

Petros Chryscochos Wins Edwardsville Futures Singles Championship With 6-4, 2-6, 7-5 Win Over Nathan Ponwith

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – Petros Chrysoschos’ final shot of the singles final of the \$25,000 Edwardsville Futures presented by the EGHM Foundation tennis tournament was such an appropriate ending for a tight, well-played match.

The final shot hit off the top of the tape of the net, bounced three times and finally fell into the front court to give Chrysoschos, of Lamaca, Cyprus and Wake Forest University, a 6-4, 2-6, 7-5 win over Nathan Ponwith of Scottsdale, Ariz., and Arizona State University Sunday afternoon at the Edwardsville Tennis Center.

It was Chrysoschos’ sixth career win in a Futures event and his first at Edwardsville.

“Well, the first time it hit the net, I’m like ‘damn, I don’t want to play this point,’” Chrysoschos said with a laugh during his post-match interview, “and you know, every time it went to deuce and ad-point games, I was not favored once, so I really wish that ball rolled over, and it did, and I can’t tell you how happy I was when it bounced three times on the net, and then fell over on the other side, but yeah, it’s an unfortunate ending, but you never know when you’re going to get this type of shots, but I’m happy it was on my side, and I’m happy to get the win.”

That the match went to three sets was the way Chrysoschos’ week went, and he felt that the longer the week went, the stronger he was playing.

“I played, I think, four three-set matches this week,” Chrysochos said, “and I was trying to play my best tennis at the end of the week, and as the tournament was progressing, I was playing better and better, but, you know, Nathan is a very physical player, he makes a lot of balls, and he makes you work for every point. You know, I don’t know how I got that break at 5-all, but I’ll take that one, and at the end of the third set, I started serving better, and I was getting some free points, so that helped me a lot, and he ended up making a few mistakes. And I used that, and I got the win.”

Many of Ponwith’s matches went into third sets and tiebreaks, but as the tournament went on, Ponwith seemed to get stronger and fresher.

“He seems like he’s enjoying himself,” Chrysochos said. “He loves tennis, and I asked him yesterday after the match; he played a 7-5, 7-6 after the third, and I asked him ‘you want to play another one?’ And he’s like ‘I can go all day.’ So you can see by that he loves tennis, and he’s willing to run for every point, every ball, he makes you work for it, and it pays off. If he keeps going like that, he’s going to win some Futures.”

For Ponwith’s part, he thought the final point was one of many in the match, and he thought both players had their moments and tipped his cap to Chrysochos.

“I mean, it’s just one point,” Ponwith said. “It was a really long match. I thought we had some nice, good moments, and it came down to the end. I played, I thought, not my best game at 5-all, but he stepped up and played well, and it was just a couple of points at the end.”

Ponwith was able to get some momentum going at the end of the first set and used it to win the second set and even the match.

“Just trying to be more aggressive, step more inside the court, and try to go for my shots more,” Ponwith said. “He was kind of being the aggressor, and I needed to make a change, and I tried to serve better, and return more aggressively, and it went my way.”

And it was only just that the match went to a third and deciding set, as many of Ponwith’s matches during the week went the distance.

“I mean, I was hoping it would go to a third set,” Ponwith said, “because if it went to the third set, it was more my favorite. It worked out, but it didn’t go my way, and that’s just how it goes.”

Chrysochos elected to receive the opening serve, and immediately got a service break, then held his own serve to take an early 2-0 lead, but Ponwith served up his first ace of the match to go up 40-15 in the next game, and won it to cut Chrysochos’ lead to 2-1.

Chrysochos then held serve again, and in the next game, broke Ponwith's service for the second time and went ahead in the set 4-1. In the next game, a brilliant drop shot by Chrysochos forced deuce, then won the next two points to take a commanding 5-1 lead in the set. Ponwith then won the next three games in a row, including a service break on Chrysochos, to cut the lead to 5-4, but Chrysochos served out the next game to win the set 6-4.

Chrysochos felt it was important to set the tone early with his first set win.

"He's the kind of player that, if you give him free points, he's going to take full advantage of that," Chrysochos said, "so I got an early breakup. He was a little bit cold, I assume, and he double-faulted the first game, I broke him again for the second time, he broke me back, but I ended up closing the set-out 5-4, I think. Yeah, it was very important, and you can't let this type of player get on top of you."

The second set started out with both players holding serve, with Ponwith going up 2-1 early on. Ponwith then went up a service break by winning the next game to take a 3-1 lead, then swept his service game to go-ahead 4-1. Both players held their next serves as Ponwith was up 5-2, then Ponwith took advantage of a Chrysochos double fault to break service again and win the set 6-2 to set up a third and deciding set.

Both players held serve in the first two games of the set, with Chrysochos coming from behind in the second game to force deuce, then win the game to tie the set 1-1. Ponwith held serve again to make it 2-1, then got what looked to be the big break when he broke through against Chrysochos' serve to take a 3-1 lead. Chrysochos returned the favor and canceled out Ponwith's break with a one of his own to make the set 3-2, then served up three straight aces to win the game and tie the set 3-3. It eventually became 5-4 Ponwith with a chance to close out the match, but Chrysochos served up an ace to make the score 30-0, but Ponwith forced deuce. Chrysochos then hit a brilliant winner to take the advantage and then won the next point to tie the set 5-5. Chrysochos then hit an amazing passing shot to break Ponwith's serve and go up 6-5, and in the final game, at match point, a shot during the final rally by Chrysochos hit the top of the net, bounced three times and delicately fell on the other side to give Chrysochos the game, the set and the championship 7-5.

Chrysochos' win is his sixth career Futures' title and hit the first title after graduating from Wake Forest, and he was very happy with the outcome.

"It actually feels good," Chrysochos said. "I was playing college for four years, and I fell in love with the whole thing, playing next to my teammates, and got people cheering for you, and they care about you. You come to the Futures, and it's a completely different environment. So, you got to get used to it. Fortunately, this is not my first

futures, and I kind of know what you have to do. I'm 23 now, so I'm kind of a little bit like a veteran when it comes to the Futures, so you've got to win in the Futures, move on to the Challengers, and then, you know how it works.

Ponwith, who won the doubles championship with Liam Caruana the day before, loved the atmosphere around the tournament and enjoyed playing before the large crowds who attended each day.

"It's an amazing atmosphere to play," Ponwith said. "They got an unbelievable crowd today, it was really fun to play here, and they put on a show. I'm really, really grateful to be a part of it."

And when asked about a favorite memory of the week, Chrysochos didn't hesitate.

"I would say the last shot of my last match," Chrysochos said with a laugh. "That just rolled over. I'm not going to lie, yeah, that was the best one."



[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)