

# DIFFERENT STROKES

*Jana Strnadova is an ace both on and off the court.*

One of the specialties that Jana Strnadova misses most when she's away from her home in the Czech Republic is the wonderful brown bread common there—topped with a little butter and salt.

Of course, Jana also misses her family and friends, though during her first year at Syracuse she didn't have much time to be homesick.

Never before has a tennis player come to Syracuse University faced with adapting to so much: a new coach, new teammates, a new tournament circuit, a new culture, and new classes in a new language. She's mastered them all, turning in top-notch performances as both a student and an athlete.

Last year, Strnadova [*Strana-do-va*] set the SU record for the most wins in one season (58) and for the most singles wins in one season (35). She became the first Orangewoman ever named Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA) East Region Rookie of the Year and was the first singles player—and only the third SU player ever—to earn an invitation to the ITA Indoor National Tournament last December. Along with teammate Erica O'Neill, Strnadova also represented the Orangewomen in singles play at the NCAA Tennis Championships in May.

Strnadova came to Syracuse as the highest world-ranked tennis player ever to compete for the Orangewomen. In the Czech Republic she has been ranked as high as first and never lower than fourth in her age group since the age of 12. Internationally, she competed in World Tennis Association tourna-



Although a world-ranked player, Czech native Jana Strnadova was challenged by the fast pace of the American college tennis circuit. She adapted quickly.

ments and ranked as high as 320. Despite this experience, the fast pace of the American college tennis circuit's busy tournament schedule—combined with the challenges of the classroom—was very different from what Strnadova was used to in Eastern Europe.

Before the fall of the Communist governments in Eastern Europe, excelling in sports was one of the best ways to move ahead in life. Top athletes often enjoyed benefits, including world travel, that other citizens did not.

Strnadova's father played basketball for Czechoslovakia as a young man and also enjoyed tennis, though he never got the chance to play seriously. He taught the game to his two daughters, Jana and Nicole. Both caught on fast. (Nicole, now 18, hopes to enter SU this fall and make her own mark on the tennis team.)

Strnadova began competing in tournaments when she was 10 and earned a spot on the Czechoslovakian junior national team three years later. Once she turned 18, she joined the women's international tennis circuit, competing as an amateur in tournaments throughout Europe. This time, though, traveling and training were at her own expense because she was no longer a member of the national team.

Training became even more difficult after the barriers dividing East and West broke down, as many of the top coaches and players left for more lucrative situations in western Europe and North America. To improve, Strnadova knew, she

also would have to leave.

Her search for the right American university was difficult. Most of the tennis coaches who contacted her seemed interested only in her tennis skill. SU head coach Jesse Dwire, who'd heard about Strnadova from a colleague, was different.

"Jesse was concerned about the human being, about who I actually was, not just if I could hit a backhand right or not," she says.

Dwire had little to be nervous about where Strnadova was concerned. "She equaled everything I was told about



her," he says. "Her tennis was very good and we're very excited about working with her for another three years. She's a fine tennis player who can get nothing but better."

**S**trnadova's accomplishments helped the women's tennis team to its most successful year. The 1992-93 team set a school record, with 16 wins in 20 matches, and finished second in the East Region behind the University of Virginia. Strnadova finished third in doubles (with partner Carrie Bentzel) and fifth in singles in the final East Regional rankings. In addition to Strnadova's Rookie-of-the-Year award, O'Neill was named the ITA East Region Player to Watch, and Dwire was honored as the region's Coach of the Year.

"Jana's a very hard worker and a great tennis player," says Bentzel, a 1992 alumnus and current graduate student in exercise science. "She's an all-around tennis player—she has a great serve and good ground strokes but she's also a very good net player. She has slices and drop shots that make her a different type of player."

Strnadova's diligence paid off academically, too, earning her a 3.65 grade-point average last year. Strnadova, who's enrolled in the School of Management, is looking forward to achieving even more on the court and in the classroom.

"At first I came more for tennis," she admits. "I thought I could try it for one year and if I wanted, I could come back. But now I emphasize the education and would like to get my degree."

This summer, Strnadova competed in several tournaments so she could remain in the world rankings (intercollegiate tournaments don't count), then set out to accomplish another goal: learning how to type.

"It's not typical for Czech students to type," she says.

Primarily, she took time off from tennis to rejuvenate herself for the busy fall tournament schedule. She savored the brown bread, yet yearned for what she now loves most in America: frozen yogurt. No doubt she prepared Nicole for her first year away from home—the books, the weather, the tennis team, and her favorite stop on M Street: TCBY.

—ANDREA C. MARSH

## SPORTS SHORTS

➤ *Lacrosse team wins fifth national title.* Senior attackman Matt Riter scored with just eight seconds to play to give Syracuse a 13-12 win over North Carolina in the NCAA Division I lacrosse championship final, held on May 31 in College Park, Maryland. The victory marks the fifth time the Orangemen have captured the national title, the fourth in just six years.

SU senior goalie Chris Surran was voted the tournament's Most Outstanding Player after compiling 48 saves in 3 games for a .640 save percentage. Surran was also among 7 other Orangemen named to the 1993 United States Intercollegiate Lacrosse Association (USILA) All-America team. Riter and mid-fielders Dom Fin and Roy Colsey were named to the first team; Surran, midfielder Charlie Lockwood, and defenseman Ric Beardsley were named to the second team; attackman Jamie Archer got third-team honors; and defenseman Regy Thorpe earned honorable mention.

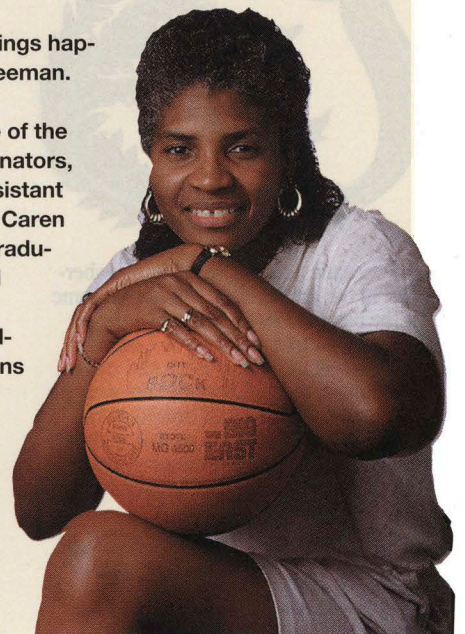
➤ *Freeman named coach.* Marianna Freeman was named head coach of the women's basketball team in May, replacing 15-year head coach Barbara Jacobs, who resigned in March. The appointment makes Freeman the first African-American head coach at Syracuse University.

"I plan to work very, very hard to bring Syracuse University back into winning form," Freeman said at a press conference shortly after her appointment. "I think winning is a learned behavior. I will attempt to do that as quickly as I can. We will do it with integrity. We will do it with hard work."

Freeman comes to SU after 10 years as an assistant coach at the University of Iowa. During her tenure, the Hawkeyes were 237-60, participated in eight NCAA tournaments and one Final Four, and won or shared six Big Ten Conference titles.

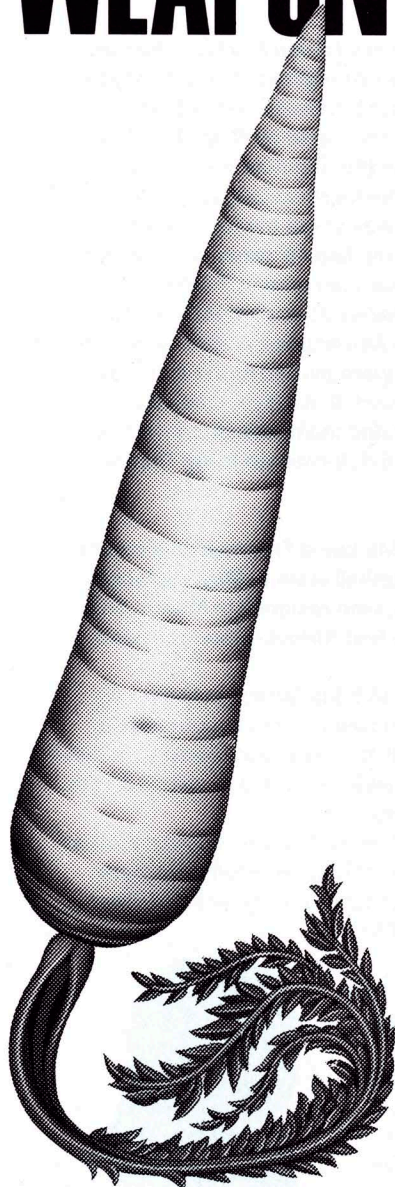
"I have a vision of great things happening at Syracuse," says Freeman. "That's why I'm here."

Freeman, regarded as one of the nation's top recruiting coordinators, has already recruited two assistant coaches: Felicia Legette and Caren Truske. Legette, a 1989 SU graduate and former SU basketball standout (she's the Orangewomen's all-time leading scorer and rebounder) joins Freeman after two years as an assistant coach at Boston College. Truske comes to SU from Stetson University, where she was head coach for three years.





# CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON



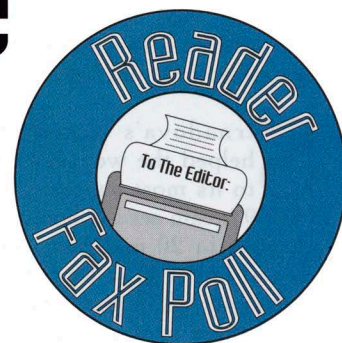
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