

Callaghan Adams makes it official: She will attend SIUE on tennis scholarship next year

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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Callaghan Adams will graduate and leave **Edwardsville High School** in the spring with the most wins ever for a female player and several other records, but the good news for area residents is they will be able to easily watch her play in college at **Southern Illinois University Edwardsville**.

Adams made an official decision signing a national letter of intent to attend SIUE to play tennis on Tuesday at EHS.

“It is a relief and I am super excited with my decision,” she said. “I love SIU, the team and coaches. There were different schools I looked at and I liked a lot of them but when it came down to picking, SIUE was my choice. SIUE has a great tennis team already and they have added another great player, so I think the team will be good next year. I also didn’t want to go too far away from home. SIUE is a Division I school and I will also live on campus the first year.”

Adams is the consummate team player and rather than talk much about her individual success she talked about how successful Coach Dave Lipe and the Edwardsville High School girls team was this past season, advancing again to state and performing well there.

“I think everybody on the team stepped up this year,” she said. “I came in wanting to improve during my senior year and I do think I transitioned as more of a leader this year.”

Adams concludes her career with 166 wins. If one thinks about it, that is an average of more than 40-plus wins a year every year for four years in her high school career. She was a four-time sectional champion and four-time All-Southwestern Conference player. She also played and performed well at state four consecutive years.

The EHS tennis star mentioned her family, Coach Lipe, Coach Phil Tripani and her private coach Bob Meyers as huge influences on her tennis development. Cathi Adams, her mother, traveled with Callaghan on many of her out-of-town tourney outings. Callaghan said both of her parents offered her constant support and without them, she wouldn’t have become what she became in tennis in the end.

Coach Meyers said he started working with Callaghan several years ago and he noticed her spark and abilities on the court from the start and believed from the beginning she would eventually be a Division I player.

Meyers said he thinks Callaghan will be a “super” college tennis player.

“The groundwork is already there,” he said. “She has the drive and determination to be as good as she can be. Playing with the kind of talent she will play with at SIUE, I think she will only get better.”

Coach Lipe could not be more proud of the EHS tennis star and her accomplishments.

“Callaghan is a superior competitor,” Lipe said. “She is a phenomenal athlete. She could have played any sport in high school, but concentrated on tennis. She naturally gravitated to tennis. She loves tennis.”

Lipe said SIUE was a perfect fit for Callaghan and she will live on campus, so it could be 400 miles away and wouldn't be any different. He said living on campus is important to Callaghan to also have that part of the “college experience.”

“Callaghan was sought after by several Division I schools,” Lipe said. “SIUE will have an impressive lineup next year and she will have to fight to make the lineup, but it will be a unique opportunity for her to grow.”

For Callaghan, playing Division I college tennis has always been her goal. She said she was uncertain at the moment what her concentration of study would be in college, but said she was considering a law career and making that her focus.

Callaghan's grandparents Jerry and Judith Gagliardo were beaming with pride and in attendance at the signing on Tuesday. Jerry was not easy to miss at Callaghan's singles matches, always sitting in the same place in the stands right in front of his granddaughter. He never missed a home match over her four years in high school and went on the road for many of his granddaughter's matches.

Speaking for both he and Judith, he said Callaghan is “a very special, wonderful, girl.”

“I think she was born with a ball in her hand,” he said. “She just loves this. Her grandmother and I are so looking forward to being able to watch her play tennis all the time in college.”

Callaghan hugged her grandfather, who choked up, talking about his special granddaughter, thanking him for his years of support and guidance.

There is no question her mother, father and grandparents will be her No. 1 fans as she graces the SIUE tennis courts next year and for three years beyond that.

