

# Tennis Tank

## Big boys make noise

As the final ball was hit, sophomore Tate Larsen and freshman Hank Lucas had just been defeated 4-6, 6-4, 2-6. Both of them were fuming with anger after their one big weakness as a doubles team was exposed, their mobility, thus ending their season.

The two breezed through their first round district match against Ryan Woolsoacraft and Tucker Rowe of Council Bluffs TJ o and o. The win matched them with the #4 seed, Des Moines East's duo of sophomore William Chhim and junior Kade Dolphin. Chhim hit a hard forehand that moved the two all over the court which took a big toll on them in the third set.

A team with two of the more bulky tennis players in the state did not seem like a recipe for success, but more like a unlikely duo. They became known as Tank when coach Jerry Kinder accidentally blended their first names.

Larsen and Lucas began playing together at the Hyperion Field Club Tennis Academy when they were young. Tennis pro Tim Brickley remembered them. "Hank cracked me up how he always wanted to play the next drill and not sit on the benches, and Tate was the opposite, he said, "lying on the floor under the benches."

A key in the cog was Lucas' older brother and two-time state qualifier graduate Jack Lucas. "It helped out that Jack would help us with our shots and other stuff," Larsen said.

What worked was Lucas' down the line forehands past net players and his ability to lob. This set up Larsen at the net.

They started the year playing #4 doubles,

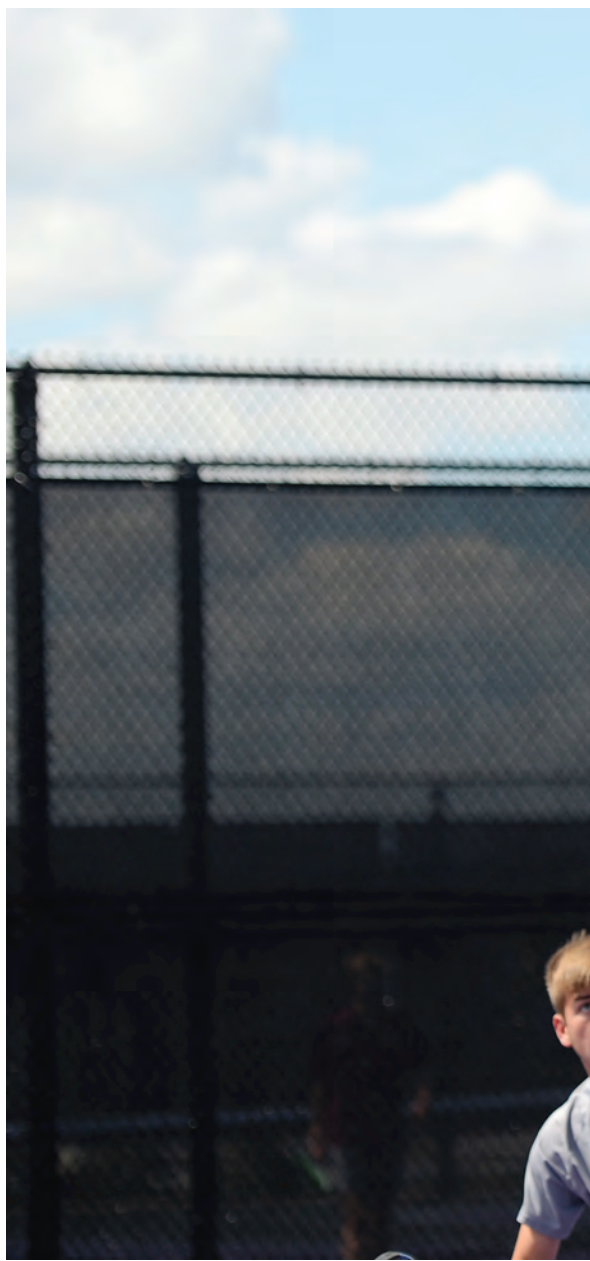
then moved to #3, winning their first four matches at the new position. Their season record was 15-5, the last match being a heart-breaker in team substate. Cam Johnson and Raife Axne on the tension-filled match 2-6, 6-2, 6-1 to take the meet 4-5, sending them to team state.

"Probably our best moment as a team was the (Dennis Hoefle) Ankeny Invite," Lucas said. "We weren't expected to win the tournament but we went out there and shocked a lot of people." Even the coach, Leslie Shipp, left at the beginning of the #3 doubles match to coach a JV meet.

After surviving a first round, three-set scare to Roosevelt's Issac Dotson and Gavin Copeland, 6-3, 4-6, 10-6 that saw them up 4-3 in the second set, they beat Ankeny second round to put them in the championship match. They dropped the first set to Valley's Grant Songer and Nate Miller 3-6, then battled to win 7-6, 10-7. It was only the 10th time in school history that a Johnston team won a championship in the tournament.

Not only did they win the Ankeny Invite, but they nearly won the Johnston Invite as well. They pulled out two close matches 6-5 to both Pella and Norwalk. They lost to Waukee's Wyatt Karras and Ben Lavastida 5-6, just falling short of winning both tournaments.

Yet even in second, they proved that they could hang with about anybody if they played how they knew they could. "If we outsmart them like we usually do, and smash the ball over the net and don't get run all over, we will win a lot," Larsen said.



1. Lining up a backhand, sophomore Nicholas Launderville tries to keep Dowling Catholic's Evan Schultheis pinned to the baseline. Launderville lost the #4 singles match, but he and partner senior Chris Yao won the #2 doubles match in three sets. (Photo by: Richard Palmer)
2. Freshman Tyler Barp hits a serve against DM Lincoln during his #5 singles. He won 1 and 2. Senior Ben Kreamer liked when Coach Jerry Kinder put them on courts next to each other so Kreamer could encourage Barp. Barp posted a 13-9 record. (Photo by: Lexi Copeland)
3. Just as crafty as his older brother Jack, freshman Hank Lucas looks to smack his forehand down the line in the first round of districts against Council Bluffs TJ. Lucas and partner sophomore Tate Larsen won 0 and 0. Lucas finished the year 11-1 in singles and 16-5 in doubles. He had eyes on his brother's all-time career wins records. (Photo by: Jordyn Cimmiyotti)
4. Senior Chris Yao hits a top spin forehand to Dan Halstead of Urbandale during the #1 singles match he won 1 and 1. Although he cramped during the district championship match against Sam Fouts of Waukee and lost, he still qualified for state, the third player in school history to qualify three times. (Photo by: Richard Palmer)
5. Being pushed deep by East's net-rushing doubles team, sophomore Tate Larsen looks for an opening. Larsen and his partner freshman Hank Lucas lost the district match in three sets. They did win #3 doubles at the Dennis Hoefle Invite, only the 10th players in school history to score a championship at the tournament. (Photo by: Jordyn Cimmiyotti)



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Story By: Will Burch  
Captions By: Staff

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