



Charlotte's Kyle Johnson learning what tennis circuit is like

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
August 6 2018 1:38 PM



EDWARDSVILLE – Kyle Johnson hails from what’s called the Queen City – Charlotte, N.C.

Johnson had a good outing in last week’s Edwardsville Futures Pro Wildcard Challenge presented by TheBANK of Edwardsville, getting to the quarterfinals before being eliminated.

Johnson traveled a good distance to get to the Illinois Swing’s first stop in Champaign-Urbana before going to Decatur and then to Edwardsville. “It took about 13 hours to get

to Champaign, then went down to Decatur and now here,” Johnson said of his travels from western North Carolina to southwestern Illinois. “A lot of miles on the car.”

But Johnson did have some very scenic views heading from the mountains in North Carolina on his way to Illinois. “It’s a nice state,” Johnson said of North Carolina.

Johnson is a graduate of DePaul University in Chicago. “When I was driving back here, I felt like I was going back home as well,” Johnson, a Charlotte native, said. During his time in Chicago with the Blue Demons, he did get an idea of what the Chicago-St. Louis rivalry was like, especially with the Cardinals and Cubs and Blues and Blackhawks.

Johnson came to tennis as a youth. “My mom’s family is from El Salvador, so we would go visit her family in San Salvador,” Johnson recalled. “I started playing there; it was like the thing to do on vacation. I started getting competitive there.

“I worked for a year at (Charlotte-based) Bank of America (after his graduation from DePaul) and I felt like I wasn’t giving myself a shot to at least try this (Futures) circuit, so I wanted to give it a shot; I really wanted to get a good job after getting out of school, but I thought I’d only get this shot once and see what happens.”

Johnson has learned that the Futures circuit isn’t an easy one. “It’s definitely tough,” Johnson said. “It’s a grind that we’re all going for the same thing for each other; before you start, before you begin the tournaments and the journey, you have these expectations and you’ve just got to throw them out.

“Things happen to you, not just on the tennis court, but sometimes it gets a little lonely when you’re traveling by yourself and the losses pile up, but you get stronger physically and mentally; you really rely on the people in your support system, the people you love. You just keep plugging away, waking up and going over and over again. That’s what Andy Murray, Roger Federer and (Raphael) Nadal have done – keep going, keep going.”

Johnson’s goals in Edwardsville were to get into the main draw and “take it match by match,” Johnson said; he defeated Tom Bickel of the United States in the Round of 32 6-1, 7-5 and Catalin Fifea of Romania 6-2, 6-4 in the Round of 16 to get to the quarterfinals before he was defeated by eventual finalist Sid Donarski of Montreal 6-3, 6-4.

After he leaves Edwardsville, Johnson will return to Charlotte “and evaluate (where he is) and take a little break,” Johnson said while supporting his Carolina Panthers of the NFL. “I’m a big Panthers fan,” Johnson said. “My grandmother worked for (former Panthers owner) Jerry Richardson; we got to know him and what he brought to the Carolinas.”

