



OPEN Observations

By Ray Collins

While plans are already underway for the 4th Annual Sarasota Open, I thought it would be good to talk about the one that many of you had a chance to enjoy last month at Longboat Key Club.

- The venue is beautiful. The relatively new Tennis Gardens at the Longboat Key Club is a \$4.5 million dollar beauty.
- A big thanks to tournament founder and director **Tony Driscoll** for having the ambition and expertise to pull off this tournament. It was a great week to see lots of tennis friends and watch some good matches along the way. And thanks to *Totally Tennis* sales rep **Doc Johnson** who was Tony's right hand man.
- The qualifying matches were impressive—so it was amazing that the main draw was an even higher caliber of tennis.
- It was exciting to see an impressive run by University of Florida student and local player **Sekour Bangoura**. He's a bright kid and a class act.
- **Kei Nishikori** is quite a 'rock star' back in Japan. The finals were televised on the web for his fans back in the Far East. At one point, I saw him pump his fist at the camera after winning a big point.
- The player who captured the most attention was **Brian Battistone** of Southern California. First of all, he uses a double-handled racquet which he says gives him more reach and power. But wait, there's more: He serves like a pro beach volleyball player, tossing the ball up with his right hand, switching his racquet into his right and jumping up and spiking his serve with amazing precision. He stayed around and talked to his fans after each match, patiently answering questions. Spectators were happy to see he and his partner **Ryler DeHeart** win the doubles final. (You can see clips of his serve on YouTube.com.)
- IMG legendary coach **Nick Bollettieri** watched the matches, enjoyed a dish of ice cream and was spotted reading *Totally Tennis* magazine. How many times we've seen him on TV watching his players in the Grand Slams?
- Other fans questioned the need for the South Beach-style lounge chairs that sat virtually empty all week long. Though aesthetically pleasing, it put fans in the bleachers even farther—half a court away—from the action.
- Thanks to all the volunteers who helped the tournament run so smoothly. I don't think I've ever seen a wider age range of ball boys—or... um... "ball people." Looking forward to next year's event!

River Strand Mixed Doubles Classic

May 28-29, 2010: Pupils Defeat the Coaches

Natalie Beazant, Tiffany Dabek's star pupil won the OPEN Mixed Doubles Championship with **Nathan Leavitt** 6-4, 6-4. The young duo defeated the #1 seeded team of **Dabek**, a former World ranked WTA player, and River Strand Tennis Director **Nate Griffin** in this exciting event.



Champions Natalie Beazant and Nathan Leavitt



Third place on left: Dennis Hendrickson and Jennifer Fiers; Finalists on right: Tiffany Dabek and Nate Griffin