

# Strode on stride for state 5A title

**INSIDE  
SPORTS**

with Earl Austin Jr.

When I first met young Mr. Strode, he was about 10 or 11 years old and quite little. Then, I started to watch him hit tennis balls with his coaches and I couldn't believe what I was watching. It was amazing to watch this little guy generate all of this power for his rocket-launching forehands and backhands. You knew this kid was going places.

Now, in his high school junior year, he is one of the best that the Show-Me State has to offer. Strode will enter the tournament as the prohibitive favorite to win the state singles title. He is the two-time defending conference champion in singles. Strode has a 13-0 record this season, having lost only one set this season.



Earl Austin

Strode's biggest victory this season came in the Edwardsville Tournament, where he won the title by defeating Charles Howard off John Burroughs. Howard was the

See STRODE, D22

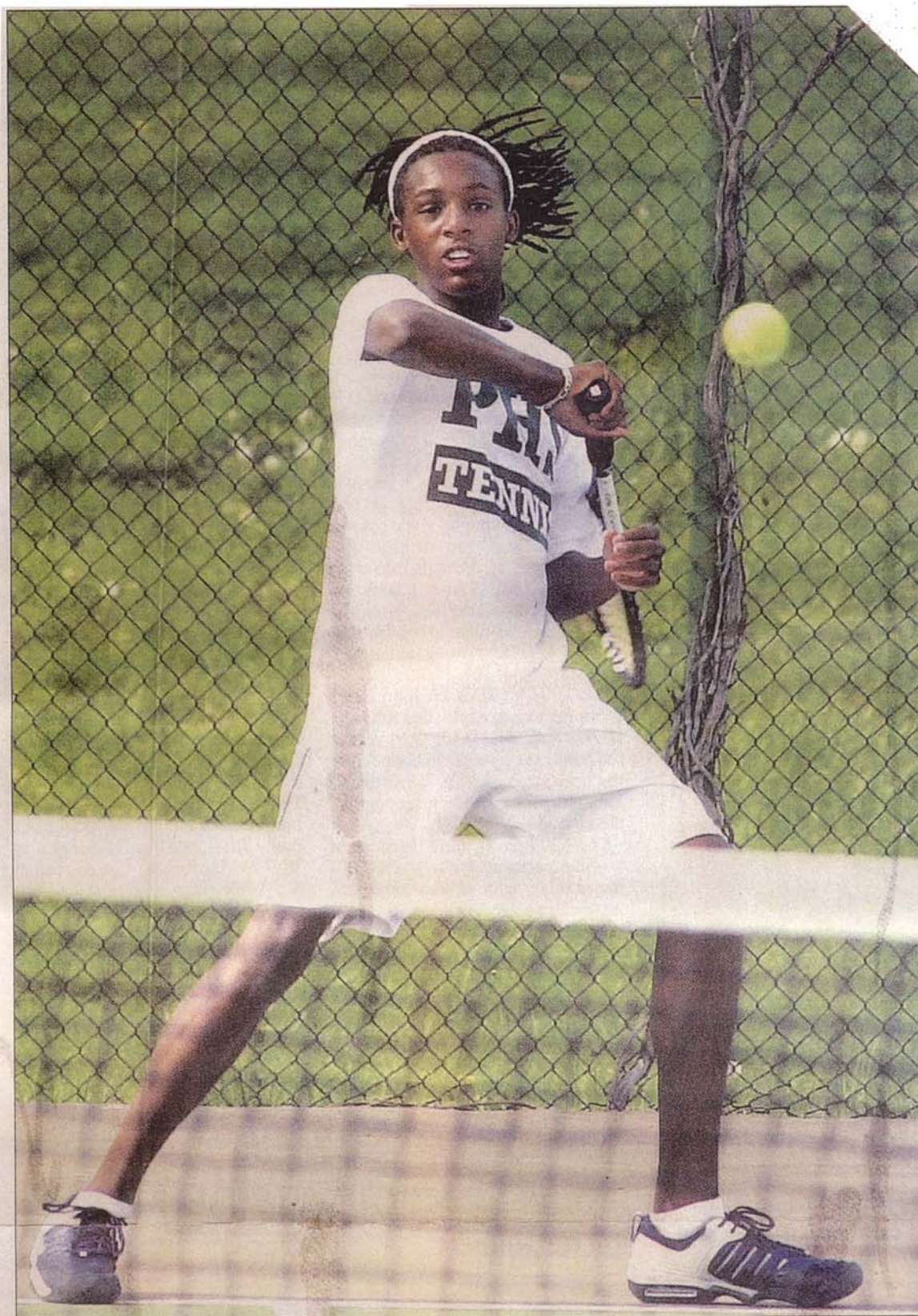


Photo by Wiley Price

Pattonville High junior Blake Strode is one of the top tennis players in the state of Missouri. He has placed in the top five at the state tournament the past two years.

## Pattonville junior is 13-0

The Suburban North Conference will hold its annual boys tennis tournament this weekend at Riverview Gardens.

For decades, the Suburban North has produced some of the state's top athletes, especially in football, wrestling and track and field. The league is also home to one of Missouri's top tennis players in junior Blake Strode of Pattonville.