

CrossCourt

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Fall 2009

missourivalley.usta.com



MISSOURI VALLEY

Up Again

Told He Would Never
Walk Again, He Proved
Everyone Wrong

Plus
Springfield
Lasers Reclaim
Show Me Cup

Two High School
Students Serve
Their Community

2009: A SUMMER TO REMEMBER - AND GO FORWARD!

Wow, summer just flew by this year! We've had some great accomplishments on the courts beginning with a competitive and hot Sweet 16 in Kansas City for our high-level juniors. We have seen national success with double gold by Jack Sock at the boys 18 National Clay Court Championships and a silver by Jackson Withrow in the boys 16.

We also had a terrific World TeamTennis season with our three franchises. In fact, the Springfield Lasers went all the way to the finals and came up just short in the championship. We are fortunate to have three of the best WTT teams in our section. We love to partner on initiatives to grow the game and we are grateful for their participation in QuickStart Tennis.

Our Pro Circuits are in full swing and we've added a new event to the mix in October in Kansas City. Congrats to Blake Strode, a former junior standout and recent graduate of the University of Arkansas as he captured his first professional title at the \$10K Futures event in Joplin, Mo.

St. Louis is gearing up for the US Open USTA Wheelchair Championships at Dwight Davis Tennis Center. This promises to be a huge success and

kudos to Lyn Gerber and Jim Dugan of Gateway Confluence Wheelchair Sports Foundation for their efforts in coordinating this event. The event runs September 1-6, so please mark your calendar to attend!

Check out our Web site for the latest information on USTA Jr. Team Tennis Section Championships. It's great fun to have boys and girls playing together and cheering for each other. Jr. Team Tennis provides play by age and skill level so everyone has a great time. Parents, you can be the coach, team organizer and, of course, team cheerleader!

And, how about Independence, Kan., making the top three Best Tennis Towns! How awesome that we had two cities in the top 10 (Independence, Kan. and Springfield, Mo.). It was a great community effort and support for our lifetime sport.

As we head into August, USTA League Championships take center stage. It's great tennis at all levels in a team format. Come to Oklahoma City, St. Louis or Springfield and check it out.

Please continue to use our Web site as your resource for all the happenings within the section. You can even follow us on Twitter and we'll let you know of special items just posted to the Web. We also rely on you to keep us in the know



about special achievements on and off the court.

We rely on our volunteers to lead us in our mission to promote and develop the growth of tennis. We are committed to any community efforts to introduce the game to all ages and we continue to educate and empower our Community Tennis Associations to be the leaders in their tennis communities. The growth of tennis in the Missouri Valley directly relates to our enthusiastic volunteers working as a team with our dedicated staff members!

Let me hear your ideas and suggestions to enhance our outreach into your communities. We're in this together. Teamwork. One Team. One Goal.

Let's have some fun and I'll see you at the courts!

WRITE TO *CrossCourt*

CrossCourt welcomes your comments and suggestions. If you'd like to see your comments in a future issue, e-mail crosscourt@movalley.usta.com or mail us at *CrossCourt*, 6400 West 95th Street - Suite 102, Overland Park, Kansas 66212.

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- Save the Date -

December 4 - 6, 2009

Sheraton Overland Park Hotel

Overland Park, Kansas

USTA Missouri Valley Annual Conference

Workshops | Award Presentations

Networking | Hall of Fame Inductions ...

and much more!

Stay tuned for more information or visit us online for current registration details!

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TEAMWORK

One Team. One Goal.

MISSOURI VALLEY



MISSOURI VALLEY

The USTA Missouri Valley publishes CrossCourt quarterly, focusing specifically on the members and events in the section. All material ©USTA Missouri Valley, unless otherwise noted. This is our 17th issue of CrossCourt, and first in the fifth volume.

Your feedback is welcome.



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A Nebraska tennis player tells of his graduation night celebration that landed him in a wheelchair. But he didn't stay down for long.

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Meet two juniors who aside from playing for their high schools, are finding time this summer to give the game of tennis some much needed love.

WANT MORE TENNIS?

Log on to missourivalley.usta.com daily for the latest news and events from across the section.

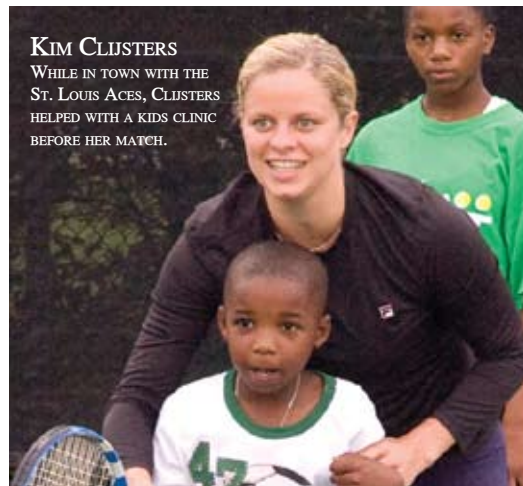
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JACK SOCK
HE ADDED TWO MORE GOLD BALLS TO HIS NAME THIS SUMMER.



KIM CLIJSTERS
WHILE IN TOWN WITH THE ST. LOUIS ACES, CLIJSTERS HELPED WITH A KIDS CLINIC BEFORE HER MATCH.



BRYAN BROTHERS
BOB AND MIKE BRYAN RETURNED TO THE KANSAS CITY EXPLORERS FOR THE LAST WEEKEND OF WORLD TEAM TENNIS.



HEATHER FLEMING
AFTER FINISHING RUNNERS-UP THE LAST TWO YEARS, BJ AND HEATHER FLEMING WON THE USTA NATIONAL HUSBAND AND WIFE HARD COURT CHAMPIONSHIPS.

Back to Life

by Eli Gieryna

On the night of June 6, 1987, Jim Wilson was with a friend, riding home from a high school graduation party in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Less than a mile from his house, his friend turned left in front of an oncoming car, which smashed into the passenger side – where Jim was sitting – at approximately 50 mph.

“They say that most accidents take place close to home, and I guess this was true,” he said. “My mom was at home and she heard the sound of the cars hitting.”

16 years old at the time of the accident, Jim would spend his 17th birthday in a coma.



photo courtesy of Jim Wilson

In 2008, Wilson was awarded the Community Service Excellence Award from the Omaha Tennis Association.

At the time of the accident, a police officer was nearby and quickly arrived to assist. Shortly after, the paramedics arrived.

“They shocked me twice on the scene with defibrillators,” he said. “My heart had quit. I was gone.”

Upon impact, Jim was thrown face-first into the dashboard, then the windshield. He suffered massive head trauma and numerous broken bones. When the ambulance arrived, the paramedics pulled broken glass from inside his throat and performed an emergency tracheotomy, a procedure that had to be repeated in the emergency room. His friend, the driver of the vehicle, had only a small cut on her foot.

“When the hospital called my parents to tell them about the accident, one of the first things they asked was if my organs could be donated. I wasn’t supposed to make it.”

After eight days in a coma, Jim miraculously woke up.

The night of the accident, a plastic surgeon began reconstructing Jim’s face, working from the teen’s driver’s license in order to know what he looked like prior to the accident.

“The doctors told my parents that when I arrived, my eye had come out of its socket, my nose was off my face and one side of my face was completely flat,” he said.

Jim awoke to the sobering news that he would need continued plastic

surgery to reconstruct his face and that the head trauma had resulted in memory loss. Most devastating, he was also told he would never walk again.

He was released in time for the start of the school year, which he began in a wheelchair – where he was expected to remain for the rest of his life.

“I was determined to walk again, but it felt hopeless at the time,” he said.

MOTIVATION TO STAND

One of the first steps in Jim’s physical therapy was to restore his hand-eye coordination. In his wheelchair, he played ping-pong in hopes of improving his condition and brain activity. Eventually, he moved outside and started hitting a tennis ball.

“I had never really played tennis before in my life,” he said. “And even though I was stuck in a chair, I found that I really enjoyed hitting the ball. It was a release for me.”

He added, “I’ll admit, I first thought that tennis was a strange way to do



I know that tennis can be a great thing for people. I mean, it’s done so much for me, and it’s such a big part of my life.

therapy, but it helped. It was good exercise.”

Slowly, his physical condition began to improve. The neurons in his brain started to repair, and Jim was able to use his legs again, albeit through a difficult and grueling process.

“I remember that I was finally able to stand up for short periods of time,” he said. “And what I found was, when I stood, I was able to hit the tennis ball a lot better. That was motivation for me to get up out of the chair. I wanted to hit the tennis ball better.”

ATTEMPTING TO ADJUST

While Jim was seeing physical progress because of tennis and his



Wilson works with various community outreach programs in the Omaha area - giving back to tennis the way it gave back to him.

therapy regimen, he still struggled to adapt to life after his accident.

“My memory was shot,” he recalled. “During that first semester back, I wouldn’t remember the names of life-long friends. Classmates had to take me from class-to-class at school, and, sometimes, they’d need to re-introduce me to the teachers because I couldn’t remember who they were.”

The frustration was evident to those who were close to Jim, and he found support from his parents, who he credits for keeping him going during the rehabilitation.

“I had a very woe-is-me attitude,” he said. “I was depressed; I was frustrated. I just wanted to go back to what I was, but I couldn’t. I couldn’t walk, and I never knew where I was.”

To help Jim’s adjustment period, his stepmother – a nurse at a nearby hospital – would get up at 4 a.m. to go into work and start on her paperwork for the day. She’d leave work to take him to school, return to work, then leave again in the afternoon to get Jim to physical therapy. She’d return to work once again, often staying until 10 p.m.

Despite the sacrifices of his parents and the life changes they had no choice but to implement, Jim says they never wavered in their support of him.

“They never got frustrated, and they easily could have,” he said. “They didn’t blame me or get mad.”

Nearly one year after the day of the accident, after extensive rehab, Jim was

again able to walk. And despite his rehab being over, he didn’t want to stop playing tennis – turning himself into the most unlikely of tennis players.

“I’ve heard of plenty of folks who keep playing tennis after being put in wheelchairs, but I’m not sure I know of anyone else who started in a chair and then moved out of one,” he said.

BACK TO OMAHA

In 1989, after going to one year of junior college, Jim moved back to Omaha, where he lived before living in Hawaii.

After he returned, he sought out old friends and started playing tennis more regularly. As he got more involved in the game, he made friends and improved his own game – he now describes himself as a “3.5-ish” level player.

In 2005, after 10 years of working with tennis centers around the area, he became a member of the board of directors at the Jack Mallett Clay Courts at Dewey Park, a public clay-court facility near downtown Omaha. He serves as the unofficial grounds keeper of the facility and is proud of the work he’s done on the courts.

“The clay courts are just beautiful,” he said. “We’ve done a lot of work on the facility. We’ve heard from people who live in Florida who say our courts are even better than the ones they have down there.”

Now 39, he plays tennis four-to-five times per week, in spite of a slight limp and occasional memory trouble related to the accident (he still has trouble with names and often forgets where his car is parked). He also takes an active role performing outreach to help grow the game of tennis in Omaha, including working with several neighborhood associations that make tennis accessible for underprivileged youth.

“I know that tennis can be a great thing for people. I mean, it’s done so much for me, and it’s such a big part of my life,” he said. “I just want to spread that message and help others get started with the game.”

“And I’m going to keep doing that for as long as I can.” ●

Net Notes

WHAT'S GOING ON AROUND THE MISSOURI VALLEY

The **Springfield Lasers** reclaimed their hold on the **Show Me Cup**, going 12-2 in the regular season, garnering the No. 1 seed in the Western Conference playoffs. The Lasers would move on to the World TeamTennis finals, but would lose to the Washington Kastles, 20-23. Springfield's coach John-Laffnie de Jager said the difference in the match was Washington's success with 3-all points but said the atmosphere and competition was vintage World TeamTennis. "This match is what WTT is all about," said de Jager. "It was exciting."



Michaela Burroughs of the SPionage Jr. Team Tennis team from Omaha, Neb., competed in the 2009 JTT Section Championships.

More than 110 players competed in the 2009 **USTA Missouri Valley Jr. Team Tennis Championships** early this month. Four champions were crowned, earning the right to advance to the USTA National Jr. Team Tennis Championships this October in Mobile, Ala. For a complete list of winners, visit missourivalley.usta.com.

The father-son team of **Nathan and Cliff Price** recently won the 2009 **USTA National Senior Father-Son Hard Court Championships**, held in June in Newport Beach, Calif. Nathan, who lives in Oklahoma City, is a former top-ranked USTA Missouri Valley junior who was at one time ranked No. 43 in the United States. He played No. 1 singles and doubles at the University of Arkansas from 2001-2004 and went on to play for several years on the ATP Tour. Cliff, 62, has coached Nathan since he was two years old. He was inducted into the USTA Missouri Valley Hall of Fame in 1999. "I was very honored when Nathan asked me to play in the Father-Son Championships with him," said Cliff. "The finals were one week before Father's Day, so when we won, Nathan told me, 'Happy Father's Day, Dad.' It was a great Father's Day present."



Photo courtesy of Cliff Price



Special thanks to the **Oklahoma City Convention & Visitors Bureau** for their support of the USTA League Section Championships held in Oklahoma City this year and last year.

Maggie Ingemi (Springfield, Mo.) and **Sierra Pahmahmie** (Mayetta, Kan.) recently attended the 25th annual USTA/NJTL Tennis Leadership Camp in Denver, Colo. The camp is for youth ages 12-14 who participate in National Junior Tennis and Learning (NJTL) programs nationwide. Ingemi and Pahmahmie were selected through a rigorous application process that considered tennis aptitude, sportsmanship, leadership skills and financial need. The all-expenses-paid, week-long camp provides the attendees with valuable tennis instruction plus a rewarding educational and motivational experience.

HAVE NEWS?

If have story ideas or quick news items that may be worthy of "Net Notes", e-mail crosscourt@movalley.usta.com or mail us at **CrossCourt**, 6400 West 95th Street - Suite 102, Overland Park, Kansas 66212.

Three current junior standouts were selected by the USTA to train on clay at the Barcelona Total Tennis Academy for three weeks. It gave the players an opportunity to test their skills with players from other countries, while competing and practicing on red clay. **Niko Madregallejo** (Diarte, Okla.), **Spencer Papa** (Edmond, Okla.) and **Trey Daniel** (Leawood, Kan.) participated in the camp.

Holliday Park Kids and Parks & Recreation of Topeka, have teamed up to develop a new program initiative for summer education and physical activity for children in under served communities. The new program will provide youth with training in computers, reading, math and tennis over the course of a year. The program will serve over 300 kids between the ages of five to 14 at ten locations throughout Topeka. They were awarded a \$10,000 grant from USTA Serves for the project.



photo courtesy of Ron Randall

Jack Mallett hits the inaugural serve on the renamed "Jack Mallett Clay Courts."

The clay courts at **Dewey Park** in Omaha, Neb., were renamed the "**Jack Mallett Clay Courts**" on May 16. Mallett was instrumental in the creation of the clay courts. The mayor of Omaha (Mike Fahey) was there and helped unveil the new sign bearing Mallett's name. At the end of the day, Mallett played with three lucky contest winners in the inaugural match on the renamed courts.

Getting to Know... Lincoln Mitchell and Christina Senger

compiled by Katie Raupp



photo courtesy of the Tulsa World

Lincoln Mitchell and Christina Senger (Tulsa, Okla.) are living proof that kids can make a difference. The two met each other playing tennis at the Grand Health and Racquet Club in Tulsa. Now as high school students, they have launched a tennis equipment drive within their community. Thanks to these two young philanthropists, children at Lacy Park are now fully equipped to learn the sport of a lifetime: tennis. As they shared their story with **CrossCourt**, it became clear how enthusiastic Mitchell and Senger are about generosity, tennis, and the combination of both.

CrossCourt: How did you start playing tennis?

Lincoln Mitchell: As a child I wanted a trophy in every sport ... My mom took me to the Grand Health and Racquet Club where I had my first 30-minute lesson, and from there my tennis career took off.

Christina Senger: There were other sports I played but wasn't that good at. Then, I saw some people playing tennis and thought it might be fun.

CC: How long have you been playing tennis?

LM: I have played since I was nine, but I've been doing tournaments since I was 11.

CS: I started playing in third grade.

CC: What activities/hobbies do you enjoy outside of tennis?

LM: Outside of tennis, I enjoy soccer, ultimate Frisbee, ping-pong, and photography.

CS: Outside of tennis, I am a Girl Scout. I do a lot of community service at a school for under served Hispanic students.

CC: Do you plan to continue playing tennis after high school?

LM: Yes, I hope to be able to play tennis in college. High school tennis has been great and I hope to also have that same experience in college.

CS: Yes, I do. I'd maybe like to play college tennis or at least keep up with it after high school.

CC: What inspired you to collect tennis equipment?

LM: Tennis is an expensive sport, and unfortunately many kids don't get a chance to play the sport because of the expense. So by collecting clothes, Christina and I were hoping to undercut some of that cost for families at Lacy.

CS: I had heard at the school I volunteer at that some of the students wanted to play tennis. Tennis can be an expensive sport, so I thought of collecting racquets that other people don't use.

CC: What is the most rewarding part of this project?

LM: The most rewarding part was the director at Lacy telling me, "Thanks a

lot Lincoln, now all the kids in the program have racquets."

CS: When I deliver clothes and racquets, people are so appreciative. It is nice getting that reaction.

CC: Do you have any plans for future growth of this donation project?

LM: Many of the donations that the Grand has received are adult tennis clothes, while the program at Lacy deals with children. I would like to find a way to put these women's and men's tennis clothes to use.

CS: I've been surprised at how much we've collected so far. It's more than I ever thought. Hopefully we can find more places to use the equipment we collect.

CC: Why did you choose Lacy Park to donate the collected items to?

LM: When we first decided to collect clothes, Christina and I had absolutely no idea of any programs in Tulsa that would actually use the clothes for tennis. So after some searching ... Christina and I met with Roberta from Lacy Park and met some of the kids, and began bringing over donations.

CS: We chose Lacy Park because they have tennis courts there. We knew that there was also a bunch of people there that would like to play tennis.

Mitchell will be a junior this fall at Booker T. Washington High School and Senger will be a junior this fall at Holland Hall School.

WANT TO HELP?

If you would like to donate tennis racquets or clothing, please contact Christina Senger at c.senger@live.com.

“

The most rewarding part was the director at Lacy telling me, 'Thanks a lot Lincoln, now all the kids in the program have racquets.'



Date	Event	Location Details
August 27-30	USTA Missouri Valley League Section Championships Adults 4.5, 3.5, 2.5; Seniors 3.0, 4.0	Various Sites Oklahoma City, Okla.
August 29-September 1	Tennis Teachers Conference	Grand Hyatt Hotel New York City
August 31-September 13	US Open	USTA Billie Jean King NTC Flushing Meadows, N.Y.
September 1-6	US Open USTA Wheelchair Championships	Dwight Davis Tennis Center St. Louis
September 4-7	Os & Open Adult Outdoor Championships	Koch Family Tennis Center Omaha, Neb.
September 5-9	USTA Semiannual Meeting	Grand Hyatt Hotel New York City
September 10-13	USTA Missouri Valley League Section Championships Adult Mixed 6.0, 8.0; Super Senior 6.0, 7.0, 8.0, 9.0	Dwight Davis Tennis Center St. Louis
September 11-13	BG10-18 Segment III September Futures	LaFortune Tennis Center Tulsa, Okla.
September 14-20	Men's \$50k Challenger Pro Circuit	LaFortune Tennis Center Tulsa, Okla.
September 24-27	USTA Missouri Valley League Section Championships Adult Mixed Doubles 7.0 & 9.0 Senior Mixed Doubles 6.5, 7.5, 8.5, 9.5 Tri-Level Super 70's including 6.0, 7.0, 8.0, 9.0	Cooper Tennis Complex Springfield, Mo.
October 2-4	NTRP & Open Adult Outdoor Championships	Plaza Tennis Center Kansas City, Mo.
October 12-18	Women's \$50k Pro Circuit	Plaza Tennis Center Kansas City, Mo.
October 13-17	National Recreation & Parks Association National Congress	Salt Lake City
November 20-22	BG10-18 Segment III Sweet 16	Various Sites
November 27-29	NTRP & Open Adult Indoor Championships	Nebraska Tennis Center Lincoln, Neb.
December 4	USTA League Coordinator's Training and Tournament Director's Workshop	Sheraton Overland Park Hotel Overland Park, Kan.
December 4-6	USTA Missouri Valley Annual Conference, Awards Ceremony and Hall of Fame Induction	Sheraton Overland Park Hotel Overland Park, Kan.



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