



Three story lines to watch

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By Jim Paulsen, Star Tribune

Edina continues its generation of excellence

According to the Minnesota State High School League, 224 teams and more than 5,700 athletes competed in girls' tennis in 2010. That's more athletes than competed in girls' hockey, and more teams than in girls' soccer.

But while rarely in the spotlight it's clear that, from a competitive standpoint, tennis is thriving at the high school level.

Here are three story lines to watch this season, along with the best players and teams across the metro area:

1. A generation of excellence: Of course, the standard-bearer for the past 14 years — and over the history of Minnesota girls' tennis, really — is Edina. The Hornets have won 14 consecutive Class 2A team championships and 29 titles in 33 years (including three by long-defunct Edina East in the late 1970s). Try this for perspective: On the MSHSL website, Edina lists eighth-grader Hannah Hankinson on the roster. Hankinson, 13, had not yet been born when the Hornets won the first championship in their recent streak. And there is no indication the streak will end soon. Two of the metro's top three singles players, Caroline Ward and Meghana Vasireddy, lead off the singles lineup and Edina lost only two seniors from the 2010 champs.

2. Upper hand in the Upper Midwest: It's a small sampling, to be sure, but if the results of the recently completed Dominican Cup tournament in Madison, Wis., are a good indication, Minnesota tennis is as strong as ever. The tournament annually invites some of the best teams across the Midwest and this year, four state teams made the trip. The final results? Minnesota swept the top four places, with Edina taking first, followed by Rochester Mayo, Mounds View and Minnetonka.

3. Broad scope of excellence: While the focus here is on the Twin Cities area, it would be foolish to discuss girls' tennis without acknowledging some of the state's best who do not compete in the eight-county metro. Class 2A defending champion Kelsey Frechette, a senior, and 2010 runner-up Jessica Aney, an eighth-grader, are back for another year of competition at Rochester Century. Frechette had contemplated a transfer to Rochester Mayo, but has returned to Century. And there are three highly regarded names among the highest-ranked players in the U.S. Tennis Association's Northern Region that are absent from the prep scene altogether: Rochester Mayo's Ingrid Neel (who helped the Mayo boys to the Class 2A title last spring); St. Paul eighth-grader Alexis Nelson, the top-ranked 14-year-old player in the state; and Sierra Halverson of Burtrum, a top-10 player in the 18-and-under rankings.

Metro Top 10

R.	TEAM
1	Edina
2	Mounds View
3	Minnetonka
4	Eden Prairie
5	Wayzata
6	Mounds Park Academy
7	Visitation
8	Breck
9	Eagan
10	Stillwater

Others to watch: Lakeville North, Elk River, Minneapolis South, Hopkins, Centennial.

Top singles players

R.	NAME	TEAM
1	Caroline Ward	Edina
2	Meghana Vasireddy	Edina
3	Amber Washington	Mounds Park Academy
4	Melanie Yates	Mounds View
5	Jessica Richards	Minnetonka
6	Maddie Buxton	Eden Prairie
7	Meredith Lawrence	Visitation
8	Shelby Henderson	Lakeville South
9	Tacy Haws-Lay	Mounds View
10	Elena Sullivan	Providence

Others to watch: Lacey Sprinkel, Minneapolis South; Faith Lee, Andover; Patty Zhao, Breck; Sonya Das, St. Paul Academy; Natalie Phippen, Stillwater; Virginia Norder, Rosemount; Carly Hayes, Roseville.