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Mansfield, Tigers dominate at H-DN tennis

Ray Aspuria/The Times-Standard
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EUREKA -- Ask a Humboldt-Del Norte high school tennis coach their definition of dominance and you'll probably get Arcata as an answer. From top to bottom the team is infused with the best tennis talent the county has to offer and on Saturday, they finally dotted the i's and crossed the t's on their stranglehold on the conference.

The Tigers completed a near sweep of the H-DN singles championship, dropping the No. 4 matchup to Eureka.

But Arcata mauled the rest of the competition, placing their stamp as one of the best tennis squads the county has seen.

The Tigers' top player, Casey Mansfield, ran roughshod through the bracket on his way to a 6-1, 6-0 victory over North Coast Prep's Matt Madonick for the title.

"It feels great," Mansfield said after his win. "I've been in the semis and finals before and this year was my year."

Like a great painter, Mansfield used his racket as a brush, to give the audience a masterpiece.

A powerful serve and equally strong forehand shots set the tone for the matchup. With Maddonick playing catchup to even have a chance to return his shots, Mansfield attacked the net and it was over.

Leading 3-1 in the first set, Mansfield's smash winner on 30-Love gave everyone in attendance the evidence they needed. Mansfield was just that good and he went on to claim the title.

Perhaps even more impressive was his relaxed demeanor throughout the contest.

"It's easier to play relaxed and not worry about the score," he said.

With Mansfield domination in the top billing, it didn't look good for everyone else.

And Alex Kusmak made sure of that in the No. 2 matchup.

Like Mansfield, Kusmak dissected Del Norte's David Standing for a 6-1 6-0 win.

An extremely overpowering first serve sealed the deal for Kusmak. Unable to return the opening salvos, Standing had little to nothing else to offer in terms of competition. While he did provide a couple of key shots, Kusmak would answer.

Even with the thorough victory, Kusmak noted he wants to keep improving his serve. But he was ecstatic about the win.

"It's pretty good for the team and team spirit," he said after the match.

The Tigers continued their race as the top team as freshman Brendan Winnacott, playing in his first tournament, defeated Fortuna's Josh Sarvinski 6-4, 6-3 to claim the No. 3 title.

Unfortunately for Ben Miller at the No. 4 spot, his luck wasn't quite as good as his teammates. Facing a determined Kyle Carbis, Miller was downed 6-3 6-2.

But Edward Hunter and Erik Martini downed their respective opponents to claim the No. 5 and No. 6 titles.

Despite their supremacy over the county however, the Tigers are still realistic about their chances in North Coast Section play.

"It's a whole different league down there," said Mansfield, who will travel to Union City on May 4 for sections.

Head coach Jason Maki agreed.

"I preach early to these guys as a coach to stay focused on goals, improving their game and staying humble," he said. "Because what we do here is going to happen 10 times worse when we go to sections."

The Tigers hope to reproduce their performance April 20 during the H-DN doubles championships.