

Men's Open Preview

Last year's Ojai Men's Open singles champion Dennis Novikov was the last American man standing after two huge qualifying wins at last month's BNP Paribas Open. Currently ranked No. 253 in the world, the 21-year-old former UCLA star fell in the first round to veteran Jurgen Melzer, 6-4, 6-4, at the popular Indian Wells event

At stake this year is an increase in prize money at The Ojai as local benefactor Mike Taggart has graciously increased his support of the men's and women's open events to \$22,500. Once again this year, the draws on both on the men's and women's side will be filled with top players. Qualifying begins Tuesday at the Ojai Athletic Club, with main draw matches starting Thursday morning at the Ojai Valley Inn.

The 2013 Ojai Men's Open singles champion and current UCLA star Mackenzie McDonald also made his presence known at the BNP Paribas winning a round of qualifying, as did current USC star Yannick Hanfmann.

UCLA players have won the last three of four men's singles title as Thousand Oaks' Marcos Giron captured the title in 2011.

In last year's doubles final, it was Haythem Abid of the Weil Academy teaming with Kyle McMorrow to beat local teaching pros Quinn Borchard and Calle Hansen.

On the women's side, top SCTA junior Emma Higuchi of Los Angeles made it all the way to the final last year in both singles and doubles. In fact, the women's doubles final was made up entirely of juniors as prospects Jada Hart of Colton and Ena Shibahara of Rancho Palos Verdes beat Higuchi and Claire Liu of Thousand Oaks.