

Berks teams thrive in USTA league play

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Wyomissing has put Berks County scholastic tennis on the map this millennium with five state championships, four from the girls (2000-2003) and the most recent from the boys this past spring.

And anyone that has been associated with their successful boys and girls programs will tell you, it certainly helps coming from a good league.

That was part of the thinking of Mike Murphy, who organized and ran a USTA junior tennis league this summer in Berks.

Murphy, who formed the Set Point Tennis Organization in 2008, had six teams involving primarily Berks players in the inaugural Set Point Tennis Organization Junior Tennis League.

Two of those teams - the Set Point Tennis Titans in 18s and Junior Aces in 14s - recently advanced to sectionals after winning a round-robin district tournament against Allentown teams.

They will play Saturday and Sunday in Princeton, N.J., hoping to qualify for the national championships in Alabama in October.

Prior to this year, hand-picked teams were sent to a district tournament randomly over the years. The month-long league this summer created a competitive atmosphere, allowed the players to enjoy the team format and familiarize themselves with one another, all the while preparing them for the district event.

The co-ed junior team format consists of one six-game pro set (a total of six games played) in boys doubles, girls doubles, boys singles, girls singles and mixed doubles.

The team taking the majority of the 30 games played is the winner.

Murphy said 47 tennis players, ages 12-18, participated in the league this summer.

"There was a diverse mixture of kids from different schools and communities," said Murphy, who also runs tournaments throughout the community, including this weekend's Gring's Mill Open. "The first year was great. Many families and friends came out to watch the matches."

The matches were played at the Wilson High School courts.

Playing for the winning Titans, coached by Murphy, were Zach Simon, Sean MacAusland, Michael Meyer, Samantha Kostras, Rebecca Perkins and Devon Pagerly. Ricardo Saad was not at districts but will play with the team at sectionals.

At regionals the Titans scored 41 points to qualify over the TZ Huskies (31) and Westend 18s Advanced (18).

Playing for the winning Jr. Aces, coached by Sue Koch, were Kalie Boyer, Tommy Heck, Elliot Rhoads, Greta Koch, Aubrey Abel, Robert Patillo and Caroline Patillo. Ross Pillod was on the team but could not play at districts.

The Aces scored 38 points to defeat Slice of Life (29) and Westend 14s (22) at districts.