

Twin brothers enjoy time at Edwardsville Futures

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – Twin siblings aren't all that unusual; according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, about 1 in 30 births in the United States are twins.

Several twin siblings have made their mark in the world of sport over the years, most notably NFL players Tiki and Ronde Barber, basketball players Heidi and Heather Burge, Olympic gymnasts Paul and Morgan Hamm, skiing greats Phil and Steve Mahre and tennis players Tim and Tom Gullickson and tennis players Mark and Bob Bryan.

This week's USTA Pro Circuit Edwardsville Futures presented by the EGHM Foundation tennis tournament had a pair of up-and-coming twin brothers playing in both the singles and doubles competitions of the event; Hunter and Yates Johnson, who played college tennis at Louisiana-Lafayette and then SMU before their graduations and are now playing on the USTA Futures circuit.

The brothers reached the semifinals of the doubles draw, falling to Robert Galloway and Alex Lawson in Thursday's semifinals, while in singles play, Hunter was eliminated in the first round by Kevin King.

This week's Futures was the first tournament back for Hunter after being out for three-and-a-half months with a foot injury. "It's good to get a win today," Hunter said following his and Yates' first-round win over American Chad Rhoden and South African Nicolaas Scholtz. "Just getting back into it was really good."

Yates Johnson won a doubles tournament while Hunter was out with his injury, but the reunited twins are glad to be back together. "It was kind of weird not having my brother playing with me for awhile," Yates said, "but it's good to be back out there with him; it was good getting a first-round match win and build a little confidence going into the second round."

The Johnsons are natives of New Braunfels, Texas, near San Antonio and have played "ever since we can remember," Yates said, "probably since we were 3 or 4 years old; our dad's (Jeff Johnson) our coach; we've always had rackets in our hands.

"We just graduated from SMU in May and we've always dreamed about playing doubles on the (ATP) tour."

And as one could expect, they're friends to the Bryan brothers. "We're actually pretty good friends with them," Hunter said. "We've hit with them a bunch, like in Cincinnati, Washington, Memphis, Indian Wells (Calif.) - all over the place; we're really good friends with them. We've really looked up to them and they've been good role models to us; they've helped us out a lot.

"They've said we've got good enough games to make it; we just have to keep working for it."

The brothers have enjoyed being in Edwardsville this week. “It's a nice town, kind of small town,” Yates said. “It's got a good feel, good community to it; our dad was talking about how this might be a good place to raise some kids, a good place for kids to grow up.”