

USC's Barkley, Johnson aren't too cool for school

By **MICHAEL LEV**
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

If you want to know why Matt Barkley decided to come back for his senior year at USC – a move fraught with expectation and risk – look no further than the recent accomplishments of a fellow Trojan.

Steve Johnson did not have to return for a fourth season with the USC men's tennis team. He already had helped the Trojans win three NCAA championships, and he won the individual crown last year. A promising pro career beckons.

But Johnson knew he and his teammates had an opportunity to do something truly special. A men's tennis team hadn't won four consecutive national titles since Stanford in the mid-1990s. Johnson vowed to come back for

a chance to "make history" and "lasting memories."

Johnson exceeded even his own lofty expectations by winning that fourth team title and repeating as singles champ last month. In doing so, he laid out a championship path for Barkley to follow.

Not that their situations are entirely the same.

"I haven't won three already," Barkley noted. "My motivation stems from (having won) nothing."

Barkley has 27 victories as USC's starting quarterback, against nine losses. But because of the Trojans' NCAA penalties, he has played in only one bowl game – the 2009 Emerald Bowl.

"We've been through a lot," Barkley said. "When the opportunity presented itself, just like with Steve, to do something special, something unique, that was

something I didn't want to miss out on."

Barkley isn't just a casual observer of Johnson's story. The Mater Dei and Orange High products are friends who've grown closer over the past year, sharing similar experiences and outlooks on life. Barkley admires how Johnson is both hard-working and humble; Johnson considers Barkley's decision to return to school "special."

When Barkley announced in December that he would postpone millions of NFL dollars to take care of "unfinished business" in college, USC immediately became a national-title contender and feel-good story.

College isn't for everyone. But don't put Barkley and Johnson in that too-cool-for-school gang. If anything, they might inspire another rhyme: To stay is the way.



ARMANDO BROWN, FOR THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Steve Johnson, of Orange, stayed in school at USC and won another national singles title.

CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS



PHOTO COURTESY OF NATALIE AVILES

The Orange Little League Volunteers won the District 30 Majors Division Tournament of Champions. The Volunteers also won the Orange City Tournament on April 28. Members of the team include - Back row (left to right): Manager Chris Esperanza, JP Walker, Coach Steve Aviles, Chris Huerta, Will Matuzak, Josh Aviles, Nick Santini, and David Christ. Front row: Christian Rohm, Jordan Schmidt, Chris Yopez, Andrew Aviles, Gabriel Honore, AJ Esperanza and Coach Greg Jennings.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

BASEBALL

Hard 9 Travel Baseball Club of Anaheim is currently accepting players ages 8-18. If interested, call 714-524-9900.

BASKETBALL

OC Elite Girls Basketball Club is holding weekly skills clinics for girls in the fifth-eighth grades every Monday night from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at Crosspointe Church in Yorba Linda. For more info, contact Matt Houser at 714-914-2336 or at oc-elite@hotmail.com, or visit ocelite.net.

FOOTBALL

Former Nebraska All-American and NFL kicker/punter Scott Livingston, and El Camino College and Carson High kicking coach Ish Ordonez are having **free weekly kicking camps** at Carson High, 22328 Main St., Carson, from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. Wednesdays. Coaches Ordonez and Livingston have been coaching kickers and

punters from high school to college to pro over the last 35 years. Soccer experience is helpful, but the camp is open to all levels of kickers, from beginners to advanced, ages 9 and up. For more information, email all decadeteam@yahoo.com.

SOCCER

West Coast Futbol Club and the L.A. Galaxy will hold tryouts for its boys U15 team from 7:30 to 9:15 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays at Concordia University. For more info, contact Erik Kirsch at 949-933-3005 or email him at erik@val-chris.com. The **West Coast Futbol Club's** boys' U15 State Cup semifinalist team is looking for a goalie. If interested, email rkaminski88@gmail.com.

The **Canyon PSA girls U17 team** is looking for 2-4 players. Tryouts will be held Tuesday-Thursday from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at Villa Park High. For more info, call 714-814-3282 or email try1414@gmail.com.

