

Tommy Haas Watches Day 4 Action at US Open Playoffs-Florida: Blog

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USTA Florida's Rick Vach blogs from the IMG Bollettieri Tennis Academy in Bradenton, Fla., the site of the inaugural US Open National Playoff Qualifying-Florida tournament:

Two out of the four men's and women's singles finalists at the US Open National Playoff Qualifying-Florida are Bollettieri products. I found Nick Bollettieri this morning around the indoor courts and asked him what his kids participating in the event get out of the tournament and a possibly shot at the US Open.

"The excitement!" the typically-intense Bollettieri exclaimed. "What other benefit can it be? The excitement and fulfilling a dream that you thought would never happen at this particular time. It gives someone a chance to come out of nowhere. These days it's much more difficult than it was when Carling [Bassett] and Jimmy Arias played -- and to think that you'd have a chance at the US Open!"

Nick didn't have a lot of compassion for one of his students beating me 6-1, 6-0. Don't these kids have any respect for their elders?

"I don't think you have any respect for anybody except for yourself," Nick said. "Let me add to that -- in respect, I mean respect for being part of the battle, and beating the hell out of you. Respect as a human being, politeness, playing fair, that's different. But when you're in battle you don't have respect for anybody, except to play your ass off, and be respectful."

If respect is beating the hell out of someone, then that kid had *immense* respect for me.

The men's semifinals today were such a high level that they drew a good-sized crowd of onlookers -- both fans, IMG staff and players, including former world No. 2 Tommy Haas, who trains at the IMG Bollettieri Tennis Academy.

Haas was watching his long-time friend and former Bollettieri student Alex Bose of Sarasota, who was edged 6-4, 6-4 in the semifinals by current Bollettieri student Christopher Klingemann.

"I think it's great just to have that opportunity," said Haas about the inaugural US Open National Playoffs Qualifying tournaments held throughout the country in the different USTA sections. "A player like Klingemann for instance -- I think Alex is doing it a lot for fun, but even for him to have this opportunity for the age he is at right now is great. You see some amateurs winning some of these [USTA Sectional events], I follow it a little bit. Seeing Alex still battling -- he came to [Bollettieri's] a long time ago and trained here for many years, and to have the opportunity to play is great. Any time you can play the US Open qualies, and no matter how you get in, I think it's a great motivational factor for



Tommy Haas (right) at the semifinals of the USONPQ-F

all players. Even if you are just on your way up, it doesn't matter."

Haas summed up the feelings of many players at the USONPQ-F, from 4.0-rated recreational players to former college players to aspiring pros.

"It's nice to compete, no matter what you do," Haas says.

In the final on Wednesday, Klingemann will face Haitian Davis Cup player Olivier Sajous of Plantation, Fla., who defeated Bollettieri student German Sanchez 6-0, 6-2.

15-year-old Jan Abaza of Deerfield Beach gained the women's final after a 6-2, 6-1 dismantling of collegiate player C.C. Sardinha of Bradenton. Sardinha's consistency was no match for the big hitting of Abaza.

"I didn't want to over-analyze -- I knew if I just tried to be consistent she would out-hit me, so I just thought I would go out there and play my game, takes risks if I need to, and then adjust from there on in," Abaza said. "I was happy with how it worked, I was making my shots. I tried some risky shots here and there but overall things worked out to my advantage."

In the final Abaza will play Bradenton's 17-year-old De Zhao, who was a 6-4, 7-5 winner over Sherry Li of Parkland.

Born in China, Zhao's family moved to the U.S. and Bradenton in 2005. Zhao says college tennis is not an option as she will make a full-on run in the coming years at professional tennis. Abaza says she expects good competition in the final -- and a good time.

"I can't expect anything other than a great match, and then win lose or draw, I'm going to go out there and have fun and try my best," Abaza said.

The women's final will be played at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, followed by the men's final at 10:30 a.m.

Tuesday's Results:

US Open Men's National Playoffs/Sectional Qualifying (Semifinal Round)

Christopher Klingemann, Bradenton, FL def. Alex Bose, Sarasota, FL 6-4, 6-4
Olivier Sajous, Plantation, FL def. German Sanchez, Bradenton, FL 6-0, 6-2

US Open Women's National Playoffs/Sectional Qualifying (Semifinal Round)

Jan Abaza, Deerfield Beach, FL def. CC Sardinha, Bradenton, FL 6-2, 6-1
De Zhao, Bradenton, FL def. Sherry Li, Parkland, FL 6-4, 7-5



Christopher Klingemann (left) and Alex Bose



Olivier Sajous