

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



For more information, contact Amy Hyerczyk (217) 244-3318

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### **Illini Eliminated in Quarterfinals at JSM Challenger Fourth-seeded Taylor Dent to meet top-seeded Kevin Kim in semifinals**

**URBANA, Ill.** – The two former Illini still remaining in the doubles main draw saw their run at the JSM Challenger come to an end earlier tonight, as defending doubles champion and top-seeded Rajeev Ram and teammate David Martin were eliminated in the quarterfinals, as were Ryan Rowe and teammate Ashwin Kumar.

“The match was tough, but I was happy to end the year here,” Ram said. “I’m really looking forward to my offseason and to reflect on what kind of a year I’ve had. It’s been good, so I’m really looking forward to training and getting ready for next year.”

Defeating Ram and Martin were brothers Brian and Dann Battistone, who won 6-4, 4-6, 10-4 en route to just their second semifinal appearance this year. The duo is perhaps best known for their unique duel-grip racquets, as well as Brian’s volleyball-like jump serve.

“I started doing it when I was 21 and I’m 30 now, so it’s been about nine years that I’ve been experimenting with it,” Brian said. “The first couple of years I used it sparingly. I wasn’t sure if I could actually use it in matches, but it eventually became more effective than my other serve. I took a few years off of tennis and when I came back, I found that it was still winning me more points than just having a traditional serve. While Dann and I have been on tour for the last two and a half years, I’ve been using it exclusively.”

Another highlight from Thursday was the dominant play of the remaining seeded players, as Kevin Kim (No. 1), Michael Russell (No. 3) and Taylor Dent (No. 4) cruised into the semifinals, while losing a combined 10 points over six sets.

Dent, who knocked off fifth-seeded Jesse Levine, needed less than an hour to claim the 6-1, 6-2 victory and will face Kim tomorrow night in the second semifinal match.

“I definitely was in the zone tonight,” Dent said. “That’s how much respect I have for Jesse’s (Levine) game. I knew I’d have to come out here and play some really solid tennis to squeak away with a win and I happened to come out and play some phenomenal tennis, so it’s a bonus. But like I said, it just goes to show how much respect I have for his game.”

One surprise this week has been the emergence of 19-year-old Lithuanian Ricardas Berankis, who swept past defending singles champion Kevin Anderson last night, before topping Kaden Hensel, 6-0, 6-2 tonight.



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“I played solid,” Berankis said. “He (Hensel) also played very well, but everything went in from my side and I didn’t make many errors, even when I was hitting hard.”

Berankis is no stranger to success, however, as he was the winner of the boys singles title at the 2007 U.S. Open Junior championships. He will face Russell in tomorrow’s first semifinal match and looks to avenge a three-set loss suffered in their previous meeting last weekend.

Admission to the tournament is \$5 for adults and \$3 for students. Additional information can be found at <http://illinoischallenger.com>.

### **Thursday’s Results**

#### **Singles - Quarterfinals**

- [1] K Kim (USA) d R Sweeting (USA) 62 62
- [3] M Russell (USA) d [Q] B Rehnquist (SWE) 62 61
- [4] T Dent (USA) d [5] J Levine (USA) 61 62
- [Q] R Berankis (LTU) d [Q] K Hensel (AUS) 60 62

#### **Doubles - Quarterfinals**

- B Battistone (USA) / D Battistone (USA) d [1] D Martin (USA) / R Ram (USA) 64 46 10-4
- [2] T Huey (PHI) / H Mankad (IND) d D Inglot (GBR) / R Rizza (USA) 36 76(5) 10-7
- [4] M Emmrich (GER) / A Siljestrom (SWE) d [Q] A Kumar (USA) / R Rowe (USA) 76(5) 76(5)
- J Delgado (GBR) / J Fruttero (USA) d A Kuznetsov (USA) / J Witten (USA) 61 62

### **Friday’s Matches**

#### **Starting at 12 PM (Court 1)**

- #4 Martin Emmrich / Andreas Siljestrom vs. #2 Treat Conrad Huey / Harsh Mankad; followed by
- #3 Michael Russell vs. Ricardas Berankis or Kaden Hensel

#### **Not Before 6:00 PM (Court 1)**

- Brian Battistone / Dann Battistone vs. Jamie Delgado / John Paul Fruttero; followed by
- #1 Kevin Kim vs. #4 Taylor Dent

### **Additional Quotes**

*Taylor Dent on the keys to his success tonight:*

“I was just playing well and running on all cylinders. From the baseline, I was really able to implement my tactics and able to get to the net and finish off the points there. The only way I was able to do that was by hitting the ball big and I wasn’t missing. It was a great night for my game.”



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*Brian Battistone on the match:*

“The whole match was played at a pretty high level. There were a few break opportunities and luckily we were able to get the one we needed in the first set and then they got us back at the end of the second set. With the super tiebreaker, it’s really about whoever gets the momentum early usually has the advantage, so we were lucky just to get the momentum and stick with it. I think it helps on the indoor courts. Everything happens a little quicker, so if you can be aggressive with the serves, returns and volleys, then it’s going to work in your favor.”

*On why his jump serve works:*

“I think there’s a few elements to it. It looks a lot different than the average serve with the high ball toss and I’m also getting a better angle and moving forward into the court, so it helps me get to the net quicker. Everyone has their own individual style of serving and for me it works, so that’s what I’m sticking with.”

