

# Teenager wins LCCC singles championship

by Daniel Winningham  
July 27 2015 1:26 PM



In a grueling match that took longer than three hours to complete — both due to weather and help from a trainer — Michael Mmoh earned a 6-3, 3-6, 7-5 victory over Jared Hiltzik to take the singles title at the 18th annual Lewis and Clark Community College's Men's Futures Tournament. The deciding third set was tied four times, at 2-2, 3-3, 4-4 and 5-5, before Mmoh, up 6-5, earned the 12th game and the singles title. It wasn't easy for Mmoh, though. Looking to go up 30-love, his drop shot sailed into the top of the net, evening things up. Later, up 40-15, Mmoh forced Hiltzik to hit a long volley that went less than a foot past the baseline, ending the match in Mmoh's favor. Mmoh, 17, spoke of

the significance of Sunday's victory. "It means a lot to me, it gives me a big confidence boost that I can compete at a high level and against really tough players," Mmoh said. "I thought I played really well today, (in) the first set, especially. The second set, I was getting a little edgy mentally." With the opening set tied 2-2, Mmoh rattled off three consecutive points for a 5-2 advantage. A backhand winner gave Hiltzik another game, but down 5-3, Mmoh served and took the first set. Despite falling behind in the second set, Hiltzik recovered to take a 4-2 edge. Mmoh cut it to 4-3, but was unable to get any closer. Both Mmoh and Lambert thought the brief weather delay proved beneficial to Mmoh's cause. "It helped immensely," Mmoh said. "I came out with a lot more energy, a little bit of a refreshed mind and a refreshed body. I don't know if it would have gone as long in the third set without that break. I don't know if I would've lasted." Lambert, watching from mid court in the covered seating at the Andy Simpson Tennis Complex, conceded the rain shower helped Mmoh. "He wouldn't have won without the (weather) delay," Lambert said. In the final set, Mmoh maintained a 2-0 lead and appeared poised to go in front 3-0 but was unable to prevent Hiltzik from getting back into it as Hiltzik's winner made it 2-1. "I played so many good deuce points, and you've really got to earn those games. It's so frustrating because I had so many chances to go up 3-0, and that would've been huge for me, but that's where he makes his money." "He played with so much mental toughness and heart," said Jose Lambert, coaching Mmoh this week. "He was tired a little hurt but was able to find a way. He pushed his mind way past his body, and I think that's huge for anybody ... He was having to serve a lot of extra balls, Jared was making him play a lot of extra service points." Mmoh's coach, Glenn Weiner, was unavailable to help this week as he was on his honeymoon. Mmoh went up several times 15-love, but was unable to get to 30-love, expending more energy than he probably wanted to. "That's how close it is in tennis, a couple of inches here or there," Lambert said. Over the course of the match, each player was pushed to the limit, according to Lambert. "They sort of stretched each other to the max," he said. Mmoh is scheduled to train in Bradenton, Fla. for the next week before competing in Junior Nationals in Kalamazoo, Mich. which begins Aug. 1. Mmoh, after winning the final point, gave a few emotional shouts before shaking Hiltzik's hand at the net. Each player was given the opportunity to say a few words about their experience at this year's tournament by Lewis and Clark USTA coordinator Jim Hunstein. Both Hiltzik and Mmoh spoke favorably of the tournament. The USTA Pro Circuit event in Godfrey began July 17 and the doubles champion was crowned July 24. Brad Dancer, Hiltzik's coach at the University of Illinois in Champaign, said it was a difficult match. "I thought it was a tricky match with weather maybe coming in, the conditions were kind of heavy and I don't think either player was at their best, kind of like two boxers trying to feel each other out, and it just kind of stayed that way," he said. "They never really got hitting the ball until the very end of the match when Mmoh stepped up and played some good shots." Hiltzik managed to get a couple of admittedly "huge" points in third set to prolong play. Trailing 2-0, he sent a winning volley on the third deuce point to get within 2-1. Later, down 4-3, Hiltzik served to tie the match 4-4. "Overall, it was two athletic guys who can

cover the court well, so you saw a lot of speed out there today, and good athleticism," said Dancer.**Match summary**Mmoh had 21 winners in the three-set match to 13 for Hiltzik.Mmoh was conscious that Hiltzik is a quick player and attempted to play many "flat" shots that carried over the net, but not by very much. Mmoh also was sending shots from corner to corner, making Hiltzit run the baseline more than him.In the opening set, Hiltzik outperformed Mmoh in winners, 5-3, while Mmoh had three double faults. Both player had one ace and Mmoh earned the only break point.In the second set, Mmoh secured nine winners to just five for Hiltzik. Hiltzik earned three break points to just one for Mmoh and had the set's only aces, with four. Mmoh had the only double fault of the second set.In the third set, Mmoh notched nine winners to just three for Hiltzik. Both players earned a break point while Hiltzig had the only ace. Hiltzig managed two double faults to just one for Mmoh. There were seven deuce points.