

1A singles tennis championship is icing -- minus the cake

Amber Washington goes solo and captures 1A crown.

By HEATHER RULE, Star Tribune

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World Series champions spray champagne.
Indianapolis 500 champions take a swig of milk.
Grand slam tennis champions kiss their trophies.

This year's Class 1A girls' tennis singles champion savors spoonful of vanilla frosting.

Amber Washington, the doubles-turned-singles player from Mounds Park Academy, beat defending champion Elena Sullivan of Providence Academy 6-2, 6-1 for the singles title Friday at the Reed-Sweatt Tennis Center.

Washington said her former doubles partner, Kate Roach, said she would bring her frosting if she won.

"It's pretty unhealthy, but that's OK," Washington said. "I love vanilla frosting."

Washington can now add a singles state title to her tennis résumé. Starting at doubles as a seventh-grader, she became the first player in tournament history to win four consecutive doubles titles.

For her junior season, she decided to switch to

singles. Coach Scott Martin said he felt that moving Washington to singles was the best option.

"She went undefeated all year, and you can't argue it," he said. "She worked hard in the offseason."

Washington said she misses the doubles atmosphere, but she still is comfortable playing singles.

"I think doubles is more intense than singles," she said. "Then again, singles is still intense because it's just you on the court and you have to think for yourself, you don't have anyone to support you all the time."

The battle between the two singles players wasn't the tight match one might expect. Washington jumped to a 5-0 lead in the first set, using her powerful ground strokes to control the points and force errors.

Momentum shifted slightly as Washington was serving for the first set. Sullivan grabbed two games before her opponent took the one-set lead. The second set started with three consecutive breaks of serve before Washington pulled away for the victory.

"I think it just came down to a couple points and who in the end wanted it more," Sullivan said. "I mean, Amber played a great match. I think I just got tentative at some points, and those were the crucial points."

After the match, Washington was greeted by teammates and friends. She raised her tub of frosting



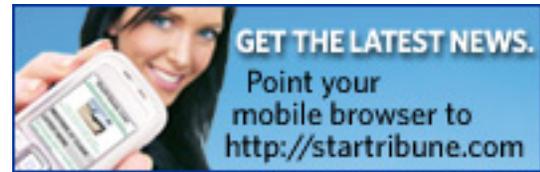
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"It feels awesome," she said. "I don't know how to explain it."



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