

# **Tiger tennis girls get state tournament send-off rally**

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer  
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**EDWARDSVILLE** – Edwardsville's qualifiers for this weekend's IHSA Class 2A Girls Tennis Championship in Buffalo Grove and suburban Chicago got a rousing send-off Wednesday morning in a pep rally prior to their departure.

Natalie Karibian, who reached the state tournament in singles, and Grace Desse and Abby Cimarolli, who qualified in the doubles competition, will represent the Tigers beginning this morning at the tournament, which runs through Saturday at various high schools in the Chicago area.

“It's one of the big days of the year,” said Tiger coach Dave Lipe. “It's a travel day and a pep assembly day – the first-ever pep assembly for these kids; we've never done a send-off for a tennis team, but we're going to do one today to give these kids a chance to enjoy some of the stuff that the kids in other sports enjoy.

“The kids will get a kick out of it; it'll be fun for the kids.”

Desse/Cimarolli were given a 9-16 seed going into the doubles competition and Karibian reached the singles final at last week's Edwardsville Sectional tournament at the EHS Tennis Center. “We're excited for them,” Lipe said. “The kids are excited to play; the competition is going to be fierce like it was last weekend in our sectional – it'll be tougher and each round, it gets a little more difficult.”

“It's definitely the most exciting thing of the season,” Karibian said. “I'm pretty excited to go. I've been playing pretty well lately and I think I have a good chance of getting a couple of wins; I'm just excited to go and excited to play. No guarantees, but I'll go up there and play my best.”

Karibian realizes the competition, especially from the Chicagoland schools, will be difficult. “It's the best competition in the state obviously, so I'm going to have to bring my best, but I'm ready to do that.”

“We're really excited and pumped up to go to state,” Desse said. “I think we've got a really good shot (of making a deep run in the tournament); we've had a pretty good season so far and there's always the mystery variable, like with anything, so we're hoping the draw pans out for us and we have good success up there.

“It's going to be a big challenge; they're really loaded up there and they've got a lot of competition, so we're just hoping all of our training this season is going to pay off.”

“I'm really excited,” Cimarolli said. “Like Grace said, we've really worked hard this season and hopefully it'll pay off.”

Karibian opens the tournament with a first-round match against Lily Tiemeyer of Highland Park at Buffalo Grove, while Desse/Cimarolli open against Kendall Schrader /Daniella Nenadovich of Lisle Benet Academy at Hoffman Estates Conant High School.

The Class 1A state tournament will also begin Thursday morning; in the singles bracket, Caitlyn Smith of Triad will meet Mia Berlino of Joliet Catholic at Arlington Heights Hersey High, Shelby Jones of Marquette Catholic takes on Ana Culatres of Marion, also at Hersey and Triad's Megan Dulaney meets Chicago University's Jennifer Lewis at

Rolling Meadows High School in the opening round. The doubles bracket has Sara Kreutztrager/Haley Milazzo of Roxana meeting Mia Stipes/Delaney Tressler of Champaign St. Thomas More at Prospect High School and Hannah Hudson/Chelsea Maag of Jersey taking on Grace Matheis/Anna Huber of Normal University at Schaumburg High School in their opening rounds.

Updates on the tournament can be found at the IHSA web site, [www.ihsa.org](http://www.ihsa.org) and clicking on Tennis under Girls Sports.

