

## FISTICUFFS FLY

NASCAR's first trip this season to Richmond had a lot of storylines, including punches thrown after the race/10

# The Intelligencer SPORTS

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APRIL 28, 2014

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## Tennis Kicks Off Big Week for the OVAC



### Finals in three sports set to be decided

By SHAWN RINE  
Sports Editor

WHEELING — There may not be a bigger week each year for the Ohio Valley Athletic Conference than the one that is about to take place. Weather permitting, and it looks to

be a dicey situation, the 50-team conference will hold three separate championship events.

#### Tennis

The raquets will be swinging when the boys take the court at 8:30 this morning at West Liberty University for doubles action, and the girls will hold the doubles part of their tournament a day later at the same time. On Wednesday, the boys' singles portion

is held, and the girls' singles portion concludes the tournament Thursday.

A champion and runner-up will be decided in two classes this year, Class 5A and Class 1A-4A. The defending champions are the 5A Cambridge boys, 1A-4A East Liverpool and Wheeling Central boys, 5A University girls and the 1A-4A Linsly girls.

In addition, coaches will vote on a

male and female who best exhibit good sportsmanship, honoring them with the Carol Strasser Sportsmanship Award. Strasser was a standout during her tennis playing days and eventually became the OVAC Tennis Director for several years.

So weather interfere, the tournament will be moved inside at the Wheeling Park tennis bubble.

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The OVAC will hand out championship hardware in tennis, baseball and softball this week.

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## Morgantown leads OVAC girls tennis

WHEELING — The girls' doubles competition in the OVAC Tennis Championships was completed Tuesday at the Wheeling Park Tennis Bubble. Once again all of the matches were moved indoors from West Liberty University to inclement weather. Morgantown High dominated the first day competition by placing all three of its doubles teams into the finals. Two of the teams earned championships.

**No. 1 Doubles Final**  
Abby Rosiello/Lexie Rosiello (Morgantown High) d. Jackie

McDermott/Amika Ekanem (Linsly) 8-4.

**No. 2 Doubles Final**  
Brooke Franklin/Cassidy Seamon (University High) d. Sydney Kacik/Lily McKnight (Morgantown High) 8-1.

**No. 3 Doubles Final**  
Michelle Joseph/Demi Derrico (Morgantown High) d. Marissa Tordella/Abby Woods (John Marshall) 8-2.

**TEAM SCORING:**  
1. Morgantown High 11; 2. University High 8; 3. Linsly 5; 4. Oak Glen 4; 5. (tie) John Marshall, Weirton, Madonna and Parkersburg South 3; 9. Wheeling Park 2; 10. (tie) Brooke, Weir and Wheeling Central 1.

Girls singles competition resumes on Thursday morning beginning at 8:30 a.m.

# OVAC tennis tournament opens Monday at WLU

The 2014 OVAC Tennis Championships will be held at West Liberty University beginning Monday and continuing through Thursday. Monday features boys doubles and Tuesday features girls doubles. Play begins at 8:30 a.m. each day.

Singles competition for boys is Wednesday beginning at 8:30 a.m. and the girls singles competition on Thursday beginning at 8:30 a.m..

Matches will be moved to the Wheeling Park tennis bubble if weather does not permit play at West Liberty University.

A champion and runner-up in both boys and girls competition will be decided over the four-day tournament in two divisions this year. The classes are 1A-4A and 5A. Each individual match win earns a point for the team.

The defending champions from last year are the Cambridge boys in 5A, East Liverpool and Wheeling Central shared the boys title in Class 1-4A. 5A University High (5A) and the Linsly girls (1-4A) claimed the titles.

During the OVAC tournament, coaches will vote on a male and female who best exhibit good sportsmanship while competing to earn the Carol Strasser Sportsmanship Award.

Carol was a long-time Ohio Valley physical therapist and outstanding tennis player, who served several years as the OVAC tennis director. This award was created to honor her work and commitment to tennis and her outstanding character.

St. Clairsville is the lone area team, which sponsors a tennis program. The Red Devils' boys and girls play in the Class 1-4A division.

After the OVAC tournaments, the West Virginia schools will head into regional play. The Ohio boys sectional tournament begins on May 12 and runs all week. The girls compete at the state level, in Ohio, during the fall.

West Liberty University will provide athletic trainers during the tournament and the West Liberty men's tennis team will provide a racquet stringing service during the week.



THE HEAT IS COMING!

Pens D-man Kris Letang promises there will be plenty of emotion during Round 2 against the Rangers/11

# The Intelligencer. SPORTS

FRIDAY  
MAY 2, 2014

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## Linsly's Ekanem Wins OVAC Championship

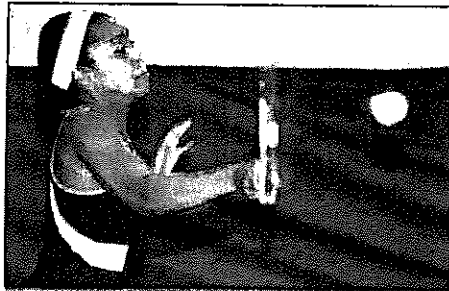


Photo by Dave Morrison  
Linsly's Amika Ekanem returns the ball during the OVAC No. 2 singles championship Thursday at the Wheeling Park tennis bubble.

### Defeats Rosiello 8-3 for No. 2 singles title

By DAVE MORRISON  
Staff Writer

WHEELING — Linsly's Amika Ekanem kept her composure and never lost her smile.

During a 10-minute delay, when her opponent, Morgantown freshman Lexie Rosiello was taking a medical timeout with a blister and toe problem, Ekanem, a sophomore, stayed warm by having her family members toss balls from the other side of the net.

When Rosiello bravely came

back and fought through her injury, Ekanem, while being compassionate, was able to close out the match 8-3, and win the OVAC No. 2 singles championship Thursday evening at the Wheeling Park tennis bubble.

"I really feel like I accomplished something," Ekanem said. "I have won a USTA event, but to win the OVAC, I feel like I accomplished a lot. It's high school tennis. It really means a lot to me to be able to win a

championship."

"I'm really happy for Amika because she worked so hard for this," Coach Dave Riethmiller said. "She went out and played the way she has been playing all season."

"I kept my eyes on the prize," Ekanem said. "I stayed focused and I always thought I was going to win. You never go into a match thinking you are going to lose."

She did, however, feel bad for

her opponent, Rosiello.

"I don't think it's fair because it's hard to play when you are injured and you know they can't play their best. I had to play on a hurt knee once and it is hard. I felt bad for her."

There was little suspense as far as the team champions heading into the four singles finals.

Both Morgantown and Linsly had wrapped up titles by that time, and Morgantown had a player in all four finals, while

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Friday, May 2, 2014

### EKANEM

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Linsly had two.

The battle for No. 1 was an epic duel between Abby Rosiello of Morgantown and Linsly's Jackie McDermott.

Their opening game was a banger of things to come, as the two battled back-and-forth in a game that lasted nearly 30 minutes. Long volleys were showcased as the two went back-and-forth.

McDermott, a senior, went ahead 3-2, but steely junior Rosiello battled back to win the last six games and take the No. 1 singles title 8-3.

Even in the last game, the battles

were long, one point took 22 shots and another took 14.

In the end, McDermott was candid about the match, and her season.

"I tried my hardest," the Cadet senior said. "I really love tennis and I am definitely proud of the career I had. I had a great team, great teammates and two great coaches."

"She played her hardest, and I'm proud of her," Riethmiller said. "She ends her career with the school record for most singles wins. She had a great career and we are going to miss her."

McDermott will head to Oberlin

University to continue her tennis career this fall.

Abby Rosiello's victory was the only victory by a Mohigan in the finals, but Morgantown didn't need it.

Morgantown had 24 points to win the OVAC 5A team title. Crosstown rival University was second with 20 points. John Marshall finished third with eight points.

"We have a really good tennis program," Morgantown coach Ted Greenlee said. "I really don't have to do much coaching. I said probably 20 words to the kids all day.

They know what to do."

All four singles players return next season and Greenlee said there are two promising rising freshmen on the horizon.

It was Morgantown's second title in three years.

University took the other two singles titles. Brooke Franklin took the No. 3 title beating Morgantown's Sydney Kacik 8-0 and Cassidy Seaman won the No. 4 title with an 8-6 victory against Morgantown's Lily McKnight.

Linsly is building a dynasty in the 1A to 4A classes.

The team title was the fourth in a

row for the Cadets, who closed their season Thursday.

"I can't say enough about our team, they all battled hard," Riethmiller said. "Our No. 1 and No. 2 (McDermott and Ekanem) really carried us in this tournament. We won all four years Jackie was with us and that is something she can be proud of. This was our goal all year. I'm proud of this team."

"It feels good, being the fourth one in a row," Ekanem said. "We had a lot of new players this year but this is always our goal and it was nice to get the championship again."

# John Marshall's Blazer Cruises to OVAC Title



Unbeaten run continues at 22-0 for senior

By DAVE MORRISON  
Staff Writer

WHEELING — Heavy was the head that was going after the crown.

John Marshall's Hayden Blazer knew he was the favorite to win the OVAC Boys No. 1-seed singles championship that barely eluded his grasp last year.

He was the No. 1 seed at No. 1 after all.

The senior knew it was his last chance, and he admitted the nerves were active.

Despite being undefeated, and having victories against his likely competition, he knew anything could happen.

"There is a lot of pressure," Blazer said. "Everyone expects you to do well. When you are a sophomore, or a junior, you go through the progressions. You get beat. You always have next year. Last year, I was able to get to the finals (falling to Cambridge senior Cody Engstrom). I wanted to take it one

Photo by Dave Morrison  
John Marshall's Hayden Blazer plays during the OVAC Tennis Tournament Wednesday at the Wheeling Park Tennis Bubble.

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Page 15)

## BLAZER

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step further this time. It was my last one."

Turns out, Blazer need not have worried. He had little trouble in cruising to the OVAC title.

Blazer breezed by his first two matches, beating Indian Creek's Justin Caniff 8-0 and Steubenville's Mike Rosaschi 8-0.

He then defeated Wheeling Central's Jonathan Haley 8-2 to get back to the championship match, where he faced Killian Stappen of Morgantown.

It was a little closer, but Blazer got the title he was after, and kept his record a perfect 22-0, defeating Stappen 8-6.

Morgantown edged Parkersburg South for the Class 5A championship, 22-18. John Marshall was third with 11.

Wheeling Central's boys won the Class 1A-4A title, winning a tiebreaker with Linsly. Both had eight points. East Liverpool, Madonna and Steubenville had five points each.

Blazer's teammate Austin Litman also advanced to the championship in the No. 3 singles, falling to Morgantown's Adam McKnight 8-1.

Steven Wu of Morgantown won the No. 2 singles title, beating Garrett Dailey of Parkersburg South 8-0 and Michael Derrico of Morgantown defeated Wheeling Park's Ollie Marra 8-1.

Unlike many of his competitors at the No. 1 seed, Blazer didn't not start playing tennis until sixth grade, when he took up the game with his sister.

He was tutored under area tennis professional Jeremy McClelland when he started.

McClelland later left the area, but returned recently.

"I hadn't seen him in a few years, and one day I ran into him," McClelland said. "I looked at him, and I said, 'Wait a minute, didn't I used to coach you?' He had grown a lot."

Including his game.

"His game has improved so much," said McClelland, who is again tutoring Blazer. "He is definitely a talented

player. Tennis is a hard game. Anybody can pick up a tennis racket and hit a ball over the net. But not everyone can be good at it. He is good at it because of his mental game. He understands the game."

His coach at John Marshall, Brad Howard, had also seen the growth. Blazer played alongside Howard's daughter Allie, early in his career as a Monarch.

"He was our No. 2 player as a freshmen and you could tell he was going to be a good one," Howard said. "The last two years, he played more of a defensive game. When you play a defensive game, you more or less wait for who is going to make a mistake. This year, we've got him playing more of the offensive game. He is really working his opponents and he's really good at placing his shots."

Blazer had picked up a championship earlier in the week when he teamed with sophomore Tyler Keller to beat No. 2 Parkersburg South's team of Grant Tebay and Garrett Daily 8-6. That was after dispatching No. 1 seeded Morgantown in the semifinals.

"It was a pretty big deal, because we had lost to them in the regular season," Blazer said. "We had everything come together. It was nice to win a doubles championship in my last OVAC tournament."

"They did surprise me," Howard said. "They have been hot and cold at times this season. On Monday they started out hot and they stayed hot. It's not an easy thing to do to beat the No. 1 and No. 2 seeds back to back."

As the OVAC boys No. 1 singles participants found out, it is darn near impossible. Blazer now moves on to the regional tournament.

The OVAC Tennis Tournament wraps up today with the girls singles competition, which will be held at West Liberty University barring more inclement weather. If rain is forecast it will be held at the Wheeling Park tennis bubble for the fourth day.

## BULLS SENT HOME

Washington ends Chicago's hopes of  
NBA title with 75-69 win to cap  
off series/16

# The Intelligencer. SPORTS

WEDNESDAY  
APRIL 30, 2014

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# Linsly Duo Falls to Morgantown 8-4

## McDermott, Ekanem still finish year 13-1

By **DAVE MORRISON**  
Staff Writer

**WHEELING** — The moment was bittersweet for Linsly double partners Jackie McDermott and Amika Ekanem.

The duo lost together for the

first time on the year, in what was their final match together, falling to Morgantown sisters Abby and Lexie Rosiello, 8-4.

The Linsly duo still finished the year 13-1, and, still have a chance to take home the coveted OVAC

1A-4A championship.

McDermott is a senior, and will continue her tennis career at Oberlin College in Ohio.

That was what made the moment so bittersweet for the duo.

"I really couldn't have asked for a better doubles partner," McDermott said. "I played the first two years with my older sister (Morgan). Playing with Amika has been just as much fun. She is always has a super-positive attitude. We didn't really talk too much about it being the last time. We were just focused on trying to

win one more together."

"I think we mentioned it at our last home meet, about how it was going to be our last time but we didn't talk about it (Tuesday)," Ekanem said. "It is really sad. She's been the best partner. I'm

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## LINSLY

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going to miss her."

The Cadets are alive and in position to make a run for another team title, as well as singles titles when the girls tournament resumes Thursday.

The boys singles tournament will be played today beginning at 8:30 a.m.

Playing for the OVAC Tournament championship is a state tournament of sorts for Linsly.

"It's been our goal all year," said coach Dave Riethmiller, who is in his 29th-year with the school. "This is it for us. We work to this point every season."

Last year the Cadets tied with Oak Glen but won on a tiebreaker.

Linsly currently leads the points race for the 1A-4A title with five.

Morgantown leads the race for the 5A title with 11 points, followed by University with eight.

The two Morgantown schools won all three doubles titles.

At No. 2 doubles, University's Brooke Franklin and Cassidy Seamon defeated Morgantown's Sydney Kacik and Lily McKnight 8-1 and at No. 3 Morgantown's Michelle Joseph and Demi Derrico defeated John Marshall's Marissa Tordella and Abby Woods 8-3.

Linsly is third overall, followed by Oak Glen with four points, John Marshall, Madonna and Parkersburg South with three each, Wheeling Park with two and Brooke, Weir and

Wheeling Central with one point apiece.

"It wasn't decided (Tuesday)," Riethmiller said. "There are a lot of good teams right there and it's going to be a great competition."

■■■

Oak Glen's Madison Juszczak isn't stuck in the past, but she does like to have a daily reminder of the path to success she has carved for herself by hard work.

The Golden Bears' two-sport standout keeps the two volleyball state championship plaques she has earned, along with the No. 4 singles state tennis championship she won, in her bathroom.

"That way when I wake up in the morning, it's one of the first things I see," Juszczak said. "It reminds me that if I keep working hard, good things will happen."

Good things have definitely happened.

Despite moving up to No. 2 singles this year, she has continued to win.

She is 14-2 on the year, and her losses to Morgantown, and Linsly came against competition she won't see in the regional tournament.

"It is a big step up in competition for sure," she said, after her and Madison Hill lost to McDermott and Ekanem in the No. 1 doubles semifinals, 8-2.

"I know that was going to be the case so I worked hard in the winter and last summer to try to get ready for

that. I don't think my goals have changed."

"She also played No. 1 doubles for us last year," Coach Ken Keller said. "That really gave her an idea what the competition would be like."

She calls winning the singles title at No. 4 "a bit of a surprise" at first.

"It was always in the back of my mind and as the matches started to go by, I started thinking 'This is getting so real,'" Juszczak said. "I made it a goal to do it. I just kept telling myself as it got closer, 'You're almost there, you're almost there.' It was so exciting."

Juszczak hasn't received any legitimate college offers yet, but she hasn't sluffed off on her work ethic.

She says she likes both her chosen sports "when they are in season."

"I don't really have a favorite but I think if I could choose to play one in college I would choose tennis," she said.

Juszczak and her teammates and competitors will be back in action at the OVAC girls singles tournament at West Liberty Thursday, if weather permits. If not, they will be at the Wheeling Park tennis bubble.



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# The Intelligencer.

# SPORTS

## OVAC TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIPS

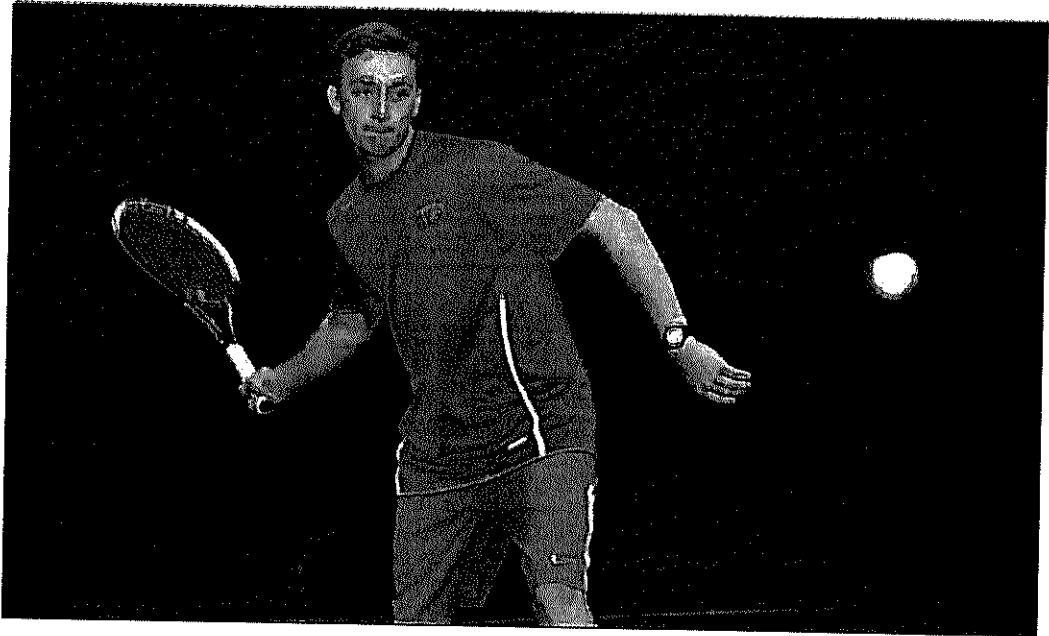


Photo by Dave Morrison  
Wheeling Park's Zac Marra returns a serve against John Marshall's Hayden Blazer and Tyler Keller during No. 1 doubles at the Wheeling Park Tennis Bubble.

# Three in One

### Marras make up big part of Wheeling Park team

By DAVE MORRISON  
Staff Writer

WHEELING — For Tracy Marra, a picture really was worth a million words.

Or hundreds of miles.

At an early-season tennis tournament in Morgantown this spring, she was able to get a picture of her three sons — Wheeling Park senior Zac, sophomore Ollie and freshman Dante — playing on consecutive courts in what has to be rare, yet priceless, photo.

Just a reminder that the day she had been waiting for had finally arrived.

"I've been waiting for this year for a long time," she said, while preparing to watch her

youngest son, Dante, and his doubles partner Doug MacNealy play Madonna's Ryan Watts and Cole Roberts (Watts and Roberts, the No. 3 seeded No. 3 doubles team entering Monday's play, won that match 8-4) in a boys doubles match at the Wheeling Park tennis bubble Monday morning.

It was all part of the first day of the OVAC Tennis Tournament.

"It's really great to finally have them all at one school, all playing together on the same team."

It almost happened in the fall, or so she thought, until Dante opted to golf while the older brothers were members of the soccer team.

It did, however, happen in the spring, and all three brothers are, amazingly enough, on different doubles teams.

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# TENNIS

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Zac teams with Shaun Hunley on the No. 1 seed boys doubles team, Ollie teams with Jared Jorden on the No. 2 doubles team and Dante and MacNealy are the No. 3 doubles team.

That it happened at all is a matter of a well-intended comment by a junior kindergarten teacher that turned a little hand-eye coordination matter into a near life-long love affair with the game of tennis.

"Zac was in J-K3 (junior kindergarten for three-year-olds) and they had been doing some games that involved hand-eye coordination," Tracy said. "His teacher told me Zac's hand-eye coordination was a little off. She said I should sign him up for tennis. He tried it and he really liked it. He has been playing since."

Shortly after he signed up, he began taking lessons from local teaching pro Missy Bailey.

That is about the time Shane Earley, another local pro, who worked with Bailey, entered the picture.

"Missy called me one day and said, 'I've got this kid you need to take a look at,'" Earley said. "So, I meet the kid, he's probably about 12. After we hit some balls, I remember thinking, 'He reminds me of myself at that age.'"

Which is pretty good, considering that Earley was a member of three West Virginia Wesleyan teams

that advanced to the NCAA Division 2 Sweet 16.

It's more an irony that Earley is back coaching the Wheeling Park team this spring.

He had been a teaching pro in Newport Beach, Calif.

A family medical situation brought him back to West Virginia and the job, which he had been contacted about earlier, was still open.

"I'd been in California for a couple years," Earley said. "When I got back, I saw the job was still open and I applied. It's really ironic that I worked with a lot of these boys and now they are on this team."

None of the Marra's won Monday.

In addition to Dante and MacNealy losing to Madonna's doubles team of Watts and Roberts, Zac Marra and Hunley lost to John Marshall's Hayden Blazer and Tyler Keller 8-4 after winning their opening match against Weir. Ollie Marra and Jorden fell to University after beating St. Clairsville in their opening match.

Their mother was at least happy she got to see them all in one building.

Blazer and Keller ended up winning the OVAC Boys Class 5-A No. 1 seed doubles championship

After nearly losing in their opening match, Blazer and Keller caught fire and ran through the top seeds en route to victory, beating

Grant Tebay and Garrett Dailey of Parkersburg South 8-6 in the championship match.

In the No. 2 doubles final, Steven Wu and Adam McKnight of Morgantown defeated Parkersburg South's Camilo Sarzosa and Alexander Herring 8-3.

In No. 3 doubles, Parkersburg South's Franklin Miller and Evan Fleak defeated Annie Nehrbas and Dominic DiCarlo of Steubenville 8-5.

Parkersburg South currently leads the team race with 10 points, followed by Morgantown with seven points and John Marshall, Linsly and Madonna with four each. Cambridge, Steubenville and University have three, Wheeling Central, Wheeling Park and East Liverpool two and Brooke with one.

A team champion and runner-up in both 1A-4A and 5A will be determined at the end of singles play.

John Marshall's Blazer is the top seed in the boys No. 1 singles tournament as well. The boys singles event will be played Wednesday, likely back at the Wheeling Park tennis bubble. The event, originally scheduled for West Liberty, was moved due to inclement weather.

The girls doubles tournament will be today at the tennis bubble with the girls singles tournament scheduled for Thursday. Tennis begins at 8:30 a.m.