

## Smith Signs With Pirates

Written by Mike Kelly

Wednesday, 18 December 2013 06:59

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Watauga High senior Meredith Smith made it official on Tuesday afternoon as she signed her National Letter of Intent to play college tennis at East Carolina University, a Division I school in Greenville, N.C., and a member of Conference USA.

Smith capped off her senior year going 11-2 playing No.1 singles and 5-0 playing No.1 doubles. She was 60-10 in singles play in her career and 38-6 in doubles. And Smith, who has a 4.10 grade-point-average and is a member of the Beta Club and the National Honor Society, will major in graphic arts at ECU.

"The academics played a big part in it, but I always wanted to play college tennis," Smith said. "I love the school and they have my major. And the team is very close. And to be playing at a Division I school really makes it special. The players at East Carolina watch out for each other, and they really like their coach (Tom Morris).

"He's been there for a while (15 years), and they really respect him (Morris is the all-time winningest coach in women's tennis in school history). I had thought about going to (University of North Carolina at) Greensboro or (University of) Charlotte, but I felt real comfortable at ECU. I wasn't recruited heavily. so, I reached out to them, and it all came together for me."

Smith was a regional qualifier for the Pioneers her senior year. She was a member of four

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Northwestern 3A/4A Conference championship teams, and she was Player of the Year in the NW3A/4A three times.

"We will definitely miss her next season," said WHS coach Beth Watts, who led the Pioneers to an 11-4 record and a conference championship in her first year. "She's really meant a lot to our team. She was a strong starting point for us in dual matches. Girls tennis up here doesn't get a lot of credit, at least not like the boy's team, but for Meredith to get a chance to play Division I tennis is a huge step for our program.

"This isn't something that happens a whole lot for our program. But for her to play at a Division I school is a big statement for our program."

Smith started playing No.1 singles for WHS her sophomore year, and she kept that spot through her junior and senior campaigns. Ironically, she staved off her younger sister, Meghan, currently a freshman at WHS, for the No.1 seed this season. Meghan, a very good player in her own right, played No.2 singles and No.2 doubles. She was a state qualifier in doubles last fall.

"Meghan will definitely be the one we're looking at to play No.1 singles for us next year," Watts said. "She has big shoes to fill and the pressure of being Meredith's little sister. Meredith was so valuable for us. She is a very strong player that can give her opponents a very good competitive match. She's a baseline player with a lot of power. I don't know a lot about (East Carolina's) team, but I do know it's hard to make their team. But she earned it.

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"Her record speaks for itself, and getting a chance to play at the next level is a huge reward for all her hard work."

"I'm confident Meghan can play No.1 next year," Smith said. "We come from a tennis-playing family. I started playing at a young age. I was four-or-five-years old when I started playing. And I've had my struggles with the game, but I love playing, and I just keep practicing and working hard at it. You have to put in the time, if you want to be good at this game."

Smith was an all-conference and all-region selection for four years. She was named all-state her freshman and junior years. She was named the team's Most Valuable Player three times (sophomore, junior and senior years), and she received the Coaches Award her freshman year.

A pretty impressive resume for a pretty impressive player.

**Photo Courtesy: Meredith Smith, Tim Smith**

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