

Photo by Scott McCloskey

Linsly's No. 4 player Joe Blalock returns a shot to Charlie Slider of Magnolia during their match at the OVAC Tennis Championships at West Liberty State College's Edgar Martin Tennis Complex Thursday.

Park Completes Impressive Sweep

Wheeling Park made it a clean sweep on Thursday afternoon at West Liberty State College's Edgar Martin Tennis Complex.

The boys' team registered three individual singles champions out of a possible four, en route to amassing 22 points to easily outdistance runner-up Brooke.

Linsly and Steubenville tied for third with 10 points each, Cambridge checked in fourth with eight, while Wheeling Central and Magnolia tied for sixth with seven each.

The Patriots join their female counterparts as team champions. Each accumulated 22 points in garnering the respective titles.

Ironically enough, the one individual title Park was unable to capture came in the No. 1 singles bracket, where second-seeded Chris Mercer fell, 8-5 in the semifinals to

(semifinals) and Cambridge's Dustin Ross in the finals. On his way, he surrender just three games -- one in each of the three rounds.

Mercer had little trouble with Ross in the finals, winning in straight sets, 6-0, 6-1.

Like his brother Chris, Steve Mercer walked away with an individual championship, claiming the finals in the same fashion, 6-1, 6-0 over Steubenville's Kurt Branagon.

However, Steve Mercer's road was a bit more taxing. He knocked off Zanesville's Cole Graham in the quarters, 8-3 and was taken to the limit by Kevin Donnelly of Cambridge in semifinal action before emerging with a hard-fought 9-7 conquest.

Second-seeded Simeon Blankenship capped off the Patriots' four-day crusade with a title in the No. 4 singles portion of the event.

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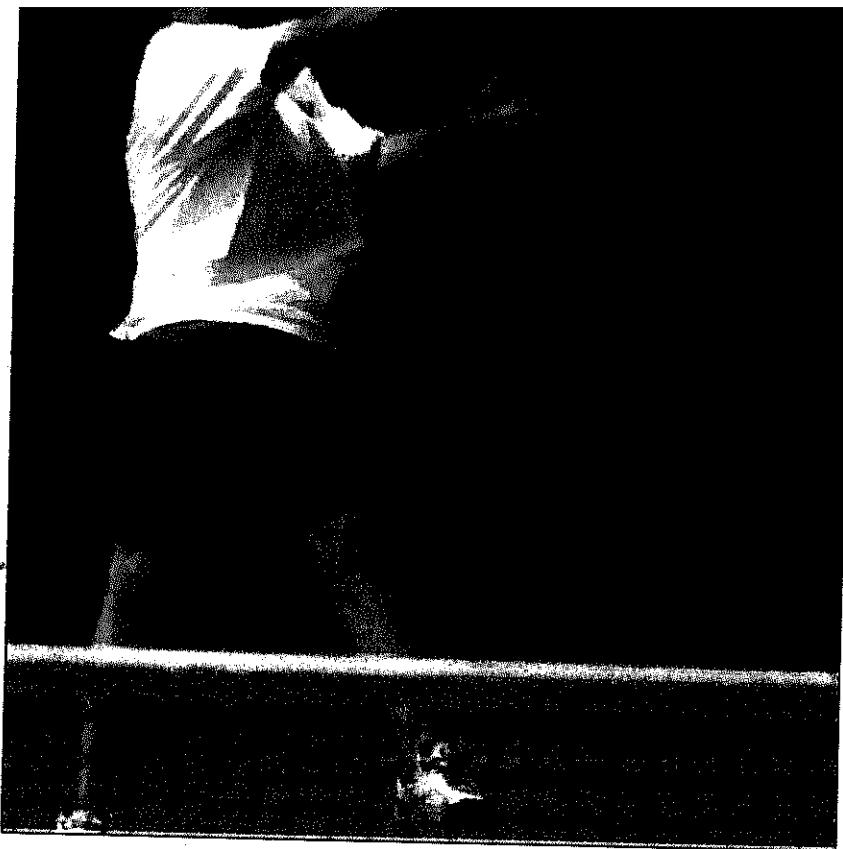


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Schram breezed through the field, winning his first and quarterfinal matches respectively, by identical 8-0 scores. He went on to defeat Oak Glen's Justin Thomas by scores of 6-2 and 6-4 to win the title.

In No. 2 singles, the Patriots gained their first conquest thanks to top-seed Chris Mercer. Mercer defeated Mike Batalo of Steubenville (quarterfinals), Joe McLane of Brooke

(semifinals) and Cambridge's Dustin Ross in the finals. On his way, he surrender just three games — one in each of the three rounds.

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Blankenship knocked off Indian Creek's Brad Farnsworth in the first round and then took care of city rival Kevin Miller of Wheeling Central, 8-2 in the quarters.

He then disposed of Brooke High's Jason Brun 8-3 in the semis to move into the finals opposite Linsly's Joe Blalock, who had given up just five points prior to the championship.

Blankenship labored, but eventually claimed a 6-3, 7-5 victory.

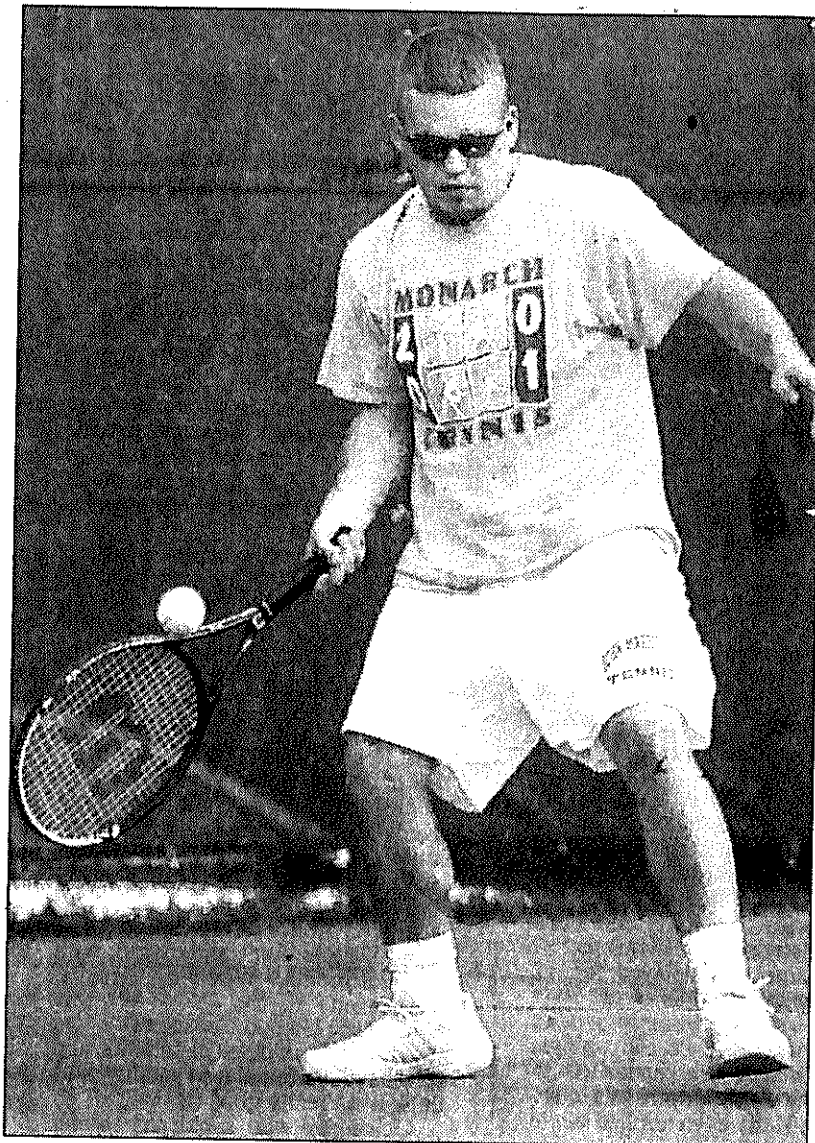


Photo by Art Limann

John Marshall's Bryan Garrison returns a shot during the OVAC Boys' Doubles Tennis Championships at West Liberty State College's Edgar Martin Tennis Complex Wednesday.

Wheeling Park Boys Lead OVAC Tourney

Boys singles conclude tournament today

The Wheeling Park boys tennis squad took the overall team score lead in the first day of the OVAC tennis championships Wednesday at the H. Edgar Martin Tennis Complex at West Liberty State College.

The Patriots finished with eight points after the doubles competition, benefiting from two doubles champions. Linsly and Magnolia are tied for second place with six points apiece and Brooke sits in fourth place with five points.

Wheeling Park's tandem of Chris Mercer and Steven Fox took home first place laurels in the No. 1 doubles, winning easily from their first seed position.

Mercer and Fox defeated Brent McNabb and Ryan McNeil of Wheeling Central 6-0, 6-0 in straight sets for the win.

Steve Mercer and Simeon Blankenship, also from the 'Park', won the No. 2 doubles championships, but required a little more effort in the finals to earn the win.

Kevin Donnelley and Cory Rowe of Cambridge put up a fight, but were defeated 7-

5, 6-3.

Magnolia won the No. 3 doubles competition over Joe Cabotaje and Phillip May of Linsly by a 6-0, 6-2 tally.

The singles championships will take place today, also at West Liberty.

