

Iskersky upends Flower in state tennis finals



AT THE NET Jim Flower scores a point in the Class AAA singles championship Saturday against Erick

Iskersky, the eventual winner. The Ross High School senior lost 7-5, 6-3.

By JON DONNAN
News-Messenger Sports Writer
COLUMBUS — Dethroned from his Class AAA tennis championship of 1974, Jim Flower turned over his title to junior Erick Iskersky of Toledo St. John's Saturday.

The 7-5, 6-3 loss to Iskersky was a matter of minor mistakes, as befits a championship bout. "It was so close," said Flower later. "A line shot here and a line shot there with one or two breaks would have been the difference."

Flower lost the coin toss and gave up the first game to Iskersky without scoring a point as approximately 30 fans from the Fremont area crowded into the bleachers.

The powerful Flower serve held strong until the 12th game of the first set when Flower thought he had served a let ball and failed to return Iskersky's service return. There was

no let called and Flower lost the set 7-5.

Double faults and minor mental mistakes weren't the problems that vexed Flower most. It was his high service return on Iskersky's near faultless game. "When you're playing a holding game you have to go all out for that winning shot," said Flower. "And that's where my service return wasn't coming in. He kept his under control but I was hitting mine high."

The high service returns plagued Flower throughout, allowing Iskersky to master the net game more than he has ever in the past. "He kept me away from the nets Saturday," described Flower. "In the past, when he'd stay back on his second serve, I'd take the net and that's how I'd win. This match he didn't and that was smart tennis for him."

The match proceeded evenly in the second set until the sixth game when Flower was

serving to even up a 3-2 Iskersky lead. With a 30-15 advantage, Flower double faulted to bring the game to deuce and then double faulted again to give Iskersky the advantage he needed to break service and take a 4-2 lead. Iskersky won his next game upping his lead to 5-2 before Flower came back in the eighth game to narrow the gap to 5-3.

In the final game of the hot afternoon, Flower's lobs began falling deep into Iskersky's court for the first time and it appeared the Ross star was preparing to break service. On three Flower-advantage points, however, he failed to connect with that one passing shot.

"I learned a lot from this finals match. I won't be quite as conservative. I'll try to hit my volleys a little faster and go for a couple of winners," said Flower.

Flower moves into semifinals

Iskersky also in semis

By JON DONNAN
N-M Sports Writer
COLUMBUS — Jim Flower gets his chance today.

The Ross High School Class AAA tennis singles champion of 1974 advanced easily through the preliminary rounds of state level competition Friday and all indications are that he will get the opportunity to meet Toledo St. John's Erick Iskersky before the day is out today.

"Yes, I am concerned about the loss in the district," said Flower of his 6-3, 6-2, loss to Iskersky in the Toledo district finals. Going into today's possible match, Iskersky, a junior, held a 2-1 edge over Flower in matches played this season.

If they meet today, it will have had to be in the state finals, a rematch of the 1974 state singles finals which Flower won in two sets.

After dismantling Walt Griffith of Walsh Jesuit, 6-1, 6-0, on the strength of a consistent service and precision net work, Flower expressed concern over his mental readiness.

"I feel great physically," said the dark haired Little Giant, "but I'm a little disappointed in myself mentally."

He felt that the higher level competition in today's semifinal and finals matches would bring the needed pressure to sharpen his concentration. Flower moved easily into the quarterfinals Friday where he was scheduled to meet Tom Porter of Cincinnati Withrow.

The meeting came off with Flower earning a 6-3, 6-4 victory but not after a quick bit of shuffling around the area west of the recently constructed courts where the match was scheduled to be played. A brief thunder-shower dampened the courts and with dark skies indicating more to come, officials decided to move the quarterfinal round to the Glenmang Tennis Club, an indoor facility.

It was there that Flower moved into the semifinals of the Class AAA singles. Today, Flower was scheduled to meet Marty Wolfe of Cincinnati St. Xavier in the lower bracket.

Meanwhile, Iskersky moves into the semis of the upper bracket and indications point toward Flower and Iskersky meeting again for the championship this afternoon.



JIM FLOWER, right, of Fremont Ross receives a congratulatory handshake from his Ross High School coach Pete Michaels after winning his first round match in the Class AAA state singles tourney.

Standing behind Michaels is Walt Griffith of Walsh Jesuit, the player Flower had beaten. The Ross state champ defeated Griffith, 6-1 and 6-0. (News-Messenger photos by Jon Donnan)

