

One-time Tiger player Schlueter continues to give back to EHS program, reflects on Coach Lipe's impact

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – Kirk Schlueter has had much experience with Edwardsville's boys tennis team the past several years.

Schlueter once played for the Tigers under head coach Dave Lipe until his graduation from EHS in 2010; he went on to play at Truman State University in Kirksville, Mo., until he graduated from the school in 2014.

Today, Schlueter continues to give back to the Tiger program as Lipe's assistant coach, a position he feels privileged to have. “It definitely is (a privilege),” Schlueter said. “I've now have the great experience of working with Dave both as a player and as a coach; I feel like just getting to be around him and the work ethic he embodies and the passion and the care that he brings to every facet of coaching and player development is great.

“I feel like I've learned a lot from him as a player and I think I'm learning even more from him as a coach. It's great.”

Being able to work under Lipe is a big plus, Schlueter feels. “There's often times of the idea of a sports coach as a domineering, dominating personality,” Schlueter said. “One of the things I've valued with Dave is that he has such class and such a culture of respect that he's created here at Edwardsville.”

Playing under Lipe from 2007-10, when he graduated from EHS; having only recently graduated from high school, Schlueter still has an idea of what the current players are going through. “I've stayed connected to the program – even when I graduated high school, I still taught classes in the summer,” Schlueter said. “I helped where I could, so a lot of kids on the guys' side, I've been coaching for multiple years, so I'm still very connected in that way.”

Schlueter came to tennis as a kid. “I think that, when you're a kid, you're playing a lot of sports and I think the sport kind of chooses you,” Schlueter said. “I think tennis chose me and I really fell in love with it. Credit to Dave, he had all these summer and winter camps, all these programs – it was easy to play all the time and I kind of fell in love with it.”

Much of Dave Lipe's coaching was influenced by his dad Larry, who was the tennis coach at the old Granite City North high school from the school's opening in 1973 until its' closure in 1983. “I know that every time I get a chance to talk to Larry – he's a really smart guy,” Schlueter said. “The thing I know about Dave, from the moment I met him, is that he's a competitor and he wants to fight, he wants to work hard and scrap by and get everything he can get.

“That's an attitude that, as a player, really wore off on me.”

What tennis has meant to Schlueter and the chance to give back to the game means much to him. “I feel incredibly honored and incredibly privileged every day I get to come out here and work with the kids,” Schlueter said. “Tennis has been one of the biggest factors in shaping my life and shaping who I am today. I feel like I'm trying to pay off the debt sort of and just try to pay forward what so many people did for me when I was the age of these guys.”

Schlueter has also been able to work with the USTA Edwardsville Futures tournament held each summer. “That benefit's incredible,” Schlueter said. “I love working with the Futures; that's one of the highlights of my year, getting to work with the Futures and being involved, not just with the Futures, but the other programs we have involved like the Mitch 'n Friends Night and the adult clinic and create the tennis community here in Edwardsville.

“I think that probably, when all is said and done, beyond the wins and losses, is probably Dave's biggest accomplishment; that he's created in Edwardsville a real tennis community that builds on itself.”