

Flower leads four Giants to districts



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

BILL FLOWER of Fremont Ross, shown in this 1996 file photo, will team with Pete Scranton in the district tournament Friday at Bowling Green State University. Singles players Ryan Newman and Andrew Humberger also qualified for the two-day tournament.

Humberger makes successful switch to singles

By **BRIAN SPIESS**
Sports editor

Andrew Humberger proved he can take responsibility for himself.

The Fremont Ross senior, known primarily for his doubles play, finished third in singles in the sectional tennis tournament to advance to Friday's district tournament. Joining Humberger Friday in Bowling Green are singles player Ryan Newman and the doubles team of Bill Flower and Pete Scranton.

Flower and Scranton have the best chance to reach the finals and advance to next week's state tournament in Columbus, Ross coach Rick LaFountain said.

But Humberger's success is the most interesting, given his lack of singles play this season.

"You have to rely on yourself more for every point," said Humberger, who lost only to top-seeded Matt Piper of Lexington. "It's going to be your fault whether you win it or lose it."

Most of Humberger's singles

TENNIS

experience came in 1996. After playing doubles for his freshman and sophomore seasons, Humberger was a singles player as a junior. But the success of Flower, Scranton and Newman forced Humberger back to doubles, where he teamed with Jay Farrell this season.

"We had five players who all wanted to play singles this year," LaFountain said. "Andrew's just going back to what he already knows."

"He wanted to play singles his senior year."

That request was accommodated when Flower and Scranton decided to leave a season of singles behind to team up in doubles. Humberger and Farrell took their singles spots alongside Newman for the two-day event at Sandusky.

"We thought we could take some more people to districts," by juggling the lineup, Humberger said.

Humberger won three

straight matches Friday to reach the semifinals before losing to Piper Saturday in three sets. He beat Ashland's Gavin McFarland for third place.

"I knew he had a shot to advance, maybe a 60-40 chance," LaFountain said. "But I didn't think he was going to play *that* well."

His chances will be much slimmer Friday, as competition stiffens as quickly as Humberger's ankle.

LaFountain did not know who Humberger would play first, but he will be doing it on a sprained ankle. Humberger injured the ankle playing basketball Sunday with teammate John Overberg and was told by a doctor to stay off the ankle for two weeks. He skipped practice Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday to rest.

"We're going to feed him 10 million balls this week," LaFountain said of today's practice regimen. "Him and Ryan we'll be hitting a lot of balls."

The lousy odds do not worry

Humberger.

"Slim chance," Humberger said. "Depends on who I play in the first round. I'm not planning on making it very far into it."

"I don't really get nervous when I play. I'm going to win or lose," said Humberger, who began playing tennis eight years ago with his mother Anne. "If they are going to beat me, I'm at least going to give them a match."

"You can never count him out, no matter how big the challenge is," LaFountain said. "The bigger the match, the better he'll play. He's the type of player who is not intimidated by anybody."

Flower said Humberger's play in big matches and understanding of the game are assets.

"And he's got a great forehand," Flower said.

Win or lose, Humberger will make the most of his chance to play singles for at least one more week.

"I proved to myself that I could play singles," Humberger said.