

Top seeds win mixed doubles

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The top seeded teams overcame tough opponents and 90 degree temperatures to win their divisions Sunday in the Ann Arbor City Tennis Tournament's mixed doubles event.

Clare and Virginia North needed three long sets to defeat Jim and Paula Burdelski in the championship match of the husband/wife division. The Norths, who also defeated the Burdelskis in the 1989 final, came from behind to win 5-7, 6-4, 6-4.

In the open division, Eric Johnson and Jennifer Lev came back from a 5-3 deficit in the first set to defeat the No. 4-seed team of Jon Restuccia-Kathy VanDeWege 7-5, 6-3.

Getting to the finals turned out to be a struggle for the Burdelskis, which had to fight off a challenge from Steve and Carol Miller in the morning semifinal. The Norths, however, finished their semifinal match more than an hour before the Burdelskis.

"We didn't play that long in the morning and rested for two hours," Virginia North said.

Paula Burdelski said fatigue was not a factor in the championship match.

"I think we played well," she said. "We had a plan — to try not to give Clare anything he could whale on."

The Burdelskis might have played shots away from Clare North, but there was no way to stop his dominating serve. Clare North, co-director of tennis at Huron Valley Tennis Club, served an ace on match point.

Clare North said that the Burdelski's strategy made this match much closer than last year's two-set final.

"They hit the ball short to Virginia," he said. "It was an effective play that set up some winning shots."

After back-to-back titles in the husband/wife competition, Clare North said it might be time to move up to the open division, where many of the big hitters play.

"We'll see what's happening next year at this time," he said. "If Virginia could play a lot, we might (move to the open division). Since I'm at the club a lot, finding playing time is not that hard for me."

The Millers took the opening set of the semifinal match 6-4, but the Burdelskis rebounded in the next two sets, 6-4, 6-1.

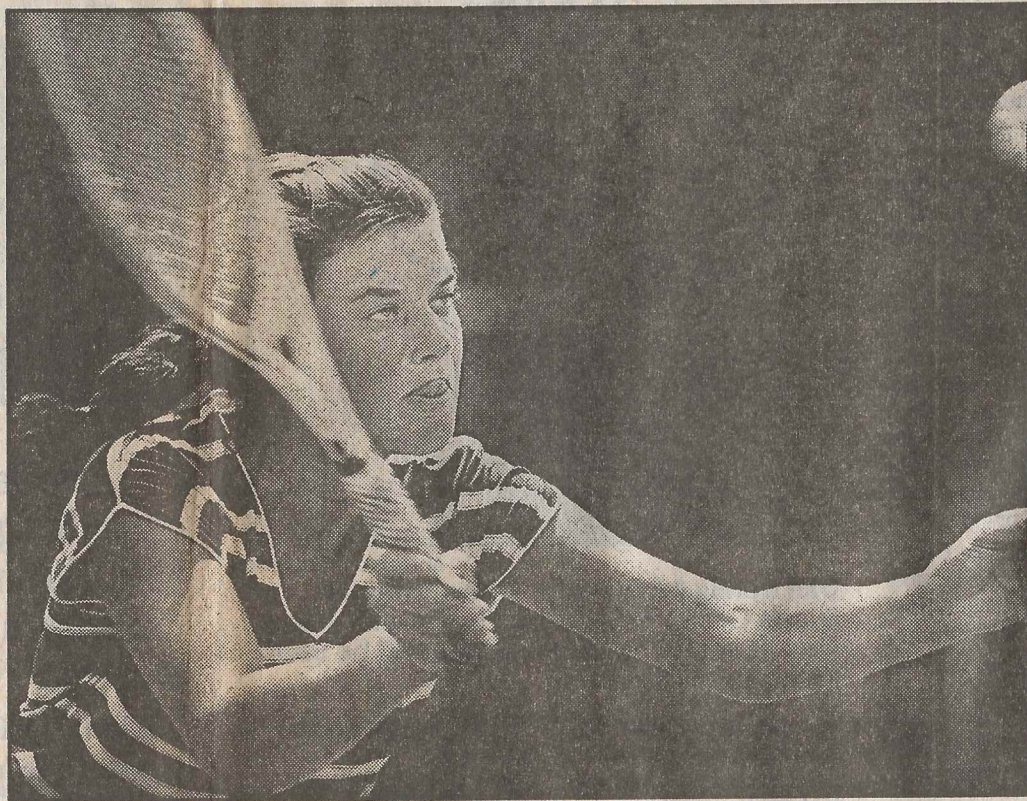
Steve Miller played much of the match at the net, while Carol Miller stayed in the backcourt. The strategy was effective against the Burdelskis.

"Carol was always at the baseline and never came to the net," Jim Burdelski said. "She has good groundstrokes and can put the ball anywhere she wants. And, that took away Paula's lob."

In the open final, the 10th game of the first set was the turning point. With his team leading 5-4, Jon Restuccia served for the set. Restuccia, who has one of Ann Arbor's best serves, ran into trouble. On break point Johnson hit a solid return that Restuccia volleyed long.

Johnson held his serve to put his team in front 6-5. The Johnson/Lev team then broke VanDeWege's serve to close out the set.

"The key was breaking Jon," Johnson said. "We didn't expect to break him because he has such a big serve. We hit a couple lucky returns, and psychologically, it's very important to win the first set."



NEWS PHOTO • NEAL LAMBERT

Jennifer Lev returns a shot that helped her and partner Eric Johnson win the Ann Arbor Open Mixed Doubles Tennis Tournament.

Johnson, who won his fourth open mixed doubles championship, said his partner's strong net play was a big factor in the match.

"She (Lev) has a strong serve and she volleys well," he said. "That's the strength of her doubles game."

Lev, who played sixth singles on the University of Michigan women's tennis team

last season, looked comfortable at the net returning the bullets shot at her by VanDeWege and Restuccia.

VanDeWege, the head pro at Chippewa Racquet Club and a former number one singles player at U-M, was disappointed with her play near the end of the first set.

"I didn't return well. I think that's why we lost the first set," she said.