

# {LOCAL SUCCESS} ——— 6.0 mixed doubles tennis team

Winning a local competition in any sport is an impressive accomplishment. Winning at the state level is more impressive. But even more impressive is earning the right to compete with the best players at your level in the entire country. A 6.0 mixed doubles team based out of the Stone Creek Club and Spa in Covington recently placed 3rd in a national 6.0 mixed doubles tennis tournament in Tuscon, Arizona.

What does 6.0 mixed doubles mean? At the end of every year, the USTA (United States Tennis Association) rates each individual player across the country. A player may be rated a 3.0, a 3.5, etc. Mixed doubles tennis involves a man and woman playing tennis together against another man and woman. 6.0 mixed doubles means that the total point ratings of the man and woman playing as a team have to equal 6.0. One player can have a higher rating than another, but the total combined rating has to equal 6.0.

The Covington team, captained by Jason Finley, featured a total of 11 players, 7 of whom went to the national tournament. The team went 9-0 locally, 6-0 at state, and 5-0 at the Southern Regionals in Jackson, Mississippi, earning a spot in the national tournament.

Finley, along with Nicole Schembre, Steve and Danelle Meyers, Ray Hebert, Cherie Pausina, and Mark Malkemus, traveled to Tuscon for Nov 20-22 for the national tourney, where a total of 17 teams from around the United States and Puerto Rico competed. The tournament began with round robin play on the 20th and 21st (similar to the way the World Cup does its opening round), with the semi-finals and finals taking place on Sunday the 22nd.

Each overall match consists of three separate matches occurring simultaneously. Whichever team wins two matches wins the overall match. However, it is important to try and win all three matches

because in the event of a tiebreaker, total number of matches won would decide which team would advance.

The Covington team defeated teams from Puerto Rico, Maryland, and Texas in the 1st round, before losing in the semi-finals to a team from New Jersey. The New Jersey team went on to win the entire tourney. Fortunately, the Covington team rebounded to win the 3rd place match versus a team from Jacksonville, Florida.



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Finley raved about the overall experience of the tournament. Despite the late November dates, daytime temperatures were in the mid-70s with no humidity. And the travels allowed the team members to get to know each other better and form stronger bonds. “The greatest thing about it was how our team grew together,” Finley said. “We just bonded and formed some lifelong friendships.”

While it may have been a tad heartbreaking for the Covington team to come so far and lose in the semi-finals, Finley maintains a healthy

perspective on the nature of the team’s accomplishment. By finishing 3rd in mixed doubles at the 6.0 level, the Covington team has finished ahead of approximately 70,000 mixed doubles players across the U.S. and Puerto Rico.

The team was also humbled to receive the support of the Covington community. The team was sponsored by NOLA Lending and MetLife and Stone Creek held a fundraiser for the team, where many local citizens contributed money, enabling the entire team to travel to Tuscon for free.

The team hopes to maintain most of its roster for next year and make another run at the national tournament. However, there will be one important difference: USTA rankings have come out again and because of their strong showings during the year, most of the team’s players have been bumped up. Therefore, the team will compete at the 7.0 level next year.