



Diversity Day Clinic Presented By McConnell and Associates, Is Big Hit Again

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
July 27 2023 11:27 AM



EDWARDSVILLE - The Diversity Day clinic and program, presented by McConnell and Associates, was another big success kids from East St. Louis and St. Louis were able to play and learn from various coaches, including players from both the Edwardsville High School boys and girls tennis teams, and were later treated to lunch and a program with guest speakers at the EHS Commons on Wednesday. The clinic itself was held on the tennis courts at Liberty Middle School in Edwardsville.



At the start of the clinic, skies were overcast with a blowing wind, with possible threatening storms. But outside of a few drops, the rain never materialized and later on, the sun came out from beneath the clouds, making things warm for everyone, but it didn't defer the players and coaches from having a great time together.

Tournament director Dave Lipe, also the head tennis coach for both Tigers' teams, thanks each of the sponsors for the contributions to the successful day.

"Big thanks to our presenting sponsor, McConnell and Associates," Lipe said. "They do a fantastic job keeping our courts in pristine shape and they get behind Diversity Day; they have been every year for all these years and first, I want to thank them. Next, I want to thank the four groups that we are working with to put this day on and do the work with these kids all year long and all of their leaders and associates. The kids have been fantastic, we've got local pro Mike Patrick out here feeding balls and we've got a bunch of our kids on our team are out here. Colton Hulme, Alyssa Wise, Katie Woods and then, we've got also Nate Bartlett from Alton High School out here donating his time."

Also present were members of the board from the United States Tennis Association's Missouri Valley area, including executive director Mary Buschmann, which Lipe felt was "amazing."

"And then Source Juicery, we've got Zac and Michelle are out here again. They're always out here for Diversity Day and we couldn't do without them, because these kids are thirsty and they're given healthy snacks and healthy drinks and everybody loves in when Source Juicery is out here."

One of the biggest things about this year's clinic was the appearance of Kweise Kenyatte, a former player at the University of Illinois and Detroit native who couldn't play in this year's event, due to a neck injury, but drove a long way to help the kids out at the clinic.

"It's a big deal to have Kweise Kenyatte out here, a.k.a Q," Lipe said, "because he put so much energy into this day. He's been asking about this day for months. I mean, like four months at least. He drove all the way out here from Georgia, because he understands that creating opportunities for kids is really important and he puts his heart and soul into this and it's really inspiring that Q is out here joining us today, the former Illini."

Other local players also stepped up to help coach and teach the kids during the clinic and Lipe thanked them along with the participating organizations, including the East St. Louis Tennis Association as well as Pointbreak from St. Louis and the Net Rushers, an organization from Ferguson, Mo., along with another St. Louis group.

"We've got Lou, a.k.a Mlungisi Mhlanga from Lewis and Clark (Community College), who's out here today with his time," Lipe said, "and like I said, the four organizations, the three from St. Louis and also, the East St. Louis Tennis Association that's out here today. Having those groups out here makes this day possible as well."