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high school previews GIRLS TENNIS

# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW THIS SEASON

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Where did she go? Several accomplished players from a year ago are not playing this season for various reasons. First Colonial's Victoria Olivarez, the reigning Beach District champ and two-time Eastern Region runner-up, is sitting out the high school season to play United States Tennis Association events. Emily Pence, who won last year's region singles title while at Ocean Lakes, is now at Cape Henry. Grassfield's Jayne Cottrell, who won the 2011 Southeastern singles title, is focusing on volleyball. Cox's Ally McNulty, a runner-up for the region in doubles, is also not playing.

Patriot act First Colonial had hoped to welcome back Shannon Hudson, who missed her junior season last year to play a more rugged schedule of national events. Hudson's appeal for a final season of eligibility, though, was denied this week by the Virginia High School League. First Colonial returns seniors Rachel Wardell, who teamed with Victoria Olivarez to win the region doubles title last year; Gavi Siman-Tov, who went undefeated at Nos. 2 and 3 last year; and Alex Dow, a member of the 2011 state title team that returns after a year at Kellam. Freshman Kimmy Costen, a transfer from Norfolk Academy, is going to be a "real strong player," said coach Leon Proffitt.

The Cavalier way Princess Anne won the Eastern Region last year with depth, and with half the lineup having graduated, it will need to do the same if it hopes to repeat. Talented freshman Danika Kahatapiiya takes over the top spot and is joined by holdovers Caroline Sugg, Victoria Alexander and Sophie Liao.

Elsewhere in the Beach District Salem coach Linda Newsome is excited about the potential of freshman Courtney White and sophomore Janice Egalla. New Tallwood coach Dallas O'Neal is also impressed with a freshman of his own in Christina Rowe.

Comets, Commodores collide again Maury beat every district opponent 9-0 last year and has already seized control of the Eastern District with a season-opening 9-0 win over Granby. The Commodores return their top four in juniors Ann-Meg Keatley (two-time district champion), Perry Keatley, senior Simone McDonnell and sophomore Evelien Steendom, though Ann-Meg Keatley will miss the start of the season due to a back injury. Granby, which went 6-1 in the district last year, returns district singles finalist Melonie Houchins and should earn the other region bid.

Hawks, Grizzlies battle The Southeastern District will likely come down to Grassfield and Hickory once again. The Hawks lost 2012 district champ Jackie Gaine to graduation, but return four players from last year's district title team, including senior Rachel Farmer, the district singles runner-up and doubles champion with Gaine. The Grizzlies welcome back three players, including Leah Machesney, who was a runner-up in the district in doubles. Grassfield, which went 8-1 in the district last year, will also rely on three freshmen – most notably Alina Creamer, who new coach Fallon Nugent believes could contend with Farmer and Machesney for the district title.

Elsewhere in the Southeastern Great Bridge, which went 7-2 last year and would likely be the top threat to challenge Hickory and Grassfield, has five seniors in its starting lineup. However, only Kristy Wright, last year's No. 3, and Katelyn Valentine, last year's No. 5, have any real high school tennis experience. C.J. Johnson, in his 19th year as Indian River coach, believes his lineup has "lots of potential" with three returning players and three players who are new to the sport. King's Fork coach Calvin Mitchell will hope that a lineup consisting of four seniors and two juniors will help the Bulldogs improve on last year's 2-7 mark.

## starting six

1. First Colonial The Patriots likely lost their role as Eastern Region favorites: Last year's top seed, Victoria Olivarez, hasn't returned, and an eligibility appeal by former state champ Shannon Hudson was denied this week.
2. Cox Led by Kait Brogan, the reigning Beach District champions are an annual fixture in the Eastern Region title hunt. Maria Faircloth is the new coach.
3. Princess Anne The defending Eastern Region champions lost half of their starting lineup and will once again need to rely on depth to have any chance of repeating.

4. Maury Could the Commodores break the stranglehold the Beach has on the Eastern Region?

5. Hickory The two-time Southeastern District champs return most of last year's team, including district singles finalist Rachel Farmer.

6. Grassfield The Grizzlies believe they have as strong a 1-2 punch in the Southeastern as anyone in Leah Machesney and Alina Creamer.

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