

# 'A New Level': Edwardsville Futures Tournament Set for August 5-11

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**EDWARDSVILLE** – The ninth annual Edwardsville Futures tennis tournament, presented by the EGHM Foundation, is set for August 5-11 at the Edwardsville Tennis Center, and once again, it's a community-wide event that will bring positive impact, both economically and intangibly, to the Edwardsville community.

The tournament and surrounding events and activities were previewed in a press conference held Wednesday at the Country Hearth Inn and Suites hotel in Edwardsville.

In addition to the tennis itself, many other activities and events that surround the tournament are scheduled, making it one of the most anticipated sporting weeks in the Edwardsville area.

“Our mantra for this year is ‘A New Level’,” said tournament director and EHS tennis coach Dave Lipe. “This is our ninth year for having this tournament, and we wanted to take this tournament to new levels in a whole bunch of different ways. Specifically, we wanted to up our marketing game plan.”

In that way, a poster was designed by Great Rivers and Routes, which features inaugural champion Blake Strode, and will also hang as a banner at the township hall. The poster will be on display at various businesses throughout the city.

Lipe also emphasized that the tournament is better organized in terms of operations itself and in community involvement. To that end, two new wild card tournaments, which will qualify the winners into the main draw of the Futures, will be held. The Southern Illinois Invitational, which is an invitation-only tournament, will be played July 19-21 on the clay courts of the Champaign Country Club.

The winner of the Southern Illinois Invitational will be awarded the First Lieutenant William Scott Summerhof trophy, named in honor of Summerhof, a member of the University of Illinois’ Naval ROTC program, and was killed in the terrorist attack in Beirut, Lebanon in 1983. Members of Summerhof’s family, including his mother and brother, will present the trophy to the winner of the event on Sunday.

The Pro Wildcard Challenge, presented by TheBANK Of Edwardsville, will be held Aug. 1-3 at the Tennis Center, with the winner also advancing to the main draw of the tournament. A new one-day Sunday Doubles Shootout, presented by Jeb and Ginger Blasingame of KellerWilliams/Marquee Realty, will be held Aug. 4, with the winner also advancing to the main draw of the doubles competition.

A previous tournament, the Edwardsville Open, was held June 7-9, with Jibirl Nettles of Detroit going through to qualify for the wild card tournament, and Carson Haskins and Jackson Allen of St. Louis qualifying for the doubles wild card tournament.

Lipe recognized members of the United States Tennis Association district board, including John Kelly, Tennis Service Representative Sue Riemann and Missouri Valley regional director Mary Buschmann, along with Edwardsville High School principal Dr. Dennis Cramsey and athletic director Alex Fox, and thanked them for their help with the tournament.

Lipe also recognized the tournament sponsors for their help, including long-time sponsors The City of Edwardsville, who was represented by Mayor Hal Patton, Edwardsville Township and the village of Glen Carbon. New sponsors include KellerWilliams/Marquee Realtors, Sign-O-Rama printers, Sudsy-Dudsy Laundry, Fletcher Financial, Rosenthal License Services and Big Daddy's Patio and Grill. Also partnering with the tournament will be hotels such as the Holiday Inn Express and Suites in Edwardsville, Country Hearth Inn and Suites, Marriott TownPlace Suites, Comfort Inn, all in Edwardsville, and the Holiday Inn Express in Troy, all of which will offer discounted rates for tournament participants.

In addition, restaurant sponsors include Bella Milano Italian restaurant, 1818 Chop House, Cleveland Heath coffee shop, Edison's Family Entertainment, Honey Baked Ham, Jimmy John's in Edwardsville and Mike Shannon's Bar and Grill.

That the USTA allows the Edwardsville Tennis Center to host the tournament is very important, according to EGHM Foundation president Joe Gugger.

"This is a true partnership," said Gugger, "and it's a partnership between the school district, District 7, the USTA, which is pretty outstanding to consider that they allow us to host a tournament in a community of this size, and we're the only high school in the United States that has a facility that's up to standard to allow them to do that."

The facility is rated every year following the tournament, and it's always been in the top, not only in the facilities itself, but how the tournament is run.

The community impact is also very important.

"The community benefits so many ways," Gugger said. "One, I think last year, we had over 2,500 people that came out and saw the tournament at various times during the seven or eight-day period. And a lot of that is through our media department which constantly informs through the newspapers and other vehicles, social media, as to what's going on. But it's a benefit for the business community. The business community, we couldn't do this unless we had the support for donations and for activities, like this hotel, also the Holiday Inn Express, Bob Plummer, and the other units. It really works, because we contribute seven days worth of expenditures back to the community. We will bring in over \$250,000 worth of economic impact to the community in seven or eight days of the tournament."

Illinois 112th district Representative Katie Stuart, who's district includes the Edwardsville area, also talked about the impact on the community that the tournament has.

“I’m always excited about this tournament every year,” Stuart said. “It’s amazing the talent that it brings, when you learn about the folks that have been in this tournament, and then you hear about them going through, and you know that they’ve been on the courts of Wimbledon just recently, it just really exciting to know that a part of their career started right here.”

In addition to the tennis each day, other events will include the annual VIP Party and Fashion Show at Sunset Hills Country Club Aug. 6, the annual Mitch ‘n’ Friends clinic for special needs players Aug. 8, Kids’ Night at the Futures Aug. 5, where younger players can participate in a clinic with the players involved in the tournament, a Youth High-Performance clinic featuring former Illinois All-American player Tim Kopinski on Aug. 7, Fan Appreciation Day on Aug. 9, where all fans get in free with a special flyer, and the finals on Aug. 11.

The list of players for this year’s event hasn’t yet been determined, but former champions have gone on to success not only on the ATP pro tour, but also in the Grand Slam events as well. Most recently, 2016 champion Tennys Sandgren reached the quarterfinals of the 2018 Kia Australian Open, and also reached this year’s Round of 16 at Wimbledon.

In addition, John Peers, who was part of the 2011 doubles championship team, has won the men’s doubles at the Australian Open in Melbourne, and was the runner-up in men’s doubles in 2015 at both Wimbledon and the U.S. Open in Flushing Meadow, N.Y. In all, Futures alumni have won a total of 31 ATP championships, had have represented their countries in the Davis Cup championships. The tournament has also contributed a total of \$2.25 million in economic impact on the Edwardsville community.

For more information on this year’s event, please log onto the tournament’s website, [www.edwardsvillefutures.com](http://www.edwardsvillefutures.com).