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April 9, 2008

First Serve Student Athlete Gets Rare Opportunity

AMELIA ISLAND, FL, USA - The First Serve National Student Athlete Competition allows children around the United States the opportunity to demonstrate their skills on the court and in the classroom, with scholarships and other rewards awaiting those who place first in their divisions at the end of the academic year. But for one lucky competitor, a reward came earlier than expected.

Kristal LaMotta, 10 years old and in the fifth grade, competes in the Malivai Washington Kids Foundation First Serve Chapter in Jacksonville, Florida. This has been an incredibly successful season so far for Kristal, as she is ranked No.3 in the country, and on Monday night she was given the once-in-a-lifetime experience of flipping the coin for the duel between former world No.1 Amélie Mauresmo and Olga Savchuk at the Bausch & Lomb Championships in Amelia Island.



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"I was nervous but really excited to flip the coin for Amélie and Olga's match," she said. "It was very cool to be out on Stadium court with the players in front of so many people. I can't believe I got to do that!"

"It was a very special night for Kristal - having the opportunity to meet top Sony Ericsson WTA Tour players is a memory that Kristal will cherish for many years to come," declared Terri Florio, Executive Director of the Malivai Washington Kids Foundation. "The players are role models for a lot of the kids in the First Serve program. They understand that if they work hard and stay focused, they can make their dreams come true just like the players. First Serve gives the kids a structured place to go after school, where they can study, play tennis and learn life skills that will make them successful adults."

The First Serve National Student Athlete Competition began on August 21, 2007 and runs through July 15 of this year. Academic grades and results at junior tennis tournaments are tabulated, and at the end of this, its first season, a No.1 male and a No.1 female First Serve Student Athlete of the Year will be crowned and awarded with the \$5,000 scholarship (the Sony Ericsson WTA Tour donated the girls' scholarship). In addition to that they'll also be sent to the US Open and given a chance to meet their favorite players. Other awards in the program include the \$25,000 grant from First Serve National to the First Serve chapter with the most competitors in the Top 25 (in both divisions).

For more information about First Serve and the National Student Athlete competition, please go to www.firstserve.org.

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