

Making Headlines

Johansson continues his roll after Binghamton

Thomas Johansson beat **James Blake**, but the United States still advanced over Sweden to the Davis Cup final. Thomas Johansson blasted James Blake in the 1st day of the Semifinal clash; but he was unable to compete in the final day, citing stomach illness, when he was scheduled to play Andy Roddick. Still, Thomas Johansson provided the only bright spot for the Swedes, with their lone victory in the 5 match series in September. Johansson is riding an 18-4 match record since July, including the 3rd round appearance at the US Open. Thomas lost to Andy Roddick in that 3rd round of the US Open, after he beat fellow veterans Nicolas Massu (here in '99) and Arnaud Clement. He has improved his ranking from #104 earlier this year to #39, highlighted by his final appearance last week in Stockholm's ATP event. He saved 5 match points against James Blake in the semifinal and then lost to Ivo Karlovic. Johansson is the first Grand Slammer to play in the 14 year history of our Challenger. For a relative comparison, Andy Murray was in fine form in the '05 Binghamton Challenger, with an 18-5 record, including 4 Challengers and the 3rd round of Wimbledon.



Former Binghamton players and recent winners in men's professional tennis include Dmitry Tursunov (2 ATP titles), The Ratiwatana Brothers (ATP Doubles), Rik DeVoest (ATP Doubles), Jonathan Erlich/Andy Ram (ATP Doubles), **Challenger Singles-** Jesse Witten, Robert Smeets, Olivier Rochus, Sam Warburg; **Challenger Doubles-** Bobby Reynolds/Rajeev Ram, Alex Kutznetsov/Ryan Sweeting

Ivo Karlovic continues to make the sport attractive for tall athletes by becoming the 4th player in history to hit 1000 aces in one season. Karlovic hit his 1000th ace in his win over **Lleyton Hewitt** in Japan, ironically the same player he beat at Wimbledon prior to being our 2003 Champion (Recall, Hewitt was the top seed at Wimbledon). Karlovic hit 25 aces in that Japan Open match, 73 for that week, winning 91% of his 1st serve points. Karlovic served up 27 against Johansson in the Stockholm final last week.

The Challenger wouldn't exist without its many volunteers, who come in all varieties. Mike Burke, a tennis enthusiast and a local school teacher, helps with many of the tasks during the 2 weeks of the event including setup of the site, scoreboard labels, as well as various jobs during tournament week. He is on-site every day for at least 15 days of August, multiple hours per day.

Volunteer Profile: Mike Burke

Been involved since: "The beginning in '94. ME's coach called me and asked me to work. This was when we were at BU. I worked the 'door' ... then I got the idea of keeping track of the scores and players outside the door so people would know who is playing and who is winning. I started with a chalkboard and chalk. That grew into the scoreboard we now have outside the entry gate. Then I just started helping out with any small jobs that needed to be done."

Why does he volunteer? "Because someone has to and I just can't say no"

Other Community Tennis involvement: Coaches two tennis teams (since 1986), STAC coordinator, Section 4 coordinator, has helped run local amateur Tennis tournaments

Favorite Player at the Challenger: "Takao Suzuki, because he was a serve & volley player and he won the tourney twice."



James Blake here in '98

Current players in the top 70 entry rankings that have been to Binghamton

- #8- James Blake
- 14-Guillermo Canas
- 17-Andy Murray
- 19-Lleyton Hewitt
- 24-Ivo Karlovic
- 28-Dmitry Tursunov
- 39-Thomas Johansson
- 44-Hyung-Taik Lee
- 51- Nicolas Mahut
- 55-Andreas Seppi
- 57-Olivier Rochus
- 61-Janko Tipsarevic
- 63-Julien Benneteau
- 65-Michael Llodra
- 70-Frank Dancevic

A word from our director

It is hard to believe that we just finished our 14th year hosting the Levene Gouldin & Thompson Tennis Challenger at Rec Park. It is truly a feather in our cap to have this caliber tennis here in Binghamton two weeks before the US Open. It can only be attributed to all of the sponsors and volunteers who continue to support the event and make all of the players, officials and spectators feel welcome.



Laurie Bowen with Thomas Johansson and Dusan Vemic

The success of the tournament is also reflected in our wild card requests from former world ranked players. This is the second year in a row that we have received such a request. This summer Thomas Johansson (a former # 7 in the world) contacted us about playing in Binghamton. It was exactly the week of tennis that he was seeking. None of his five matches leading up to his title were easy which helped him to prepare for the Pilot Pen and the

US Open. Thomas was always approachable for staff and fans alike. His coach and hitting partner was Magnus Norman, a former #2 in the world. We can only hope to continue to attract these world ranked players, as it brings more excitement to an already incredible event!

The Discovery Center and YMCA together raised over \$6000 this year through “Pastabilities with a Taste of Tennis” and the YMCA’s “Party in the Park”. Our mission to help grow the game of tennis in the Southern Tier will move forward with some initiatives for students in grades 5-8. The focus of physical education today is activities that students can participate in for the rest of their lives. Tennis definitely fits the bill!

We always look forward to next year’s event. 2008 is no different. We do so appreciate all of our sponsors and volunteers who step up to the plate year after year. The Levene Gouldin & Thompson Challenger continues to be one of the oldest challengers in the nation!

– Laurie Bowen