

Irvine's Learner Tien and San Diego's Haley Giavara Claim ITF World Tour Singles and Doubles Titles on the SoCal Pro Series at the Racquet Club of Irvine

Tien, 17, Teamed With San Diego Native Bryce Nakashima to Win Saturday's Men's Doubles Title Before Winning His First Pro Singles Crown at Home; Giavara, 22, Wins Her First ITF Singles and Doubles Crowns and Takes the Women's Singles Lead in the 'Race to Indian Wells'

IRVINE, Calif. – It's been a whirlwind year of tennis for Learner Tien across the globe since he debuted on the SoCal Pro Series with three tournament appearances in 2022. From Wimbledon to Flushing Meadows last summer, to Melbourne Park and Roland Garros this year, Tien has enjoyed remarkable playing experiences and pinch-me moments before his 18th birthday.

Yet, there was no place like home, and the SoCal Pro Series, for the 17-year-old Irvine resident to gain his first professional singles championship this weekend.

Playing in his first Futures tournament since the 2023 SoCal Pro Series' opening \$25,000 ITF World Tour event in January at Pepperdine University (where Tien reached the semifinals), Tien returned to the SoCal Pro Series and its \$15,000 events along the ITF World Tour and USTA Pro Circuit and swept the singles and doubles titles this weekend at the Racquet Club of Irvine.

Tien gained his first ITF singles crown Sunday with a 7-5, 6-2 victory over qualifier Quinn Vandecasteele. A day earlier, Tien partnered with San Diego native Bryce Nakashima to win his second ITF doubles crown, 6-4, 6-2, over the British team of Joshua Goodger and Matthew Summers.

"It feels very special to win it somewhere where I kind of grew up playing a little bit," Tien said. "I haven't been here (Racquet Club of Irvine), maybe, in about a year but these courts are very familiar. I actually live two (I-405 freeway) exits south of here. I used to come here fairly often for tournaments. It's my first pro (singles) title, so it kind of stands on its own.

"Having these (SoCal Pro Series) tournaments close by where I live and so close to where I practice is really nice just because I get to stay at home, all my coaches get to come out and watch, and my family and my friends get to come out."

San Diego resident Haley Giavara, who wrapped up her college career at UC Berkeley (Cal) in the spring and is six weeks into her full-time pro tennis career on the ITF Tour and USTA Pro Circuit, matched Tien's weekend feat by impressively completing the SoCal Pro Series double in Irvine for her first career ITF singles and doubles titles.

The second-seeded Giavara, 22, was dominant on Sunday in a 6-1, 6-3 triumph over top-seeded Jia-Jing Lu, an 18-time ITF singles champion from China. On Saturday, Giavara teamed with fellow San Diegan Katherine Hui, a 2023 Santa Fe Christian graduate, to win their first SoCal Pro Series doubles championship together, 6-2, 6-4, over recent USC graduate Eryn Cayetano and Isabella Chhiv.

Giavara, a 2019 Serra High School graduate, rates her first two pro titles on the SoCal Pro Series as her best tennis moments.

"It's hard to top winning doubles and singles. This is the goal every week, but to actually accomplish this week feels incredible," Giavara said. "All the hard work, working towards it and not knowing when it's going to pay off, and then having it pay off, it feels so good in the moment. I played really well this weekend, and this week. I executed my game plans perfectly and I was positive."

Since Tien debuted on the SoCal Pro Series last year, he won the USTA 18s National Championship on the hardcourts of Kalamazoo, Mich., which parlayed itself into a main draw berth at the 2022 US Open.

In January, Tien won the Australian Open's doubles championship and was a singles finalist (an 11-9 third-set tiebreaker away from being anointed champion) in the junior events at Melbourne Park. Roland Garros was Tien's stop in early June, when he reached the singles semifinals of the French Open's junior tournament. In between tennis' first two grand slams, in March, Tien competed in the qualifying draw at the BNP Paribas Open at Indian Wells Tennis Garden and the Miami Open (both ATP Masters 1000 events).

Tien has chosen to play the SoCal Pro Series' final two tournaments at the Lakewood Tennis Center in the next two weeks over returning to London this week to play in Wimbledon's junior tournament for the second consecutive year. His upward trajectory is such that these might be the final two \$15,000 SoCal Pro Series events he plays.

The United States' top-ranked junior last year before he enrolled at USC in January to begin his college career, Tien will return to Kalamazoo in August with the hope of successfully defending his USTA Boys 18s national title and receiving another automatic wild card into the US Open's main draw.

Though he hasn't officially ruled out a return to USC, Tien's current mindset is such that he's hoping his on-court progress through his summer tournament schedule will convince him to stay on the professional tennis pathway full-time.

"I hope that it becomes very apparent that I should turn pro. I hope I do well enough to where it's so obvious that it would be stupid to not turn pro," Tien said. "As of right now, I'm not going back (to USC) in the fall and I'm playing (pro tournaments) for the rest of year. There's not a certain benchmark I'm trying to hit – win a tournament or reach a certain ranking – but I think it's depending on how confident I feel and how I'm playing, if I feel like I'm really ready to take the next step."

Tien earned 15 ATP ranking points and a winner's prize of \$2,160 for his singles achievement, while University of Oregon junior Vandecasteele – who reached the singles final from the qualifying stage for the second consecutive week on the SoCal Pro Series and has played a competitive singles match for each of the past 14 days (and a doubles match for 11 of those days) – collected eight ATP ranking points and a runner-up's share of \$1,272.

The Ohio State-bound Nakashima, 19, secured his second SoCal Pro Series doubles title in three finals this spring/summer, having first won in Rancho Santa Fe four weeks ago. Nakashima and Tien each received 15 ATP world ranking points and split a \$930 winner's prize. Goodger and Summers earned eight ATP world ranking points each and split a runner-up prize of \$540.

For her singles win, Giavara earned 10 WTA world ranking points and a \$2,352 winner's prize. Lu, the oldest player in this week's women's draw at 33, received six WTA world ranking points and a \$1,470 runner-up prize. In doubles, Giavara and Hui received 10 WTA world ranking points apiece and split a \$955 winner's prize in doubles.

Cayetano, a Long Beach native, and the Princeton-bound Irvine resident Chhiv collected six WTA world ranking points each and split a \$515 cash prize. The duo won the SoCal Pro Series doubles championship in Rancho Santa Fe four weeks ago.

It was the second SoCal Pro Series doubles title for the Stanford-bound Hui, 18, following up on her first doubles crown two weeks ago at Barnes Tennis Center in San Diego. Oddly enough, Giavara eliminated Hui in Saturday's singles semifinals just hours before they took the court together to win the doubles championship.

"I love Katherine. I love her to death," said Giavara, who was named the Pac-12 Women's Tennis Scholar Athlete of the Year for the 2022-23 school year while finishing up at Cal. "We met at the first (SoCal Pro Series) tournament in Rancho (Santa Fe). We actually played each other then and we were hitting that week and then we just carried over our friendship. She's so positive and nice, and she may be going to Stanford in the fall but it's okay.

"We were not going to hold anything back against each other in singles. I knew we'd be cool at doubles because we still had something to win. After we finished our doubles (match on Friday), I told her, 'I got, like, ten more minutes of being your friend, and then it's over until after.' It was all good. After the match, I came and sat and talked with her, and then we got kicked off the court for talking too long. Typical doubles team."

USTA SoCal's 'Race to Indian Wells' will award the top male and female singles players from the SoCal Pro Series (determined through a aggregated points system which rewards overall performance throughout all of the events on the series) a wild card into the qualifying draw for the 2024 BNP Paribas Open.

Giavara's singles title put her into the lead in the SoCal Pro Series' 'Race to Indian Wells' points standings and has her feeling compelled to keep playing the series through its final two events of the year at the Lakewood Tennis Center in Lakewood for the next two weeks.

The 2023 SoCal Pro Series wrapped up its fifth week of \$15,000 ITF men's and women's tournament competition in Irvine. Debuting in 2022, the SoCal Pro Series gives Southern California players the chance to earn valuable ATP and WTA world ranking points.

Daily tournament admission and parking is free to the public at all SoCal Pro Series events. The SoCal Pro Series' remaining tournament dates and locations are:

- July 3-9 – Lakewood Tennis Center, Lakewood
- July 10-16 – Lakewood Tennis Center, Lakewood

To learn more about the SoCal Pro Series, go to: <https://www.ustasocal.com/proseries>.
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