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Prestigious MCC tourney touts top tennis talent Runs through Aug. 13

By John T. Miller



Last year's Heritage Bank of Commerce men's singles winner Karue Sell returns a serve. Photo Ron Tong

The 31st annual Heritage Bank of Commerce Open Tennis Championships is now underway at the Moraga Country Club and will run through Sunday, Aug. 13.

Prize money totaling \$25,000 will be awarded to the top finishers in men's singles and doubles, women's singles and doubles, and mixed doubles. It is one of the most prestigious open events on the West Coast.

The tournament, which is free for spectators at what is billed as one of the best facilities for viewing tennis competition, draws a mixed group of players, from high school standouts, top collegiate players and touring pros.

A full complement of 128 men's singles players is led by last year's champion, No. 1 seed Karue Sell, who was born in Brazil and came to the U.S. in 2012, winning more than 100 matches at UCLA. Victor Pham (No. 2 seed) won first team All-Ivy League honors last season at Columbia, losing to Sell in the quarterfinals last year. Trevor Johnson (No. 3 seed) attends Texas Christian University, receiving All-Big 12 honors last year, and Loran Staggs (No. 4) had a 21-4 record for UCLA last year and lost in the quarterfinals of the Heritage Bank of Commerce Open a year ago to the eventual runner-up.

Women's singles drew 37 competitors, and is highlighted by No. 1 seed Jovana Jaksie, a Serbian who has been a professional since 2009. She has won 16 singles and two doubles titles on the International Tennis Federation pro tour. The No. 2 seed is Allie Will from Boca Raton Florida who boasts 11 doubles titles in her professional career.

The men's doubles features local favorite Tyler Browne, a Northgate grad who played for, and now coaches, at UC Berkeley, and his partner Nick Brunner. The two of them won doubles last year and will be representing the U.S. in the over-30s at a Davis Cup-like event in Great Britain.

Many local players are entered in the event, including Miramonte grad Luke Bohuslav, who just graduated from Loyola Marymont; Acalanes grads Ryan Cardiff, now at UC Berkeley, and Kyle Everly who attends Gonzaga; and Campolindo grad Tilden Oliver, now at Trinity College. Orinda resident Julie Silveira is entered in the women's competition.

Mark Orwig, head tennis pro at MCC who is in charge of the tourney, says, "There's a lot of very good players here, especially some excellent college players who could really do damage to the draw."

A host of notable players have come to the tourney in the past. Many have gone on to the quarterfinals at Wimbledon, and Glen Mitchibata, once ranked No. 1 in the world as a doubles player and who now coaches at USC, competed here.

The tournament is presented by The Heritage Bank of Commerce and Pine Grove Business Center of Orinda.

Reach the reporter at: john@lamorindaweekly.com

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