



Gwinnett's Grace **Junior player Grace Min is setting the groundwork for a pro tennis career**

By Daniel Lucas
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At the tender age of 14, Grace Min of Lawrenceville, Georgia in Gwinnett County is using the \$50K Classic at Collins Hill Athletic Club, her former training site, as a step towards a career on the WTA tour. She has been placed directly into the main draw through a sponsor's wild card, putting her face to face with the tennis sharks that swim in the deep end of the draw. But for her first experience at a \$50K event, Min is keeping her goals modest. She says, "[I'm] just going out and having fun. I didn't really set any goals for myself. Just competing hard and trying my best out there."

With a number of national championships in her distinguished junior career, the soft-spoken, friendly Min is now building her resume by competing on the USTA Pro Circuit. She has played in three \$10K events (the entry level for pros) this year, including Sumter, South Carolina in May where she made it through the qualifying draw, won her first-round match, then lost in the round of 16 in a close match to Australian Anna Wishink, 7-6, 7-5. She also played a \$25K event in Raleigh, North Carolina, where she lost in the second round of qualifying.

Tennis in Gwinnett was a family affair for the Mins, as her mother participates in ALTA (Atlanta Lawn Tennis Association) and USTA league play (Grace says, "She is pretty good!"), and her brother, now age 19, played for Collins Hill High School. However, Grace is now a long way from Lawrenceville's K.E. Taylor Elementary school as she is about to start living and training full time at the USTA Training Center for student athletes in Boca Raton, Florida. The USTA says the center "... hosts the most promising junior players in the United States." She'll be doing schoolwork 4 ½ hours per day--and mixing in a little tennis.

She is enjoying competing as a pro though she reports that, "Traveling can be a little tough. Traveling is the up-and-down part--being away from home, but also seeing new places. I love everything I see here, it just makes me want to be on the tour even more. They treat me so much better at pro tournaments than at junior tournaments--like they give you a full set of line judges for every match, and they make all the calls and they give you water and just the hospitality is much, much better."

Of course, in such a competitive environment, getting to know the pros that are using the circuit on a day-to-day basis as not just a way to make a living but hopefully as a springboard to the WTA Tour can be tough. Grace finds that most pros are friendly enough, but, "They don't give out advice really! I guess if I ask they might say a few things. I've made a few friends. I see them around all the time, so I ask them to hit maybe. Just traveling a lot you see a lot of the same players."

In the first round Tuesday afternoon, Min was paired against Julia Cohen, an experienced pro from Miami who was ranked number four in the world junior rankings last year. Grace maintained her cool after losing the first set 6-4 to pull out victory in the last two sets, 6-4, 6-2. She will next play on Thursday against the winner of Angela Haynes (the sixth seed)/Lindsay Lee-Waters.

Min is also playing in the doubles draw, partnered with relatively new pro Brittany Augustine, and they are expected to play their first-round match on Wednesday, October 15. See www.gcvb.org/tennis for full details.