



AIA FEATURE STORY By: Don Ketchum

**THERE IS NO DEBATING
THAT RED MOUNTAIN'S KAYLA ENSMINGER IS A GOOD BADMINTON PLAYER**

PHOENIX, AZ (October 13, 2008) – Mesa Red Mountain's Kayla Ensminger likes following politics. She hopes to study political science in college.

The senior's only regret is that she is two months shy of being able to vote in the upcoming general election that will decide a new president and involve many other important issues.

There are no regrets, however, about the decision she made to join Red Mountain's badminton team as a sophomore after debating whether to try the sport.

She was like many people who viewed badminton from afar – it was fun to play in the back yard, but it couldn't be all that competitive.

Ensminger has discovered that it is very competitive. She developed into one of the better players around, both in doubles and singles, and is ready for the Class 5A Division I East Valley Region tournament on Oct. 16 and the state tournament a week later.

Her main sport was softball, but one of her coaches thought her athleticism would allow her to become a good badminton player.

"She didn't take it seriously at first, but then she did. Her competitive side took over," said Red Mountain coach Diane Gillen. "I think it was frustrating at times for her because she is a perfectionist and always expects to do well. She worked hard at it and clawed her way up."

Ensminger wanted to smash everything, but she learned that timing and placement of the bird are just as important.

And a player has to be in good shape. It is not like their feet are glued to the floor.

"It's amazing how much moving you actually do," Ensminger said.

A good rally can be exciting.

"Some people say, "Badminton?" I tell them, "Come and watch. It's not boring," she said.

"We practice hard every day. We have a lot of drills, put in a lot of work."

The sport involves reacting quickly and has a lot of hand-eye coordination, which Ensminger uses as a hitter in softball and defensively as a center fielder.

She has enjoyed playing doubles, first with Mandy McDaniel as a sophomore, Sara Washburn as a junior and Rebecca Rubin this year. Ensminger hopes to qualify for the state tournament as a singles player for the first time.

Ensminger moved with her family to Queen Creek after the last school year, but Queen Creek High did not have a badminton team. She found that she missed playing more than she thought and she arranged to transfer by getting an apartment near Red Mountain with her sister, Bre, a softball player at Phoenix College and former Red Mountain player.

The trip from home to school is a lot closer, and that helps Ensminger concentrate on studying.

She said she is a straight-A student.

“I think I have maybe four B’s my whole life,” she said. “Academics come first and they always will.”

The AIA 5A State Team Badminton tournament begins Saturday, Oct. 18 with first and second round matches at the sites of the No. 1, 2, 3, and 4 seeds. Dobson High School will then host the semi-finals on Monday, Oct. 20 at 6:30 p.m., followed by the championships on Wednesday, Oct. 22 at 6:30 p.m.

The individual tournaments will be held on Friday and Saturday, Oct. 24 and 25, at Dobson High School.

Have a Story Idea:

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