

# NET/GAME

SUMMER 2022  
ISSUE NO. 2

*The official magazine of USTA Southern California*

## SECTIONAL SENSATIONAL!

*It's championship season in  
Southern California*



**BRANDON  
NAKASHIMA**

*The right kind of "privilege"*

**SUPER SENIORS  
STRIKE GOLD**

*#TeamSoCal reigns over top  
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# NET/GAME

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Cover images by Lexie Wanninger | USTA SoCal

NET/GAME ISSUE NO. 2

Summer 2022



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SUMMER 2022

# Setting goals yields results

A Message from the Executive Director



Michelle S. Kim / UC Irvine Communications

I was lucky enough to win six doubles titles during my pro tennis career, but in one of my most memorable moments as a professional, we didn't even win. It was on center court at the French Open in my rookie Grand Slam year, a match against John McEnroe and Andre Agassi in the Round of 16 on center court at Roland Garros. Truth be told, they really took it to us and gave us a beating. Four times I played on center court at Wimbledon. It was like playing in the Super Bowl. Like Game Seven of a Stanley Cup final. There's nothing like it.

From a young age, my entire life centered around becoming a professional tennis player. As a young man in Bradenton, Florida, I was fortunate enough to have a couple of school administrators who were also tennis players. They really bought into the fact that this was my chosen path. Throughout my journey in tennis, there have always been supporters who helped me achieve lofty goals. Today, we look to nurture young SoCal players in the same manner, helping them accomplish more than they could ever imagine.

As a junior, my peers were future Hall of Famers like Pete Sampras, Andre Agassi, and Jimmy Arias. In those days, I could excel behind a power serve and a big forehand. Now, everybody is an elite athlete. The talent is better, and the players are stronger. They can hit the tennis ball with both power and precision. The fitness is extraordinary - everybody can run for hours. Without question, it's harder today.

The advice I would offer current junior players - and even young pro players - is to set goals. I played college tennis at UC Irvine, and each season I would determine ten goals that I knew I could achieve with hard work and dedication. I'd write them down and stick them on the back of my headboard, tape them to my mirror in my bathroom, and place them somewhere in the kitchen. Each and every time I walked by, I could see these goals and be reminded. It's the little things that make all the difference.

What were the main principles? Believe in yourself. Don't ever let anybody tell you that you can't achieve your goals. Consider the intangibles that you can control every single day - your attitude, your concentration, your effort. Master those things, and then everything else will take care of itself.

*Trevor Kronemann*



## WHAT'S HAPPENING ON A TENNIS COURT NEAR YOU...

### ➔ Canyon Crest wins big



After capturing the section title, the boys of Canyon Crest Academy in San Diego earned their first ever CIF State Regional Championship with a victory over top-seeded Bishop's School. The wins provide a storybook ending for CCA coach Chris Black, who stepped down following the season to focus on family and his career in education.

### ➔ Grant awarded to USTA SoCal



USTA SoCal received a \$400,000 California Violence Intervention & Prevention (CalVIP) grant to help increase access to tennis for children in underserved and low

income communities. The grant, from the State of California Board of State & Community Corrections, will be used to create and develop tennis coaching programs at four sites, in under-resourced neighborhoods, for elementary and middle school aged children.

# WHAT'S UR REP?

## Campaign stresses sportsmanship

By Darryl Nash / USTA SoCal

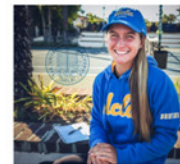
In our ongoing effort to promote exemplary sportsmanship, USTA Southern California launches the "What's Your Rep?" campaign in June to remind players that actions on the court have a lasting effect off the court.

The campaign features thoughtful reminders of how bad sportsmanship can carry over into everyday life. A dishonest player who makes suspect calls during a tennis match simply cannot expect that perception to disappear once the match ends. Instead, a reputation is gained - and it's not a good one!

Conversely, our recognition of good sportsmanship continues this summer with gift cards furnished by Tennis Warehouse, awarded to those who display acts of fairness and etiquette during competitions throughout the year. The section is also pleased to announce this year's recipients of the Evelyn Houseman Lifetime Junior Sportsmanship awards (see sidebar), and the development of targeted signage that speaks both to players and parents (see page 10).

To learn more about our efforts in sportsmanship, please visit [ustasocal.com/junior/sportsmanship](http://ustasocal.com/junior/sportsmanship).

### ➔ Evelyn Houseman awards announced



Santa Barbara's **Masato Perera** and **Anne Christine Lutkemeyer** of Irvine have been named recipients of the prestigious Evelyn Houseman Lifetime Junior Sportsmanship

awards. Both juniors exemplified good sportsmanship throughout their junior careers and will be rewarded with a lifetime USTA membership. Perera will attend Harvard this fall, while Lutkemeyer will join the Bruins at UCLA. The players will be honored during a ceremony at this year's Junior Sectionals.

## ➔ You Return, We Recycle



At select events in 2022, USTA SoCal will roll out a tennis recycling initiative called "You Return, We Recycle." With greater emphasis on sustainability and the

environment, the section hopes to promote proper re-use of materials like tennis balls, cans, and lids to reduce waste. Recycle bins will be placed near tournament desks at Sectional tournaments and Signature Series events beginning with Junior Sectionals in June.

## ➔ Find Your Best Shot



Photos from select USTA SoCal tournaments are available online on the PhotoShelter platform by visiting our homepage, [ustasocal.photoshelter.com](https://ustasocal.photoshelter.com).

Visitors can download watermarked images for free - or purchase high resolution versions simply by selecting images from galleries, which are organized by event. Take a look and see if we focused on you!

## ➔ Pro Circuit Early Returns



USD's August Holmgren and Aussie Talia Gibson were champions at the first SoCal Pro Circuit event in Rancho Santa Fe. Holmgren outlasted the tourney's No. 2 seed,

Irvine resident Gage Brymer, 6-4, 6-4 in the men's final. In a lengthy women's final, Gibson went the distance with No. 4 seed Maria Kozyreva, 7-6 (4), 3-6, 7-6 (5) to claim her first ITF women's singles title.



In the second event of the series at University of San Diego, Taiwan's Jiangxue Han defeated No. 5 seed Ya Yi Yang in three sets to win the Women's title, while

Portugal's Duarte Vale fought to secure a second set tiebreak before locking up the Men's title over ASU's Nathan Ponwith.

# "You always have to have hope," says father of SD player after tragic accident

A Division 1 tennis standout from the University of the Incarnate Word in San Antonio, 20-year-old Ivan Smith was 6-3 in singles along with posting 14 wins in doubles action while earning all-conference first team honors in his junior year. Smith was poised to close out another excellent season when his vehicle was struck as the San Diego native was headed to the Cardinals' team practice, leaving Smith fighting not for tennis accolades, but instead fighting for his life.

On the west coast, his father Gary – the Club President at Balboa Tennis Club in San Diego – was hitting on court when he noticed a call from Ivan's college coach. In game mode, he continued playing until his phone continued to ring. Eventually, he received the dreaded news. Then, as word spread, the SoCal tennis community began to lend its support in any and every way possible.

A GoFundMe page created to support his recovery – one that was raised over \$100k to date – described the devastating extent of his injuries. Sixteen screws to rebuild his spine. Broken ribs that punctured his lungs. Both clavicle bones broken. Spinal cord injuries. Collectively, the trauma has left Smith immobile below the waist.

Talking to his father, Gary, Ivan Smith unquestionably has a long road to climb. It's a daunting journey, but one that Gary knows his son can travel. "He's going to reach for success," Gary said of Ivan. "I think that other students, children, even adults... You always have to have hope. We have a lot of hope for Ivan."

The family's attention turns now to clinical trials, in hopes of finding the right combination of medicine, technology, and perhaps a little bit of welcome luck along the way.

"It's in the infancy stage right now," Gary Smith says of the trials. "But I think there are possibilities. Ivan is going to be able to walk someday. That's my feeling."



August 5, 2022 | University of San Diego  
A one-day conference to showcase  
inspiring sports industry leaders and athletes.

[ustasocal.com/WomenWhoAce](https://ustasocal.com/WomenWhoAce)



BRANDON NAKASHIMA

# THAT QUIET KID FROM SAN DIEGO

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By Darryl Nash  
with Lexie Wanninger

It was only a few days before he hopped a plane to Europe, a whirlwind trip that will take him across the continent on what will be an annual journey for Brandon Nakashima. The San Diego native, now in his fourth year on the pro tour, was asked about his aspirations for this year's event at Roland Garros.

Along with his desire to advance well into the draw, to compete against the world's best, and to test his mettle on red clay, the 20-year-old offered one particular word that stood out. He described the experience of traveling and competing in France as "a privilege."

That perspective, one that is refreshing for a modern-day professional athlete, pretty much sums up the mild-mannered Nakashima. Even since his junior days here in

Southern California, Nakashima has always been a quiet but steady presence on the court. After a year of college ball at Virginia, Nakashima burst on the pro scene in 2019 to methodically begin his climb up the ATP rankings list. He's captured five ATP Challenger events and twice reached the second round of the US Open.

On the World TeamTennis tour in 2020, he earned Rookie of the Year honors while helping push the Chicago Smash to a championship final.

Last October, Nakashima made his hometown return with the ATP Tour at the San Diego Open. It was a full-circle moment. "I've enjoyed every minute out there traveling and competing at the top-level tournaments against players



from all over the world,” Nakashima told USTASoCal.com. “It’s what I dreamed of when I was little kid, and you want to be able to fulfill that dream now and compete all around the world. At that same time, it is a tough sport playing against all the top players, and to travel all the time, it takes a toll on you and your body. But I’ve enjoyed every part of it and I’m excited to keep doing what I’m doing.”

At the recent Tennis Fest in San Diego, Nakashima made a rare appearance before jetsetting to Paris. At the event, he spent time helping draw attention to the story of Ivan Smith, a friend and longtime tennis peer whom he’s known for years while growing up in SoCal. Smith was seriously injured recently in a car accident while on his way to tennis practice, and suffered life-altering injuries.

“He’s been a good friend of mine,” Nakashima said of Smith. “We used to compete with each other, practice with each other. We kind of went our separate directions a little bit (for college), but we’ve stayed in touch over the years. It’s a tough situation right now. It’s very sad, but we’re just trying to do everything we

**It’s what I dreamed of when I was little kid, and you want to be able to fulfill that dream now and compete all around the world.**

can to help him out and hopefully have him recover from this.”

Generous with his time and his words, Nakashima credits his family for years of support that have carried him to the world tour.

“It is very important to me,” he said of his culture, being celebrated nationwide during AAPI Heritage Month. “Especially always knowing where I came from. My family are the biggest supporters of my tennis, so I always remember where I came from. I think it’s really important for me.”





 **Adult Tennis** BY STEVE PRATT FOR USTASOCAL.COM

## Super Seniors Strike Gold

There are many who would argue that winning a USTA National Gold Ball is the ultimate prize for any competitive tennis player, from the seniors all the way down to the juniors. But for a select group of seniors who compete year after year on the ITF International Team Cup circuit, there's nothing that compares to having a gold medal placed around your neck – at least in Dave Sivertson's eyes.

For the third time during his illustrious senior career, and the first time as a captain, La Quinta's Sivertson achieved the highest prize recently by leading his USTA team to a 2-1 win over Austria in the final of the ITF Super-Senior World Team Championships 70-and-Over Jack Crawford Cup in Palm Beach County, Fla.

"You take the highs of winning a national titles and multiply it by four," said Sivertson, 70. "Sometimes you are even happier for the other guys. At the awards ceremony you hear the names called, and you walk to that podium and just seeing the other guys' reaction is incredible."

United States men's and women's teams won a total of six ITF Super-Senior Cup titles ages 65 to 85 during the competition and four other teams finished in second place. Rancho Santa Fe's Carolyn Nichols successfully captained the 65-and-over Kitty Godfree Cup team to a 3-0 win over Great Britain to win the gold for the U.S. Cathie Anderson of Del Mar – with neighbor Suella Steel of La Jolla also on the four-player team – captained the Doris Hart Cup 80-and-over U.S. team to a runner-up silver medal finish in a 2-1 loss to Germany.

Sivertson has played on six out of the last seven ITF World Cup teams that have competed, including the last two held in Austria. After Covid forced the cancellation of the 2020 event, last year's tournament was set to go as teams were named and airlines tickets purchased for Mallorca. *CONTINUED NEXT PAGE*

### 2022 Summer Adult League Sectionals

**JULY 22-24**  
ADULT 18+  
2.5 | 3.5 | 4.5 | OPEN  
ORANGE COUNTY

**JULY 29-31**  
ADULT 18+  
3.0 | 4.0 | 5.0  
ORANGE COUNTY

**SEPTEMBER 9-11**  
ADULT 55 & OVER  
SAN DIEGO

**SEPTEMBER 23-25**  
MIXED 40 & OVER  
ORANGE COUNTY

FIND UPDATES & MORE EVENTS AT  
[USTASOCAL.COM/ADULT/LEAGUES](https://ustasocal.com/adult/leagues)

But at the last minute the USTA thought best to keep all safe deciding not to send the U.S. team to compete in Spain. "We were all disappointed," Sivertson said. "But we understand what a tough decision it was to make."

Being a captain entails some administrative work, making the final call on lineups and overall leadership. Sivertson said he leaned on teammate and former captain Paul Wulf, even going as far as calling the pair co-captains. "You try and build a consensus and see what makes the most sense," said Sivertson, who serves as the Director of Tennis at Citrus Club La Quinta Resort.

In individual play, Sivertson won five matches at the Worlds to advance to the semifinals in singles of the 128-player draw. Ranked No. 8 in the ITF world rankings, Sivertson broke to open the second set, but pulled a calf muscle and was forced to retire from his match.

Injuries have also kept the 65-and-over Kitty Godfree Cup team captain Nichols sidelined as she had to take nearly a year off because of an injured shoulder.

Nichols does an hour-long stretching routine each day that she calls a "whole new shoulder routine" that has kept her pain free and allowed her to compete. "It's so easy to get injured and so much tougher to heal as you get older," Nichols said.

Nichols, 66, has lost count but says she has played on at least 20 international Cup team over the years and had 14 or 15 first-place gold medal victories. "Once you've got one, you don't it's harder to keep track," she said. "It's great and all. But you realize it doesn't change your life."

Like Sivertson, Nichols advanced to the semifinals at Worlds Individuals losing to rival and eventual champion Patricia Medrado in singles and made it all the way to the doubles final for a silver medal with partner Carolyn Lane.

Nichols says her greatest advantage is her movement, defense and mobility. "I don't have swings between my worst and my best tennis," she said. "I'm always working on stuff and always trying to think of the best way to work on things."

Nichols will travel to the ITF Canada 1000 Seniors event the week of June 6 and plans to spend most of July and August in Europe playing tournaments.

Next up for Sivertson is the USTA National Hardcourts in Irvine in two weeks and he hopes to be healed up and rested to try for another gold ball. Like Nichols, Sivertson relies on his speed and conditioning to be the 70-and-over players.

"I feel like I'm a step faster than everyone else, that's my advantage," said Sivertson, who plans to keep playing senior events. "I hope to stay the same as everyone else keeps gets older. The international players play all year long in hopes of getting selected to a Cup team. To play for the U.S. is our No. 1 goal. Gold balls are great, but there's nothing like winning that gold medal for your country."



## **TEAM USA Southern California Champions/Finalists**

### **Britannia Cup**

Men's 65 & over  
Finalists vs. Australia  
Toby Crabel  
(Beverly Hills)

### **Jack Crawford Cup**

Men's 70 & over  
Champions vs. Australia  
David Sivertson  
(La Quinta)

### **Kitty Godfree Cup**

Women's 65 & over  
Champions vs. Great Britain  
Carolyn Nichols  
(Rancho Santa Fe)

### **Althea Gibson Cup**

Women's 70 & over  
Champions vs. Great Britain  
Tina Karwasky  
(Glendale)

### **Queens' Cup**

Women's 75 & over  
Finalist vs. Great Britain  
Carol Gay  
(San Diego)

### **Doris Hart Cup**

Women's 80 & over  
Finalist vs. Germany  
Cathie Anderson, Del Mar  
Suella Steel (La Jolla)

### **Angela Mortimer Cup**

Women's 85 & over  
Champions vs. Great Britain  
Doris DeVries (Palm Desert)  
Roz King (San Diego)

## Nguyen & Friends aim to fortify good sportsmanship on and off the court

The USTA Southern California Youth Leadership Council is a dedicated volunteer corps of junior tennis players from across Southern California, aimed at fostering ideas that help grow and improve the game of tennis in the region. This summer, Council member Drake Nguyen spearheaded an initiative to promote sportsmanship among spectators and tennis players alike.



Nguyen came up with the concept when thinking about which aspects of the sport of tennis are most significant to him. “Sportsmanship has always been the one aspect that’s an important part of my game,” Nguyen explained.

“At my club, there’s a sign saying, ‘Please remain quiet out of respect for our members while the matches are in progress.’ I asked why can’t we do that for the whole community in Southern California? I then started looking into designs that could do the same.”

The team settled on the phrase “Let the Players Play,” and aim to place signage featuring that phrase at as many tennis facilities in Southern California as possible. The committee has the goal of encouraging all those in attendance at tennis matches to focus on the match, instead of prodding or agitating the players themselves.

Nguyen and the Council are all experienced junior players who have encountered pushy and overly aggressive parents and spectators before. “We hope to reduce player grievances with spectators,” said Nguyen. “We want to send a message to aspiring juniors that sportsmanship should go ahead of wins.”

More at [ustasocal.com/community/youth-council](https://ustasocal.com/community/youth-council)

**SIGNATURE SERIES 2022**

UNIVERSAL TENNIS + USTA SOCAL

# FINAL 8 JUNIOR MASTERS

November 19-20, 2022

REMAINING GRAND PRIX EVENTS

<b>JULY</b> Level 4 Open- Mary Brymer	<b>SEPTEMBER</b> Level 4 Open - Los Caballeros Level 4 Closed- Barnes Tennis Center	<b>OCTOBER</b> Level 4 Closed- J.P. Yamasaki
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## Visiting with Riverside's SoCal Adaptive Sports

SoCal Adaptive Sports is an organization that looks to make tennis an accessible sport for people of all backgrounds and abilities throughout Southern California. The organization was founded in June of 2020, and collaborates with other public, private, and non-profit organizations and individuals to fill the need for consistent access to sports opportunities for people with physical and intellectual disabilities in Riverside County and other Southern California communities.

SoCal Adaptive Sports primarily operates out of Palm Desert Community Center and offers a number of adaptive sports, including basketball, bocchia, pickleball, and tennis.

The organization adheres to four core values – Resilience, Inclusiveness, Service and Excellence – and views sports as a pathway for athletes of all abilities to be able to lead full and athletically fulfilling lives.

James Lindsay is an adaptive tennis player with Autism and Asperger's syndrome who was exposed to tennis through SoCal Adaptive Sports. Lindsay heard about the program through word-of-mouth, initially trying out tennis at a collaborative event between

SoCal Adaptive Sports and Desert Recreation District Adaptive at Palm Desert Civic Center Park. "My friends mentioned to me about this tennis thing happening at the Palm Desert tennis courts. I figured I could give it a try in my spare time," he explained.

Lindsay himself can't quite place exactly what it is about tennis that drew him to the sport, but his appreciation of the sport was instant. "I guess I just like hitting the ball over net," he said, adding that he also values tennis as a way for him to add to his social circle. Like a lot of others in the community, Lindsay may have first been captivated by hitting the ball, but it was the community itself that gave him a reason to stay. "I mainly came back to see some people that I made friends with right here," he said.

James credits the organization's Executive Director Michael Rosenkrantz with helping him steadily improve on the court. Despite only having started playing tennis a few short months, Lindsay is critical of his own performance and is focused on getting better: "I do have to improve on some of my movements of how I hit a ball, like bending the knees. That's one of my problems I need to work on."

With the program supporting him, Lindsay is eager to improve his form and enjoy his time with the community, all while getting more fit and enjoying the simple pleasure of simply hitting the ball over the net.





# SUH SIBLINGS STAY TRUE TO TRADITION

BY STEVE PRATT FOR USTA SOCAL

Being well-rounded both in athletics and performing arts has always been important for members of the Suh family from the City of Orange. Fifteen-year-old Nathaniel holds a USTA national ranking and plays for the Villa Park High School team as a freshman, while 12-year-old Sophie is a sixth-grader at Tustin Connect and is among the top players in her age-group nationally.

Both siblings embrace their Asian American heritage, especially during the month of May with the observance of Asian American Pacific Islander month, tracing their ancestry to Korea. The patriarch of the family, Dr. Will Suh, is a cardiologist raised in Chicago. Nathaniel and Sophie's mother Caroline was born in Korea and moved to America when she was 2 years old.

"So I guess you can consider Nathaniel and Sophie 2.5 generation Americans," said Will Suh.

"With May being Asian American Pacific Islander Month, I feel proud to be Korean," said Nathaniel, who also enjoys going to the batting cages with his younger brother and playing video games on his computer. "My parents have taught me to be proud of who I am and my heritage."

Nathaniel is learning how to play the Nanta, traditional Korean drums and performs with a drum group. Sophie does Korean dance and is also learning to play the Korean drum and gayageum, a stringed zither.

"Doing these things makes me feel connected with

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

**"Lately I'm a huge fan of Carlos Alcaraz. He is not that much older than me..."**

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Korean tradition and culture," said Sophie, who appears in a music video by the rock group Steelheart with her Korean dance group.

But it is on the tennis court where the Suhs have received the most accolades. Nathaniel won a bronze ball in the 14s at the FILA Easter Bowl, but his best USTA Nationals result was a silver ball at Winter Nationals in January. Last year, Nathaniel won the 16s at the L4 JP Yamasaki and Fullerton. He will play SoCal Junior Sectionals in June and continue training for USTA Boys' 16s Hardcourt Nationals at Kalamazoo in August.

Last year, Sophie won a gold ball at USTA 12s National Indoors and recently won the L3 14s in Irvine. "I love the adrenaline rush of winning a tournament," said Sophie, who has been training at USTA Carson and will also play Junior Sectionals. "I like the sound the tennis ball makes when hitting it hard."

Nathaniel says he enjoys tennis because it's an individual sport and counts the Big Three among his favorites. "But lately, I'm a huge fan of Carlos Alcaraz. He is not that much older

than me," Nathaniel says of the rising Spanish superstar. "But his game is big and his results are amazing."

Both siblings idolized Asian American sporting heroes growing up. Nathaniel loved basketball as a young child. "I realized I wasn't going to be the next Jeremy Lin, so I decided to try tennis," he said of the former Lakers guard. "I went to Lakers games to see him play especially because he was the only Asian player on the court. I also like Simu Liu since he is the first Asian Marvel superhero. Shang Chi was an awesome movie."

He added: "I really liked the competition of an individual sport and I think my basketball skills helped me with my tennis."

Sophie favored Serena Williams early on and notes she has won more Grand Slams singles titles than any of the men. "I really like Li Na. She had an aggressive game style. I want to have a down the line backhand like hers," she said.

Like Nathaniel in basketball, Sophie said Korean dance requires good footwork and rhythm, which has helped her with her tennis. She concluded by thanking one person who has made it possible. "It's hard to balance both, but I have to thank my mom for driving me to both practices," she said.



# Former All-American Kleege supports opportunities for today's college standouts

Bruce Kleege knows more than anyone the struggles facing young junior and college tennis players looking to make the transition onto the professional tour.

A former college All-American in singles and doubles at Brigham Young University, the San Diego native and current Rancho Santa Fe resident Kleege has recently studied the pro circuit landscape – as he has two 15-year-old twin boys who are freshman at Torrey Pines High School and among a core group of young SoCal players looking for opportunities to play for world-ranking points.

Where there were once 12 to 15 Pro Circuit Futures and Challenger tournaments a year in SoCal, only one or two ITF events remain on the annual calendar in Southern California.

"I've been to all the places and remember what it was like traveling to Japan and Africa," said the 67-year-old Kleege, a major donor and financial sponsor to the newly launched SoCal Pro Circuit which began May 30 at Kleege's home club at Rancho Santa Fe Tennis Club. "I remember playing in Bangkok and Taiwan and playing the Satellite circuit in the United States back in the day."

So Kleege began thinking of ways to get more of these home-grown events to take place locally. He got together with good friend Lornie Kuhle and the two came up with the idea of a series of events where only SoCal players and those attended local college would be eligible for qualifying and wild card opportunities. Add in influential players from USTA SoCal like board members Chris Boyer, Executive Director Trevor Kronemann, Board President Bob Hochstadter and former pros like Paul Annacone, Pam Shriver, Marianne Werdel and Peggy Michel, who agreed that additional Pro Circuit events were sorely needed.

"It was really Lornie," said Kleege of his North San Diego County neighbor. "I had an idea and he helped put me in touch with the right people to get it done."

Kleege, who owns a real estate development company, graduated from BYU in 1977 with a business management degree right at the height of the tennis boom.

"I've been trying to figure out how I can put together a Satellite Tour," said Kleege, who was ranked as high as No. 6 nationally in college. "I call it that because when you got out of college, and you wanted to play pro you would play the Satellites and that was the transitional tour.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

## SOCAL PRO CIRCUIT

The Future of Tennis



**SOCAL PRO CIRCUIT**  
**Rancho Santa Fe**

**WOMENS CHAMPION**  
**Talia Gibson**  
Perth, Australia



**SOCAL PRO CIRCUIT**  
**Rancho Santa Fe**

**MENS CHAMPION**  
**August Holmgren**  
Univ of San Diego

**SOCAL PRO CIRCUIT**  
**Rancho Santa Fe**

**DOUBLES CHAMPIONS**  
**August Holmgren / Alexander Cozbinov**  
**Maria Kozyreva / Veronica**  
**Miroshnichenko**

KLEEGE, CONT.

You would play four or five in a row just to get one ATP point. But at least that was a way to do it.”

Kleege said his hope is for the SoCal Pro Circuit to be a model for other sections to follow. “I do hope it’s the building blocks to have many more of these,” he said. “I think you’re going to see results from these Southern California players who will have the potential to compete on the Challenger and ATP and WTA level. It will make a difference, and a couple of them will break through because of the opportunity.”

He’s happy he’s been successful in his business ventures to be able to give back to tomorrow’s futures pro players from SoCal.

“There was a need for me to step in and help out and that’s what I’m trying to do,” Kleege said. “This is a great opportunity for these kids. It’s a win, win, win. I really hope it grows over the next few years.”



## When you can't go home

### Ukraine's Zeynalova still competing as battle for homeland rages on

Just days after leading the University of Texas to the NCAA Team Championship, 18-year-old freshman Sabina Zeynalova arrived in San Diego to start play as a qualifier in the first-of-six SoCal Pro Circuit tournaments at Rancho Santa Fe Tennis Club.

Zeynalova said when she set out for Austin, Texas, from her native land of Kyiv, Ukraine, back in September the idea was to return home and reunite with family and friends and to play select ITF pro tournaments near her home in Eastern Europe following her first year of college.

“To be honest, I would have gone back to Ukraine if I could – that was the plan,” said Zeynalova, who said the first military strikes and invasion by Russia on her homeland that coincided with the start of her first season on February 24 changed everything. “But I cannot go back there because of the war. I talked with my coach, and he said I should just stay in America and come to San Diego and play these ITFs. So that’s what I did.”

Zeynalova said it was the South African native Joffe and her Texas teammates who provided her with the emotional and mental support she needed so badly during a time of war in her home country when she was so far from family and friends. “Of course, I talked to them every day,” she said. “My father and mother and grandparents managed to escape and get out of the country because they have dual citizenship in Azerbaijan. They actually just came back a week ago because of work. But I had other relatives that had to stay. That was probably the toughest just not knowing day by day what was happening.”

Zeynalova will, of course, miss home and longs to see her parents once again as things stabilize in Ukraine. But for now, the plan is to play five more SoCal Pro Circuit events and continue her rise up the WTA rankings. “It’s a structured plan and having all these events together will cut down on my travel expenses,” she said. “Honestly, it’s so beautiful here. If I ever do decide to come back and live in America, this is where I would want to be.”

BY STEVE PRATT FOR USTASOCAL.COM



# Salter brings tennis back to his L.A roots

Ted Salter is a long-time member of the tennis community, and a pioneer in Oregon and Southern California in his efforts to diversify and increase access to the game of tennis. The Compton native is the Executive Director of *Tennis for Kids*, a program designed to introduce tennis to children in Los Angeles, where they may not have had the opportunity before.

Salter's journey in the sport is a unique and rather unorthodox tale. Salter recounts that he had always had an interest in playing tennis, but never found the opportunity as a child. Salter always had something drawing him to tennis and some years later, living in Portland, he finally found himself taking the jump. "I had joined a tennis club and paid the money," he recalled. "Two thousand dollars." Salter was unaware that he had only paid the club fee and not the fee to start tennis lessons.

He'd been unjustly misled.

"That's when I went to the park and Don saw me," Salter said of his meeting with Oregon tennis legend Don Johnson, founder of *Kids 'N Tennis*, who had been providing tennis coaching to children in Oregon since 1987. "For two years, I was in line with the kids every Saturday and Sunday learning how to play tennis." When Salter was spotted by Johnson in 1995, he was given the chance to learn the game of tennis, as long as he didn't mind hopping in line with the children.

Salter never stopped learning about the tennis world even after so many years in the sport. "I didn't know there was a tennis community like that, one that sticks together and plays tournaments and all that," said Salter joyfully.

After experiencing the tennis scene in Portland, Salter wasn't finished in the slightest. He looked back to his roots in Los Angeles and decided to come home. "Tennis changed my life in so many different ways," he said, "to the point where I said I want to go home to L.A. and start my own program. That's what I did in 2017."

Salter was steadfast in his goal when coming back to Los Angeles. He recounted his plan to launch *Tennis For Kids*. "We had all these clubs, and we had all these kids that couldn't afford to go to the club. So I needed to do something to meet that need. That's what starting my own program took up here," Salter explained.

The Culver City-based *Tennis For Kids* caters to a wide range of players, and ensures that participants are able to benefit in a way that best suits them. "We have two pathways, a recreational pathway and a competitive pathway... where you can compete in national tournaments and have a pathway through middle school, high school, college and beyond," he explained. Salter also has a clear target in mind as his program expands. "Pathway 1000! We want to introduce 1000 kids to tennis over the next five years. It's ambitious, but we think we can do it."



Lexie Wanninger | USTASoCal

BY ANISH VISHWAKOTI FOR USTASOCAL.COM



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She grew up as a Southern California junior, which led to a successful run at UCLA, a junior US Open doubles crown, and a big jump to the pro ranks in 2018. Now, the sky is the limit!



# ENA LET'S RALLY WITH SHIBAHARA

**“Junior Sectionals was one of my favorite tournaments for sure, especially, since there was singles, doubles, and mixed doubles. My favorite memory of that tournament was winning the triple crown (all 3 events) in one year. It was a such a great accomplishment for me and gave me so much confidence going forward.”**

The tour is so much fun traveling around the world and playing against the top players is such an amazing experience. Of course, there are many challenges and obstacles along the way that I had to learn to deal with, but it is all worth it in the end because I get to do what I love while exploring the world.

I think doubles is so important since you learn how to work and communicate as a team from a young age and you create such great friendships with your partners. Not only that but I believe some parts of doubles can also help with your singles game as well.

I considered playing for USA since I grew up here and played for SoCal and USTA in the juniors. It was a very difficult decision to make. But I made a promise to my grandparents a long time ago, that I would play in front of them at the Tokyo Olympics, representing Japan. And I was very happy that I could achieve that last year for myself and of course, for them.

Since we spoke with Ena, she competed at the French Open and paired with Wesley Koolhof to win the mixed doubles crown, her first Grand Slam title. Congratulations, Ena!



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