

Edwardsville Futures ball kids get attention of tournament participants

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – You see them in tennis tournaments all over the world.

They run out onto the courts to retrieve loose balls, hand players new balls and towels between points, stand at attention during breaks in the play near the umpire's chair and generally keep the matches moving along.

They're the ball boys and ball girls, and they played a big part in the USTA Pro Circuit Edwardsville Futures tennis tournament presented by the EGHM Foundation that concluded Sunday morning.

“They did just a fantastic job,” said Kirk Schlueter, who coordinated the ball kids for this year's tournament. “We had about 12 ball kids who signed up total (for the tournament) and we had anywhere from about 8-12 here at a time – they did a fantastic job. I had a lot of officials and players tell me what a great job they did; I had a lot of fans tell me what a great job they did. I couldn't be prouder.

“I believe the youngest kid we had out there was 9 and the oldest kid was in high school, but overall, we're pretty younger (than the ball kids one may see on the ATP and WTA world tour events on television), so I was excited to see they really stepped up at the moment and provide some really quality (work).”

That the opportunity to be a part of a tournament that attracts big crowds to the EHS Tennis Center is a big moment for the kids. “Hopefully they enjoyed it,” Schlueter said. “I think there's a lot of things you can do as a kid – school recitals or whatever – where you don't get this many people watching you, so I thought they did a really good job; I'm proud of their effort.”

One of the ball boys and girls who took part in the tournament – the ball kids were used starting with Friday's singles quarterfinal matches – was Brighton McDaniel, who is about to begin her seventh-grade year at Lincoln Middle School, who is an aspiring tennis player herself. “I just volunteered to do it, like they were looking for ball kids here because I did (Edwardsville Tennis Academy) for the summer,” McDaniel said. “They were looking for ball kids for the summer; I said 'I'll do it' because I've done it in the past, so I felt like I wanted to do it again.

“It's a really fun thing to do with like all my friends and learn from the players that are playing.”

Schlueter was tremendously proud of the effort the kids turned in this year. “I'm so proud of the kids we had,” Schlueter said. “They came out for two training sessions; they did it last week (including the final of the Pro Wildcard Challenge tournament for a spot in the main draw); they did it on Friday (during the singles quarterfinals) – we had

two matches going on simultaneously, so there were only three kids out there for some matches, and they did such a great job.”



