

Natalie Karibian takes step up, wins girls 18s crown at Tiger Classic

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – Edwardsville's Natalie Karibian took a big step forward over the weekend, winning the girls 18 singles championship in the Tiger Classic tennis tournament presented by Leskera Law Firm and Scott Credit Union at Edwardsville High's tennis complex.

Karibian defeated Isabel Burwitz of Swansea in Sunday's championship match, taking a 6-0, 6-0 win over Burwitz. "This whole weekend my serve was pretty good," Karibian said. "I think that's the one thing that really helped me this weekend."

Karibian has performed well in previous Futures tournaments she's taken part in. "Futures qualifiers I do OK – I've won a couple – and I've gone to some Futures, but I've never won in 18s before, so this is my first 18s Future (win)," Karibian said. "It's a big deal because I'm obviously playing up (Karibian is a rising junior at EHS), so I get a little bit harder competition – it feels good to win."

Karibian had faced Burwitz previously in high school matches – Burwitz is a rising senior at Belleville East – so meeting her in the final wasn't uncharted territory for Karibian. "I've played her in (the Southwestern) conference (tournament) last year and during the school year, so I'm pretty familiar with her game," Karibian said. "I've been practicing a lot and doing (Edwardsville tennis coach Dave Lipe's) academy and private lessons with my coach and that sort of thing."

Karibian still has a busy schedule upcoming this summer. "The beginning of July, there's a Futures for this, there's a couple of Futures later that month," Karibian said. "I really wanted to win this because it was the first time I was playing up; it feels good to win it."