

Geller, Korda reach Edwardsville Futures singles final

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – Sunday morning's championship match of the \$25,000 USTA Pro Circuit Edwardsville Futures presented by the EGHM Foundation has reached Championship Sunday.

Axel Geller of Buenos Aires, Argentina, and Sebastian Korda of Bradenton, Fla., will meet each other on Court 2 of Edwardsville High's tennis center at 11 a.m. Sunday for the singles championship of the eighth edition of the tournament.

Geller had to hold off Maxime Cressy of France with a 6-4, 6-7 (9-11), 7-6 (7-2) win in Saturday morning's first semifinal of the tournament, while Korda, the son of 1998 Australian Open champion Petr Korda, eliminated Peruvian Nicholas Alveraz, who won the doubles title Friday evening with Liam Caruana of Italy, by a 6-2, 6-4 score Saturday afternoon.

The Family Day crowd at the tennis center was certainly treated to some very good tennis; tournament director Dave Lipe said "I'll tell you what, the first match (Geller-Cressy), the first semi, was incredibly close; obviously a long three-setter (that took better than two-and-a-half hours to finish) – our matches have been incredibly, incredibly competitive.

"The high level of play was really fun for people to see; Korda was so dominant in his second match – he really played well, but congratulations to Nico Alvarez on winning the Illinois Swing."

Alvarez amassed the most points in the three Futures tournaments the past three weeks in Champaign (the Fighting Illini Open), Decatur (the Ursula Beck Pro Tennis Classic) and the Edwardsville Futures and was awarded a \$1,000 bonus for having the most points; Alvarez won the Ursula Beck singles title last week over Korda and got to the doubles semifinal with Liam Caruana of Italy before being eliminated and won the doubles final at Edwardsville Friday evening before being eliminated in singles Saturday afternoon.

"The 70 points he put up qualifies him for the \$1,000 bonus and we're all very happy for him," Lipe said. "A fantastic, fantastic day for him."

The Korda-Alvarez semifinal got off to a good start for Korda; after the players split the first four games of the first set, Korda got hot at the right time and won the final four games of the set going away; much the same thing happened in the second set where Korda managed to hold off Alvarez to advance to the final.

“He played very well; he played a good match, but from last week (the Ursula Beck final), he switched up the patterns and was smarter than I was today,” Alvarez said. “He deserved to win.

“He mixed up a couple of things and started moving the ball up earlier in the point than I did and served better; I couldn’t get into the match the way I wanted to, so congratulations to him and tomorrow, he’ll have a good match.”

Korda found ways to counterpunch Alvarez when things were tight. “He was taking the ball earlier and in the second set, I got broken in a tough game when he hit a couple of good shots and I missed a couple of easy balls,” Alvarez said. “The first set, he was superior.”

“We played last week in Decatur, so we know each other’s games pretty well,” Korda said. “I had a good game plan going in (to Saturday); i lost last week and I had to adjust a couple of things – coming into the net a lot more. It was a good match; I played really well.”

Heading into Sunday’s final is a good feeling for Korda. “It’s always a good feeling playing in a final,” Korda said, “especially when so many people come out and the tournament is run so well; the ball kids are great, so it’s an awesome feeling.

“Everybody does a great job here; it’s a great location and there’s so much to do here. The hotel (the Country Suites) is about 100 feet walking; we don’t get that often – it’s a great place.”

The Geller-Cressy match was a close one all day long; neither player could get a lead on the other and it stayed tight until the finish. “I did my best and I thought I was going to win the third set when I saved those two match points,” Cressy said. “I gave everything I’ve got; I was tired and not 100 percent, so my serve was not as effective as I would have liked it,” Cressy said. “I did the best I could with what I had today.

“I wasn’t feeling all that great, so I adapted my game a little bit and chipped and charged a little bit more; I didn’t feel super at-ease with my returns a little bit – I’m not used to returning a big serve like (Geller’s). It was a big battle and we both gave everything we had; he ended up winning it.”

The players have enjoyed the experience throughout the week in Edwardsville. “It’s been great,” Cressy said. “It’s been really fantastic winning a lot of matches; every day, I fought my hardest; I think I really stepped it up this week and I think it’s a big turning point in my career.”

Sunday's final will be live-streamed on riverbender.com, with more information available at www.edwardsvillefutures.com and www.itftennis.com.



