

November 9 - 16, 2008
Atkins Tennis Center - University of Illinois



For more information, contact Mike Cation (217) 244-3318

October 20, 2008

2007 Finalists Levine and Young highlight JSM Challenger Field Anderson, Delic, and Ram highlight Illini Program

A proven cast of hungry young players will be in Champaign-Urbana November 9th-16th at the Atkins Tennis Center, as 2007 Champion Jesse Levine and runner-up Donald Young lead the entry list for the tournament, released this morning by the United States Tennis Association. Both players have spent most of the 2008 season on the ATP Tour, after big jumps following last year's tournament.

The 19-year-old Young played at all four grand slam tournaments this year, picking up eight ATP tour wins over the summer, and earning a career-high \$228,000 so far this season. He fell to James Blake in a thrilling five set match at the U.S. Open, and earned his first quarterfinal appearance at the Regions Morgan Keegan Championships & Cellular South Cup in Memphis, en route to a career high ranking of 73.

Levine, who topped Young in straight sets in Champaign last year, also beat his fellow lefty at Wimbledon, his first Grand Slam victory. He also has an ATP quarterfinal to his name, making a run in New Haven. He currently sits at 99 in the world rankings, just off of his career high of 95.

A talented group looks to challenge these two young Americans on the fast courts at Atkins next month, with a mix of youngsters and seasoned veterans ready to go. Vincent Spadea would be the top seed based on today's rankings, at #81 in the world. The 34-year-old has earned nearly five million dollars in his career, and is just three years removed from his career high ranking of #18. John Isner thrills fans with his booming serve. The 6'9" American reached an ATP Final in Washington just months after graduating from the University of Georgia. Frank Dancevic is a crafty Canadian, having reached as high as 65 in the world last year. Bobby Reynolds, Kristian Pless, Kevin Kim, and Robert Kendrick have also all spent time inside the top 100.

Taylor Dent also is on the entry list, which could provide a different experience for local fans. The serve-and-volley specialist is currently unranked, as he recovers from several back injuries that have knocked him off his form. The former world #21 has played in just two tournaments this year, and his appearance is not yet confirmed.

A strong Illini contingent will also be on hand, headed by Kevin Anderson and Amer Delic. Anderson, the lanky South African, has had a monster season on the ATP Tour, reaching a career high ranking of 95 in June, based largely on his appearance in the finals of the Tennis Channel Open. He owns an 11-10 record on tour this year, but has been slowed a bit by injury in the fall.

Amer Delic also returns. The 2006 Champion reached a pair of quarterfinals on the ATP Tour this year, in Los Angeles and Las Vegas. He also owns a winning record on tour this year, at 8-7, and comes in with a world ranking of 132. Rajeev Ram will also make a stop in Champaign, along with former Illini Ruben Gonzales and GD Jones. The current University of Illinois team will also have the opportunity to play in the event, with many participating in the qualifying tournament on the opening weekend.

The 2008 JSM Challenger begins with qualifying on November 9th and 10th, with the main draw beginning on the 11th. This year's finals will take place on Sunday November 16th. The full entry list is available on the tournament's website, www.illinoischallenger.com.

