

Amherst's Binder wins fourth ECIC tennis crown

by PATRICK J. NAGY
Reporter

Ari Binder felt he wasn't playing his best tennis heading into last week's ECIC Singles Tournament at Lancaster High School.

The Amherst Central senior said he had won all of his high school matches but thought he could have played better. He also thought he was struggling in recent United States Tennis Association tournaments.

So, out to prove that he still has what it takes to succeed, Binder overcame early nerves to put away Hamburg's Matt Kane, 6-4, 6-2, in the ECIC singles final on Thursday, May 17. It was Binder's fourth straight ECIC singles championship.

"It was nice to get back to my game," said Binder. "I haven't been playing as well as I should have lately, so I was out to prove to myself I could still succeed."

Kane, a sophomore at Hamburg High School, matched point for point with Binder early, leading 2-1, and broke Binder's serve at 3-2. Binder later broke Kane's serve at 5-4 and went on to win the match.

"Once I served at 5-4, I was thinking about that game (3-2)," said Binder. "I didn't want it to happen again. I got down 15-30, but I got my forehand working and I was able to win. It was a big sigh of relief and it boosted my confidence and loosened up my shot."

"He was nervous at the beginning, but he picked up his game," said Kane. "He wasn't doing anything much different."

Binder looked in top form in the second set, jumping out to a 4-0 lead. Binder ripped a forehand shot down the line to end the match.

"Ari hit the ball lower than he liked to, which gave Matt more of a chance to hit his forehand," said Amherst coach Eric Damiani. "But Ari adjusted and hit more winners in the second set."

Binder and Kane are no strangers to each other. Binder defeated Kane twice during the high school season when Amherst and Hamburg were in the same division. Both also play together at the Village Glen Ten-



Williamsville East's Jerome Luo lost to Amherst's Ari Binder in an ECIC singles prequarterfinal match but qualified with Matt Kweller for the Section VI doubles tournament.

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nis Club.

Binder and Kane easily advanced to the finals. Binder had a first-round bye before defeating Williamsville East's Jerome Luo 6-1, 6-0, in the prequarterfinals; Lancaster's Tony Nitkowski, 6-2, 6-2; in the quarterfinals, and Orchard Park's Clark Driscoll, 6-1, 6-2 in the semifinals.

Kane won via forfeit over Lackawanna's Eric Skarby in round 1 and beat Clarence's Ryan Clover, 6-2, 6-1, in the prequarterfinals, and Sweet Home's Ian Carr and Clarence's Jarrett Regier, 6-1, 6-1, in the quarterfinals and semifinals, respectively.

Luo beat Tonawanda's Dave O'Neil, 6-1, 6-0 in round 1.

Binder and Kane advanced to the Section VI singles championship, which began Tuesday, May 22 and continues through Friday, May 25 at Lancaster High School. Binder has lost in the sectional final the last two years.

The top five finishers from ECICs qualify for sectionals. Besides Binder and Kane, Carr, who beat Frontier's Tim Dorsheim, 6-3, 5-7, 6-0, in round 1, and Springville's Sven Mueller, 6-2, 5-7, 6-1, in the prequarterfinals, finished third. Carr defeated Williamsville East's Matt Kweller, 6-1, 6-1, and

Nitkowski in three sets to take third.

Nitkowski, who defeated Carr's teammate, Ryan Barton, 7-5, 6-2, in round 1, was fourth. Mueller finished fifth.

Four other players from the Town of Amherst competed in the ECIC Singles tournament. Two won their first matches but then lost in the prequarterfinals (Amherst's Ken Schmidt defeated Cleveland Hill's Jeremiah Smith, 6-2, 6-0, lost to Driscoll, 1-6, 2-6; Williamsville South's R.J. Grampp defeated East Aurora's Will Reuter 6-2, 5-7, 6-2; lost to Nitkowski, 2-6, 2-6).

Kweller and Williamsville North's Tony Miller advanced to the quarterfinals. Kweller beat John F. Kennedy's Mike Kaminski by forfeit in round 1; defeated Depew's Joe Grzybowski, 6-2, 6-1, in the prequarterfinals; and lost 3-6, 2-6, to Driscoll and then 1-6, 1-6, to Carr. Miller beat Springville's Mitchell Steiner and Frontier's Ramsey Kasem, 6-2, 6-0, in round 1 and the prequarterfinals, respectively, before losing to Clarence's Jarrett Regier, 3-6, 6-4 and 3-6.

ECIC Doubles

The Flames are sending both of its doubles entrants to sectionals. Both lost in the semifinals. Joe Buran and Taylor Deer took third and Kweller and Luo joined forces to finish fourth.

Buran and Deer defeated Pioneer, 6-3, 6-3; Amherst's Ryan Menasco and David Greetham, 6-2, 6-4; and Jamestown, 6-1, 7-5, before falling to eventual champion Orchard Park, 1-6, 5-7. Menasco and Greetham won its round 1 match over West Seneca West's John Scioli and Brandon Nieswodony, 5-7, 6-1, 6-1.

Kweller and Luo defeated Cheektowaga's Adam Piscitello and Tyler Rudick, 6-2, 6-1; Amherst's David Scirto and Andy Taube, 6-0, 6-3; and Sweet Home's Barton and Sabooh Khan, 6-1, 6-3, before losing to Clarence's Ryan Clover and Regier, 6-4, 6-7, 3-6.

Barton and Khan beat Alden and East Aurora in the first two rounds.

Barton and Khan lost to Clarence's Mike Jurek and Sean Maloney, 1-6, 4-6, for fifth place.

The Clarence duo also ended the sectional hopes for Sweet Home's other doubles team, Ian Collis and Matt Bordanaro, defeating them 6-0, 7-6 (10-8), in the pre-quarterfinals and Williamsville South's only entrants, Doug Bounds and Greg Potter, 0-6, 0-6, in round 1. Collis and Bordanaro defeated Lancaster, 6-2, 6-2, in round 1. South finished 6-6 in ECIC III, a five-win improvement from 1-11 last year.

Both of North's doubles entrants dropped matches in the prequarterfinals to Orchard Park. Jack Jagodzinski and Julian Rothschild defeated East Aurora's Mike Kelly and Matt O'Shea, 6-0, 6-2, in round 1 before falling to OP, 0-6, 1-6. Steve Glickman and Tony Miller beat Maryvale's Tom Micalowski and Jeremy Mongiovi, 6-0, 6-0, then lost to OP, 4-6, 3-6.

East beat South 5-0 and Sweet Home beat West Seneca East to finish 11-1 and tied for the ECIC Division II crown. Sweet Home finished 16-2 overall.

"It was a great regular season with a great record and with a group of kids who were inspired to really be the best in Western New York," said Sweet Home coach Brian Koziol. "Our wins over OP (twice) and East were really special, especially the East win, which gave us a league title."

"Ian Carr was great at ECICs, he just figures out ways to win," he added. "He can play against almost anyone, and I look forward to his chances at sectionals. The doubles matches were great battles. We're a little disappointed we couldn't qualify anyone at doubles for sectionals as well, but both teams faced great competition and have nothing but to hang their heads high on their accomplishments this year."

Team championships began on Monday, May 14. Sweet Home faced Amherst and Springville in one flight of the Gold Bracket. East (East Aurora and Orchard Park) and North (Clarence, Pioneer) are in the other Gold Brackets. South faces Lancaster and Iroquois in the Silver Bracket.

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Denman's no-hitter gives Sweet Home baseball first win

by PATRICK J. NAGY
Reporter

In a season the Sweet Home baseball team would like to forget, pitcher Travis Denman gave his teammates a memorable performance they will always remember.

Denman fired the school's first no-hitter in at least nine years in the Panthers' 3-0 win over West Seneca West on Wednesday, May 16. The win snapped a 15-game losing streak to start the season for Sweet Home.

Denman, a junior, struck out 11 batters and walked another six.

"This group of guys showed no

quit all season, win or lose, so I was happy for them," said Sweet Home coach Derek Zgoda.

Sweet Home only had three hits against West Seneca West but made the most of them. Already up 1-0, Casey Kacz hit a two-out two-RBI single to score Ryan Maxwell and Aaron Klein. Maxwell and Klein reached on walks.

"It was nice to see someone step up and make a clutch hit," said Zgoda. "To get that 3-0 lead was huge."

Derek Wiser, who scored on a sacrifice fly by John Graziano in the fourth, and Ryan Gutt, singled for the team's two other hits.

The Panthers followed the next day with a 10-3 win at Cheektowaga on Thursday, May 17. Brian Barnas threw a complete game eight-hitter with one walk and allowing two earned runs.

Gutt led off the game with a triple and scored on a Mike Wolcott single. In the second, Graziano led off with his own triple and scored on a Brandon Hudson ground ball.

Sweet Home scored four runs in the fifth. Two of the runs came from a Graziano two-RBI triple. Graziano and Craig Young would also score in the inning. Graziano finished 2 for 4 with two triples and two runs scored. Brian Pap-

pagallo and Rob Kurzdorfer scored on errors in the sixth and singled in runs in the seventh. Pappagallo and Kurzdorfer each had two hits.

Sweet Home dropped their other three games, beginning with a 9-7 loss at Williamsville South on Monday, May 14. South scored six runs over the first three innings and Sweet Home scored seven runs over the last three innings. Sweet Home stranded two runners in the seventh.

Denman (two hits, two runs scored) and Young (two hits, RBI) paced Sweet Home.

Frank Pieri (two hits, RBI), Dan Lynch (2 for 2, double, triple, two runs scored, two RBIs), and Andy Esposito (two hits, RBI double) led South.

Chris Hammer pitched the first five innings for Sweet Home and allowed six earned runs. Barnas threw one inning of relief and allowed one earned run.

On Tuesday, May 15, Sweet Home lost at Hamburg, 9-6. The Panthers left the bases loaded in the seventh.

Kacz (2 for 3, double, triple, two RBIs), Gutt (hit, run scored), Graziano (hit, two runs scored), Kurzdorfer (hit, run scored), Young (hit, RBI), and Pappagallo (hit) helped Sweet Home on offense.

Wolcott allowed two earned runs and recorded the loss.

Sweet Home closed out the week with a 6-2 defeat at Frontier, finishing the Panthers' league record at 1-13.

The Panthers led 2-1 heading into the fifth but Frontier had a five-run fifth, including a three-run home run, to put the game out of reach for Sweet Home.

In the third, Young doubled and scored on a Maxwell doubled and Maxwell scored on a passed ball.

Maxwell allowed six runs, three earned runs, struck out three batters, and walked another two.

Sweet Home (2-16, 1-13) played Williamsville East on Tuesday, May 22 but the result was unavailable before The Bee went to press.

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Sports briefs

The Park School of Buffalo boys tennis team won Monignor Martin Association Division II with a 6-0 record. Park was 8-2 overall.

St. Christopher's defeated SS. Peter & Paul in a JV soccer game

held on April 29. After a scoreless first half, the SSPP offense came alive in the second half, led by Alec Cowe, Cameron Sedia and Natalie Reesor, for two goals. St. Christopher's scored on a late goal for the win. Strong games were also played by Allison

McKenna, Madalyn Mueller and Gabe Lopez. Anthony Podgorsak was tough in net.

Jerry Morkisz used a 5-iron to sink a hole in one on the 166-yard third hole at Audubon Golf Course on Tuesday, May 8.