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US OPEN NATIONAL PLAYOFFS

Kukharchuk defends her title, as eight move on from Mid-Atlantic qualifier



On Court Player Towel

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By Jackie Finn, USTA.com

The US Open National Playoffs Mid-Atlantic Sectional Qualifying Tournament, played at the Tennis Center at College Park in College Park, Md., saw eight different players advance to the US Open National Playoffs Championships

Nika Kukharchuk (pictured), 29, of Tarrytown, N.Y., successfully defended her 2015 women's singles title with a 6-2, 6-1 victory over Alexis Merrill in the final. Kukharchuk, who is originally from Russia, also won the USTA Mid-Atlantic women's singles title in 2012 and 2013. Previously a four-year letter winner for the University of Mississippi, Kukharchuk has actively competed in USTA Pro Circuit and ITF-level tournaments around the world in recent years, cracking the Top 500 in singles in 2013

Hunter Koontz, 23, of Glen Allen, Va., took home the men's singles title, defeating top seed Junior Ore 4-6, 6-1, 7-5. Koontz graduated from Virginia Tech in 2015

Although Ore wasn't able to capture the men's singles crown, his men's doubles campaign proved fruitful. The 23-year-old Ore partnered with Hunter Reese, 23, of Kennesaw, Ga., to take home the men's doubles title. Ore and Reese are no strangers to doubles; the two have partnered together before, winning three USTA Pro Circuit doubles titles, including the \$10,000 Futures in Weston, Fla., earlier this year. Reese, who was a standout at the University of Tennessee, won the NCAA doubles title in 2014 and competed in the 2014 US Open doubles draw as a wild card

In women's doubles, 16-year-old Alexis Merrill of Fairfax, Va., and Anastasia Revzina, 27, of Washington D.C., earned the victory lap. Merrill is currently a top-ranked junior in the USTA Mid-Atlantic section. The veteran Revzina, originally from Russia, played for the University of Florida, where she won the Southeastern Conference championship three times. She was also the graduate assistant coach for Florida's women's tennis team for three years

Eric West, 26, of Cincinnati, and Lauren Bellinger, 21, of Dublin, Ohio, captured the mixed doubles crown. West played for Oklahoma State, where he received All-Big 12 second-team honors. Since 2015, he has been serving as the assistant women's tennis coach at the University of Cincinnati. Under his charge at Cincinnati is Bellinger, a rising senior at the school, who played primarily No. 2 singles this past season

The overall winners of the men's and women's singles championships earn a wild card into the 2016 US Open Qualifying Tournament at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center, home of the US Open. The winners of the men's and women's doubles championships earn a wild card into the main draw of the US Open men's and women's doubles draws, respectively, while the winners of the mixed doubles earn a wild card into the main draw of the US Open mixed doubles draw

The 2016 US Open National Playoffs – Men's and Women's Singles Championships will be held Aug. 19-22. The men's and women's doubles championships will be held Aug. 21-24, and the mixed doubles championships will

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