

SPORTS

10 TO WATCH

Here are 10 other former Coastal Bend high school athletes who excelled last week at the collegiate level:

BASEBALL

Missouri junior RHP Rob Zastryzny (Calallen): Struck out 10 and surrendered one earned run and eight hits over seven innings, but was tagged with the loss in a 4-1 Southeastern Conference decision Friday against No. 5 South Carolina. Has a 1-3 record with a 4.05 ERA and 27 strikeouts in 26.2 innings for the Tigers (6-9, 1-2).

Schreiner senior IF Pete Trevino (Alice): Was one of the bright spots for the Mountaineers as he went 4 for 10 with two runs scored in three American Southwest Conference losses to Texas Lutheran. Batting .372 (32 for 86) with 11 runs scored and four RBIS for Schreiner (7-18, 0-3).

Texas Lutheran sophomore RHP Aaron Aleman (IWA): Raised his record to 5-2 by allowing one earned run and five hits over 5.1 innings in Saturday's 7-2 seven-inning American Southwest Conference win over Schreiner. Has a 3.38 ERA with 24 strikeouts in 40 innings pitched for the Bulldogs (17-6, 6-0).

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Alabama A&M junior guard G.A. Hill (Aransas Pass): Came off the bench to score 17 points and grab six rebounds in Friday's 72-59 Southwestern Athletic Conference Tournament semifinal loss to Southern. Helped the Bulldogs defeat Grambling State 59-51 in Wednesday's first round.

Arkansas Tech senior C Will Paul (Calallen): Ended his collegiate career Saturday with nine points and eight rebounds in an 81-65 loss to host Minnesota State-Mankato in the first round of the NCAA Division II Central Regional Tournament.

Oklahoma Christian sophomore G Willie Harper (West Oso): Scored 13 points and a pair of 3-pointers in Saturday's 90-87 overtime loss to Shorter in the National Christian College Athletic Association Championship title game in Winona Lake, Ind. Had eight points and two 3-pointers in Thursday's 79-66 upset of second-seeded Cedarville and had seven points and one 3-pointer in Wednesday's 83-59 rout of Spring Arbor.

SOFTBALL

Concordia-Austin freshman RHP Zalyza Perez (Alice): Improved to 4-1 by pitching four shutout innings and allowing two hits in Saturday's 5-0 win over Alfred. Has a 4.02 ERA with 12 strikeouts over 40.1 innings for the Tornados (12-6).

Cornell junior OF/C Christina Villalon (Tuloso-Midway): Was 3 for 4 with an RBI in Saturday's 7-5 loss to Radford. Went 2 for 2 with a run scored in a 3-2 win over Robert Morris earlier in the day. Headed into Sunday's games at the South Florida Invitational in Clearwater leading the Big Red in batting with a .481 average (13 for 27).

Incarnate Word sophomore OF Alex Zepeda (Sinton): Went 6 for 11 with three runs scored as the Cardinals won one of two games over Cameron in their Lone Star Conference series over the weekend. Batting .373 (25 for 67) with a team-high 14 runs scored for UIW (14-9, 3-3).

St. Mary's junior RHP/UTIL Emily Brittain (Tuloso-Midway): Raised her record to 14-2 by scattering six hits and allowing one earned run in Saturday's 7-1 Heartland Conference victory over Newman. Allowed no earned runs Friday in a 10-1 five-inning win over Newman.

Compiled by Coy Slavik. If you have a Hometown Heroes suggestion, please email hometown.heroes@gmail.com



Rafael Nadal (left) and Maria Sharapova won titles Sunday in Indian Wells, Calif. Nadal defeated Juan Martin del Porto 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 while Sharapova beat Caroline Wozniacki 6-2, 6-2.

Nadal, Sharapova win titles

By Beth Harris
Associated Press

INDIAN WELLS, Calif. — Rafael Nadal rallied from a set and 1-3 down in the second to beat Juan Martin del Potro 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 in the BNP Paribas Open final on Sunday, giving the Spaniard his third title in four tournaments since returning from a seven-month injury layoff.

Nadal improved to a career-best 17-1 on the year, including 14 straight match wins. He's won three titles — two on clay while runner-up in another on his favorite surface — since returning from a left knee injury.

Maria Sharapova defeated Caroline Wozniacki 6-2, 6-2 to win her first title of the year in the women's final between two former top-ranked players.

Indian Wells is his first hard-court title since Tokyo in October 2010, having lost in six previous finals on the surface. He won his 600th career match and will move to No. 4 in the rankings released Monday.

Nadal broke a tie with Roger Federer with his record 22nd career ATP Tour Masters 1000 title. He earned \$1 million for his third Indian Wells title.

Del Potro came up short in his bid to beat three Top-10 players in the same tournament for the second time in his career. He defeated No. 3 Andy Murray and No. 1 Novak Djokovic in three sets apiece in becoming the second Argentine since Guillermo Villas in 1977 to reach the final here.

Nadal served three love games in the third set, capping his last one with a 123-mph ace that gave him a 5-3 lead.

Del Potro came from love-40 down and fought off three match points to hold at 5-4. But Nadal served out the match, dropping just one point in the final game. As Del Potro's forehand sailed wide on his fourth match point, Nadal collapsed flat on his back after playing 2½ hours in the desert heat.

He got up and hugged Del Potro, then trotted behind the baseline to clasp hands with billionaire tournament owner Larry Ellison of Oracle Corp., before falling to his

knees near the net and raising his arms in celebration. Nadal playfully took a bite out of the Baccarat crystal trophy.

Del Potro saved three break points to lead 1-0 in the third. Nadal held at love, taking three games in a row for a 3-1 lead that he never gave up.

Nadal blew a 3-0 lead in the first set. From there, Del Potro won eight of the next nine games to claim the opening set and a take a 2-0 lead in the second. He went up 3-1 before Nadal grabbed the momentum, winning the final five games and the set 6-3 on a 105-mph ace that capped a love service game.

Sharapova dictated from the opening game, when she broke Wozniacki at love with groundstrokes that had the Dane running from side to side. Sharapova faced just two break points on her serve in the nearly 1½-hour match.

"I always felt like I was always a foot ahead, especially with the breaks," she said. "I was able to serve well today, and that helped me."

It was Sharapova's second career title at Indian Wells, where she first won in 2006. Wozniacki won here in 2011. The women met in a final for the first time; their six other matches came in earlier rounds.

The Russian is projected to move one spot in the WTA Tour rankings to No. 2 on Monday, dropping Victoria Azarenka to third. Wozniacki will move up one spot to No. 9.

The victory, worth \$1 million, gave Sharapova at least one title for 11 straight years dating to 2003.

Sharapova led 2-1 when Wozniacki brought her coach-dad Piotr out during a break. But she couldn't get untracked, and was broken again in the seventh game. Sharapova fought off two break points to take the first set in 38 minutes.

"She was putting pressure on me from the start. She was serving very well," Wozniacki said. "I felt like everything that she wanted to do today was going in. She was making very few errors, and if she did, then it was really at the times where it didn't really matter."

HEROES
from 1C

best-of-three NCAA Super Regional in Tempe, Ariz. But the Sun Devils bounced back with 9-2 and 8-0 wins to end the Ragin' Cajuns' season

The Ragin' Cajuns were ranked No. 11 in the pre-season USA Today Top 25 poll, but were shocked when Lotief announced his resignation Feb. 8, just before ULL's 2013 opener. Lotief and his wife, Stefni, had served as co-head coaches and compiled a 500-122 record over 10 seasons before Stefni resigned in July. But Lotief returned to his head-coaching duties Feb. 27.

It had been reported that the Lotiefs were not happy with the ULL athletic administration. Walsh said the coaching instability greatly affected the team.

"There was a falling out when the coach situation came about," Walsh said. "But we're starting to get our team back. Hopefully, we can keep moving on from here."

Walsh said her biggest adjustment to college softball was experiencing more lows than ever before in her career.

"Everything is different from high school and you learn to accept failure as part of getting better," she said. "It's a process and you just have to learn to trust it."

Lotief said Walsh's strength this season has been her versatility. Walsh started out at second base, then was moved to shortstop when previous starter Nerissa Myers sustained an ankle injury.

"Samantha has worked hard," Lotief said. "She is able to do some really special things offensively and defensively. She has a lot of knowledge of the game and she can play every position on the field."

"I'll play where they need me, but there is more action at shortstop," Walsh said. "It's been more fun for me since I was little."

Offensively, Walsh has had to adjust to facing the top pitchers in the country.

"Coming from a small 3A school, I didn't see the pitching that you do in college," Walsh said. "Here, it is a matter of recognizing the pitches. In high school, they either tried to blow it by you or tried to just throw their one good pitch."

"When you get to college, every pitch is a good pitch. You have to be more aggressive, because they're only going to throw you one mistake pitch and you have to capitalize on that one mistake."

Lotief said Walsh has been one of the team's pleasant surprises in the batter's box.

"She's very competitive,"



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Samantha Walsh is batting .282 (20 for 71) with 15 runs scored and 12 RBIs. Walsh has also committed only three errors in 65 chances while playing second base and shortstop.

Lotief said. "She likes that one-on-one competition between her and the pitcher. She is one of those rare athletes who possesses power, strength and above average speed. She has the physical attributes that have helped her to make the adjustment to college."

Louisiana-Lafayette is 19-11 overall and 2-4 in Sun Belt Conference play and faces Mississippi State in a nonconference game Wednesday before resuming SBC play March 29-30 in a three-game series

at home against Florida International.

Now with the coaching problems apparently behind them, Walsh feels the Ragin' Cajuns can focus on developing some team chemistry and making another run at an NCAA tournament berth.

"We all knew there was going to be big shoes to fill this season," Walsh said. "It has made us work harder. There were only so many spots on the field that are open and there is a lot of talent on this team."

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