

IPTV to feature Queens

Feature to air at halftime of state soccer

CLINTON -- People across the state of Iowa will have a chance to see inside the Clinton girls tennis program next month.

An Iowa Public Television crew was in Clinton on Tuesday and Wednesday working on a feature that will air during its telecast of the Iowa girls soccer tournament.

“That’s awesome for our program,” said senior Samantha Brisch, who plays No. 1 singles for Clinton.

Tyler Brinegar, the producer of the segment, and videographer Phil Blobaum spent time two days in Clinton this week working on the segment.

“The nice thing about the Clinton program, from what we’ve heard, is it’s pretty inclusive,” Brinegar said. “There’s a lot of diversity. I think (Coach Cindy Rasche) said over 20 girls are on the squad.

“Sometimes tennis can be an upper-crust sport, and we like to highlight that girls can get active in tennis, find a team activity, find the discipline of athletics without being a 6-foot tall basketball player or an incredible volleyball player or something like that. You can come out here on the tennis court in Ms. Rasche’s program and learn how to put the racket on the ball.”

For the past three decades, coaches Barb Brondyke and Rasche have guided the River Queens to top-three finishes in the Mississippi Athletic Conference, and the 2013 Queens won the state team title.

“I just think that God has blessed us for 32 years, and I think it’s just wonderful that they’re coming to highlight the kids,” Rasche said of the coverage. “They’re what have made the program over the years, and we try to stress to them that it’s always a great day to be a River Queen and that always and forever you will be a Queen.”

IPTV began televising girls state championships several years ago and tries to integrate features into its live game coverage.

“We cover girls high school sports championships and generally we do the track and field each year, but this year we decided to mix it up and add some different sports to the roster,” Brinegar said Tuesday while visiting Max Lynn Courts. “We’re covering a golfer out of Ankeny, Karli Kerrigan, and also this tennis program here in Clinton, with Cindy Rasche, at halftime of the soccer championships in mid-June.

“We’ll spend two days here. We’re at the match (tonight) picking up shots, then tomorrow we’ll come back and interview a couple of seniors — I think four seniors, actually — and the coaches and shoot a little bit of practice and see what the program involves and kind of get a feel for it.”

One angle that intrigued Brinegar was Clinton’s successful summer program. While many of the top players across the state have their own private coaches and take expensive private lessons, many of Clinton’s players have come up through the summer program.

“Our kids with their \$35 dollar lessons through Parks and Rec,” Rasche said with a chuckle. “A lot of them are lower-income kids who have just picked up a racket and ended up out at state, so that’s really exciting to see. Most kids (from other schools) have their pros who come from the racket club, and they’ll say, ‘Where are your pros?’ And they’re like, ‘Our coaches are our pros. We don’t have pros.’ That’s a nice compliment from them.

“Gregg Obren (Clinton’s director of parks and recreation) does a great job with Parks and Rec for us in the summertime, so that allows us to really build our program through that in the summer. Now we’re looking at Ashford’s indoor facility for helping us out in the wintertime.”

Despite their budding television careers, players had mixed reactions to their matches being filmed Tuesday.

“It’s a little nervous when you look up and there’s a camera,” said senior Caitlin Thompson, who won her sixth-flight singles match Tuesday.

“I didn’t really pay attention to that,” Brisch said.

You can bet, though, that the River Queens will be paying attention when the feature runs in June. People across the state will have the chance to see a Clinton success story, too.