



Edwardsville Futures Tennis Tournament To Be Hosted At EHS For 11th Year

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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EDWARDSVILLE - Edwardsville High School will once again be hosting the Edwardsville Futures Tennis Tournament. This tournament has been part of the Pro Circuit since 2011 and is one of, if not the only, professional tennis tournaments in the St. Louis area.

EHS tennis head coach and Futures Tournament Director Dave Lipe compares the tournament to something like AA baseball. It's essentially the minor leagues prior to the big leagues of professional tennis. He mentioned that a majority of the players that go on to play in the ATP Tour started out playing in Futures tournaments.

Lipe wanted to acknowledge that this isn't a local tournament. This event brings in players from all around the United States as well as from overseas from countries in Europe and South America. Some of the best up-and-coming tennis players in the world will be competing in this event he added.

The purse has increased by nearly double since last year. The amount of prize money on the line in 2022 is \$25,000. This is what helps draw in top-notch players from around the world.

The tournament will be held at Edwardsville High School's new and improved eight-court tennis facility. It was Lipe's goal to not only make it one of the best high school tennis courts in Southern Illinois but perhaps one of the best in the tri-state area.

According to Lipe, the EGHM Foundation, one of the tournament's biggest sponsors, has spent tens of thousands of dollars improving the high school's tennis courts.

"We have constantly renovated them and got them to a level where we're confident to host a Pro Circuit event," Lipe said.

Players had to qualify to play in this Futures tournament. One of the places players could've qualified was last weekend at the Edwardsville Open. Lipe mentioned that two players from the University of Illinois were given what they call Wild Cards to play in the event. Hunter Heck was awarded a singles main draw match.

Lipe mentioned that for the first time the Edwardsville Open had an extensive women's division and is an area that he'd like to see the tournament expand.

"We've never had a women's event like the Edwardsville Open," Lipe said.

He said that it featured a big draw of Division I talent and that it's vital for players to see women's tennis be played at such a high level.

Players still have three more tournaments to try and earn wild cards into the Futures event. There will be the Edwardsville Open's "sister event" as Lipe says in Evansville Indiana, the Pro Wild Card Challenge, and the Doubles Shoutout.

Lipe strives to improve upon the event each year and this year he wanted to focus on the fans.

"We're going to have a bigger, better VIP area, better concessions, and live streaming of all our main draw matches."

He told a story of how the men's singles final in the tournament's first year had over 300 spectators. He wants to make sure that those spectators are having the best possible experience at this tournament.

Lipe believes that Edwardsville is one of the only Futures tournaments that have ball kids for every main draw match. He says that it's a big deal for the players, makes the game go faster, and makes it seem a little more proper.

"We don't do anything, regarding this tournament, halfway," Lipe said.

It's shaping up to be the best Futures tournaments that Edwardsville has hosted yet. The tournament will be played from July 25-31 at Edwardsville High School's tennis facility.

For more information about the Edwardsville Futures tournament go to edwardsvillefutures.com