



We're going to be encouraging you to go to the Web often in **CrossCourt**.

Learn more... Stay informed... Your Section Website is a great source for upcoming events, features, photos, results and more.

Answer the "Go to the Net" questions posed in **CrossCourt** and submit your responses to:

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Correct entries will be entered in a prize drawing.



The USTA/Missouri Valley Section publishes **CrossCourt** quarterly. Feedback is welcome.



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### Introduce someone new to tennis and help grow the game!

USTA/Missouri Valley Executive Director

uch of our section is rich farmland. Ours are the states that harvest enough bounty to feed the whole world.

So, we know a thing or two about growing stuff, don't we?

We understand it takes hard to plow the fields and all the Racquet

We understand it takes hard work – to plow the fields and pull the weeds – and plenty of patience because a bumper crop doesn't just spring up over night. There are no shortcuts, whether you're growing corn, beans or wheat.

Or tennis.

As you are reading this, we are just days away from our 2005 USTA/Missouri Valley Annual Conference in Overland Park, Kan. Go to the net at missourivalley.usta.com for more about the conference as we concentrate on getting "all eyes on growing the game" during the Dec. 2-4 event.

We've already planted some good seeds here in the Missouri Valley. Our Team Tennis programming, more after school programming and our recent efforts developing intramurals at the collegiate level all bode well for the future.

Sometimes, however, we are so close to the game – WE LOVE IT! – we can't imagine why others haven't embraced tennis.

I think it all goes back to caring for the seedlings. According to the *U.S. Tennis Participation Study*, one of the most comprehensive surveys ever conducted to gauge athletic interests (involving 25,500 households across America), millions of people are picking up a racquet and giving tennis a try. The problem we're having is keeping them playing.

They get flustered. How come on TV it looks so darn easy at the US Open?

That's where you come in.

Whether you can make it to Overland Park Dec.

2-4 or not, whether you're hoisting championship trophies or playing for pure fun, keep an eye on growing the game.

Here's my challenge to you: Introduce some-

one new to tennis in 2006 and – and this is the important part – help that person grow into a tennis player.

Could be your son or daughter, niece or nephew. An old friend or a new one. How 'bout someone who needs encourage-

ment to get off the sofa and back into shape?

Whoever it is, introduce that person to all tennis has to offer. Endless fun. Tremendous fitness. New friends.

Really show them how they can stay fit for life doing something the whole family can enjoy. What other sport can you teach your kids and still be playing when your kids have got kids?

Don't try transforming your new player into the next great champion. Someone who will grow to love the game, too, will do nicely.

Yes, it will certainly take patience. No one picks up a racquet and starts smacking lasers down the line. Yet, with the right person showing the way, a tennis novice can enjoy learning the game.

They may never master the game. Who has? Along the way, though, you can help them experience the thrill – that tingle tennis gives you – of hitting a cross-court winner on the run or an ace down the "T." Teach them to find joy in being able to simply and routinely keep the ball in play. That, in and of itself, represents an achievement, for there's nothing routine or simple about it.

So, please plant a seed in '06!

The great part of getting tennis to grow is, while it may be hard work, even the growing pains can be fun. And making it fun is the key to keeping new players coming back for more.

#### New USTA logo and image campaign being rolled out

he USTA has a new look. The organization's redesigned logo incorporates the famous flaming ball from the US Open, as a not so subtle reminder that the most prestigious tennis tournament held on American soil is a USTA-owned and operated event.

The new logo was introduced during the US Open and is being gradually imple-

mented right now. A full conversion will take place early in 2006 in conjunction with a new image campaign the USTA will be rolling out to bolster interest in the game.



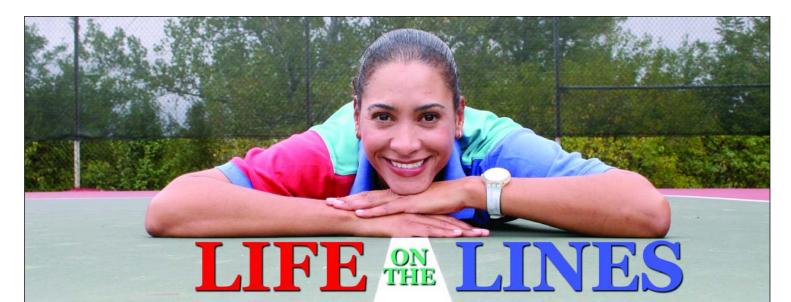
Kathy Francis, USTA managing director of Community Tennis Marketing and Development, will be discussing in detail the national '06 marketing effort at the USTA/Missouri Valley Annual

Conference, Dec. 2-4 in Overland
Park, Kan. Francis will introduce the new USTA/Missouri
Valley Section logo and provide insight into the use of the logo at the grassroots level.

Look for more details about the exciting new image campaign and logo on the Web at missourivalley.usta.com. A redesigned Website is also on its way.







Getting on the court with the world's best players – as a USTA official

hen Roger Federer and Marat Safin were playing their amazing five-setter in the semis of the 2005 Australian Open in Melbourne, blasting balls at warp speeds, Kansas City native Francess Mudge-Lisk was there – on top of everything. Staring down every shot off Safin's and Federer's racquets with an intense gaze, she literally

Francess Mudge-Lisk gets extra close to the action.

had the best view in the Rod Laver Arena that night, up close and personal

No, Mudge-Lisk didn't have a well-placed connection for tickets. No, she didn't sneak past an usher into a front-row seat. No, she didn't know Federer or Safin well enough to be seated in either's friends' box.

She was closer to the action than that. Mudge-Lisk gets right on the court as an official for ATP, WTA and USTA Pro Circuit events.

"It's the best seat in the house, that's for sure," said Mudge-Lisk, who has been a full-time

official for the last four years, covering everything from local USTA matches in the USTA/Missouri Valley Section to the women's finals of the US Open. "It's also a hot seat if you know what I mean."

TOP LINESPERSON Mudge-Lisk had been around tennis much of her life – as a former National Junior Tennis League (NJTL) participant and USA League Tennis captain – before the officiating bug bit. After attending a few

Kansas City Explorers' World Team Tennis matches in 2001, she was intrigued enough to inquire about officiating matches with Heart of America District officials Michael Oliver and Billie Owen. Shortly after, Mudge-Lisk took a provisional line school class required of all aspiring officials, decided she had the mettle, and soon was on the court calling the lines at USTA events. A year later, she was at the US Open.

Since then, Mudge-Lisk has been on a fast track, traveling across much of the United States for professional events on the USTA Pro Circuit, ATP and WTA Tours. She may be watching the lines, but others are watching her. In 2004, she was given the Jack Stahr Award, presented annually to the USTA's best linesperson.

Mudge-Lisk called both the Australian and US Open women's finals this year, and has been privy to some outstanding tennis in 2005.

'A HUGE RUSH' Besides the Federer-Safin epic Down Under, Mudge-Lisk called lines for the James Blake-Andre Agassi quarterfinal at the US Open, and the Federer-Rafael Nadal five-set final at the Nasdaq-100 Open. In the Missouri Valley, she was at several World

Team Tennis matches and the Terrific 32 junior event in Kansas City.

"It's a huge rush to be out there, to feel that energy on court during matches," said the 38-year-old Mudge-Lisk. "You're under pressure on every shot, so it's a test every second you're out there. But I like that."



Being criticized wasn't on the job description, but it's certainly a part of officiating, as are long hours on site and rigorous travel schedules, according to USTA Pro Circuits Supervisor Peter Kasavage.

"It can be a very nomadic existence. Officials live just like players do, lots of hotel time and lots of time away from loved ones," said Kasavage. "Francess has handled it all quite well, and she stands out for a lot of reasons. She has a great presence on court, and she's very authoritative."

Off the court, Mudge-Lisk steers away from the players.

See ON THE LINES Page 6



#### Jack Sock has been good as gold

ennis whiz kids come, and tennis whiz kids go. Where they will go – up or down – no one knows. Not even even their parents.

It's a question tennis parents must ask themselves: Could my child's profession in life one day involve chasing little yellow balls?

For Pamela Sock, if her 13-year-old son Jack – the latest whiz to be tagged a "tennis prodigy" – becomes a solid citizen, like, say, Roger Federer, but not a great champion, like Federer, that's OK. According to Pamela, when her little boy is all grown up, his being a solid citizen is far more important than whether or not he ever ends up playing in Arthur Ashe Stadium.

And if Mom has anything to say about it, no matter how big young Jack gets – no matter how long his current championship run lasts – his attitude or reputation will never precede him walking into a room.

"He's just my kid, so I'll forever try to keep him grounded, humble and respectful to other people," said mother Sock, who's as proud of her son's near-perfect grade point at Overland Trail Middle School in Overland Park, Kan., as she is his growing list of tennis accomplishments.

10 TITLES What's the young Sock done to earn that moniker of the next great potential American junior? Plenty.

In 2005, at the barely double-digit age of 12, all Sock did was go where few, if any, young American tennis players had gone before. The Lincoln, Neb., native has simply struck gold in the junior tennis world. He captured the Junior Grand Slam in both singles and doubles, while winning 10 USTA national championship gold balls over a 13-month stretch.

"I'll always try to make tennis fun for him, but we don't throw balloons in the air around here and have a 10-gold-balls-in-13-months party, because I don't ever want Jack to be a prima donna," said Pamela. "I want him to learn how to give back, be a leader, someone I'll always be proud of. Because no

matter what Jack becomes, I don't want his head to ever be so big that he won't scrub the floor."

Can Sock continue to clean up in junior tennis as he ages up? The competition only becomes more fierce each

successive step along the way. Sock turned 13 in September and now competes in the 14-year-old division.

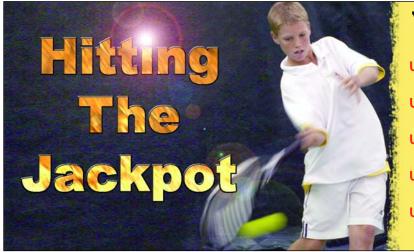
LOTS OF SUPPORT But with the support team Sock has firmly in place, one that includes Pamela, father Larry, brother Eric (himself a 15-year-old whiz), coach Mike Wolf, and a gaggle of backers that includes Prince, his racquet and clothing sponsor, Sock is well taken care of on and off the court.

"Teaching him tennis is the easy thing," said Wolf, who trains both Jack and Eric at his academy in Overland Park, where the boys moved to from their Lincoln home in August 2003. "Barring something totally unforeseen, if Jack continues the way he's going, he will have the opportunity to become something really special. That's something only time will reveal, and it's so hard to predict."

Added Wolf, "No one's really done what Jack has at age 12. What's not going to change is we're all going to make every effort to stay balanced and well-paced, and try to make it so that Jack never feels rushed or pressured to make tennis become anything more than normal."

Normal is not a word typically associated with Sock, whose early maturity is evident in everything from the way he speaks to the way he strikes a backhand. For now, Sock is just trying to soak it all in, be a sponge, improve each day, let the results take care of themselves.

"I'm enjoying every minute of this so far," said Jack, who began playing seriously at age 8. "Tennis is teaching me some good lessons about a lot of things, and I love the competition. I know if I give it my all, I can get to where I want to go."



#### Where Jack Sock Struck Gold!

His 10 National Tournament Titles in Boys 12's (2004-05)

USTA NATIONAL CLAY COURT July 2004
Greensboro, N.C. | Singles (1) & Doubles (2)
USTA NATIONAL HARD COURT August 2004
Little Rock, Ark. | Singles (3) & Doubles (4)
USTA NATIONAL WINTER CHAMP. December 2004

Tucson, Ariz. | Singles (5) & Doubles (6)

USTA NATIONAL SPRING CHAMP. April 2005

Boca Raton, Fla. | Singles (7) & Doubles (8)
USTA NATIONAL HARD COURT August 2005

Little Rock, Ark. | Singles (9) & Doubles (10)

## No. 1 and then some

Rielley focuses on competing, not her ranking

olleen Rielley's rise to the top will never be confused with *Rudy*, the pull-on-your-heartstrings movie based on a bruised and battered, yet beloved "practice body" who makes the most of his one shot at glory on a Notre Dame football field. Rielley is a to-the-bones Fighting Irish fan and will soon be a Golden Domer, herself, but hers is no underdog story.

The 17-year-old from Shawnee Mission, Kan., is America's top junior female tennis player. Many universities were courting her, and Notre Dame won the sweepstakes. She will be heading to South Bend, Ind., in 2006.

Rielley has most definitely not risen from obscurity to find her one shining moment a' la Rudy Ruettiger, the Notre Dame alumnus Hollywood made famous. Rielley has been an immovable fixture atop the USTA/Missouri Valley's 18-and-under rankings for the last two and a half years. This past July, she vaulted to No. 1 in the nation in *both* singles and doubles (with partner Amanda Craddock of Leawood, Kan.).

CONTENT IN KANSAS Lofty rankings and college scholarship aside, Rielley is no tennis diva. She's much more down home than uptown. While most junior players with her primetime results and pedigree (her father Richard played tennis for Notre Dame and Rockhurst University) would have forsaken Kansas for the tennis training Land of Oz (Florida), Rielley never considered doing that. The Yellow Brick Road has always led to her front door at home.

"I've never been one to focus on my ranking," said Rielley, a senior at Bishop Miege High School in Overland Park, Kan. "I just kind of let those things happen. For me, it's just about playing, competing. That's what I really love."

Though she has an adjusted school schedule allowing for more court time at the Mike Wolf Tennis Academy, Rielley still played for Bishop Miege's team this fall, scoring a second straight Kansas state 5A singles title.

How dominant was Rielley in high school tennis? There wasn't one smudge on her record her two seasons at Bishop Miege, going 45-0 as

the Stags' unquestioned No. 1. This fall, she lost a grand total of 11 games all season. She didn't drop a single game in three matches at the state championships.

"A lot of the top national kids don't even go to school," said Rielley. "I just loved being a part of the team, and being with a really neat group of people. It's important to have different outlets besides tennis, and that's what I get here. I'm just a regular girl here."

20-0 RUN Bishop Miege coach Mike Riley agrees.

"I think it's something of an anomaly to have a player like her play high school," said Riley, who is also Rielley's Advanced Placement Government teacher. "She found her niche in the community here, and she's really thrived being just one of the girls. She's a quiet worker and humble. You'll never hear Colleen say anything about herself."

Rielley's game speaks plenty loud enough. In 2005, she hasn't lost a match in any USTA/Missouri Valley tournament, going 20-0 since November 2004.

"As a competitor, she's head and shoulders above anyone I've seen," adds Riley. "She's relentless whether it's on the court, or in the classroom (where she's among Bishop Miege's top students). Whatever the challenge, Colleen accepts it."

Sounds a little like Rudy, after all.



HALEY MARTIN, 13

# Promising junior finding success 'playing up'

Playing up an age division or two - then succeeding - is often a signal of good things to come. It's something Haley Martin of Tulsa, Okla., has been doing since she was four years old, hitting with her dad, Andy Martin, a USPTA teaching professional.

Martin won her first tournament at the ripe old age of 7, and the winning hasn't stopped since, no matter the age group.

At the Section level, Martin's playing up has already yielded big results. At just 13, she is ranked in the 18's division. In July, she even won a Girls' Segment II Futures tournament in her hometown – in the 18's division.

Martin has reached the finals of four National Opens and won four other national doubles tournaments this year in Girls 12's. Before aging up, she finished with a Top 10 national ranking in 12's. Big things are in store for this hard-charging teen.

Strings are Martin's thing. When she's not belting tennis balls, she plays cello and violin at Franklin Youth Academy, a Tulsa public school. She's also a 4.0 student.

Colleen Rielley

has served her

way to Notre Dame.

### Members find value in belonging to the USTA

he results are in. The 2005 USTA Member Survey reveals why so many people who play tennis have joined the organization dedicated to promoting the game's growth.

Among Missouri Valley respondents, an opportunity to participate in USTA-sponsored competition prompted many to become members (see the chart). Playing in USTA Leagues and tournaments topped the list of reasons for joining.

Do Missouri Valley members believe the money they pay to belong to the USTA is money well spent? Yes.

While 33.1 percent rated a USTA Membership an "excellent value," another 35.1 percent called it a a "great value." Only 1.8 percent characterized a membership as a "poor value."

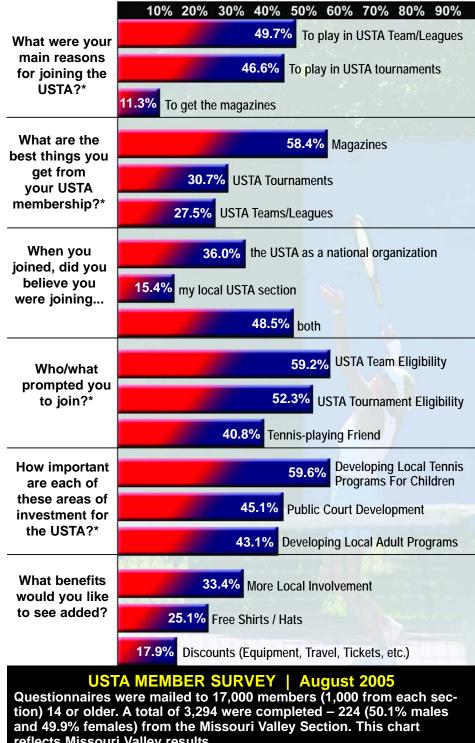
Furthermore, Missouri Valley's members indicated they feel their membership is of value to the USTA as it attempts to expand interest in tennis. When asked if they thought their membership "contributes to the USTA's efforts to grow the game," 23.9 percent stated "a great deal" - more than 10 times the 2.1 percent saying "not at all."

So, how would members like to see the USTA utilize its assets?

The survey shows in the Missouri Valley members are focused on growing the game at the grassroots level.

One-third of the Missouri Valley respondents want more emphasis on "local involvement." Nearly 60 percent stressed investing in development of local tennis programs geared toward children. Public court development is also a high priority for Missouri Valley members, with 45.1 percent stating it should be a key investment area.

Discovering the next great American champion was of far less concern to respondents. Developing future pros was cited by one in four respondents.



reflects Missouri Valley results.

\*Multiple responses were possible for some questions

#### ON THE LINES From Page 3

Fraternizing with them is taboo, since even the slightest perception of impropriety or bias compromises the credibility of calls.

An intimate knowledge of the *Friend* At Court rule book and keen vision are also mandatory, as are quick reflexes to keep from getting brained by one of Andy Roddick's rocket serves.

"This isn't for everyone," said USTA

Director of Officials Richard Kaufman. "When we recruit, we're not looking for volume, but recommendations of talent. Francess had that, and she's been one of our more recent finds when it comes to officials. It doesn't matter if it's a grassroots 12-and-under event or a multi-million dollar Grand Slam, she treats them all alike."

Mudge-Lisk estimates that most days,

she's on site long before players arrive and well after they leave. She doesn't have chair umpire aspirations yet, preferring to stick to the lines of fire. She also knows she won't get rich doing this, having to pay for her own travel expenses to some events. But there's nothing else she'd rather do.

"I just love doing this. It's not glamorous, but it's incredibly addictive."



# Serve fit Up!

#### **Calendar of Events**

#### **USTA LEAGUE NATIONALS**

Twenty-five teams from the USTA/Missouri Valley qualified for



the USA League Tennis National Championships that were held in September and October in

Tucson, Ariz. and Palm Springs, Calif. The Section's top finishers were three teams from Kansas City - 4.0 Men (third place), 4.5 Women (second) and 5.0 Women (fourth). A St. Louis 4.0 men's team took third, and a 2.5 women's team from the Tulsa, Okla., area placed fourth. Congratulations to all of our teams that made national appearances!

#### **NEWS FROM HEART OF AMERICA**

The Overland Park (Kan.) Racquet Club was the site of two special events in October, The Prince Plugged In Challenge Cup II and the Joe Randa Grand Slam Tennis Classic. The Prince tournament (Sept 30-Oct. 2) was an inter-academy competition of some of the nation's elite training facilities, including the host Mike Wolf Tennis Academy, which took third place. Nick Bollettieri's camp won the final, defeating T Bar M Ranch of Dallas.

The Joe Randa Grand Slam
Tennis Classic brought in more than
\$150,000 for the Hope House,
Kansas City's largest shelter for
domestic violence victims, and
Turning Point, a support center for
families facing cancer and other illnesses. Randa, a former Kansas City
Royals player, had several local
celebrities in attendance, including

WTA Tour player Jenny Hopkins, former World Series hero Joe Carter and current Royals pitcher Zach Greinke.

#### **NEWS FROM IOWA**

Preparations are already getting underway for the USA National Special Olympics in Ames, July 3-8, 2006. With more than 3,000 athletes from all 50 states, including 120



players for the tennis competition, it's a massive logistical undertaking, and the USTA/Missouri Valley will lend its support. The USTA will help acquire the 16 officials and numerous volunteers needed for tennis, and help division play-

ers (determing skill level for tournament brackets).

If you would like to volunteer for the tennis competition, register at 2006nationalgames.org. Just click the "Volunteers" button.

To support the second year of the Tennis Welcome Center campaign, the lowa District Community Development Committee developed a multiple age and activity contest focused around the TWC motto: "Tennis - Come Out Swinging."

Contestants from elementary schools and NJTL's were asked to define what the motto meant to them, in posters, photos and essays, while lowa community tennis associations and organizations nominated different aged "Come Out Swinging Superstars" to be judged for their contributions. Cash prizes totaling \$1300 were given out to schools and NJTL contest winners. Plaques were

given to the "Come Out Swinging Superstars."

Winners included:

Poster - Ryan Anderson (Marengo) Photo - Katherine Astor (Fort Dodge), Samuel Felderman (Chariton) Essay - Marshall Felderman (Chariton), Jordan Sagastizado (Des Moines).

Superstar Youth (ages 5-18) -Avery Gibson (Fairfield).

**Superstar Adult (19-49)** - Cindy Rovner (West Des Moines).

Superstar Senior (50+) - Pat Kannenberg (Spirit Lake)

#### **NEWS FROM KANSAS**

Wichita's Nick Taylor (below) won

three titles at the US Open USTA National Wheelchair event in San Diego, Oct. 9. Taylor won the men's quad



singles title, doubles title (with David Wagner of Oro Valley, Ariz.) and the mixed crown (with Tiffany Geller of Redondo Beach, Calif.). Taylor's singles title was his third overall, adding to his 2000 and 2002 US Open championships.

#### **NEWS FROM MISSOURI**

Amine Boustani of Springfield attended the US Open Continuing Education Program in New York City, Sept. 3-5. Boustani was one of 24



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Dec. 2-4	USTA/Missouri Valley Section Annual Conference	Overland Park, Kan.
Dec. 2-4, 9-11 & 16-18	USTA/Missouri Valley Segment 3 Winter Futures	Various Locations
Dec. 10	Oklahoma District Annual Meeting	Oklahoma City
Jan. 14	St. Louis District Annual Awards\Hall of Fame	St. Louis
Jan. 21	Missouri Valley Tournament Directors Workshop	Overland Park, Kan.
Jan. 21	Officials Workshop	Overland Park, Kan.
Jan. 21-25	Kansas Park & Rec. Conference	Overland Park, Kan.
Feb. 3-6	National Community Tennis Development Workshop	Hollywood, Calif.
Feb. 12	Iowa District Spring Meeting	Little Amana, Iowa
Feb. 13-19	\$50,000 Men's Pro Circuit Challenger	Joplin, Mo.
Feb. 18-19	Sectional "Tennis on Campus" Championships	Drake University (Des Moines, Iowa)
Feb. 24	Missouri Park & Rec. Annual Conference	St. Louis

High Performance coaches invited to attend the program. The attendees studied the stages of development in junior tennis, looked at the training/playing regiments of top juniors and pros, and examined the differences between American and international juniors.

#### **NEWS FROM NEBRASKA**

As part of a multi-cultural outreach program, the USTA/Nebraska District gave away approximately 170 free racquets to youths participating in after-school and summer programs. More than 80 students at Marrs Magnet Elementary in south Omaha received free racquets for having perfect attendance at a six-week afterschool program. Nearly 90 kids at Gifford Park in north Omaha received free racquets for having perfect attendance at a five-week summer program. Free racquets for perfect attendance is an on-going effort to promote tennis among Latinos and African-Americans in Omaha.

#### **NEWS FROM OKLAHOMA**

Tulsa's LaFortune Park team coached by Melissa McCorkle, won the 2005 USA Team Tennis Midwest Regional (Youth) Championships in early October. The competition was held in Oklahoma City and included teams from the USTA/Missouri Valley, Intermountain, Midwest and Northern Sections. LaFortune's team members were Amber Adams, Tim Eubanks, Brennan Fox, Shannon Hamilton, Travis Holmes, Ryan Luis, Kalyn Miller and Katie Schuller.

Bill Davis of Shawnee, represented the United States at the Senior World Championships in Antalya, Turkey, Oct. 16-22. Davis posted a 4-1 record in singles and doubles to help the United States' team place second.

Tulsa and Tahlequah each hosted special events in conjunction with **Standing Tall Tennis**, David Dantzer's non-profit Native American organiza-

tion, as several of the region's Indian nations like the Cherokee and Chickasaw, were among those participating. Tulsa's La Fortune Park hosted the largest mixed doubles tournament in the state on Sept. 24, drawing almost 70 teams. Tahlequah's Northeastern State University held a tennis clinic two days later that had 170 kids participate in interactive drills and education sessions about tennis.

#### **NEWS FROM ST. LOUIS**

The Central Institute for the Deaf (CID), a school that has taught children to speak and understand the speech of others in the city for the last 90 years, began a six-week after school tennis program on Oct. 6. Tennis will also be taught in the school's physical education classes.

Dick Johnson (Ballwin, Mo.) captured the men's singles and doubles titles at the USTA Men's 60's Clay Court Championships at the Standard Club in Duluth, Ga., Oct. 9-16.

**CROSS COURT** 



FALL 2005



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