

Dekmeijere part of international stars at Edwardsville with young prodigy Morris

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August 3 2015 1:50 PM



EDWARDSVILLE - The **USTA Edwardsville Futures** and the prior **Edwardsville Pro Wildcard Tourney** event brought together several big national and international names in tennis, including Liga Dekmeijere, a former international tennis star.

Dekmeijere's tennis career has ended, but now she is inspiring young lives in American to achieve their tennis dreams. One such prodigy was **Eric Morris**, who participated in his first pro tournament in Edwardsville a week ago.

Dekmeijere, a **Latvian** tennis player, was ranked No. 54 in the world in doubles play and in the top 300 for women in singles. She started playing in junior tournaments and played professionally for 15 years. She took part in over 30 Grand Slam tournaments. She married her husband, Brent, who is an American a few years back, and the two decided to settle in the Dallas area, where she met young Eric Morris. Morris is a high school tennis star from Corinth, Texas. Dekmeijere has also taken on some other tennis students in that area.

“Tennis was my whole life from age 6 since growing up, then playing in international junior tournaments,” Dekmeijere said. “My first Grand Slam Tourney was the Australian Open. I have traveled a lot in the United States. I knew I wanted to stay in the U.S. and spent a lot of time training here, usually half the year. When I married my husband, Brent, we just randomly ended up in Texas as the state for us to live in.”

Dekmeijere didn’t obtain a college degree, so she thought coaching and teaching would be natural things for her to do and she has been quite successful from the start.

She said young Eric Morris has “great potential” for the future in tennis.

“He is really good,” she said.

Dekmeijere said she had never been to Edwardsville before, but has fallen in love with the American city because of their hospitality.

“First when researching the schedule, we looked at tournaments and thought where is Edwardsville,” Dekmeijere said. “It is a dot on the map. Eric said is the club nice and I said it is at a high school. It is amazing for a high school what facilities Edwardsville has and Dave (Lipe) has given us good hospitality. We are very impressed by this small town and stayed for the Futures.”

Eric Morris has a goal of playing college tennis and earning a scholarship.

“The competition level is so much faster here,” he said of play in the Edwardsville tourney. “We drove 890-some miles, but I like the drive and it is fun. I like being here. My goal is to play one year in college on a scholarship and go pro and see how it works. My ultimate goal is to graduate from college.”

Dekmeijere runs an organization called **Overall Tennis Development in Flower Mound, Texas**, and it continues to grow in popularity. She is becoming a household name and that area for her coaching and instruction skills, much like she did as a player on the pro circuit.

A year ago, Morris could not beat her on the court, but now she is having a difficult time topping him.

“I train with him and I told him one year ago he had to beat me and he has done that,” she said. “I still enjoy playing, but now I have other priorities as a coach.”

