

Robinson Tournament expands food options

Joseph Hayes, Times Herald

Published 6:43 p.m. ET Aug. 3, 2017



(Photo: Joseph Hayes, Times Herald)

What's better than relaxing at Sanborn Park on a nice day and watching competitive tennis matches?

Probably not much, unless you are enjoying a smoothie from Kate's Downtown Cafe, BBQ from Jeff Cook's Big River BBQ or a chicken taco from Eli's Eats on the Streets' food truck.

This year's Francis J. Robinson Memorial International Tennis Tournament won't just be a draw because of the action on the court, but also the food available throughout the day.

"I've been playing in the Robinson for 27 years and even after moving to Montana we try to come back every other year," Robinson veteran Laura Wickens said. "There weren't any food options before.

"But now we have the Big River BBQ in the afternoon and it's great. It shows how important the tournament is to the community to have these local food options. Before, people would have to leave and get food. But now we can support local restaurants and even have healthy options as well."



Lexi Fischer competes in the Girls 18 Singles Tournament Aug. 3. The tournament is part of the 60th annual Francis J. Robinson Memorial International Tennis Tournament, which continues at Sanborn Park with mixed doubles play Friday/ *(Photo: Brian M. Wells/Times Herald)*

The 60th version of the annual tournament continued Thursday with singles, doubles and mixed doubles. But along the way, players found a way to nourish themselves with the options available at Sanborn Park.

"It's really good food," Robinson player and tennis instructor Justin Sabourin said. "I had a chicken sandwich (from Eli's Eats on the Streets') that I had never had before. It was incredible. I think it's great that we have all of the healthy items along with some of the stuff I like to eat, like brats and hamburgers.

"I like to eat here. We get a pretty good crowd and the food options are something to look forward to."

Having food provided by local restaurants on-site simply seems to be part of the continued evolution of the tournament.

"Everyone knows Kate's smoothies and sandwiches, and some people come just to watch and grab food," tournament director Steve Pillon said. "Jeff is awesome with the BBQ and I had just read about (Eli's Eats on the Streets) and didn't know too much about it, but the food is really great."



Paige Nicholson competes in the Girls 18 Singles Tournament Aug. 3. The tournament is part of the 60th annual Francis J. Robinson Memorial International Tennis Tournament, which continues at Sanborn Park with mixed doubles play Friday/ *(Photo: Brian M. Wells/Times Herald)*

The additions off the court have continued to make the Robinson one of the biggest events of the year. Just ask Wickens, who might possibly have made the longest trip to participate.

"Port Huron is a very big tennis community," she said. "It's really a family-oriented event and the competition is really good in this area. It's just good to get back and play with everyone."

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