

Facility keeps team going

By: **Brooke Cersosimo**, The Daily Republic

Recent weather has made it unbearable for the Mitchell High School boys' tennis team to practice outside.

So the Kernels have taken their practices indoors, thanks to Wayne and Mary Puetz.

"The Puetz family has been very generous in support of the girls' and boys' tennis programs," Mitchell tennis coach Pat Moller said. "Anytime we need to use it, it's always been available to us. They don't ask anything from us other than just the respect of the facility, which we obviously do."



The boys' tennis team has held more than half of its practices since March 11 at Puetz's indoor court, which is connected to Puetz Corp. on North Kimball Street.

Moller, in his second year as head coach of Mitchell's tennis programs, said the indoor court is a big advantage for his team, as schools like Pierre don't have the luxury of playing on an actual tennis court when the weather is bad.

"Some teams are practicing in a gymnasium where things don't act and fly the same, and we're able to go play on a real court with ideal conditions," Moller said. "Hopefully, that gives us a little bit of an advantage."

Taylor Moore, a Mitchell native who played on the Mitchell boys' tennis team from 2006 to 2012, said having the chance to play on an actual court rather than in a gym does make a difference.

"You're able to maintain your tennis game, so when you are able to get back on the outdoor courts, you aren't rusty," said Moore, who is a freshman at South Dakota State University.

Melanie Puetz-Mullenmeister, daughter of Wayne and Mary Puetz, said the court was built in 1993, her sophomore year at Mitchell High School, to give her and others an opportunity to practice year round.

"My parents saw a huge need for us tennis kids to have a place to hit the ball during the winter months, and I was extremely fortunate to be able to continue to play and build my love for the game

after it was built,” said Puetz-Mullenmeister, who won the Flight 1 singles state title in 1994. “Sioux Falls’ tennis programs tend to have a huge advantage because their players are able to train year round. At least having one court in Mitchell lets the kids keep a racquet in their hand throughout the winter season.”

In addition to high school practices, the court has held winter tournaments and a place for community tennis players to meet up for the last 20 years.

“It’s a wonderful opportunity for the tennis community to get together and play. My parents get great joy out of the fact that so many people from Mitchell are able to use the court and have a good time with it.”

Due to this week’s snow storm, the Kernels had to cancel or postpone three matches. Moller said he hopes the team can get outdoors next week as Mitchell is scheduled to host Huron and Madison in a triangular Friday at Hitchcock Park.