

November 14 - 21, 2009
Atkins Tennis Center - University of Illinois



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November 17, 2009

Ram Advances to Second Round at JSM Challenger Nevolo falls to top-seeded Kim

URBANA, Ill. – Fresh off a Challenger victory in Aachen, Germany, former Illini All-American and second-seeded Rajeew Ram won in straight sets earlier tonight at the JSM Challenger, topping Luka Gregorc, 6-2, 7-6 (5). Ram entered the match ranked a career-high 78th in the world.

“I thought I played really well and came out really strong,” Ram said. “It was tough because I just got home from Europe yesterday, so I had a little bit of jet lag. But it’s always nice and motivating and fun to play here, so it’s not hard to step up. I started to feel a little fatigued in the second, but I still think it went pretty well.”

In the final match of the night, Illini sophomore Dennis Nevolo was defeated by top-seeded Kevin Kim, 6-1, 6-3, who is currently ranked at No. 115.

“I got broken my first couple times at serve,” Nevolo said. “They were both deuce games and he just kept getting the better of me on the more important points. The score doesn’t look that competitive, but I never really felt like I was getting blown off the court. He played the bigger points better than I did and served well. I tried to slow things down in the second set a little bit and took a couple steps back on his second serve and it actually worked pretty well for me. I didn’t play a bad game, but I just didn’t capitalize on the points when I needed to.”

Earlier in the day, former Illini All-American Ryler DeHeart, who has been battling a back injury, was in action for the first time since August, but dropped a three-set heartbreaker to Kaden Hensel, 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (3).

“It was fun to get back on the court again,” DeHeart said. “It was kind of disappointing, because I felt like I could have won, but overall I didn’t expect too much from myself, so I feel like I put up a pretty good effort.”

In the doubles main draw, former Illini Kevin Anderson and Ruben Gonzales were defeated in the first round by Alex Kuznetsov and Jesse Witten, 6-4, 6-4.

All but two seeded players have now advanced to the second round and will be in action tomorrow. Sixth-seeded Somdev Devvarman was forced to withdraw before today’s match due to a shoulder injury.

Admission is free through tomorrow and additional information can be found at <http://illinoischallenger.com>.



Tuesday's Results

Singles - First Round

[1] K Kim (USA) d [WC] D Nevolo (USA) 61 63
[2] R Ram (USA) d L Gregorc (SLO) 62 76(5)
[3] M Russell (USA) d [Q] A Brugues-Davi (ESP) 61 62
[4] T Dent (USA) d I Van Der Merwe (RSA) 67(5) 63 64
R Sweeting (USA) d S Jenkins (USA) 63 62
[Q] B Rehnquist (SWE) d [LL] C Mamiit (PHI) 62 75
[WC] N Monroe (USA) d I Bozoljac (SRB) 76(3) 46 61
[Q] R Berankis (LTU) d R Harrison (USA) 62 64
[Q] K Hensel (AUS) d R Deheart (USA) 63 36 76(3)

Doubles - First Round

J Delgado (GBR) / J Fruttero (USA) d [3] K Hensel (AUS) / A Hubble (AUS) 46 76(2) 10-6
A Kuznetsov (USA) / J Witten (USA) d [WC] K Anderson (RSA) / R Gonzales (USA) 64 64

Wednesday's Highlighted Matches:

Following 12PM Match (Court 1)

Michael McClune vs. #3 Michael Russell; followed by
Ramon Delgado vs. #5 Jesse Levine; followed by
#4 Taylor Dent vs. Todd Widom

Approximately 4:30 PM (Court 2)

Kaden Hensel vs. #2 Rajeev Ram

Not Before 6:00 (Court 2)

Scoville Jenkins / Phillip Simmonds vs. Ashwin Kumar / Ryan Rowe; followed by
#1 Kevin Kim vs. Blake Strode

Not Before 6:30 (Court 1)

#7 Kevin Anderson vs. Ricardas Berankis; followed by
David Martin / Rajeev Ram vs. Colt Gaston / Ryan Harrison

Additional Quotes

Rajeev Ram on playing closer to home:

“My mom and dad and friends were here. That’s what’s kind of tough about tennis. Every other sport, half your games are at home, but with tennis, you’re lucky to get one or two, so it’s cool to get to play here.”

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Ryler DeHeart on what he took away from his first match since August:

“The most positive thing is that my back felt pretty good. I really wasn’t expecting it to feel that good because it had still been bothering me a lot, but hopefully that means I’ll be ready for 2010 and I can get healthy again pretty soon.”

