

1999 State Tournament

# One of the guys: Watkins state-ready

By **SCOTT TAPPA**  
Sports editor

Ainsley Watkins is clearly frustrated.

It's Wednesday afternoon at Rodger Young Park, and the first girl in Fremont Ross history to reach the state tennis tournament as a singles player is having trouble figuring out how to beat her opponent, a two-headed monster comprised of Buck Young and Pete Scranton.

The frustration is by no

---

**Inside:** Watkins to play exchange student. **Page B4**

---

means deep-rooted or illogical; Young and Scranton are members of the successful Ross boys team, and anyone in Sandusky County would have a tough time beating them 1-on-2.

But such athletic masochism comes with the territory, as Watkins

---

**See WATKINS, B4**

# Watkins caps career with state trip

Continued from B1

prepares herself for what will undoubtedly be stiff competition at Friday and Saturday's Division I tournament at Ohio State's Stickney Tennis Center.



WATKINS

"Guys hit harder than any girls do," Watkins says. "Pete and Buck both hit harder than I do, they give me good points and they give me good rallies. They're both really good players."

Young, who said he has been playing with Watkins for nine or 10 years and said he has never lost to her, is quick to return the compliment.

"She's fast, she hits the ball hard, she has good ground strokes," he says. "She's at that level, she's really fun to play with."

Playing against the guys, who are most likely taller than anyone she will face at state, Watkins is forced to work on specific areas of her game.

"Lobbing and passing shots," she says. "Basically, you have to keep it low to the net, especially when they're approaching."

"And the tempo of the shots coming back isn't tortoise-variety slow, either, which is helpful. The deeper she goes into the tournament, the harder the shots will be," says Ross coach Lisa Wolfe.

"You're not going to see any balls being dinked," Wolfe says.

"Watkins hasn't been doing much dinking herself lately. In the past three weeks, the senior has lost only to Lexington's Melissa Schaub, and earned second place at both the Sandusky sectional and Bowling Green district.

"The whole end of the season, my game's been the best it could be, and that's all I could ask for," she says. "Basically, all my goals that I wanted, I've reached. The top goal was to get to state, now I have to set little goals, like winning my first match, maybe."

In Columbus Independence sophomore Kate Sotsenko, Watkins, who carries a 27-5

record, will be facing a well-decorated player. But the reverse is true for Sotsenko, as Watkins has been reminded lately.

"Getting down there means you're one of the top 16 in the state, and I can't believe it," she says. "I sit down with people and talk about the other girls at state, and I'm like, 'But they're so good,' and they're like, 'Well, you're good too, you made it.'"

"The support's been wonderful, coach, Buck, Pete, the guys, the boosters, (athletic director Art) Bucci, my parents, especially."

October  
30th,  
1999

Ottawa - Sandusky  
Seneca County



JOINT  
SOLID WASTE  
MANAGEMENT  
DISTRICT

## Collection Locations

### Ottawa County

Ottawa County Fairgrounds  
State Rt. 163  
Oak Harbor

### Seneca County

Seneca County Fairgrounds  
Hopewell Ave. - Tiffin  
Enter at Gate 3

### Sandusky County

Sandusky County Health  
Dept.

Parking Lot - Countryside  
Drive - Fremont  
All Bellevue and Fostoria  
residents included.

Call 1-888-850-7224 or 334-  
7222 for more information.

# Watkins loses tight two-set match in state tourney opener

News-Messenger reports

COLUMBUS — When Kate Sotsenko eased up a little, it spelled bad news for Ainsley Watkins.

Watkins, a Fremont Ross senior, lost in the first round of the Division I state tennis tournament to Sotsenko, a Columbus Independence sophomore, 7-5, 6-4 at Ohio State's Stickney Tennis Center on Friday.

"(Watkins) could hang with her as far as baseline to baseline," said Ross coach Lisa Wolfe. "(Sotsenko) was an aggressive player. She would

move up as soon as she could, and that's where she would get the angles.

"Ainsley would sit back at the baseline, but (Sotsenko) would come to the net and 'Boom.'"

Watkins took a 5-2 lead in the first set, benefiting from Sotsenko's mistakes, but could not hold the lead.

"At one point Ainsley was up 5-2, and I know exactly what the other coach told (Sotsenko)," Wolfe said. "At that point, this girl was erring on power hitting, she was so strong, and she was

## Tennis

trying to make these tremendous shots. At that point, she just got the ball over, she was not cleaning her clock with hard shots, she wasn't forcing errors."

In the second set, both players stayed on serve for the majority of the set, but Sotsenko broke Watkins late and closed out the 6-4 win.

In the second round, Sotsenko lost to Michelle DaCosta of Huber Heights Wayne 7-5, 6-4. Two of the Division I

semifinalists are from the Northwest district, Toledo St. Ursula's Anna Volberg and Lexington's Melissa Schaub, who meet today.

Watkins' high school career is over, though, and Wolfe said she handled it well.

"She took it fine," Wolfe said. "It got a little emotional toward the end of the second set, she could probably feel it. But when she came off the court, she was proud. I kept assuring her that she was one of the top 16 in the state, and I think that kept running through her mind."

For Watkins, the first girl in school history to reach the state tournament as a singles player, and Wolfe, who was making her first trip to state as a coach, it was a new experience.

"We had a couple of nice bonding days," Wolfe said. "It was exciting for both of us being rookies, to be in this area full of all these great tennis players. I just kept thinking that Ainsley was one of the top 16 in the entire state.

"Of over 300 high schools in Ohio, 50 were represented at the state level. That was ex-

citing in itself, that Fremont Ross was represented, and for me to be a part of that, I was very thankful."

Watkins is one of five Little Giant seniors who will not be back next season, along with Brittany Ford, Nicole Wolfe, Laura Papalia and Sheri Pollock.

"It's sad that it's over," Wolfe said. "I will really miss her. She was always an exciting player to watch, and I don't know if I'll ever see as determined a player as she is.

"She was a leader; I could always count on her."

## Singles tournaments

COLUMBUS — Lexington's Melissa Schaub, who battled Fremont Ross senior Ainsley Watkins several times this season, lost in the finals of the Division I state singles tournament on Saturday, falling 6-2, 6-1 to Michelle DaCosta of Huber Heights Wayne.

DaCosta, whose title was her second, had earlier beaten Katie Sotsenko of Columbus Independence, who knocked out Watkins in the first round.

In Division II, Huron's Morgan Landes took third place, beating Maria Husain of Marion Pleasant 6-0, 6-3 in the consolation match.