



Visitation junior Meredith Lawrence returns a volley during a doubles match against Breck on September 22. The Blazers won 5-2. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

## Balanced Blazer tennis team keeps winning at steady pace

By BILL WAGNER

The Visitation High School tennis team doesn't have players who are particularly imposing physically. They're not likely to slam serves down opponents' throats or make big scoring shots from the baseline. Instead, the Blazers rely on finesse to outlast their opponents, and as of September 22 they had compiled a 9-3 record in the process.

"We don't give away many matches," said coach Danny Wilson. "We don't play over-aggressively. We just put ball after ball into play."

Wilson, 23, who played tennis at Minneapolis South High School, DePaul University and the University of Illinois-Chicago, admitted he's not a taskmaster as a coach. He wants the game to be enjoyable and feels that players who are content have a greater chance for success.

"Our wins come from everybody working hard and having fun," Wilson said. "We're not an intimidating group, but we can relax during matches while playing good fundamental tennis I think we can beat almost any team."

The Blazers have given a good account of themselves despite playing a challenging schedule early this fall. To date, their losses have been to three solid teams—Prior Lake, Blake and Cretin-Derham Hall. Prior Lake and Visitation are both in Section 3AA, so the two clubs might tangle again when playoffs begin the first week of October.

The Blazers also have bested several tenacious teams, including close wins over Minneapolis South, which Wilson called "a fun one," and Hopkins, which he called a "big win for us." Visitation also defeated Simley and St. Paul Academy, which were significant notches in their belt.

Visitation has good depth this year. No. 1 singles player Meredith Lawrence might typify what Blazer tennis is all about. Lawrence, a junior, barely tops 5 feet, but she packs a wallop on the court and was 6-1 in singles match-

es through mid-September.

"She can make all the shots," Wilson said. "She's like a mosquito. She can't overpower people. She just tries to frustrate the other player."

No. 2 singles player Lily Foley might be the only Blazer who doesn't conform to the team blueprint. The junior had posted a 7-1 singles record by mid-month and has impressed the coach with her take-no-prisoners approach.

"She's probably the most aggressive player on the team," Wilson said. "She can hit big from the baseline and she can serve hard. She has pretty strokes."

At No. 3 and 4 singles are junior Maddie Palmer and sophomore Bridget Sicard. The two are basically interchangeable, according to Wilson.

Behind them is 7th-grader Sarah Voelkers, who plays sparingly at singles and doubles, but could move up soon. "She has a bright future," Wilson said.

The No. 1 doubles team is composed of senior captain Morgan Morrison and junior Katherine Voelkers. "They're both very athletic," Wilson said. "Morgan never misses and Katherine is a little more aggressive."

Wilson, who doesn't hesitate to shake up his lineup, noted that by the time sectional play rolls around, Lawrence and Morrison might be teamed up at No. 1 doubles.

The No. 2 doubles duo consists of senior captain Sarah Fohrman and junior Emily Doyle, who also have been winning a lot of matches this fall.

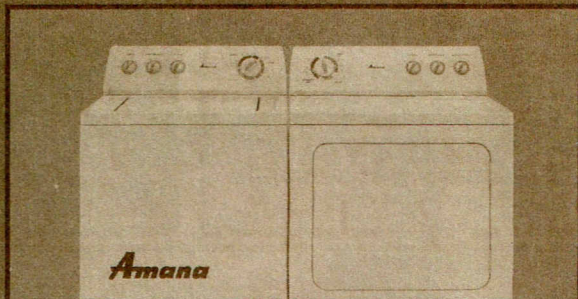
No. 3 doubles is anchored by sophomore Paige Scobee. Wilson rotates in one of two other players as her partner.

Senior Coco Quinlan and freshmen Kate Hallett and Sara Schuld add to Visitation's depth off the bench.

The Blazers are fairly young, so Wilson may be forgiven if he's hesitant to peg his team as a threat to go to state this year. However, he figures his team, along with Eagan and Prior Lake, will be right in the mix.

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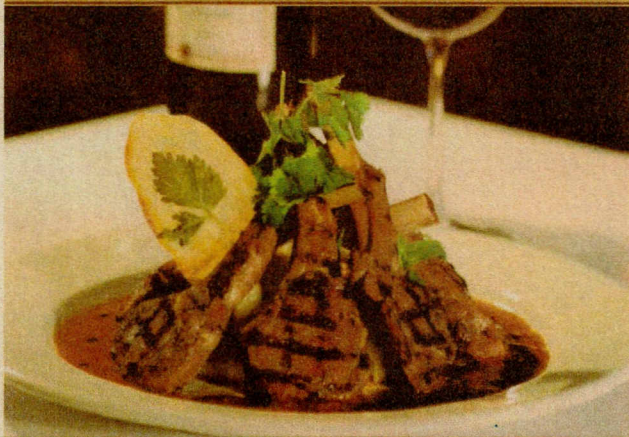
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