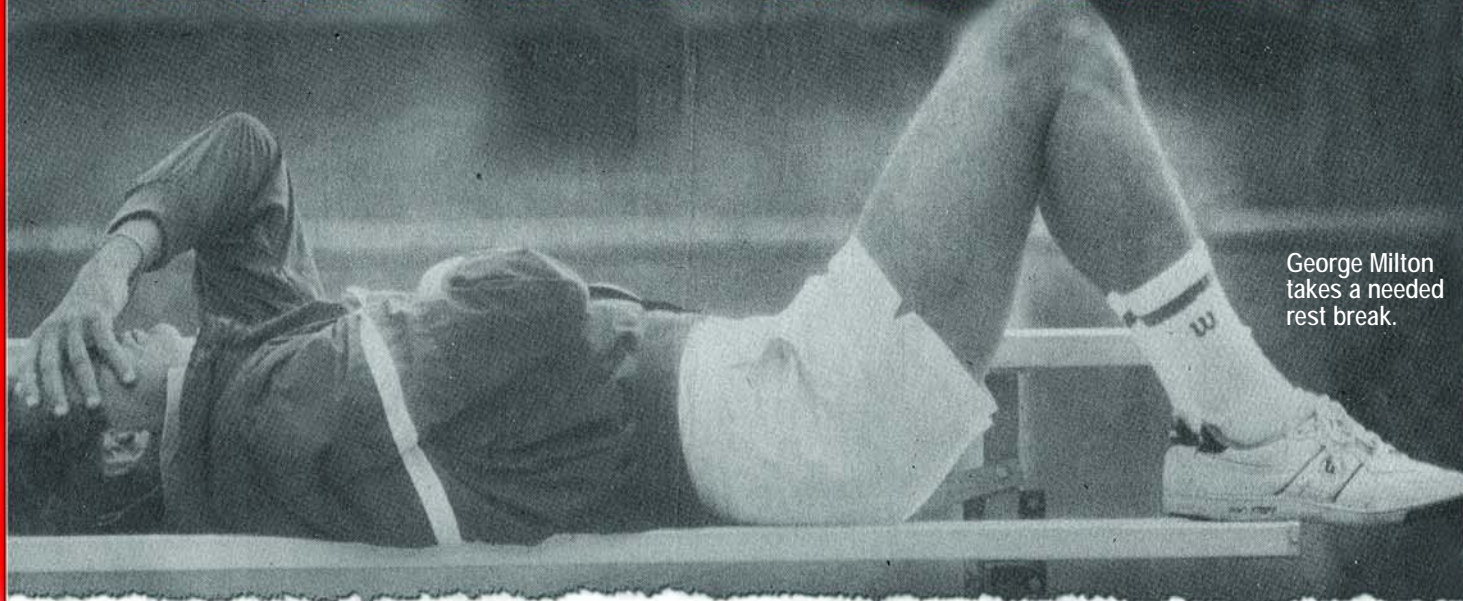


CROSSCOURT



George Milton takes a needed rest break.

There's no time limit
on a love for the game

People often go to great limits for the things they love and hold dear. But to lay love on the line for 120 hours, literally, the way George Milton and Jan Jefferies did when they played a fundraising marathon match in late October through early November of 1987, you have to be both a supreme tennis nut and a little nutty.

Five straight days *and* nights on a Hammond Park tennis court in Emporia, Kan. — 120 hours packed with 2,000 games, 198 sets, blisters galore and a lifetime of memories — proved Milton had an unquenchable love and fortitude for the game. Not that it had ever been questioned before.

Milton, a former coach at Emporia State University (ESU), has always been one of the strongest and most dedicated advocates for tennis in the USTA/Missouri Valley Section.

"Those five days were pretty special to me," said Milton,

Tennis 'Til It HURTS!

recalling the feat. "We had moments when we were playing really well, even after five days. Then there were also some moments we kind of just staggered around. Once you lose sleep you obviously can't make it up.

You just kind of recycle yourself and try to stay alert.

"But it was always fun."

PLENTY OF FAN SUPPORT

Ninety seconds of rest between games was all Milton and Jefferies had for five days as they went for

what they believed then would be a famed entry in the *Guinness Book of World Records*. (They later learned that the record time they set out to surpass had already been broken.) They were allowed five minutes of rest per hour, but the pair "banked" it all each day, preferring to take one two-hour block of time per day.

Food and drink? Milton and Jefferies ate granola bars and bananas on the sidelines because there was no time to eat or digest anything heavy. Bathroom breaks? The pair took them during their 90-second changeovers or two-hour daily breaks.

See TENNIS MARATHON • Page 4



Uniquely
Tennis



Kansas junior
playing in
Wimbledon!





The USTA/Missouri Valley Section publishes **CrossCourt** quarterly, focusing specifically on the members and events in the section. Your feedback is welcome.



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We encourage you to "go to the net" and keep updated at your USTA/Missouri Valley Section Web site.

Learn more... Stay informed... Your section Web site is a great source for upcoming events, features, photos, results and more. Plus, you can download back issues of **CrossCourt**.

Tennis is the sport that welcomes us all

Karin Korb had never played tennis, having always considered it an uninviting, "country club" sport. But after she broke her back during her senior year in high school, Karin discovered tennis was the one sport that welcomed her to play — in a wheelchair.

Today, Karin's the No. 2-ranked wheelchair player in America, and she is keeping busy spreading the word about one thing is, as the headline on page 3 of this *CrossCourt* states, "uniquely tennis."

Tennis truly is a sport for everyone. Players in wheelchairs clearly understand that. The barrier is often getting others, able-bodied players, for instance, to understand the welcome mat has always been out for wheelchair players to participate in USTA programs, including League tennis. Does your League team recruit wheelchair players? (You have to then be certain your matches are contested on accessible courts.) And realize wheelchair players compete right alongside able-bodied players. The lone exception to the rules is that they receive two bounces, rather than one.

I'm proud of the work the USTA does around the country, but especially here in the Missouri Valley to bring the game of tennis to people with disabilities — from wheelchair tennis to introducing the game to those with special needs, the hearing impaired and injured U.S. veterans.

It's our game — all of us.



all the **Racquet**

Mary Buschmann
USTA/Missouri Valley Executive Director

KEEP THEM PLAYING About 300,000 kids play high school tennis. Their "season" lasts around eight weeks, then several of them hang their racquets up, and that's it. The majority, I fear, don't play much when tennis is "out of season" on the scholastic calendar.

We've got to keep them playing, during the summer and after graduation. Let them know they've got options, especially

Junior Team Tennis (JTT). Through JTT, they can keep playing, fine tuning their game and enjoying the bond with teammates.

If they're off to college, urge them to get involved with Tennis on Campus, either through an existing program or by even starting one, themselves, at their new school. And, of course, we welcome fresh faces for USTA League tennis.



WTT Discover that World Team Tennis serves up some of the most fun in tennis. We in the Missouri Valley are especially lucky with three franchises in our section — the Kansas City Explorers, St. Louis Aces and Springfield Lasers. Adding to the thrills this summer, those three times are vying for the first "Show-Me Cup."

But you can be more than a spectator when it comes to WTT. Play in a league of your own! WTT Recreational Leagues offer high-energy co-ed team play for players of all ages and abilities. Visit **wtt.com** to find a league near you.

IT'S YOUR GAME™



New campaign focuses on getting people on the court more

"Find a court... Find a partner... Find a program... It's your game!"

That is the USTA's new call to action as it introduces a new marketing campaign to urge current tennis players to play more often and former players to get back on the court. It's Your Game™ focuses on the emotional connection recreational players have to the game and their favorite courts.

"The campaign highlights why people play or what they are missing by not playing," said USTA Managing Director of Marketing & Development Kathy Francis. "It reminds them that it's your escape, your workout, your bond to friends and family — It's your game."

While the national campaign has concentrated on five different public courts from throughout the

country, the USTA/Missouri Valley introduced It's Your Game at **missourivalley.usta.com** with a series of articles about some of the unique courts in the section (see page 4).

National advertisements began appearing in April to coincide with the debut of the re-designed **USTA.com**. The Web site now offers a wide range of new services and data bases that will help you find a local court, a playing partner or information about a variety of tennis programs. (New section Web sites will also be launched soon.)

It's Your Game follows the 2005 USTA/TIA (Tennis Industry Association) *Tennis Participation Study*, which identified a 4.1 percent increase in tennis participation vs. 2004, with 5.8 million new players hitting the court last year.

Uniquely Tennis

Jacob Johnson believes he's viewed as just another player on his Topeka high school team.



Sport allows many wheelchair students their only opportunity to compete with peers

The opportunity to compete — to put one's athletic skills to the test — is one of the greatest joys of playing sports. Unfortunately, for many high school-aged wheelchair athletes, the opportunity to compete interscholastically isn't always afforded to them.

Many sports are simply at a loss to address the varying challenges of intermingling disabled and able-bodied high school athletes into the competitive fold.

Tennis is an exception. Two high school wheelchair athletes in the USTA/Missouri Valley — Austin Tisdell of Kickapoo High School in Springfield, Mo., and Jacob Johnson of Hayden High in Topeka, Kan. — are putting their skills to the test for their schools playing with and against able-bodied players.

"I just love to compete and play, and I can do that with tennis," said Johnson, who just completed his sophomore year at Hayden. "I think when I'm on

the court, people just see me as an opponent and nothing else."

ONE RULE According to *Friend at Court*, the only rule difference regarding wheelchair athletes participating in either singles or doubles is that the sitting player is allowed two bounces every time the ball crosses his/her side of the net. Nothing else about the game is altered.

"The only concern we've had or looked at was getting verification from the USTA about doubles competitions with wheelchair and non-wheelchair players, and we looked into it, and educated ourselves to the two-bounce rule," said Kevin Garner, assistant executive director for the Missouri High School Activities Association.

"The only modification for tennis is that rule. Plus, if a player's good enough to make a team, then they certainly should be able to play."

TEAM SPIRIT Tisdell and

See **UNIQUE** ■ Page 6

next stop
the big



Chloe Jones to play in game's most storied tournament

It is the dream most kids who pick up a tennis racquet share: To someday play at Wimbledon. A junior from the USTA/Missouri Valley Section will realize that dream this year.

Chloe Jones will compete in The Championships — better known here in the states simply as Wimbledon — in the juniors division. The 16-year-old from Baldwin City, Kan., will travel to England early to also compete in an International Tennis Federation (ITF) junior grass court warm-up event in London, a week prior to Wimbledon.

Jones has skyrocketed up the ITF world junior rankings in 2006. Hovering around 350 at the beginning of the year, Jones took an early spring trip to the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia, reaching the quarterfinals in two events to help vault more than 200 places in the rankings.

In early May, Jones was a part of the U.S. Junior Federation Cup team's winning effort at the North/Central America & Caribbean Junior Championships in Merida, Mexico. Jones went 3-0 to help the U.S. team qualify for the Junior Federation Cup finals later this year.

In 2005, Jones finished the year as the No. 3-ranked girl in the nation in Girls' 16s, but she has since played only 18s events. Jones is coached by Rex Haultain, and trains at the Kansas City Racquet Club.



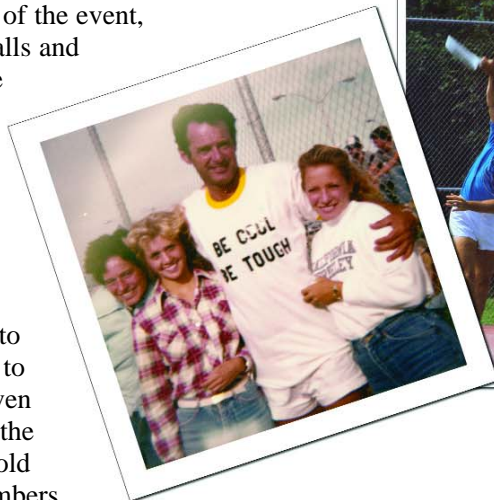
Chloe Jones nails a serve during a recent workout.

Doctors were on site at Hammond Park to monitor play and the players. Milton, who was then the Emporia State head tennis coach, charged his players with every small detail of the event, from running in new balls and towels to keeping score when the players turned into tennis zombies from sleep deprivation.

Fans lined up in droves, sometimes 10 deep behind the Hammond Park courts to scream encouragement to Milton and Jefferies, even in the waning hours of the morning, and despite cold conditions. Family members massaged the players on changeovers, when either Milton's or Jefferies' energy flagged. But the two players never stopped. Forehand after forehand, backhand after backhand. For five full days.

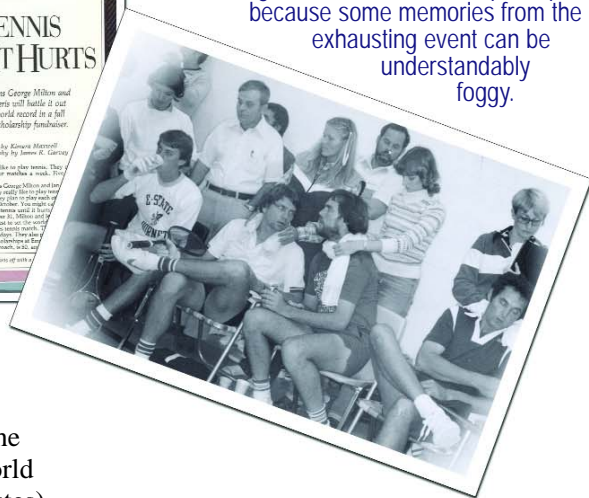
FOUR MARATHONS The fundraiser was called "Tennis 'Til It Hurts" (TTIH). It was a perfect name, since it took both men nearly 10 days to fully recuperate from the marathon.

"I still have people come up to me all the time asking about those matches, people who wonder how we did it," said Milton, who actually did four of the TTIH marathons as fundraising efforts for Emporia State's tennis program, the last being the duo with Jefferies. "There were times I don't know how we did it. We were hanging on by a thread."



MARATHON MEMORIES

The support of friends and family was vital to keeping the marathon men of "Tennis 'Til It Hurts" going! Items from a scrapbook, including a *Kansas Magazine* article, are crucial for George Milton and the other participants because some memories from the exhausting event can be understandably foggy.



Milton took part in all four of the TTIH events, and he did nab a world record in 1981 (65 hours, 30 minutes) for the second of those marathons, a doubles match with Jefferies, Les Stafford and Ken Hush. Again, that match was eclipsed by another four-some, and the *Guinness Book of World Records* retired awards a few years later that they deemed "injurious to people's health."

UNFORGETTABLE? In all, Milton, the coach at Emporia State for 35 years (1965-99), helped raise nearly \$65,000 for the school's tennis scholarship endowment, with his tireless fundraising efforts.

He's a cult hero in Emporia for the marathons and the legions of players he has helped introduce the game to. The

Hammond Park court still holds special memories for him, even if the details are a bit hazy. The ESU courts, a mere 25 yards away from the Hammond Park court, were named in his honor in May of 2004 for his service to the university — and the sport.

"It's amazing how many people still bring (the marathons) up," Milton said. "I guess it's good to be known for something, especially doing something you love. It was quite an experience, that's for sure, especially the lead-up to each one and the actual playing. You don't forget something like that, but you can't exactly remember it, either."



MEMORABLE COURTS

Some courts are memorable for the people you met on them or for the matches contested within their boundaries. These courts in the USTA/Missouri Valley Section stand out because of their setting — the underground cave courts of Carthage, Mo., and the "Court of Dreams" surrounded by corn fields in Charles City, Iowa. Learn all about these remarkable courts at the section Web site, as we celebrate the new USTA "It's Your Game" campaign at missourivalley.usta.com.



Dot and Sam Saunders



Cupid's Court

A match made in tennis heaven

Dot Saunders vividly remembers the first time she met her husband Sam. It was on the LaFortune Park tennis courts in Tulsa, Okla., and Dot didn't know then that Sam — an opponent across the court — would someday become the love of her life.

All she cared about was that Sam's mixed doubles partner kept hitting sitters that begged to be put away. So, Dot poached and plugged this stranger-at-the-time named Sam with a stinger of a shot, unbeknownst to her that the volley was Cupid at work, using tennis balls instead of arrows.

"Sam was better than I was, but I wanted to show him I could play that day," said Dot. She did, and in doing so, set in motion a love story of a different kind.

An athletic girl who began playing the game at 16 in her hometown, Lawrence, Kan., Dot found the sport a great family activity, and a Rolodex-expanding one as well when she moved to Tulsa shortly after college in the early 1980s. Dot immersed herself in the Tulsa tennis scene, becoming a

regular at LaFortune Park, playing whenever she could.

She was a frequent player in USTA Leagues and in numerous summer tournaments in her home state. Dot also participated in Native American tennis tournaments in Oklahoma (she is half Cherokee and half Choctaw) and other areas of the United States.

"I traveled a lot playing tennis when I was single, Tucson, northern California, all the Valley tournaments," said Dot. "I'd play anywhere and any time I got the chance. I still do. It's a lot of fun, and I've met so many people."

Little did Dot know that the most fateful of meetings would come on the LaFortune courts in 1990. Arriving at the courts that day, she saw a friend hitting with a guy Dot had never met before. After some initial hellos and introductions, the group started up a little mixed doubles match.

The volley that tattooed Sam left more than a fleeting mark on his chest. He called Dot up soon after and asked if she wanted to play some time.

"I said, 'Sure, let's go hit,'" said Dot, remembering Sam's smooth approach. "Our first date was at the tennis courts. A year later, we were married. It was kind of funny meeting Sam (at LaFortune). I'd always said that I wanted to meet someone that played tennis."

The tennis theme continued on the honeymoon, when the newly-hitched pair went to the US Open in 1991 to celebrate their nuptial.

"We've been to the Open three times already, for our first, fifth and ninth anniversaries," said Dot. "We love it."

Mr. and Mrs. Saunders have excelled on the court, too. The pair were the No. 1-ranked 9.0 NTRP mixed team in Oklahoma in 1996, and though the Mrs. still gets out to the court at least once a week, a knee injury has hampered her play lately. She's planning on playing leagues this season, then considering a knee surgery after the season is over.

"I used to play a lot of singles," said Dot. "I'm just a doubles player now."

And her favorite partner is still Sam. Their love match is in the 15th set and going strong.

Say 'I do' to entering this national tournament

Down the aisle and onto the court!

You and your spouse can put your love on the line during the 2006 USTA National Husband & Wife Tournament. The USTA/Missouri Valley is hosting the mixed doubles event July 21-23 at the Plaza Tennis Center in Kansas City.

The winning couple will claim a USTA National Championship "gold" ball.

The tournament is for husband-and-wife teams only. **To enter, you and your doubles partner must be legally married – to each other.** The entry fee is \$70 per team (USTA membership required), and there's still time to enter. **The entry deadline isn't until July 14.**

Visit usta.com and click TennisLink™ for more entry details, using the tournament ID 404307106.

For more information, contact the tournament director Scott Hanover at **816-784-5100** or Scott_Hanover@kcmo.org.

The USTA/Missouri Valley has already hosted one other USTA National Championship – the recently completed Women's 65, 75 & 85 Indoors. The Kansas City Open 5's to be held in September, also at the Plaza Tennis Center, is a Category 2 USTA national tournament.



Johnson are both good enough. They have been competing for the last two years in high school matches, playing singles and doubles for their respective teams. Both have left a lasting impression on their teammates, coaches and opponents with their skill and determination.

"I had some struggles at first with doubles and getting used to standing partners, since I hadn't done that before," said Tisdell, the 2004 and 2005 US Open USTA National Wheelchair Champion in Women's A doubles. "At first, I think people were a little afraid. But once we started playing more together, we'd get used to it."

Tisdell says playing and competing in high school tennis has been one of her greatest joys. She said the sport helped ease her transition socially when her family moved from San Diego to Springfield in 2004.

"So many of my friends are tennis players," said Tisdell.

Susan Lynch, Tisdell's coach last year at Kickapoo, says the joy goes both ways. Having Tisdell be a part of the squad the last two seasons has been beneficial for everyone involved, including Lynch, making her a better coach.

"(Everyone) had seen wheelchair ten-



(L-R) Jackie Cimino paired with Austin Tisdell to defeat Vicki Tucrost and Alana Nichols in the Women's A Doubles final of last fall's USTA National US Open Wheelchair Championships.

nis in some way, but Austin was the first junior wheelchair player they'd come across on a day-to-day basis," said Lynch. "It's so inspiring to watch her and watch the girls learn from her, and it's made our team spirit something spe-



Jacob Johnson (L) plays doubles with partner Ian Quintan.

cial. I think Austin is proving that being in a wheelchair isn't a disability on court; it's just a different way of doing things."

Johnson says he was worried about acceptance initially, being new to the sport, but that thought disappeared rather quickly when the team and his coach, James Sandstrom, embraced him wholeheartedly. Johnson also said his competitive thirst kicked in once on court with his standing partners, and that quenching it by playing is the best part of the game.

"I'm a competitive person, like anyone. So, it's been really great being a part of the action," said Johnson. "I like winning and I hate losing just as much as anyone else."

'GOT THEIR BACKS'

Educating everyone involved is something that goes part and parcel with incorporating wheelchair athletes into competitive situations — something the USTA is trying to be more cognizant of and proactive about. Most players are unaware that

wheelchair athletes can participate in and compete against the able-bodied in any USTA program, whether it be USTA Leagues, Junior Team Tennis or local sanctioned tournaments.

"The big push is inclusion and integrated sports for everyone," said Karin Korb, the No. 2-ranked women's wheelchair player in the United States. "I can speak for a lot of kids when I say the USTA has got their backs on many different levels, whether it's creating opportunities to play, working on accessibility issues or just educating people. Still, we've got a lot of work left to do grassroots-wise."

Which is why the USTA recently partnered with BlazeSports America, a group whose sole mission is to increase awareness and opportunities for wheelchair and disabled athletes. The partnership yields fruit every time a player like Tisdell or Johnson competes.

"Very often people are fear-based and that stops them in their tracks," said Korb, who is also program development manager for BlazeSports. "They don't know what to do, how to deal, where to start, how to proceed. We need to educate them. (Kids like Austin and Jacob), they're carrying the weight now for themselves, as well as a lot of people to come. But they're educating everyone around them, as well as breaking down barriers and changing perceptions."

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Flip your calendar to December and circle Dec. 8-10 right now. Those are the dates of the 2006 USTA/Missouri Valley Annual Conference to be held in Overland Park, Kan. Our special guest is one of tennis' most enthusiastic ambassador's, former French Open doubles champ Luke Jensen.

MEMBER BENEFITS

USTA/Missouri Valley membership has many benefits. Have you been taking advantage?

Check out all the new benefits being offered specifically to section members at missourivalley.usta.com – benefits such as Continental Airlines offering discounted fares to New York during the US Open.

So, visit the Web site and click the "Benefits" option under Membership.



CAUSE TO CELEBRATE

Luke Jensen (center) finds himself surrounded by kids from the Advantage in Sports Foundation, during a Tennis Block Party held May 4 to celebrate the Grand Re-Opening of the Oklahoma City Tennis Center. Approximately 300 tennis players participated to commemorate the \$1.8 million upgrade of the largest tennis facility in Oklahoma. The trademark berms that enclosed the tennis center were removed, on-court lighting was improved, the pro shop and locker rooms were renovated, and amenities like misting stations were added for player comfort. "This facility will now be one of the top tennis centers in not just Oklahoma or the Missouri Valley, but the nation," said Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett. The mayor played a special doubles challenge match, partnering with Jensen, who also conducted a junior clinic. Throughout the USTA/Missouri Valley, other Tennis Block parties have already been held or are scheduled for later this summer.

WORLD TEAMTENNIS

World TeamTennis always offers friends a great time, but the competition within the USTA/Missouri Valley should be especially interesting this July.

First, the three teams based in the section (all in Missouri) – the Kansas City Explorers, St. Louis Aces and Springfield Lasers – will vie for the inaugural "Show-Me Cup."

Second, World TeamTennis always brings the stars to the USTA/Missouri Valley. The Explorers again have the dynamic **Bryan Brothers** playing doubles for them. The brothers, Bob and Mike, are currently ranked No. 1, on the heels of Grand Slam wins at the 2005 US Open and '06 Australian Open. Meanwhile, the Lasers welcome back 2004 French Open champ **Anastasia Myskina**. As for the Aces, they'll be hosting matches that bring the legend, 14-time Grand Slam champ **Pete Sampras**, and the always popular **Anna Kournikova** to St. Louis.

Finally, the three World TeamTennis franchises in the Section have special offers for USTA members. For tickets information and complete schedules visit each team's Web site: kcexplorers.com, stlouisaces.com and springfieldlasers.com.

You can get in on the action. For information about Recreational World TeamTennis visit wtt.com.



Maria Coronado works on her serve toss as she and more than 250 other Kansas City Mo., School District eighth graders are introduced to the game during the May 9 YES (Youth Education through Sports) Clinic. The clinic was held at Kansas City's Rockhurst University, which served as the host university for the May 10-13 NCAA Division II Men's and Women's Championships. Valdosta State (Georgia) captured the men's championship, and BYU-Hawaii claimed its sixth women's crown in eight years.

June 17 | **Wichita, Kan.**
Tennis Block Party
McAdams Tennis Center

June 24-28
Kansas City, Mo.
Terrific 32 Tournament

June 26 - July 2
Edmond, Okla.
Women's \$10,000 Pro Circuit
Kickingbird Tennis Center

July 1-5 | **Omaha, Neb.**
National Open Boys & Girls 12s
Koch Family Tennis Center

July 3-9 | **Ames, Iowa**
Special Olympics
USA National Games
Iowa State University

July 3 | **Des Moines, Iowa**
Tennis Block Party
Birdland Park

July 7 | **Merriam, Kan.**
Tennis Block Party
Brown Park

July 7-9 | **Oklahoma City**
USTA/Missouri Valley
Outdoor Championships
35, 45, 55, 65, 75 & Open
Oklahoma City Tennis Center

July 17-23 | **Joplin, Mo.**
Men's \$10,000 Futures
Pro Circuit Tournament
Millennium Tennis
& Fitness Club

July 21-23
Kansas City, Mo.
USTA National Husband & Wife
Hard Court Championships
Plaza Tennis Center

July 24-30 | **Godfrey, Ill.**
Men's \$10,000 Pro Circuit
Lewis & Clark
Community College

July 26-30 | **Omaha, Neb.**
National Zonals Boys & Girls 12s
Koch Family Tennis Center

July 26-30 | **St. Louis**
National Zonals Boys & Girls 16s
Dwight Davis Tennis Center

July 27-29
Kansas City, Mo.
Junior Team Tennis
Section Championships
Plaza Tennis Center

July 31 - Aug. 4
St. Joseph, Mo.
Women's \$10,000
Pro Circuit Tournament
Noyes Tennis Center

Aug. 3-6 | **St. Louis**
USTA League
Section Championships
4.0, 4.5, 5.0 Adults
& 3.0, 3.5 Seniors

Aug. 10-13
Kansas City, Mo.
USTA League
Section Championships
2.5, 3.0, 3.5 Adults
& 4.0, 4.5 Seniors

Aug. 11-13 | **Tulsa, Okla.**
Juniors Segment 2
Section Championships
LaFortune Park

Aug. 24-27 | **Topeka, Kan.**
USTA League
Section Championships
Adult Mixed
Kossover Tennis Center

Aug. 26 | **New York**
Arthur Ashe Kids Day
National Tennis Center

Sept. 1-7 | **Omaha, Neb.**
USTA/Missouri Valley
Outdoor Championships
30, 40, 50, 60, 70 & Open

Sept. 12-17 | **Belleville, Ill.**
USTA National Indoor ROHO
Gateway Classic
Wheelchair Tennis Tournament
Kings Point

Sept. 14-17
Oklahoma City
USTA League
Section Championships
Super Senior & Senior Mixed
Oklahoma City Tennis Center

CROSSCOURT



SPRING/SUMMER 2006

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