Lake not feeling the heat this time around

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SALEM — It was this time a year ago when Andy Lake felt a bit pressure coming down on his shoulders.

Having not even been on the job for a full year, the Keowee Key tennis pro knew going into the Keowee Key Pro Tennis Invitational that former pro Pratik Shrivastava had won consecutive titles in the opening two years of the tournament, leaving quite a standard for Lake to live up to.

And it certainly didn't come easy for Lake in his first outing in the tournament, as he won a seven-point tiebreaker with nephew Bobby Lake for the doubles championship on the opening day of the event before picking up a narrow 6-4 win over Paul Goode the following day for the singles crown.


Lake

After ensuring the tournament title remained with the host tennis pro in his Keowee tournament debut, Lake said he hopes to keep that tradition alive this year, although the atmosphere is different coming into the event this year, which will get under way this afternoon.

"There's no pressure on me this year," Lake said. "Last year I felt like I was lucky winning both because I was down in a couple of matches,

See LAKE, Page 2B

LAKE

Continued from Page 1B

so for me, I just want to have a good crowd out here and have everybody enjoy themselves."

But even if the pressure isn't there, and the main concern is having fun, there's still no doubting a competitive fire will be burning somewhere in Lake.

Lake is feeling good coming into the event, as he won a title earlier this month playing in the Southern Senior Cup in Huntsville, Ala., which came after capturing a crown in the Atlanta Senior Invitational earlier this year.

Additionally, Lake said he will be playing about 12 pounds lighter than he did last year, which he said should play to his advantage.

"I've been playing a little bit more this year than last year leading into the tournament, his singles title on Saturday, he may not be able to exactly recapture the magic of his doubles win from a year ago, as he may not necessarily be paired with Bobby this afternoon.

After the pairings were predetermined last year, the teams will be selected by drawing out of a hat this year, so Lake may have to defend his doubles crown with a different partner.

Either way though, Lake said it'll be important to keep an eye on Bobby, who is a multi-year letterman at Appalachian State.

"The thing about him is he's one of the guys in the field who's improving, and the rest of us are getting older," Lake joked. "He's getting stronger and we're getting older, so I figured it wouldn't have been fair if we played again this year."