

Greenville competing for '09

Upstate fans may see Americans take on Swiss team led by Roger Federer

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Greenville is a finalist to host the first round of the 2009 Davis Cup tennis tournament, which will fea-

ture a Roger Federer-led Switzerland team against the United States, a spokesman for the United State Tennis Association said Tuesday.

Tim Curry, the USTA's

director of public relations, said Greenville, Birmingham and San Antonio are competing for the event to be held March 6-8.

Association officials are reviewing each city's bid, and an announcement should be made next week, Curry said.

Lucy Garvin, a Green-

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Davis Cup match

ville resident, will become the USTA's president in January. Currently the organization's first vice president, she will serve a two-year term. She couldn't be reached for comment.

However, Roger Newton, general manager of the Bi-Lo Center, which submitted the bid to host

the Davis Cup competition in Greenville, said Garvin is remaining neutral.

"She doesn't want to exert any influence on the final decision," Newton said. "She wants the decision to be based on strictly a business decision — what's the best decision for the Davis Cup and the

USTA."

Meanwhile, Curry said Federer, who this year won his fifth consecutive United States Open men's singles championship and is considered one of the greatest players of tennis' so-called Open Era, plans

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to play for his native Switzerland against the U.S. Davis Cup team.

Newton said USTA officials recently visited Greenville to look at the Bi-Lo Center's seating capacity, dressing rooms and media facilities.

The officials also wanted to know more about such amenities as hotels and restaurants and where practice facilities would be located, he said.

Newton said the Davis Cup teams could practice at Furman University, where the school's teams have as their home one of the region's top tennis facilities, the Minor Herndon Mickel Tennis Center.

The Bi-Lo Center, Newton said, can be reconfigured to about 12,500 for Davis Cup tennis competition. That would compare with the Alamodome in San Antonio, for example, that could be reconfigured to seat between 20,000 and 35,000 people, according to Tennis Week magazine.

"In a nutshell, we played up not only our city and our facilities, but also our area, our region being very supportive of tennis," Newton said.

In South Carolina and neighboring states, there are a large number of USTA members in state and local tennis associations who could help sell tickets and act as volunteers in a variety of ways during the competition, he said.

Many of those organizations were involved with Charleston's effort in 2004 to host the U.S. Davis Cup team's semifinal against Belarus. That marked the first time Davis Cup matches were played in South Carolina.

Winston-Salem, N.C., also has hosted the tennis competition.

Newton said the Bi-Lo Center staff would draw on its success in hosting the NCAA men's basketball tournament in 2002 and the 2008 Bassmaster Classic fishing tournament.

"We met the venue criteria with no problem," he said. "They (USTA officials) were comforted to know that we are good at doing major events."

The Davis Cup's potential economic impact in Greenville hasn't been determined, Newton said.