

Ball Kids Play An Important Role In Edwardsville Futures, Schaefer Bates Directs Group This Year

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
July 16 2023 9:36 PM



EDWARDSVILLE - Every year in the Edwardsville Futures Tournament, the ball kids play a very important role in the event, helping both players and officials. The kids will be back and will have a new supervisor in Schafer Bates.

Bates, a long-time player and ball kid who had a big freshman season for the Tigers, qualifying for the IHSA Class 2A state tournament in doubles and was named first-team All-Southwestern Conference in doubles as well as the league's Rookie of the Year. He was the first-ever ball kid invited to participate in the press conference. Bates will be serving in his sixth tournament as a ball kid.

"Being a ball kid is not an easy task," EHS tennis coach and Futures Tournament Director Dave Lipe said. "It is physically demanding, you have to be focused, you can get hit by a ball if you're not careful and you can get a glare from a player occasionally."

"But I think for a young person like Schaefer, he's grown up with this tournament. This tournament has been there; he's been able to watch pro tennis in his backyard, basically his entire tennis life. I think that's important."

For Bates' part, he enjoys the job and being around both the players and officials.

"I have a really good time," Bates said, "getting out there with the players and getting to talk with the officials and it's just a great tournament."

Bates said for him and the ball kids being up close to the players is "a great experience" and one they will remember for their lifetimes.