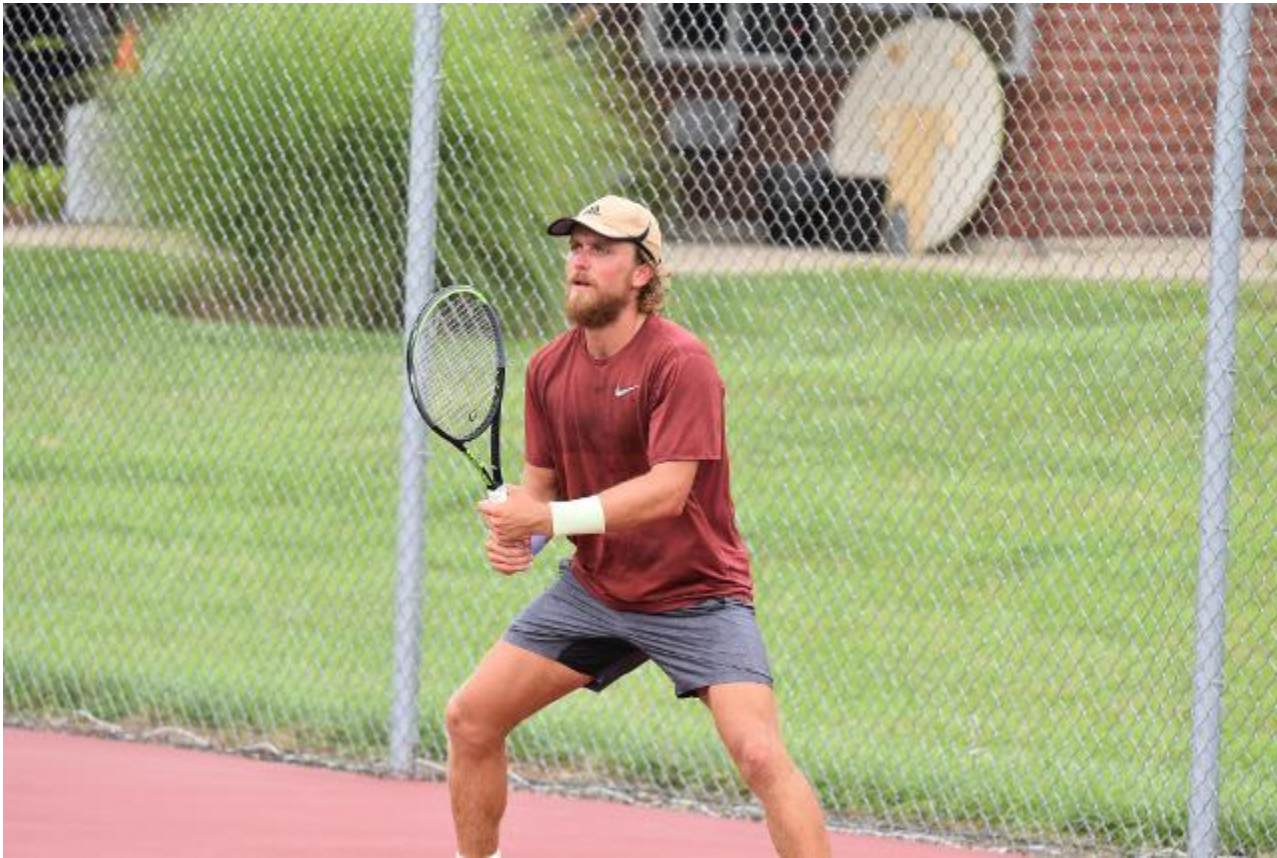


Nathan Ponwith Posted Outstanding Overall Effort At Futures

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - Nathan Ponwith of Scottsdale, Ariz., won his singles semifinal match over Sam Riffice of Orlando, Fla. 6-2, 6-4 to advance to the final of the Edwardsville Futures tennis tournament, presented by the EGHM Foundation, in a good performance over an outstanding overall player.

Ponwith would eventually lose the final to James Kent Trotter of Yogo, Japan and Ohio State University in Columbus 3-6, 6-4, 6-1, but after winning the semifinal on Saturday, he had a good feeling about taking the match.

"I feel good," Ponwith said in a post-match interview. "It was a good match today. I thought I played pretty well and it's always a tough match against Sam, so I was just happy I was able to stay tough and he was definitely fighting back in the second set, so happy just to get through."

Ponwith went up by a pair of service breaks on Riffice in the first set and it was a telling key to the match.

"Definitely," Ponwith said. "That was a huge key to the match today. I got off to a good start and he's such a tough player. You always want to take as big a lead as you can, because he returns so well. So he's going to be tough on my service games. So, yeah, I was pleased I was able to play aggressively at the beginning and establish my game plan when I wanted to."

Riffice did have his moments and played well also, but Ponwith came up with the answers when he needed them.

"Yeah, definitely," Ponwith said. "It was a tough match; we had a lot of extended rallies that could have went either way, but it was just about who could get off their game a little quicker."

At the time of the interview, Ponwith's opponent hadn't yet been decided, but he would go into the final and keep playing as he had throughout the week.

Ponwith is a veteran of the Edwardsville Futures and always enjoys the support from the fans and the atmosphere of the tournament itself.

"Yeah, it'll be a familiar moment, which is always nice," Ponwith said. "A lot of times, you're playing in a new place and you might not have played that round before, but it's definitely cool here."

"I've been here before, so I'll be able to remember some lessons from last time and just go out there and do my best. I just want to say I love playing here and I appreciate all the people who made this tournament possible and all the fans for coming out and supporting it."

