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Keowee Key pro tennis tourney kicks off today

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THE DETAILS

What: 5th annual Keowee Key Pro Tennis Invitational
Where: Keowee Key Country Club
When: Today and Saturday, gates open at 12 a.m.; Pro Doubles tournament to start today at 6 p.m.; Pro singles tournament to start Saturday at 6 p.m.
Cost: Free

SALEM — While perhaps the biggest tennis tournament in the world is currently taking place across the Atlantic Ocean at Wimbledon, fans of the sport don't have to travel nearly that far to see top quality tennis this weekend.

Beginning today and carrying over into Saturday, the Keowee Key Country Club will be hosting the 5th annual Keowee Key Pro Tennis Invitational, featuring a singles and double competition among eight of the top tennis pros around the state.

"The tennis (today) will be intense," Keowee Key pro Andy Lake said. "It's going to be a high level of tennis. There'll be a good crowd out there. It's a lot of fun, but it's also intense for the members. We really try to play and win. I think it's a good atmosphere all around."

Competing in the event will be Lake himself, his nephew, Bobby Lake, recent Clemson graduate Gera Boryachinskiy, who played four years for the Tigers, Cal Hillsman, a freshman on the Clemson team, John Boetsch, the assistant coach at Clemson, former No. 1 singles player at Brigham Young University and Charleston resident Chris Hand, former No. 1 singles player at USC Upstate and Spartanburg resident Sandy Franz and Marcus Sarstrand, another Spartanburg resident who was on the WTA tour for nearly a decade.

And after bringing in such talented and notable players, Lake is proud to say that this year's group is the strongest class the event has seen in its five years of existence.

"This year is the strongest field by far," Lake said. "We've upped the level two or three levels this year."

The field may also be responsible for the title leaving the hands of the Keowee Key pro, which has won the event in each of its four years in existence, including the past two years for Lake.

But with plenty of prize money available, including $1,000 for the winner of the singles event, and the honor of being the host and defending champion, Lake isn't quite ready to concede his position. Yet, he also knows that the most important thing is the wellbeing of the event.

"I'm as competitive as everybody," Lake said. "I want to win it. But I want it to go well more than anything. I just want it to run smooth and everybody to have a good time."

The event is not limited to Keowee Key members, and there will be free parking, snacks and beer and wine available. Dinner will also be available for purchase from Keowee Key catering both nights.

Gates will at noon today and Saturday. Today, there is a pro-am type event from 2:30-4:30 before the pro doubles tournament at 6 p.m. and an award ceremony shortly thereafter.

On Saturday, there will be an adult tennis clinic from 2:30 to 4:30, which is currently filled, and the pro singles tournament at 6 p.m. The final award ceremony will come afterward and end the event.

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