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A Perfect Summer Day at the Stead

By Cathy Barbaqallo



Mixed double Amy Jensen and Amir Hadad Photo Sheryl Cardiff

Hundreds of fans were on hand last Sunday to watch the finals of the Stead Open Tennis Championship at Moraga Country Club (MCC). The beautiful blue skies, warm weather and perfect court conditions made for a superb event for tennis fans who appreciate watching world class tennis. One hundred and twenty-eight men and thirty-two women entered the tournament earlier in the week and it all came down to Sunday's final four championship matches.

The fans were a bit stunned as 2-time champion and number one seed Amir Hadad wasn't able to make it a 3-peat by being overthrown by 3rd seed Robert Yim in a surprising upset. However Hadad and Brad Weston took the men's doubles title defeating I. Seri and new nemesis Robert Yim. A resilient Hadad came back for his 3rd match of the day with Amy Jensen in mixed doubles but were defeated by Arunprakash Rajgopalan and Nirupma Sanjeev. The women's singles match kicked off the day and went for three exciting sets as Maria Sanchez defeated Claire Ilcinkas.

According to MCC Head Tennis Professional, Mark Orwig, this event has an amazing connection to the Lamorinda community. Players are not only drawn here by the prize money, a total of \$25,000.00 in cash prizes, but also because they are treated to things like being housed by local families and attend a huge bbq party hosted by MCC. Hundreds of local volunteers make the event run smoothly with Orwig at the helm.

"Looking back over the past 22 years and watching this tournament continue to grow" said Orwig, "This is one of the strongest draws of players in many years. The beauty of the Stead Open is that you can watch some of the best college players in the nation and some of the top professional players and then mingle with the players." Mark also noted that having the same sponsor for 22 years, The Stead Family of Fine Automobiles, is pretty much unprecedented in any sport and fans enjoy seeing all the fancy new cars on display in between the tennis courts.

Orwig also noted that scores of Lamorinda kids who competed in local high schools programs and participated in the tennis programs at MCC, OCC and other local clubs are now college players and also compete in the Stead. "It's extremely gratifying to watch these kids grow up, learn to play tennis then take it to the

college level. They come home over the summer and are able to play in the Stead and experience some great competition," said a proud Orwig. At the end of this perfect sunny Lamorinda day loyal Stead fans wondered if Hadad will return next year to regain his title. Those fans certainly hope so and look forward to the 2009 Stead Open.



Amir Hadad Photo Sheryl Cardiff

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