

All About

Family



MEET THE FOURNIERS – Little brother Carson enjoys the support of his sisters (L-R) Shae, Taylor and Haley, while Alison and James back up their kids' efforts on the court.

Time on the court brings a close family closer

They're a mixed doubles team that has discovered the fountain of youth – their kids' tennis.

As a pair of 5.0 caliber players, James and Alison Fournier used to rack up plenty of USA League mixed wins. These days, they don't have many opportunities to compete on the court. With three daughters – Taylor, Haley and Shae – and now their youngest, son Carson, vying for victories in USTA/Missouri Valley junior tournaments, the Belleville, Ill., couple has passed the competitive torch to their children.

"Playing with the kids, *trying* to keep up with them, is keeping us young," says James.

But Alison rolls her eyes and laments that the girls don't want to play much with Mom anymore. "I just can't keep the ball in play," she says, laughing.

Until Taylor turned 15 in August, she and Haley were both ranked among the Missouri Valley's top 10 in the Girls 14s. Shae, meanwhile, cracked the top 5 in the Girls 12s.

"Tennis gives the kids a rush," says James. "They've made a commitment to play competitively. The hard work is paying off

in the progress they've made and the results they're getting."

Hard work? Ask Taylor and she'll sum up why she puts so much effort into tennis in one word: "Fun."

"All of it," she says. "It's so much fun" – fun the whole family can share.

SIBLING RIVALRY? Though the Fourniers relish the competition and are delighted with their kids' tennis success, the parents are most proud of the reputation their family has earned throughout the Missouri Valley for hard play and good sportsmanship. They've made friends, not rivals, on the court.

In describing what she admires about her sister's play, Haley mentions Taylor's crisp groundstrokes, but also says, "She's not

dirty on the court.

She doesn't cheat you on line calls."

On rare occasion, the two older sisters, born just a year apart, have found themselves on opposite sides of the net in tournament play. During those Fournier-vs.-Fournier matches, being the oldest puts added pressure on Taylor as Haley, seeking to topple big sister, shifts her drive to win into high gear.

"It's only happened three times, ever," says Taylor. "I *have* to win." The sisters, Haley insists, "keep (any sibling rivalry) on the court and really get along great."

PRIORITIES IN ORDER The Fourniers take their game seriously, yet the parents aren't looking to turn their tennis family into a tennis factory. They're raising children, not tennis players. If the kids weren't good students – each earns honor-roll grades – James says they wouldn't be entering tournaments.

"When we go to these national tournaments, we try *not* to make tennis the focus," James says. "The kids have a big say in where we go based on what they want to see and do."

While in town for a tournament, the Fourniers took a hot-air balloon ride over Park City, Utah, and in Las Vegas, James booked a helicopter flight so the kids could see the lights from high above.

None of the Fourniers can envision tennis ever becoming "a grind," for the game has been too good to them, bringing this close family even closer. James beams as his kids say they can imagine themselves still playing tennis when they're "old like Mom and Dad," passing the game on to the next generation.

"I love it," Haley says. "I'll teach tennis to my kids, too."

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What does the youngest Fournier, Carson, like most about tennis?

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