

2024 District Tournament

HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS TENNIS



Fremont Ross senior Kayla Lewis serves. KAYLA LEWIS/PROVIDED TO NEES-MESSENGER

'A cool experience'

Ross senior Kayla Lewis appreciates opportunities

Matthew Horn

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Tennis has been good to Kayla Lewis.

The Ross senior was named to the Northern Lakes League Cardinal Division first team, played on a scintillating stage, and tennis even helped Lewis emerge from her shell.

"It's going to be sad to look back at and realize it's over, but it was a great opportunity to do what I love and meet new people that became a big part of my life," she said.

In the past, Lewis was so committed to her individual competition, it was the only thing she focused on. She deliberately challenged herself to step outside her comfort zone.

"I was a little quiet to start, but by the end of the season I was more comfortable," she said. "Being on the court alone, I can be in my own world, but I learned to communicate. Looking back, I'm surprised how much more confident



Lewis

I am."

Lewis was runner-up at No. 1 singles at the conference tournament this season. She was fourth at No. 1 singles as a junior and fifth in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference at No. 3 as a sophomore.

"It means a lot. I got it last year, but it meant a lot in my last year," she said. "I was able to become a better player. My serve changed, it got faster and had some spin. I got better at doing a little slicing. I took some lessons at Tiffin and it helped with my backhand.

"My mental ability got better. Last year, I got a little upset when I lost. It was better this year."

This year, she lost her first match at district to finish 19-10. She split two matches at district as a junior.

"My goals before the season were to make district, and runner-up for the NLL was pretty awesome," she said. "First team in the NLL. For the first sin-

gles championship, BCSN was there with cameras set up all around the court. That was cool to experience."

Lewis plans to study radiology or learn to be an ultrasound tech. She's undecided whether tennis will be part of the equation.

Ross senior Mariska Rakay and sophomore Elayna Gray were second-team in the NLL Cardinal Division. Junior Julia Barnett was named player of the year as Bowling Green finished first in the conference.

"A lot of my teammates grew and became better players," Lewis said. "They all did something in at least one match where I said, 'Wow.'"

Lisa Wolfe was named Coach of the Year as the Little Giants (4-6) finished third in the conference. To hear Lewis tell it, that's for a good reason.

"This was the year because she works so hard to get us where we need to be," Lewis said. "She really knows

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how to help with what you're struggling with and what the (opponent) is doing (in order) to switch around the game.

"She always keeps our stats and we play practice matches to see how to put things together. Her communication and coaching style — we do a bunch of drills — she tells us what we're doing wrong and what to fix."

Lewis credits Wolfe for helping her grow on the court as well as off.

"Our coach learns about us at practice," Lewis said. "Doing that in front of the team made me more comfortable and I learned more about them as people. She likes to do that so she can learn about us and we can learn about each other."

"It makes us feel like more of a team,

if we all work together, even if we're on different courts, it makes us feel like one. We're able to bond. It brings us close."

mhorn@gannett.com
419-307-4892
X: @MatthewHornNH