

# Teens tour Belgium

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**BLAIRGOWRIE** – Four budding tennis stars are back from a tour in Belgium, where they learned something new and grew as players.

Jessica Portwig, Mieke van Deventer, Joshua van Zyl and Evert van Schalkwyk, all aged between 13 to 14, took part in the Argayon Cup, the UCCLE Trophy and the Royal Leo Cup, for three weeks in August and September.

The tournaments form part of the U14 tennis circuit in Europe.

The group from the Advantage Tennis Academy, which is based at the Randburg Tennis Club in Blairgowrie, took part in the singles and doubles events at these

tournaments. The group's greatest accomplishment was the two girls making it to the girls' doubles quarter-finals of the first two tournaments, and making the final of the Royal Leo Cup, but having to forfeit the match to catch a plane home.

Van Deventer, a Northcliff resident, also reached the quarter-finals of the girls' singles event of the Royal Leo Cup. She agreed with Portwig, a Greenside resident, that they learned that they had to be strong in all the tennis shots to win matches in Europe.

Linden resident, Van Schalkwyk, said, "I enjoyed every minute of my tour. I made new friends from Belgium as well as different European countries."

He added that the best part of the tour was playing on clay for the first time and meeting players from

other countries.

According to Van Zyl, tennis players in Europe do not always play to win. "For them, it is not all about winning, but sticking to the game style they want to play when they are older."

Coach Gareth Gibson said the intention of the trip was to open the players' eyes to how Europeans play tennis. "The children in Europe are streetwise in tennis," he said.

"They know how to play on a day, how to win points on clay and how to construct a point." He said he hoped this would rub off on the four.

Furthermore, the youngsters all agreed that the chocolate shops, Tintin stores and water canals were also highlights of the trip.

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Joshua van Zyl and Jessica Portwig mess around on the tennis court.



Mieke van Deventer has learned that she needs to be strong in all her tennis shots.



Evert van Schalkwyk plays in Belgium. Photo supplied



Evert van Schalkwyk, Joshua van Zyl, Mieke van Deventer, Jessica Portwig and coach, Gareth Gibson, relax for a moment in Belgium. Photo supplied