

Bill Eydler ~

The Face of King's Men's Tennis Wins 400th Match



To say Bill Eydler is merely the head coach of the King's College men's tennis would be a true understatement. After completing his 33rd season as the Monarch mentor and earning his 400th career victory in the process, Eydler can be viewed as the face of the program.

During his time at King's, Eydler has been many things. He is often colorful and charismatic. He is a second father, a voice of reason and role model to many. He can also be a fighter, battling perceived injustices he believes can or will hurt the tennis team at King's or members as a whole within the Middle Atlantic Conference. The bottom line for Eydler is that he loves King's tennis and has done whatever he could to make it both successful and rewarding for all who have played for him.

"I cherish the hundreds of players I have had the pleasure of working with and hopefully made a positive impact on their lives," said Eydler, who also spent 17 years as the King's women's coach. "These players are like family to me. They came here from high school as boys and girls and left as men and women, ready to put the skills and values they have acquired at King's into their lives. Those friendships we have last a lifetime."

Eydler's love for King's and the tennis program go beyond his coaching. He was a member of the Monarch tennis team as a student. After graduating from Meyers High School in 1965, Eydler began his collegiate career at Division II Mansfield University. After one year, he elected to come home and transferred to King's where he played the final three years of his career. He graduated from King's in 1970 and became a teacher.

Eydler began his coaching career at nearby Wyoming Seminary and led the team to the Northeast Pennsylvania High School Tennis League championship in 1972. He then returned to his alma-mater, coaching Meyers High School for three seasons. One day, Eydler received a telephone call from then King's coach John McGowan who informed Eydler he was planning to step down and wanted to recommend Eydler to take over the Monarchs if he was interested. "I told him I was interested and figured I would try it for a couple of years," Eydler recalled with a laugh.

Over the years, Eydler has seen many changes at King's and within the Middle Atlantic Conference. Colleges have come and gone and the format of the conference has changed several times. Yet, Eydler remains, having won a number of titles over

the years. His teams captured three straight MAC Northeast titles from 1991-93. The 1996 squad won the Freedom League title and was second overall in the MAC. In 2000, the Monarchs won both the Freedom title and the overall MAC championship.

The team also came close to winning titles on several other occasions, garnering second-place Freedom finishes in 1994, 1995, 2002, 2007, and 2012 and second in the overall MAC tournament in 2001.

Eydler has had six individual MAC champions, including Vlad Handl (2000), Mike Portonova (2005-07), and Chris Cozzillio and Chris DiMino (2011). MAC doubles champions include Bill Mendler/Mike Ungvarskry (1992), Joe Brown/Jim Zimmerman (1994), Mike Portonova/Nick Hojsack (2006-07), and Chris Cozzillio/Tim Carroll (2011).

Eydler reached the biggest milestone of his career on April 29 when the Monarchs went on the road to defeat Alvernia University 7-2, handing the long-time mentor his coveted 400th victory. His career record to date is 401-297 after 33 full seasons.

"Every match, win or lose, has special memories," Eydler reflected. "The 400th win allowed me to realize what an honor it has been to coach at King's and work with so many great young men and women. The 2011-12 team is a wonderful group of guys who made reaching the milestone very special. I am very proud to work every day with such fine, dedicated student-athletes."

Asked what his top three memories with the men's team were, Eydler was quick to respond.

"The first was in 1992 when Bill Mendler was selected to the Division III national tournament in singles while he and Mike Ungvarskry were also chosen to play doubles," he stated. "The second was coaching and watching the talent and intensity of Mike Portonova, who won three MAC titles and went 78-2 in singles during his career. The third would be in 2000 when we won both the Freedom and MAC overall championships and Vlad Handl won the MAC singles title. But there are also plenty of other great highlights."

After 38 years of teaching, Eydler retired from the Wilkes-Barre School District in 2007. His love for the game remains strong and he has no immediate plans to retire. His wife Diane is still a frequent spectator at King's home matches and travels with the team during their Spring Break Florida trip to serve as a chaperone. Being a part of the King's Community has played such a prominent role in his life, Eydler insists he is not yet ready to walk away.

"I truly appreciate the opportunity I have had to be coach at King's," Eydler said. "The College and all the people associated with me and the tennis program have been supportive and outstanding over the years. It has truly been an enjoyable ride of a lifetime."