



[Polk Leisure Time](#)

## Lakeland Pro Am Offers Tennis, Entertainment

Wednesday, [March 2, 2011](#) at 12:25 by [Lisa Coffey](#)

Tennis fans were treated to some fabulous action in Lakeland's 32nd annual Pro Am tournament Saturday and Sunday.

The event, hosted by the Junior League of Greater Lakeland, featured a terrific ending, great weather and few if any problems, as the Junior League took the event over for the first time.

The Achievement Academy and a volunteer staff led by Doris Trohn, handled the pro am for years before an independent board took over last year with the assistance of Achievement Academy staff.

This year, the two friendly entities – the Achievement Academy and the Junior League, joined forces again to host the tournament.

They know each other well.

Years ago, when the academy was named United Cerebral Palsy in 1955, the Junior League was instrumental in its beginnings, providing office and financial support. Junior League volunteers would volunteer answering phones, feeding children, and giving tours and such for years. The Junior League also paid the director's salary at one time.

Jumping to the present, the Junior League helped build the building the Achievement Academy now uses in Lakeland.

Achievement Academy marketing coordinator Cece Christian praised the Junior League for its organization and success in handling the majority of the event.

“They are amazing,” Christian said of the Junior League volunteers. “Everybody is just doing their thing and making it happen. It’s a great friendship. It’s come full circle.”

By the way, the Achievement Academy is just one of the beneficiaries of the pro am. The Junior League also donates any funds raised to several literacy programs.

Longtime pro am participant Danny Barnes and pro Milos Koprivica won the men’s title over pro Alex Bose and Santa Fe Catholic junior Thomas Stanford, 6-4, 4-6, 6-4.

The match was incredibly entertaining with plenty of oohs and aahs from the fans. The athleticism of the players was phenomenal.

Pro Ana Kharchenko and Demaris Flores won the women’s title over Julie McBride and pro Tiffany Dabek, 6-4, 6-3.

They too had their moments.

Sunday’s finals were pushed back until 2 p.m. after two of the semis went three sets.

McBride and Dabek and Flores and Kharchenko were the best of Group I. Joanne Collier and pro Fabiana Hinds won Group II. Kim Lafferty and pro Miranda Guterrez claimed Group III.

Dabek and McBride out-lasting Collier and Hinds, 7-6, 5-7, 6-4 and Flores and Kharchenko downed Lafferty and Gutierrez, 7-5, 6-1, in the semis.

Jeff Stokes and Joel Helm won the men’s Group I category. Stanford and Bose took Group II. Jim Maskas and Adrian Qi-Hao Tan won Group III while Barnes and Koprivica took Group IV.

Stanford and Bose defeated Stokes and Helm, 6-2, 6-3, in the semis. Barnes and Koprivica defeated Maskas and Qi-Hao Tan, 4-6, 6-2, 6-3.

Not only did fans see great tennis, but there were several interesting stories to come out of it.

Flores was a last minute replacement for an amateur player who couldn't make it. Chair Leigh Harris called her at 7:15 a.m. Saturday morning and asked Flores if she would play.

Flores agreed. She's a former pro beach volleyball player who has been playing league tennis, on Harris' team, for less than a year.

She saw Kharchenko warming up when she walked onto the yacht club courts.

"Oh my gosh, maybe I'm in over my head," she said of her thoughts before her first match.

She was thrilled after she won it all.

"It's been a nice adventure," she said.

Kharchenko also has an interesting story.

The 21-year-old from the Ukraine is not only trying to make it big as a pro, she's got another purpose.

She is a member of the International Christian Tennis Association.

When she goes to tournaments, her first purpose is to act as a missionary to the other players, coaches, parents and fans.

"I use tennis as a tool to fulfill God's calling on my life," she said.

If you want to learn more about Kharchenko and her cause, visit [www.christiantennis.net](http://www.christiantennis.net).

How about Thomas Stanford?

He's a junior at Santa Fe High School who reached the final.

His nickname is Nitro, given to him for the hat that Santa Fe coach Jim Hall gave him.

Hall gave Stanford the hat last year and Stanford had not lost until Sunday while wearing the hat.

He was humble in his achievement.

"Wow, what a great opportunity," he said of playing in the event. "It's a chance to show my stuff and play like I know how."

His teammate, Alex Bose, knows how to play and we'll get to see him a lot more.

Bose is the new director of tennis at the Lake Region Yacht and Country Club. He started about a week ago.

Bose has lots of energy and ideas. His plans are to power the Lake Region facility by Bose. Bose has worked with players such as Tommy Haas and Anna Kournikova.

I hope to have more on him in the near future.

It's nice to see players from our local tennis community like Barnes and Koprivica in the final. What a bonus.

In addition, former chair Doris Trohn made an appearance at the pro am Saturday. I understand she did her usual good work behind the scenes.

It looks like this event is well in hand for the future.