

SPORTS

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Alexander comes back with new attitude

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Scott Alexander, Kansas City, Mo., junior, still gets angry once in awhile in the midst of a tough college tennis match.

Sometimes he catches himself at the split second the pressure mounts and he feels like yelling at himself. Sometimes he doesn't. But this year, he is getting better.

Alexander has come a long way since he was suspended for disciplinary reasons from the KU tennis team last spring.

"HE'S IMPROVED phenomenally," said Scott Perelman, KU tennis coach. "He's got a little more improvement to make, but he's by no means the same person. I'm tickled to death he's back, because he can mean the difference between us being a good team and a great one."

Yesterday, Alexander won his final match of the fall season in No. 4 singles against Baker. Playing at No. 4 was Perelman's idea to help Alexander gain confidence in his game. Alexander said he was just happy to be playing college tennis again.

"When I got kicked off the team, it was probably the worst thing that happened to me in my life," Alexander said Saturday. "Being suspended was a culmination of a few things, some totally my fault."

"For the most part, we were having a very poor season last year, and I was playing No. 1 singles and putting a lot of pressure on myself to win. I would get angry in matches and let it get out of control. But the fact that I wasn't going to be able to play anymore gave me incentive to get my act together."

Perelman had been concerned with Alexander for some time, he said, because Alexander was having trouble controlling his emotions during tennis matches. Other KU tennis players were having similar problems, but Alexander's case was a little more extreme.

"BASICALLY, SCOTT had a very

difficult time on the court," Perelman said. "He would do a lot of cussing, screaming and break his racket once in a while. It was beginning to look bad for both Scott and the University of Kansas."

So Perelman suggested that Alexander see Andy Jacobs, who the University of Kansas recently hired as part-time sports psychologist. Alexander was reluctant at first, but Perelman said that about two weeks after his suspension, Alexander agreed to consider.

"I told him if he wanted to play tennis again at KU, he'd have to see Andy," Perelman said.

"I STARTED SEEING Andy Jacobs at the end of last semester, and I saw him all summer," Alexander said. "He's really helped me a lot in understanding my problem. I don't think I could have done it though, without my own desire to change."

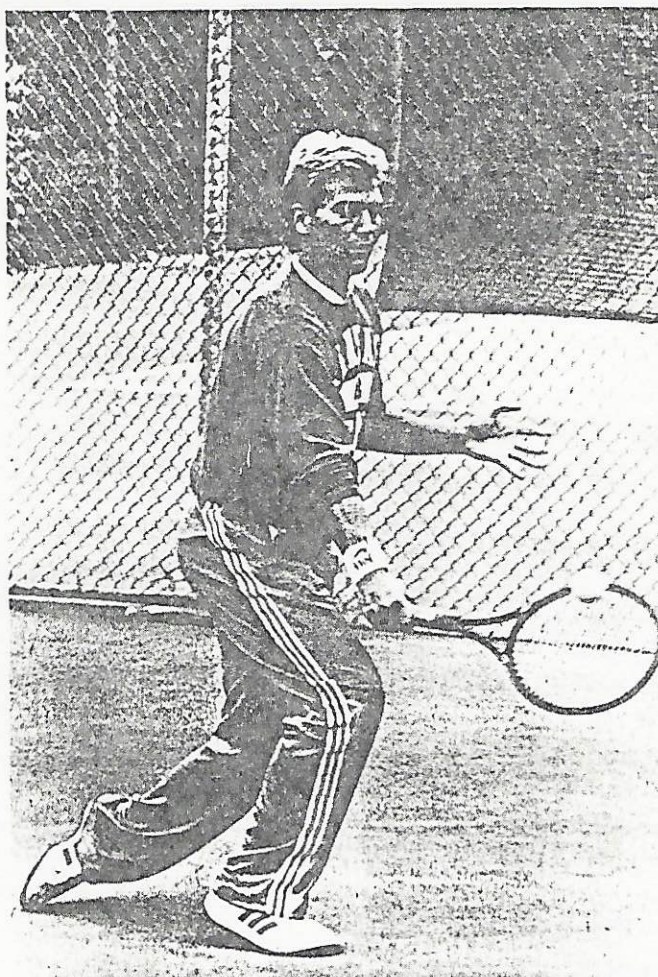
Alexander met with Jacobs during the summer once a week for about one hour per session. Alexander said that first he was administered a personality test, a test of attentional and interpersonal styles. Then, the two worked on defining Alexander's problem of dealing with frustration.

Alexander said, "Tennis can easily be a frustrating game, and it is conducive to people getting a little frustrated or angry. The best players all feel the frustration. They just realize that getting angry isn't going to help."

WINNING WHILE looking bad is not something Alexander wants. This year he has improved, he said, because he realizes he has a problem and can help himself by relaxing.

"I've done a lot better this year," Alexander said, "but when you have developed an outlet for your frustrations, it doesn't go away overnight."

Jacobs said, "For many athletes, the biggest step is to admit you've got a problem. I feel he's made progress, but he's got a long way to go."



Gary Smith/KANSAN

Scott Alexander returns a shot during a singles match against Baker. Alexander, who is coming back from discipline problems that forced him off the KU tennis team last season, has controlled his anger and is playing No. 4 singles for the Jayhawks this fall.