



DOMINATING THE OFFSEASON

Jim Geerdes

Tennis is a game of dedication. Senior Joe Hoff has learned that the hard way.

As a freshman, he thrived. The first year ace of the City High team shredded through opponents four years his senior. The success motivated him. He wanted more. But with triumph comes failure. His freshman school season quickly ended as he was knocked out before state playoffs. The sting of defeat made Hoff realize something needed to change.

Hoff has always been an athlete. He excelled at baseball, soccer, basketball, and of course, tennis. The 6'4" senior has the frame to be successful at any of these sports at the next level, but he had to choose. Freshman year forced Hoff to make one of the most difficult decisions of his life. What sport? The workload of high school plus juggling four sports was not an option for Hoff, for he sought to be the best.

"I realized that in order to succeed, playing other sports would take time away from playing on the court," Hoff said. "I needed to focus on tennis."

And focus he did. Hoff has played nearly three hours of tennis everyday for the past three years. Chip Hardesty, Hoff's high school coach, has guided him on and off the court.

"I think I've helped his mental approach," Hardesty said. "Physically, he's at the point in his career where he is mostly self-coached."

Hoff has also reached out to many professional sources to improve his game. Notably, Sarah Borwell, a British doubles professional player, gave Hoff an understanding of the practice necessary to excel at the

sport. Matt Hagan, the assistant men's tennis coach at the University of Iowa, is currently assisting Hoff to play at the college level.

The senior has used this guidance to propel himself onto the center stage of tennis in Iowa. Hoff had a strong junior season and a stronger postseason push. Unseeded, Hoff battled his way through three rounds, including a semifinal against then number two in the state, John Bowser, to reach the championship match against cross town rival West High's ace Jiung Jung. Hoff and Jung battled through two sets, when Jung finally pulled ahead. City's ace ended his junior season second in the state.

Hoff, a friend of Jung, was happy with his performance but wanted more.

"Jiung [Jung] is a great player," Hoff said. "I'm happy to see him succeed, but next year I'll have him."

Hoff is currently 387th in the nation and a three star college recruit according to tennisrecruiting.net. He has travelled to Kansas City, Oklahoma City, Omaha, and other places in the Midwest to participate in tournaments, ultimately trying to improve his national ranking.

College is currently Hoff's number one priority. Currently undecided, Hoff has shown interest in Division I Creighton and some high level Division III programs, such as Case Western in Cleveland and Sewanee in Tennessee.

"The competition drives me," Hoff said. "Tennis has taught me hard work. Three hours a day, everyday. You have to focus."