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Tiger rallies, finds himself in five-way tie for lead, **5D**

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TENNIS | Serving Up a Grand Slam Tennis Classic



Johan Kriek, left, and Jim Courier lost to Petr Korda and Ellis Ferreira 8-7 in an exhibition Saturday on Longboat Key. TED MASE/Special to the Herald

Courier lends helping hand

Saint Stephen's grad appears at event to help stop child abuse

By **MATTHEW POSTINS**
Special to the Herald

LONGBOAT KEY — Good works and his own bustling business kept Jim Courier on the move Saturday.

The former No. 1 tennis player in the world — and Saint Stephen's graduate — stopped at the Longboat Key Club for the fourth annual Serving Up a Grand Slam Tennis Classic for the All-Star Children's Foundation to Prevent Child Abuse.

Courier wasn't the only former tennis touring pro in attendance. Petr Korda, Johan Kriek and Ellis Ferreira — all of whom have won Australian Open championships — also participated in the celebrity

exhibition.

But Courier, a 2005 inductee into the International Tennis Hall of Fame, was the only one to arrive via helicopter about 15 minutes before the match.

"Phone call," Courier said of what it took to get the helicopter ride, "And friends in the right places. Many of them charitable-minded."

He said afterward he had no intention of missing this year's event after an injury forced him to miss the 2007 edition. He was obviously tired from his match earlier Saturday at the Oliver Group Championship, the opening event of the Outback Champions Series in Naples, a circuit his company owns and operates for 30-and-older tennis players.

"I made a promise that I would come (this year), and we found a way to make it work," Courier said. "I'm real

happy I made it. I came to the golf course event for this about a year and a half ago, so I know it's a very worthy cause."

Courier and his doubles partner, Kriek, lost to Korda and Ferreira 8-7 in a match that lasted about an hour. All four participants wore microphones for the event, and there was plenty of chatter, including Courier quoting South Park's Eric Cartman after a particularly authoritative volley.

Courier also showed off the bruises he suffered during his match in Naples against Todd Martin, where Courier lost 6-4, 6-4.

Operating since 2006, the Outback Champions Series has grown from five to eight events, with the next matches in April in the Cayman Islands.

Courier said he was pleased with the growth of the circuit.

"It's been better than I thought it would be, to be honest," Courier said of the tour. "We've gotten great feedback from fans, players and our corporate partners. They're happy. We're getting a lot of television coverage, which is excellent. The tour's very competitive, and there's a lot of prize money on the line. The guys play hard for it."

Courier and Korda played in a special four-game match with two Longboat Key Club members, and Courier participated in a "Return a Serve from a Pro" contest in between taking photos and shaking hands with just about everyone in attendance.

It was obvious Courier enjoyed being at the event — and being close to home.

"I really came of age in this area, and I know the good work they're doing here," Courier said. "There's a lot of joy in being here."