

[GI's Gallagher swaps glove for racquet](#)

BY Ryan Nagelhout Niagara Gazette

GRAND ISLAND — When Pat Gallagher tried out for the Grand Island tennis team this spring, he didn't even own a racquet.

Gallagher had focused on football and baseball during his scholastic career, but after his senior season on the gridiron wrapped up he was looking for something different. His first pick was hockey, a sport he wandered away from due to football.

"He finished strong in the football year, then he came out to play hockey. It was the first time he played hockey in quite a few years," Vikings hockey and tennis coach Don Pray said. "He's also in my AP psych class and he said one day he was just going to come out and play tennis instead of playing baseball."

Borrowing his dad's racquet, he went out for Pray's varsity squad along with Bobbie Dickenson hoping to have a bit of fun with a new sport before graduation.

"We kind of just decided to play tennis after the winter and wanted to do it together," Gallagher said. "I love sports so this is just one I wanted to try out."

Pray's reaction was the same when he saw the righty on the ice during hockey season.

"I said 'Hey, that's great' because Pat's a great athlete and I saw that he developed from a second and third liner in hockey all the way up to one of the top centers and penalty kill guys," Pray said.

"I knew the same thing was going to happen here in tennis."

Gallagher and Dickenson paired up for the Vikings at second doubles, and despite a lack of experience on the courts the duo had done well according to Pray.

"He's a really good doubles partner to have because he's calm on the court, he's confident all the time," Pray said. "He likes to pick up his partner and they compliment each other. They make a good pair together."

Gallagher said familiarity with Pray helped him make the jump from baseball to hard courts, and he's excited to hone his skills while dodging rain drops this spring.

"I really didn't know coach Pray did tennis and when I found out it kind of swayed my decision," he said. "Coach has been teaching me a lot and it's kind of hard because it keeps raining but I do what I can."

Gallagher said he's heading to Brockport in the fall and isn't sure if he will play any sports, but with a few months left in his high school career he's going to enjoy playing tennis with borrowed equipment.

If he ever gives it back, that is.