UNITED STATES TENNIS ASSOCIATION

United States Tennis Association

2013Grants Program

Okechi Womeodu Scholar Athlete Grant

June 2, 1988 – November 10, 2004

About Okechi Womeodu

Anthony Okechi Womeodu was much more than a great tennis player, he was a son, nephew, brother, friend, and academic scholar with a very bright future. He was described by many as having a million dollar smile, "that launched a thousand friendships." Okechi won a USTA national title at the age of 12.

Okechi, as he was fondly called, lived up to the meaning of his name during his 16 years – "God's Gift". He was a gift to his family and to the many lives he touched all around the country. He excelled as a student, participating in honors programs at all grade levels. At the time of his death he was a junior in the optional honors program at White Station High School in Memphis. His high school principal, Dr. Wanda Winnette, said "He was an all-around nice guy. I wish I had 1,000 more like him." After graduation he planned to attend Stanford University. Years before when Okechi won the United States Tennis Association Boy's 12s National Tennis Tournament in Alameda, CA he had an opportunity to visit the campus. He met Dick Gould, the tennis coach and played at the tennis club. He remarked then that he planned to return to Stanford one day as one of the top 3 men's tennis players.

Okechi was blessed with incredible athletic abilities and had the demeanor of a champion on and off the court and fields. He was your ultimate sportsman and loved all sports, but the two that he focused on were tennis and soccer. His high school ring had a soccer ball for the stone and tennis rackets on the side. He was a United States Tennis Association nationally ranked tennis player at all age levels. One of the highlights of his junior tennis career was his participation in the Junior U.S. Open in New York City in 2004. Also in 2004, he was the singles and doubles winner at the Southern Open Championships, and made it to the finals of the ITF Chanda Rubin Junior Circuit in South Carolina with his doubles partner Jeff Dadamo.

He was a fierce competitor who remained humble and respectful of his opponents despite his achievements. Okechi had a wonderful engaging personality and smile. He made a point to reach out to younger athletes and was eager to hit a few balls with novice tennis players or share some soccer skills. The world of sports provided an opportunity to meet and develop friendships with peers of diverse racial-ethnic and geographic backgrounds. Okechi valued these friendships and many of his peers have found unique ways to honor his memory and pay tribute to the wonderful champion they loved. Okechi was wise beyond his years and illustrated that young people can teach all of us a lot about how to approach life.

He was as focused in the classroom as he was on the court. An eleventh grade honor student, member of the Junior National Honor Society and the Beta Club. Tragically, in November 2004, Okechi collapsed due to heart failure while playing an indoor soccer game. He was only 16 years old. This Scholar Athlete Grant that bears his name is a way to honor not only his talent off the court, but his determination in the classroom, and generosity to those who shared his same dreams and visions.

The objectives of the **Okechi Womeodu Scholar Athlete Grant** are to:

1. Honor the memory, life, and achievements of this exceptional young man, who otherwise would have had a very promising future, on and off the court.
2. Reward players who work to excel as much in the classroom as in sports.
3. Widen the net of opportunities to young minority players who aspire to excellence in competitive tennis.
4. Assure the careful nurturing of young players who may be candidates for USTA Player Development Programs, and may have the ability to achieve national or international rankings.
5. Demonstrate the USTA resolve and commitment to diversity and inclusion in tennis.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Okechi Womeodu Scholar Athlete Grant
Grant funding is based on a number of factors including the success level of the player in the previous year (e.g., end of the year USTA ranking list/performance) and recommendations/commentary about the individual's team spirit and leadership qualities. The grant funding is intended to be granted to junior player(s) aspiring to achieve national and/or international rankings. The recipient(s) should have a history of strong national tournament results. The recipient(s) must be actively training and competing in tournaments in the award year. The grant funding is for actual and necessary training expenses.*

GRANT REQUIREMENTS:

- For consideration the player must be:
  1. A United States Citizen
  2. Of ethnic or racial minority background
  3. Ranked in the Top 100 (at the national (i.e., USTA) level, in his/her age category, or player must have an ITF, ATP / WTA Ranking.
- The **player's grade point average must be a 3.0** or higher. 1 Copy of ***official high school transcript*** must be attached to the application.
- Input from members of the USTA Player Development staff will be sought.
- Two letters of recommendation are required.
- Players must be in high school between the ages of 14-18 years old.
- **A proposed 2013 tournament and training schedule must be submitted along with the grant application.**
- Recent photograph of player must be attached to the grant.

TWO GRANTS ARE AWARDED per year in the amount of $5,000 each, for actual and necessary training expenses.

Please Mail Application No Later Than December 31, 2012 to:
The USTA Office of Diversity & Inclusion
70 West Red Oak Lane, White Plains, NY 10604

Please include a fax number and/or an email address to assist us in the application process. Email addresses shall not be used for any other purpose unless we receive consent from the applicant or from his/her legal guardian.

Decisions will be announced in March of 2013 via official letter and posted on the USTA web site:
www.usta.com/USTA/Home/AboutUs/AwardsandGrants.aspx

*Actual and necessary training expenses include, but are not limited to, developmental training, coaching, facility usage, equipment, apparel, supplies, comprehensive health insurance, travel, room and board.

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USTA 2013 OKECHI WOMEODU SCHOLAR ATHLETE GRANT

CONFIDENTIAL (To be completed by parents if under 18)

Last Name:_____ **First Name:**_____ **Age:**_____

Address:_____ **City:**_____ **ST:**_____ **Zip:**_____

Home Phone: (____)_____ **Total Dollar Amount Spent on Tennis in 2012: $**_____

E-mail Address: _____ **Number of USTA National Tournaments Played in 2012**_____

Date of Birth: _____ ***(MM/DD/YY)*** **USTA Section:**_____

Current Grade Point Average:_____ **ACT/ SAT Score:**_____

Male/Female **Race/Ethnicity:** Black/Asian/Pacific Islander/Hispanic-Latino/North Am. Indian/Other_____
(Circle One) **(Circle One of the Above – If other, fill in the blank next to other.)**

Jr. Singles Ranking: 2012 Final National Ranking/Standing: _____ Age Group:_____

2012 Final ITF Ranking/Standing: _____ Age Group:_____

ATP/ WTA: 2012 Current Ranking: _____ (as of what date?)_____

Parent/Legal Guardian: _____ **Home Phone:** _____

Home Address: _____ **Occupation:** _____

Work Phone: _____

Parent/Legal Guardian #2: _____ **Home Phone:** _____

Home Address: _____ **Occupation:** _____

Work Phone: _____

Personal Coach (if any): _____ **Academy:** _____

Phone: (____)_____ **Fax:** (____)_____ **Other:** (____)_____

Address: _____ **City:** _____ **ST:** _____ **Zip:**_____

Do you presently receive financial assistance for tennis from any other source, other than parents?

_____ Yes (if yes, please explain)_____ _____ No

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Race/Ethnicity: Please check one of the descriptions below corresponding to the ethnic group with which you identify.

- ☐ **American Indian or Alaska Native (Not Hispanic or Latino):** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintain tribal affiliation or community attachment.

- ☐ **Asian (Not Hispanic or Latino):** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia or the Indian Subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand and Vietnam.

- ☐ **Black or African American (Not Hispanic or Latino):** A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.

- ☐ **Hispanic or Latino:** A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race.

- ☐ **Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Not Hispanic or Latino):** A person having origins in any of the peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa or other Pacific Islands.

- ☐ **White (Not Hispanic or Latino):** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East or North Africa.

- ☐ **Two or More Races (Not Hispanic or Latino):** All persons who identify with more than one of the above five races.

Parent's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Player's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

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ATTACHMENTS & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUIRED:

1. Please provide name(s) of coach(es) and/or tennis program and/or Program Director with whom you are currently working. Attach additional pages if necessary.

2. Please have your coach or Program Director describe the progress you have made since beginning your tennis participation with him or her. (Feel free to attach in a separate document)

3. Please describe your training regimen, including: hours of practice, drill, competitive play, hours and methods for conditioning, etc. Attach additional pages if necessary.

4. Please attach a proposed tournament and training schedule for 2013.

5. **In a brief one page essay, please tell the USTA why you feel you embody the ideals, determination, and other qualities of Okechi Womeodu.** ***(Attach essay to this document.)***

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For students *attending public or private high school*

Please attach TWO (2) letters of recommendation from any combination of the following:

a. High school principal
b. High school guidance counselor
c. Part-time job employer
d. City, county, or state elected official
e. Religious leader
f. High school teacher of a core academic class (gym and art/ music teachers are not included)
g. A non-relative over the age of 18 who has known you for 4 years or more (please specify relationship)
h. Tennis instructor (no more than one letter accepted from instructors/ coaches, so you must choose at least one more from this list)
i. APPLICATIONS WITHOUT TWO LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION WILL BE IMMEDIATELY DISQUALIFIED AND WILL NOT BE REVIEWED

Please attach a copy of your high school transcript. (APPLICATIONS WITHOUT A COPY OF AN OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT WILL BE IMMEDIATELY DISQUALIFIED AND WILL NOT BE REVIEWED. Transcript copies must include school, school's address, school's phone number, official letterhead or emblem of the school, information key defining school's grading system)

For students who are *home schooled*:

Please attach TWO (2) letters of recommendation from any combination of the following:

a. Part-time job employer
b. City, county, or state elected official
c. Religious leader
d. Community leader (non-relative)
e. A non-relative over the age of 18 who has known you for 4 years or more (please specify relationship)
f. Tennis instructor (no more than one letter accepted from instructors/ coaches, so you must choose at least one more from this list)

Please attach a copy of your home school transcript, including documentation of classes taken, certification of home school instructor, and any year end evaluations of student performance. (APPLICATIONS WITHOUT A COPY OF HOME SCHOOL DOCUMENTATION WILL BE IMMEDIATELY DISQUALIFIED AND WILL NOT BE REVIEWED.)