

Grandslamers having ball in Volvo League

By DAVID BULLA
Chronicle Sports Editor

It happens once in a while in the world of tennis.

An opponent loses her temper, utters an expletive and makes a scene.

The sight is a little too familiar to the Grandslamers, a predominantly black tennis team that competes rather successfully in the Winston-Salem Volvo 3.5 Spring League. Indeed, the Grandslamers have been the league's most successful team in recent years, winning three consecutive city championships.

But success provokes envy and sometimes Grandslammer opponents go for the jugular when they are losing.

"It's just an everyday thing," said No. 1 singles player Katie Carter. "You take it in stride and avoid making a vendetta out of it."

Matters got so bad one year that the local league almost took away the championship that the Slammers had rightfully won by finishing in a tie in the standings with another team, the Linedusters.

"They tried to argue that we should not go to the state tournament based on one set of rules," Ruth Oliver said. "It was obvious they were trying to give the league championship to the other team."

The Linedusters pleaded that the state representative should be the team which had won the most sets. Meanwhile, Oliver's group, then named the SWATS and playing at the 4.0 level, argued the berth should go to the team which had lost the fewest sets. After the local governing body ruled in favor of the Linedusters, SWATS appealed to the North Carolina Tennis Association, which overturned the local verdict.

At that time, the league had a different sponsor and was in its formative years. It had plenty of faults. Fortunately, there are fewer faults now. For instance, there is a definitive tie-breaking procedure.

However, it won't be needed this year. Winston-Salem will get two berths in the state tournament June 21-22 in Asheville.

The Grandslamers have won their first three matches this season, including a 5-0 verdict



Gail Manuel, left, and Ruth Oliver, right, helped the Grandslamers to a 5-0 victory over Our Ad in a Volvo 3.5 League match last Saturday at South Fork (photos by James Parker).



over Our Ad at South Fork last Saturday. They appear headed for another trip to the state tournament. They couldn't play in the tourney last year because league rules prevent back-to-back appearances by a state champion. The team won the state title in 1984 and advanced to the regionals in Atlanta.

This year's team features Carter, the reigning Garber-Lash women's champion, and Michele "Mickey" Grace at No. 2 singles. The doubles teams include Oliver and team captain Martha Stockman, Carolyn Rice and Gail Manuel and Cookie Kennedy and Laverne Livingstone. Other team members are Bernadette Murphy, Verline Horne, Beth Hopkins, Sheila Andrews and Denise Adams.

Carter says players are picked according to ability.

"We're all honest about it," she said. "We want to win, though we do our best to rotate in the weaker players. But this team has a special quality because everybody shows up on Saturday morning."

Ratings are essential to becoming a member of a league team. A

player is given a rating by the National Tennis Rating Program, which is governed by the United States Tennis Association. Ratings are from 1.0 (novice) to 7.0 (professional). Local ratings are given at the Joe White Tennis Center. In Winston-Salem there are leagues at the 3.0, 3.5, 4.0 and 4.5 levels.

There were only two 3.0 teams in the city this spring, so they were incorporated into the 3.5 league.

"We don't take any of the teams lightly," Carter said. "We think we can go to the state tournament again, but we're not in the position where we can rest against anybody."

The team played in the 4.0 league last fall. Oliver said the team is one represented something of a struggle and the players decided to return to the 3.5 level for the spring.

While the Grandslamers have been a first-rate success in the 3.5 League, there's more to the game than winning. Oliver, who picked up tennis when her children played under Coach Dave Lash, says the purpose of the league is to bring tennis to a wider audience.

"It's basically a grassroots thing," Oliver said. "The intention is to get more and more people involved in the sport."

Carter said she primarily plays for fun and physical fitness.

"After work, it's a good way to cut the tension," she said. "It's my way of unwinding."

The Grandslamers are a close-knit group who share a common background. Most are past or present members of the Kimberly Park Tennis Association.

Their closeness is expressed in their coordinated blue-and-white togs. Included in their outfits are tee-shirts that Grace designed. The tee-shirts have the names of each player written on the image of a tennis racket on the back. The configuration resembles a crossword puzzle with the answers filled in. Several of the players also possess Grandslammer license plates.

The team's attractive image complements its successful record. Both are good tools to fight the ignorance the Grandslamers occasionally encounter.

Grandslamers' 1986 Schedule -- May 3 vs. Racquettes at Polo; May 10 vs. Lobbers at Schaffner; May 17 vs. Top Spinners at Carver. June 21-22 State Tournament in Asheville.

AAU

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forward, he's our best big man and most dominant rebounder."

The 6-foot-7 McNeill averaged 19 points and 11 rebounds for Andrews and was an honorable-mention all-state selection.

But the talent doesn't end with the starting five. The bench is strong with North's Rodney Scott, Chris Upson and Jeff Denney (signed with North Carolina), Carver's Cory Belton and Tim Douthit, Parkland's Zeb Sheff, West's Dwayne Morgan and East's Kevin Mumford.

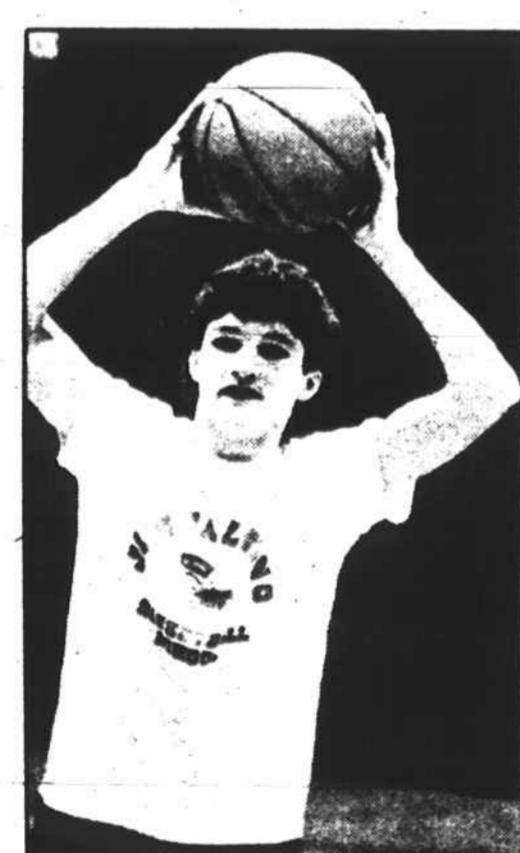
Hollingsworth hopes to have the full services of Sheff, but the 6-5 forward high jumps for the Parkland track and field team that will compete in the Central Piedmont meet this weekend. It is likely Sheff will only be available on a part-time basis.

The Twice As Nice coach believes the Jets will have plenty of incentive against his talented team.

"These guys want to beat guys like Brian and Jeff," he said. "Kemp knows what's it like because North Surry beat North Forsyth in the Frank Spencer Holiday Classic. I just wish we didn't have to play them first."

Hollingsworth said that Howard has continued to show improvement despite the fact that he signed early. The continued improvement is particularly impressive from a player who had such lofty stats as 16.4 points, 11.6 rebounds, 4.7 blocks and 4.2 assists while leading the Vikings to the state 4-A quarterfinals.

"Even though he has little left



Kevin Besecker will lock horns with all-stater Kemp Phillips (photo by James Parker).

to prove, he's reached another plateau since the end of the season," the Twice As Nice coach said. "He, Reggie and Cory are the only ones who have not missed a practice."

Corrigan believes his team can do more than make a respectable showing because of the international rules AAU employs.

"In the past, we've had more athletic talent on our teams," said Corrigan, who had UNC-Wilmington's Kenny Mickens and ASU's Ronnie Christian last year. "But we're going to be

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Y-HAPPENINGS

Y-ACTIVITIES

Free Blood Pressure Screening

Free blood pressure screening is available on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month. This service is provided by Mary Grace Boorio, a registered nurse. Mrs. Boorio believes that since the YMCA is a place to provide better health promotion, we should provide blood pressure screening for our members. She is at the Winston Lake-Family YMCA from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Stop by and let her check your pressure.

Tennis Lessons

Tennis lessons are being offered by the YMCA on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The classes are open to beginners as well as intermediate to advanced players. Children's classes are from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m., and adult classes are from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Cost for the classes and other information is available at the YMCA. Call for more information.

Meet HENRIETTA HODGE-FELDER



HENRIETTA S.
HODGE-FELDER

Henrietta S. Hodge-Felder is a native of Winston-Salem but lived out of the state for several years prior to 1980, when she returned and was employed at the Patterson Avenue Branch YMCA as office manager. Now she is employed at the Winston Lake YMCA as executive secretary. She is a graduate of Palmer Memorial Institute in Sedalia and Orangeburg, S.C., and did further studies at South Carolina State College in Orangeburg. She is the daughter of Henry T. and Lizzie B. Settles and the mother of two, Angela and Alphonso. She is married to Edward Timothy Felder. Mrs. Hodge-Felder is a member of Union Baptist Church and serves as recording secretary of Meridian Chapter No. 308, Order of the Eastern Star. Her hobbies include interior decorating, singing and sewing.

MEMBER OF THE WEEK



ANN WHERRY

Ann Wherry believes in physical fitness because it improves cardiovascular functions, increases lung capacity and relieves stress, all of which she believes can only improve mental and physical alertness. Ann works out at the YMCA twice a week, and her routine consists of aerobics, utilizing the Nautilus equipment, free exercises and running/walking the park course. After her multiple workout, Ann winds down in the whirlpool. Ann is employed by the City of Winston-Salem Human Services Department as an employment and training specialist. She is a native of Winston-Salem and the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ira Wherry. She attends Galilee Baptist Church and is very active in community affairs. Ann challenges all residents of the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County community to incorporate some type of physical fitness program into their weekly routine, and she feels that there is no better place to do this than the Winston Lake Family YMCA.

Y-TIP

"Love is a canvas furnished by Nature and embroidered by imagination." -- Voltaire

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