

# **Ochi, Watanabe Take Advantage Of Early Second Set Service Break, Defeat Kenyatte And Williams 7-6, 6-2 To Win Futures Doubles Championship**

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July 31 2022 9:41 AM



EDWARDSVILLE - The Japanese doubles team of Makoto Ochi of Akashi and Seita Watanabe of Fukushima got a second-set service break and took advantage of it to go on to a 7-6 (7-1 in the tiebreaker), 6-2 win over Kweisi Kenyatte of Detroit and Cooper Williams of Greenwich, Conn. to win the doubles championship of the Edwardsville Futures tennis tournament presented by the EGHM Foundation late Saturday afternoon at the Edwardsville Tennis Center.

The doubles final climaxed an incredible next-to-last day of the 2022 edition of the tournament and the fans who came out to watch the tennis on an ideal day weather-wise weren't disappointed at all.

"Today was almost just like a fantasy day, as far as this tournament is concerned," said tournament director and Edwardsville High tennis coach Dave Lipe. "Weather, ball kids,

great tennis, great players, fantastic staff, lot of help. Officials did a great job, players were energetic, players were into it, the players fed off the fans and we had really big crowds here all day. Some of the biggest crowds in the world for Futures matches at this tournament, ask any player, ask any official. We had great sponsors here today. Big thanks to Dr. (Patrick) Shelton (the superintendent of Edwardsville Community Unit School District Number 7), Joe Dugger and Kevin Hall (Edwardsville Township Supervisor), who all did coin tosses for us today. Obviously, the weather is the big variable in any outdoor event at the end of July in this region, obviously. If it's sweltering, there are some people who prefer not to attend. But today, the weather was fantastic, and that always helps."

Lipe had big thanks for the ball kids and his staff, also saluting the players for all of their efforts.

"A lot of respect for the players, the way they battled," Lipe said. "We had three tiebreaker sets in that second semi, the first semi was 7-6, 6-4, so five single sets, four were tiebreaker sets. So the competitiveness of the matches was crazy. And the level of the matches was definitely what you would see at the U.S. Open, definitely for sure, what you would see. Maybe not in the quarterfinals, but definitely in the first several days of the U.S. Open. You would see play not higher than what fans and everyone saw here today on court number two."

The heavy rain that pelted the St. Louis area and greatly affected the order of play in the tournament presented a challenge that the tournament's organizers were able to overcome to produce great tennis.

"We truly are fighters here," Lipe said with a big smile. "Fighting off the weather is what we do. It comes at us, we put our boxing gloves on. Because you know why? We're fighters," he said, tongue planted firmly in his cheek.

The first set saw both teams hold serve early that enabled Kenyatte and Williams to go up 2-1, but Ochi and Watanabe kept holding serve as well, which prevailed throughout the set, both sides making brilliant and key shots at the right time. The set ended up being tied 6-6, forcing the tiebreak, which Ochi and Watanabe dominated to win 7-1 and the set 7-6 to go up 1-0. In the second set, Kenyatte and Williams got the match's first service break to go up 1-0, with Ochi and Watanabe returning the favor, breaking their opponents' serve to tie the set 1-1. Both teams continued to hold serves while playing very entertaining and enterprising tennis, with Ochi and Watanabe leading 3-2. In the next game, Ochi and Watanabe the second-seeded team in the tournament, got the break they needed, breaking Kenyatte and Williams' service to go ahead 4-2, then held their

service to take a 5-2 lead. Ochi and Watanabe reached match point on a great, perfectly placed passing shot, then won the match when a shot went long, giving them a 6-2 set win and the championship two sets to none.

The final match of the tournament takes place Sunday at 11 a.m., when eight-seeded Nathan Ponwith of Scottsdale, Ariz. meets qualifier James Kent Trotter of Japan for the singles championship. Lipe is anticipating a very good match for the singles title.

"Fantastic player," Lipe said of Trotter. "Brings a lot of offense, a slick one-handed backhand, but theres a saying; 'Ponty don't quit,' because Nathan Ponwith never stops fighting, he's a grinder and you've got a slasher against a grinder tomorrow. It's going to be a great battle."