

Aussie garners city tennis title

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Men's open champion Holcombe adds to tournament's international flavor

BY RICH REZLER
The Ann Arbor News

Sven Holcombe created a buzz among the local tennis regulars this week, raising eyebrows as he cruised through the men's open division of the Ann Arbor City Singles Tennis Tournament.

"Everybody was asking each other who this guy was, but nobody knew," said tournament regular Tim Petersen, the 4.5 division champion. "That's the great thing about Ann Arbor, you never know who's going to roll through town."

Turns out that besides being a right-hand batsman and wicketkeeper in cricket and an engineer focused on researching child restraint safety systems, Holcombe also is the 2008 city singles tennis champion.

The 26-year-old native of Canberra, Australia, beat No. 1 seed Victor Petreca 6-1, 6-2 in Sunday's championship match at the University of Michigan Varsity Tennis Center.

"(Petreca) had a much better ground strokes than me, so it was a case of getting to the net and trying to finish the point as quickly as possible," Holcombe said.

Holcombe, who played competitive junior tennis in Australia before turning his athletic pursuits toward cricket, moved to Ann Arbor just six weeks ago to work on crash test engineering with trauma surgeons at the University of Michigan Hospital.

His victory over Petreca, a native of Brazil, only added to the international flair of the tournament.

Yasmin Kashef, a native of Cairo, Egypt, won the women's open championship while Nicole Nessler-Stuhec, originally from Munich, Germany, won the women's 4.0 division.

All of Sunday's champions had to overcome more than the competitor on the other side of the net. A strong wind blew across the courts most of the day.

"It was basically just keeping the ball in play and looking for a chance to hit a winner," said Nessler-Stuhec, who beat Sherry Witmer 6-1, 7-5 in a title match. "But winners were hard to hit today because the wind made that dangerous."

Nessler-Stuhec, who played youth tennis in Germany, moved to Ann Arbor six years ago. She returned to the sport recently after receiving a Huron Valley Tennis Club membership as a Christmas gift from her husband.

Kashef, on the other hand, has

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'Now I'm trying to become the No. 1 player in the Midwest, hopefully.'

Yasmin Kashef, a native of Cairo, Egypt, who won the city women's open championship.



Yasmin Kashef hits a forehand winner against Huron High School coach Kendra Clark in their women's open final, which Kashef won, 6-4, 4-6, 6-2.

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Andrew Berriz prepares to serve in his 4.0 final against Pierre-Yves Emelie on Sunday. Berriz, a former player for Huron High School, won 6-2, 5-7, 6-4.

been playing competitive tennis since coming to America to play at Sacramento State University. The three-time Big Sky Conference champion then moved to Connecticut, where she was the No. 1-ranked player in New England, before relocating to Dearborn in December.

She beat former Eastern Michigan player and current Huron High School coach Kendra Clark 6-4, 4-6, 6-2 in the finals.

"Now I'm trying to become the No. 1 player in the Midwest, hopefully," said Kashef, who teaches tennis at Travis Pointe Country Club.

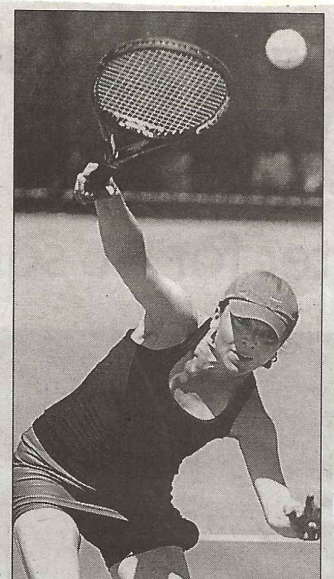
In the men's 4.5 division, Petersen rallied from a 3-0 second-set deficit in a semifinal match against Joe Jankolovitz to win 3-6, 7-6 (5), 6-2. He then beat Robert Smothers 6-1, 6-3 in the finals to earn a singles trophy to go alongside the mixed doubles trophy

he and his wife, Sally, won in 2002.

Ann Arbor's Fred Chapman beat Steve Jensen 6-0, 7-5 to win the men's senior division; former Huron player Andrew Berriz topped Pierre-Yves Emelie 6-2, 5-7, 6-4 to win the men's 4.0 division; Robert Gray of Chelsea beat Syed Rafey 6-4, 6-3 for the 3.5 men's division crown; and Kevin Tang cruised to the men's 3.0 title, losing a total of five games in straight-set semifinal and final victories.

Lynn Henry, who won the tournament's 3.0 division last year, moved up and took home the trophy for the 3.5 flight Sunday. She beat Carol Diephuis 6-1, 6-0. Ann Arbor's Carol Levovic beat Mary Reilly 6-4, 6-2 for this year's women's 3.0 title.

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Nicole Nessler-Stuhec hits a winner in her 4.0 singles final against Sherry Witmer. Nessler-Stuhec won the match, 6-1, 7-5.