look back at her decision to choose Alabama four years prior.

"I realized over the weekend that this was my last hurrah as an Alabama tennis player, my last award," said Guarachi. "When I signed, I wanted to help put



"When I signed, I wanted to help put Alabama on the map as leaders in collegiate tennis. ... I know I made the right decision."

— Alexa Guarachi

Three-time NCAA tennis All-American from South Walton

Alabama on the map, to put Alabama up there with schools like Stanford and Florida as leaders in collegiate tennis. That's why I went there, and I know I made the

right decision."

With the ITA recognition came a chance to attend an awards luncheon at Flushing Meadows on Saturday, as well as the chance

to attend the Arthur Ashe Kids Day show.

Featuring 20 of the nation's top student-athletes from tennis programs across the nation, the ITA All-Star Team was inaugurated in 1984. The All-Star Team features the nation's top-ranked men's and women's players from the year-end ITA College Tennis Rankings at the NCAA Division I, II and III, NAIA and junior college levels, as well as winners of the 2012 USTA/ITA National Indoor

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PREP VOLLEYBALL

Baker starts with win

Gators top Central in four sets

By **RANDY DICKSON**

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BAKER—The Baker School volleyball team took care of business against Central on Tuesday, opening the season with a 3-1 win by scores of 25-6, 23-25, 25-6, 26-11.

"I think overall we played solid," coach James Kerrell said. We played fundamental volleyball. "All in all, I'd say it was a good performance."



With senior Savannah Risen leading the way, the Gators (1-0) jumped to a quick 9-0 lead in the first set. The Jaguars opened the set with a serve out of bounds. Risen then reeled off eight straight points with three aces mixed in to give Baker the commanding lead.

Hana Wadsworth and Jordan Linzy had kills in the set and Ashley Black provided a timely block for a score, but mostly the Gators feasted on Jaguar mistakes.

It looked as if it was going to be more of the same in the second set when Baker jumped to an 11-1 lead, but the tenacious Central squad battled back with a 14-6 run to close the Baker lead to 17-15. A Central net violation made the score 18-15 with Risen taking over on serve for Baker.

A kill by Hartley Moate followed as Baker scored four straight points to pull within three points away from taking the set. A couple of unforced errors by the Gators kept Central in the set.

Baker still led 22-19 when Risen took a tumble and collided with a teammate, bruising her right knee. Temporarily sidetracked by Risen's injury, the Gators allowed the Jaguars to finish off the set with a 6-1 run to take the set.

"We had a hiccup there in the second game," Kerrell said. "Any time you have one of your captains, setters and outside hitters (Risen) go down it kind of throws everybody out of their rhythm a little bit. They were fine once they saw she was fine and everything."

Reassured Risen was OK, it didn't take long for the Gators to regain their focus in set three.

Baker roared to an 11-3 lead and never looked back.

Wadsworth and Linzy sparked the big run.

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Going for

'Bama players eye three-peat, but don't want to talk about it

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. (AP) — Alabama quarterback AJ McCarron offers a primer for what it takes to fit in with the top-ranked Crimson Tide football team.

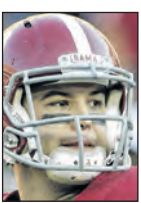
For starters, don't fixate on the shot at a historic three-peat, BCS-or-bust expectations or the anointment by pollsters as the team to beat.

It's all about Virginia Tech, taking it one game at a time, staying focused and all the other cliches that get trotted out in the football building each year about this time. In short, ignore what coach Nick Saban puts under the "external factors" umbrella.

"I feel like if you don't think that way, you're kind of irrelevant a little to the team," McCarron said Monday. "Everybody needs to have the same mindset. We can't worry about

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"That was a different team then and it's a different team



now. Got different players and different mindsets among the team as individuals. We've got to focus on our goal this year."

— AJ McCarron
Alabama quarterback

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AP
Alabama running back Derrick Henry works through drills during practice in Tuscaloosa, Ala.

During rough year, Federer starts well at U.S. Open



AP
Roger Federer returns a shot to Grega Zemlja during the first round of the U.S. Open on Tuesday in New York.

American men go 5-1 on the day

NEW YORK (AP) — At this point in his career, Roger Federer recognizes the importance of a little extra work.

That's why the owner of a record 17 Grand Slam titles, and the man who spent more weeks ranked No. 1 than any other, was out there on a U.S. Open practice court late Tuesday afternoon, putting in some training time shortly after finishing off a 6-3, 6-2, 7-5 victory over 62nd-ranked Grega Zemlja of Slovenia in the first round.

At 32, at his lowest ranking, No. 7, in more than a decade, coming off a stunningly early exit at the previous major tournament — one of a series of newsworthy losses lately — Federer is OK with making some concessions.

He insists his passion for tennis is still there.

"I'm in a good spot right now," Federer said. "I want to enjoy it as long as it lasts."

He made it sound, though, as if it isn't as easy to enjoy things the way his results have been going.

Federer entered Tuesday 32-11, a .744 winning percentage that doesn't sound too bad, until you consider his career mark at the start of this season was .816, and he's had years where he went 81-4 (.953), and 92-5 (.948). He's only won one tournament in 2013, which would be great for some guys, but Federer topped 10 titles three times, and hasn't won fewer than three in any season since 2001.

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