

Oz Fest

Ram, Chappell prepping for Aussie Opens

(1-9-10) Rajeev Ram and Nick Chappell are getting set to make their singles debuts Down Under after qualifying for the main draws of the Australian Open and Australian Junior Open, respectively. With a strong 2009 and a late singles title in a Challenger in Aachen, Germany, Ram saw his season-ending ATP World Tour ranking rise to 79, which earned him a direct entry into the Open, the first grand slam of 2010. Ram had one singles win (Newport) and three doubles titles (Chennai, Newport & Bangkok) on the ATP Tour to go with four wins on the Challenger Tour (Aachen in singles title, and doubles titles at Dallas, Baton Rouge and Tulsa). "You hope and you want, but you never really plan for it," Ram said of his '09 successes. "I climbed about 100 spots (in the singles rankings), and it's not that easy to do so I'm definitely proud of that." Leaving North Central High School, where he won the state boys' team title in 2007 and a singles championship in 2008, Chappell concentrated on the International Tennis Federation (ITF) Junior circuit, where he won in Bermuda in only his second tournament appearance. By the year's end, his ranking had climbed to 55, good enough for his own direct entry into the Aussie Junior Open. Both Ram and Chappell will be competing in pre-Aussie tournaments, Ram in India and Pakistan and Chappell in Traralgon, Australia.