

## All about tennis: Francis J. Robinson Tournament returns

It's Robinson week.

Starting Wednesday morning, the Francis J. Robinson Memorial International Tennis Tournament will begin for the 62nd consecutive year.

Play will ensue with the kids coed divisions and continue through Sunday evening, where it will wrap up with the adult doubles divisions. In between, there will be plenty of action with more than 200 players are expected to be involved.

With a few new divisions, added fun from Friday's Play Day and newly resurfaced Sanborn Tennis Courts, the return of the Robinson Tennis Tournament couldn't have come at a better time.

"It's kind of cool because it's a tournament that brings everyone together," Port Huron Northern senior Isabella Murray said. "With it being open this year, I'm having my friend come from Livonia and be my doubles partner. I've played in it for as long as I can remember. This year is going to be my seventh or eighth year and it's still so much fun.

"It's a great atmosphere because everyone wants to be here. I think everyone wants to do their best."

Steve Pillon returns as the director of the tournament and also one of its top players. That's a double-sided hat that's not always enjoyable, as it can be a strain on his game.

"It's definitely a challenge," Pillon said of staying sharp, while also focusing on the needs of his fellow players. "I'm definitely not at my best. I'm thinking about other things when I'm on the court and it can be tough. It's a tough week mentally."

But even with the challenge, Pillon wouldn't want it to be any other way. After playing in the event for around three decades, he has seen just how special it is.

"I think anything that is able to maintain itself this long, just the tradition of it makes it special," Pillon said. "A really big part of this is the local part. Port Huron is not a big community and over 260 people are playing in it and over 100 kids will be in our kids play day event. For such a small community, that showcases our talent and our love for the game."

One of the highlights of the week will be Friday's Kids Play Day, from 3-4 p.m. The free event will help get the next generation of Robinson Tournament players involved with fun interactive games.

"We are striving every year to adjust the tournament and find what people really want to have out of it," Pillon said. "We wanted to make it enjoyable for as many people as possible. We knew there were some people who are newer to the game of tennis. So many of the young kids are exposed to the game and have a blast through the Play Day.

"Then with the Mixer Divisions, we knew we had a big crew of adults we either had just come back to the game or were just starting to come back to the game and they wanted to have a place where they can come out and be a part of the tournament and play and be feel comfortable and not feel overwhelmed and feel they are going to get crushed. So we established the Mixer Divisions as a spot for them."

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