

Lobsters' results mixed

Heed King's advice, but Freedom reigns

By KAT HASENAUER CORNETTA

MANCHESTER — During her playing days, legendary tennis star Billie Jean King had a definite preference as to her favorite event.

"I like mixed doubles the

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best, doubles the second-best and singles third," King, the founder of World TeamTennis, told a group of youngsters assembled before last night's Lobsters match against the Philadelphia Freedoms at Manchester Athletic Club. "I love collaboration. I like team efforts."

Taking the court soon thereafter, the Lobsters reflected King's sentiments. The mixed doubles team of Arantxa Parra Santonja and Scott Lipsky opened the evening for the Lobsters with a win. But on a night entitled a "Salute to Strong Women," it was the dynamic power of former junior women's world No.1-ranked player Taylor

Townsend that jump-started a comeback for the Freedoms, leading them to a 24-14 win over the Lobsters.

Losing the first point of the night to Philadelphia's Townsend and Marcelo Melo, Parra Santonja and Lipsky made quick work of the next three points to win the first game. The two pairs traded sets, and the set went to a tiebreaker, knotted 4-4. Parra Santonja, who had struggled serving earlier this season, used a series of stellar serves to move the Lobsters toward the tiebreaker win, giving them the early 5-4 match lead.

"We were very aggressive," said Parra Santonja. "We really went for it in the tiebreaker."

But Townsend wouldn't drop a matchup again, taking her revenge on the Lobsters' Irina Falconi. Using a killer backhand, Townsend frustrated Falconi and took the set, 5-0, giving the Freedoms a lead they wouldn't relinquish.

"When I played her in Philly, I made a lot of mis-



CELEBRATION OF LADIES IN SPORT: The Lobsters mixed doubles team of Scott Lipsky and Arantxa Parra Santonja celebrate a point during last night's match against Philadelphia at Manchester Tennis Club, which began with comments from legend Billie Jean King, the founder of TeamTennis back in the 1970s.



STAFF PHOTOS BY MATT STONE

takes," said Townsend. "I just wanted to play my game (last night). I tried to do what I needed to do for the team."

The newest addition to the Lobsters, Tim Smyczek, caught men's singles opponent Robby Ginepri sleeping in the first game, but Ginepri woke up to take the second. Both players scrambled all over the court to eventually knot the set, 4-4, setting up the evening's second tiebreaker. Ginepri took a fast

4-0 lead in the tiebreaker, and while Smyczek held him from match point twice, he eventually won the set.

Paired with Parra Santonja in women's doubles, Falconi made up for her singles struggles with a leaping effort. The Lobsters' pair battled Townsend and Abigail Spears to tie the set three times, summoning the match's third tiebreaker, which Philadelphia took decisively, giving them a 19-13

lead headed into the last set of the night. The Freedoms sealed their win with Ginepri and Melo's 5-1 win in men's doubles.

Before the match, King was joined by Olympic figure skating silver medalist Nancy Kerrigan and four-time Olympic ice hockey medalist Angela Ruggiero in a celebration of women in sports. Kerrigan spoke highly of the trail blazing King did for women in all sports.

"I wouldn't be here and I would not have been on TV is it was not for Billie Jean," the Stoneham resident said. "Even in a female dominated sport like figure skating, she got women on TV."

King noted that her fight for equality is embodied in the Lobsters and World Team Tennis.

"If you watch this match, you will see my life's philosophy," she said. "Men and women, playing equally."