

# USTA Southern Wheelchair Tennis Newsletter

OCTOBER 2024

**Welcome** to the final 2024 edition of the USTA Southern Wheelchair Tennis Newsletter, providing you with

information about upcoming tournaments, wheelchair tennis programs, tips on how to take your game to the next level, and all things wheelchair tennis. A special thank you goes to the dedicated volunteers of the 2023-2024 USTA Southern Committee for their incredible support in reaching new members, growing the sport we love, and making tennis more inclusive for everyone.

## Tournament Recaps

The **Lost Mountain Wheelchair Open** was held October 10<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> in Georgia. Players from around the country took part in the tournament, making it a great event not only for competition but also for building friendship and camaraderie. Supported by strong crowd support, there were great matches throughout the tournament. The Sportsmanship Award went to Ranato Jurado. Congratulations to everyone involved!



The **Wheel Serve NC Open**, a USTA Level 5 tournament, was held on October 19<sup>th</sup> at North Meck Park in Huntersville, NC. A short set format allowed all matches to be completed in one day. It was a great opportunity for players to come together and compete, including wheelchair athletes from all six of the Wheel Serve NC programs. In addition to A, B and C levels, the tournament offered an up-down C division for players who are just getting started so that the transition into tournament tennis was fun and stress free. In total, 16 wheelchair players participated in the tournament, and there were dozens of spectators and volunteers on site to assist with logistics for the day and to support the athletes.

Congratulations to the tournament winners:

A Singles Division Winner - Nick Burnham

A Singles Division Finalist - Chris Thomas

A Doubles Division Winner - Nick Burnham & Gaila Fosbinder

C Doubles Division Winner - Christian Felki & Gary Grindell

C Doubles Division Finalist - Kenny Heuchert & Juan Mendez

C Doubles Up/Down Winner - Simeon Gilliam & Addie McElwee

C Doubles Up/Down Finalist - Sandy Holub & Molly Leonard



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**Hallowheel** in Baton Rouge, LA held October 25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> is a fundraiser tournament for the Cajun Classic Wheelchair Tennis Tournament. Both wheelchair and standing players compete, and costumes are encouraged! Hallowheel attracted a total of 500 players who competed in men's, women's, and mixed doubles tennis matches, as well as an up-down tennis competition that paired wheelchair tennis players with able-bodied partners. The weekend also included a "carnival" to introduce tennis to children with disabilities. Since 2015, Hallowheel has raised \$243,402 to help offset expenses of the Cajun Classic Wheelchair Tennis Tournament, an ITF Super Series event that attracts the world's top-ranked professionals and amateurs, along with a substantial group of juniors and newer wheelchair players.



## Dream Court Wheelchair Tennis Activation In Montgomery, AL

Dream Court partnered with USTA National in October to deliver a one-day Wheelchair Coach Development Workshop and an All-Comers three-day Wheelchair Tennis Training Camp, as well as a Tennis Mixer Community Fundraiser at Lagoon Tennis Park to kick off the other two events. The Harvest Hope community fundraiser and celebration of inclusion garnered 300 attendees and included a tennis mixer, live music, food and drinks, and kids' activities, as well as a serve speed competition and a college tennis exhibition. For the instructional part of the activation, partnering with USTA National for the Coach Education Workshop on how to properly teach wheelchair tennis allowed a world of knowledge to be shared by National Manager for Wheelchair Tennis, Evan Enquist. The course had an in-classroom component, an on-court component, an opportunity to use a sports chair, and even for participants to use their new coaching skills on wheelchair tennis players. For the All-Comers Camp, Coach Cliff Cook from Lakeshore Foundation led drills, games, and matches for 17 participants of all ages and abilities, including one at just 7 years old and Zane Goodwin, a nationally ranked player who often was used as an example to demonstrate drills. In addition, the Auburn University at Montgomery male and female tennis team came to serve as assistant coaches, and coaches who participated in the Coach Workshop had an opportunity to coach. Campers were enthusiastic, motivated and ready to learn. Also included in the Camp were three current college students and adults.



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## Juniors

USTA Southern Wheelchair Tennis Junior athlete, Lucy Heald, can often be seen playing on the courts in her hometown and in the Junior division of wheelchair tennis tournaments in the Southern Section, but she's also looking towards what she wants to accomplish in the future. Lucy attended the Paris Paralympics as a spectator, where she caught the action at Roland Garros and got to meet Paralympic wheelchair tennis athletes. She loved learning more about what Paralympic level wheelchair tennis is like, and it gives her fuel to work towards her goals.



## Collegiate

As collegiate wheelchair tennis continues to grow, get to know some collegiate wheelchair tennis athletes in the Southern Section.



### Delaney Hopkins

**College Year, and Major:** Junior at Clemson University, Environmental and Natural Resources

**Hometown:** Northville, Michigan

**How long have you been playing wheelchair tennis, and how did you get started?**

I've been playing for a little over 6 months. I was looking for a way to get back into sports after becoming disabled 2 years ago when I saw a Clemson Wheelchair Tennis sticker on someone's car while parking on campus. That car turned out to be my coach's.

**What is your favorite memory playing wheelchair tennis, either collegiately or prior to college?**

My favorite memory of playing tennis is from my first-ever match. I had only been playing tennis for two weeks at this point, but I somehow managed to return the ball just right so that it landed over the net on my opponent's side, then spun and came back over the net to land on my side, making it impossible for my opponent to return. I still have no clue how I did it, and I'm not sure I'll ever be able to repeat it.

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## **What drew you to the college you are attending?**

Ultimately, I decided to go to Clemson because of the atmosphere. Even though it's a large college numbers-wise, it still feels like a small-town community.

## **What are your goals, both in wheelchair tennis and in life, for the future?**

I think any adaptive athlete's ultimate goal is the Paralympics, but in the meantime, I just want to have fun playing and to keep getting better. Hopefully after I graduate I'll find a job rescuing and rehabilitating animals and maybe travel the world doing so.



### **Max Barbier**

**College, Year and Major:** Senior at University of Alabama, Sports Media

**Hometown:** Abita Springs, Louisiana

## **How long have you been playing wheelchair tennis, and how did you get started?**

I've been playing wheelchair tennis since I was about 13. My best friend at the time's mom knew a coach who was coaching his little brother, and the coach was interested in coaching a wheelchair player, so I showed up one day and started playing, and the rest is history.

## **What is your favorite memory playing wheelchair tennis, either collegiately or prior to college?**

I think my greatest memory playing wheelchair tennis was the first time I won a collegiate national championship. As a kid, I didn't think that being a college athlete while having a disability would ever be a possibility, so when I won my first national championship, everything hit me all at once. The emotions...all of it. It was crazy to think that a small-town kid from a tiny town in Louisiana with a disability would someday be a college national champion.

## **What drew you to the college you are attending?**

The main thing that drew me to the University of Alabama was the reputation they had. By the time I had arrived at Alabama, they had already won multiple national championships and had made a name for themselves. They had top notch coaching and a top-notch support staff that you could really tell cared about the athletes and the mission. I couldn't think of a better place to be than at Alabama.

## **What are your goals, both in wheelchair tennis and in life, for the future?**

My goal for wheelchair tennis is a simple one. The goal is to hopefully win one last national championship this year and leave the game better than I found it. We've made so many strides as a sport since I arrived at Alabama, and my hope is that I have left my mark on the sport and hopefully left it in a better place than I found it. Tennis has given me so many opportunities in my life that if I hadn't found the sport, then I probably would not have had, so my goal is to give back to the game as much as it has given to me. As far as my life my lifelong goal, it has always been to be a

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sports broadcaster. My love for sports has been a prominent part of my life ever since I was a young kid, so to be able to do something I love while also making it a career would be a dream come true.

## ITA Wheelchair Singles National Championship

McKenna Woodhead, representing Clemson Wheelchair Tennis, captured the title in the Singles C Division at the ITA Collegiate National Wheelchair Tennis Championship, held from November 1-3 at the University of Alabama Recreation Courts. Her incredible dedication, skill, and sportsmanship were on full display throughout the event, and her hard work continues to inspire the tennis community and beyond. Check out the Instagram post celebrating McKenna's win [here](#).



## Coach's Corner

Did you know that the USTA has a library of coaching resources and videos to help coaches learn how to work with wheelchair tennis athletes? Check it out [HERE](#).

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## Southern Wheelchair Tennis Committee

Do you have any questions? Please feel free to reach out to any of our members.

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