



Midlothian's Abbott is T-D's girls tennis player of the year

Credit: P. KEVIN MORLEY/TIMES-DISPATCH 1

When Christine Abbott walks onto the tennis court for a match, she has a few things in mind. None of them are good for her opponent. "Obviously, I like to keep the ball in play, and I want to make sure that I'm not going to be making any errors," Abbott said. "That's my first goal. "Secondly, I like to make sure that I'm playing my game, and I'm not changing what I do because someone else is making me do it. I know that my game is strong, so I can use that. "After I find out how [the match is going], and if I'm in control, I can start to try anything. But overall I want to make sure I get the ball in play, and I can't blame myself at the end of the match. I don't want to beat myself." Abbott, a rising senior at Midlothian High and the Trojans' No. 1 player, used that strategy to beat 18 consecutive foes this spring before falling in the quarterfinals of the state Group AAA singles tournament in Fairfax. In addition to leading Midlothian to the Central Region team semifinals, Abbott won the region singles championship with a 6-1, 6-1 victory over Cosby's Lauren Denuel. Abbott was the runner-up a year ago. For her accomplishments, she has been named The Times-Dispatch All-Metro girls tennis player of the year. Competing against Abbott is akin to practicing with a backboard — the ball keeps coming back. That tends to frustrate her opponents, who eventually grow weary of trading ground strokes and will make an unforced error. "Visually seeing them beat themselves up, it helps

me know that what I'm doing is right and what's going to work. And that I've got to stick to that, and I don't need to change anything," Abbott said. "I still can't let my guard down because I know people can come back." Midlothian coach Doug Garrett has watched Abbott's game develop since her freshman year and has been impressed. "She's just so consistent with her strokes," Garrett said. "She doesn't gamble. She understands her style and how she plays. I'm sure, as an opponent, it can be very frustrating because she's only going to go after the shots she knows she can hit. "She has much more patience than the majority of us. She's very content to stay in the point for as long as you want, and then when she sees the opening, she may go after it. But she's not going to try any wild angle or something not within her game. "I don't think she's extremely quicker than a lot of other girls on the team, but she has a great anticipation of where the ball is going to be. There's been plenty of shots in matches that I thought was a sure winner by the other girl, but all of a sudden, there's Christine." She pounds the ball back and keeps the point alive just a little longer — too long, in fact, for most of her contemporaries.

Times-Dispatch 2011 All-Metro girls tennis team



Lauren Denuel School: Cosby Year: Sophomore

The Skinny: Denuel had a stellar season as the Titans' No. 1 player although it meant she had to play Abbott five times. She was the runner-up in the Dominion District and Central Region and qualified for the state singles tournament. Denuel

teamed with Anjelica Esteves to win the district and region doubles titles, and the duo advanced to the state semifinals.

One thing about you most people don't know: "I want to go bungee jumping. I like heights and roller coasters."



Anna Fuhr School: Steward Year: Freshman

The Skinny: Fuhr has been ticketed for the All-Metro first team for a couple of years but wasn't eligible until this season. She led the Spartans to the Virginia Commonwealth Conference title and didn't lose a match, singles or

doubles, this season. Two of her singles wins were over Mills Godwin's Abigail Randolph and Douglas Freeman's Emma Carl. **One thing about you most people don't know:** "My mom (Joy) was a professional tennis player."



Caroline Mosberg School: Deep Run **Year:** Freshman

The Skinny: Mosberg stepped front and center as the singles player to beat in the Colonial District. She won the district title and helped the Wildcats defeat Mills Godwin in a regular-season match. Deep Run was the Central Region runner-up in team play and advanced to the state semifinals. Her only singles losses were to Denuel and Abbott. **One thing about**

you most people don't know: "When I was 8 years old, I was the shot put champion of Virginia."



Callie Whitlock School: St. Catherine's **Year:** Senior

The Skinny: The Saints play in the fall, but Whitlock repeats as a first-team All-Metro pick after guiding St. Catherine's to its first Virginia Independent Schools state championship. She was undefeated in singles and doubles, won the LIS singles and doubles titles again and was named the state private

schools player of the year for the second straight season. She will continue her tennis at Rollins (Fla.) College.

One thing about you most people don't know: "I collect guitar picks at concerts. (Her favorite is from Mumford & Sons.)"



Maddie Wood School: Mills Godwin **Year:** Senior

The Skinny: Wood finished four years as an Eagles stalwart, playing No. 2 singles this fall. She lost only four singles matches in her career. She played doubles the past two seasons. Mills Godwin won three state titles, was state runner-up this year and won the Colonial District and Central Region title four times each during her high school career. She was first-team All-Metro in volleyball

as a junior. **One thing about you most people don't know:** "I have a fear of costume characters like those at amusement parks."

Second Team

- Connor Brewer** – Collegiate – Sophomore
- Anjelica Esteves** – Cosby – Junior
- Haley Moses** – Mills Godwin – Junior
- Karen Pak** – Glen Allen – Freshman
- Abigail Randolph** – Mills Godwin - Sophomore
- Angelina Sportelli** – Lee-Davis - Junior