

THOUSANDS GATHERED ON COAST TO DETERMINE USTA TENNIS CHAMPIONS

By; Justin Sutton

The United States Tennis Association determined its Mississippi Adult League Champions last week staging contests at locations across the coast from Pascagoula to Gulfport with about 1200 players participating.

Two area teams claimed state championships. Christi Foil's Biloxi squad won the women's 4.5 crown, edging out the champion from the Jackson area in round robin play with the number of sets lost deciding the champion, and Stacey Butera's 2.5 women's team topped a representative from the North Central league in the final to bring a second title to the coast.

In all, six men's championships and five women's championships were decided from the 2.5 to the 5.0 levels. The USTA developed a rating system to promote fair competition among players of equal skill. A 2.5 player is typically a beginning player where as a 5.0 player has extensive experience, usually at the college level.

Teams from the Jackson area saw the most success, capturing four state crowns. Paul Kimble's 4.0 team, Brooks Buffington's 4.5 team and Trey Usry's 5.0 team all won men's titles, and Carrie Starks's 3.0 team took a women's title back to the metro area.

Two Oxford teams brought hardware back to the North Central region when Amal Dass's 2.5 men's team and Pamela Grafton's 4.0 team won titles.

Thomas Wright's 3.0 squad from Greenville brought a title to the Delta region, Sonya McCormick's 3.5 team from Tupelo captured a championship for the Northeast region, and a Hattiesburg based squad captained by Joey Campbell won the men's 3.5 title for the Pine Belt region.

These teams earned the right to participate in the USTA's Southern Section championships. The tournament, which has earned the moniker, the world's largest tennis tournament, takes place in Mobile from July 30 to August 7.

Lindsey Sartain, Director of Adult Programs from the Mississippi Tennis Association, said the Coast won the support of many players who hope to see the tournament return.

"I've have had people come up to me throughout the tournament saying they love it here and want to play here every year," said Sartain.

The location of next year's tournament has not been decided.

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