

Sunday July 25, 2010

## Awards and titles continue for Junior Team Tennis squads

Aiken's junior tennis teams continued their streak of excellent play at the state level, with two teams winning USTA South Carolina Junior Team Tennis State Championships, held July 17 and 18 in Sumter, and another

advancing to the tournament's final four. Aiken's 12-and-under advanced team and 14-and-under intermediate squad will represent South Carolina at the Southern Section Championships in Mobile, Ala. The teams will compete against champions from eight other Southern states.

In addition to all of the team success, an Aiken player won a state-level sportsmanship award for the first time. Alex Poda, who plays for the *Hurricanes*, Aiken's Junior Team Tennis (JTT) 18-and-under intermediate level squad, received multiple nominations from opposing coaches and tournament officials and was named the boys recipient of the sportsmanship award for the entire tournament.



Aiken's 14 & Under Intermediate State Champion team *RUSerious*. Left to Right – Jean Plummer (Captain) Taylor Fischbach, Sabrina Leguizamon, Tracey Hoel, Matthew Willis, Peter Zotovic, Christopher Plummer, McLeod Barber, Marko Zotovic, and Arturo Costa (Coach)

The *Hurricanes*, coached by Pam Fischbach and Fran Poda, won their first two matches but lost to the eventual state champions in their third match.

"The team that eventually won is composed almost completely of varsity players from Irmo High School, which went deep into the state playoffs, so we knew they were going to be very tough," Fran Poda said. "Our players know their players very well, and we wish them the best of luck in Mobile."

The sentiment also holds true for the victorious Aiken teams. *RUSerious*, the 14-and-under team coached by Jean Plummer, went 3-0 in their flight and won 98-86. *RUSerious* then proceeded to win the state title, prevailing 29-24.

The *Palmetto Aces*, the 12-and-under team coached by John Tiffany, played the only other advanced team in their age group four times. The *Palmetto Aces* won three of those matches and emerged on top by a score of 126-87.

"I am proud of all the teams for the way they played and conducted themselves in this tournament," said Arturo Costa, the head tennis professional at Houndslake, the home court for all three Aiken teams who went to state competition. "I am especially proud of Alex Poda for bringing home the sportsmanship award. This is a very prestigious award, and it's very special to have one of our players recognized by other coaches and officials."

*RUSerious* accepted an invitation to the Southern Section Championships, Aug. 20-22. "I am really proud of the way we never let up at states," Plummer said. "JTT is all about winning games and not letting your opponent win games. All of our kids played their best tennis and did that. I hope we can bring home Aiken's first JTT sectional championship this year."

A year ago, the *Future Federers*, Aiken's 12-and-under team, lost in the sectionals by the thinnest of margins - one game. In addition to that runner-up finish, Aiken teams reached the finals in 2006 and 2008.

While *RUSerious* is getting ready to go to Mobile, the *Palmetto Aces'* future is less certain. Their opponent in the state tournament filed a grievance against them, saying they recruited players outside their geographical area.

The *Palmetto Aces* maintain they asked for and received permission from USTA South Carolina to recruit outside Aiken, because there aren't enough advanced players in that age group in the area to form a team.

"Whatever happens with the grievance, I am proud of our kids and in my heart we are the South Carolina state champions," Tiffany said.

#### NOTE:

On August 2, The USTA South Carolina Grievance Appeals Committee upheld the *Palmetto Aces'* appeal of their disqualification. Accordingly, the *Palmetto Aces* will also represent South Carolina at the USTA Southern Section Championships!

*AATL Webmaster*