

# QUICK START IS A GREAT START!

**Sarah Douglas, 6, of Cary**



Soccer has its smaller balls, and smaller goals in some cases, for the younger kids; baseball has coach pitch, t-ball and an actual t-ball; basketball has the smaller ball and lower hoops; and swimming accommodates the younger athletes with shorter distances. And tennis has finally caught on! While the smaller playing format has been around since the '80s with various names, the United States Tennis Association (USTA) is now actively rolling out

QuickStart Tennis and promoting it to enable younger players to actually play tennis! And it's working!

**What is QuickStart (QS)?** QS is a tennis format designed for younger kids by scaling the game to the size and speed of kids. The courts are smaller – four 8 & Under QS courts can fit onto one USTA regulation court. The USTA's QS initiative made the conversion of one regulation court possible at the Cary Tennis Park, and has purchased equipment for other towns and organizations to temporarily change the size of a court – lines that can be placed on the courts and portable nets.

The length, weight and grip size of the QS racquet is reduced to allow smaller wrists to manipulate it quickly and withstand the force of the ball. And the ball has also been adjusted. Official QS balls include a foam ball that is the size of a softball but lightweight and slow enough to allow young players to get to it and to hit it, and a low-compression ball the same size as a regulation tennis ball but with less speed.

A legal serve can be hit over- or underhand, the net height is downsized, and keeping score has been simplified for ease and to make the games and sets a little quicker. "At the same time that the new 1-7 point game is being introduced, we have many young kids who already know how to keep score the proper way thanks

to Wii Tennis," says Patrick Henson, Junior Tennis Coordinator at the Cary Tennis Park.

In addition to these changes, the manner in which young kids are taught is also changing, although not as quickly. The QS format will encourage more peer interaction. A game of Sweep is played with the younger class at the Cary Tennis Park where a "rally" between players occurs on the ground instead of in the air – this is the first step toward actual rallies.

**How is QS doing?** "Fabulously," says Town of Apex tennis instructor Dan Swan whose class of 5-6 year olds were hitting nicely. "It raises their caliber of play and it's safer," he says. "Getting hit with a tennis ball isn't fun for the younger ones, but getting hit with a QS ball is like being hit with a Nerf™. Kids are often intimidated by a regular tennis ball and we would see them recoil when they went to swing – we don't see that with QS. It is really making a difference in their playing ability."

**Where are QS programs?** Everywhere – towns, private clubs, YMCAs, schools, camps/track-outs and festivals. Parks and recreation programs and private recreation clubs offer lessons and even Junior Ten-

## QuickStart (QS) at a Glance

Format	Court	Balls	Net*	Racquet	Scoring
USTA Regulation	72' x 27' (Singles)	Regulation	3'	Regulation, adult size	Love, 15, 30, 40, (Deuce), Game
QS for 8 & under	36' x 18'	Oversized, foam (size of a softball) or low-compression	2'9"	Up to 23" in length, light weight	1-7
QS for 10 & under	60' x 21'	Low compression (regulation size)	3'	Up to 25" in length, light weight	1-7

\*Height at middle of net



**Simin Kohoussi, 5, of Apex**

nis Team (JTT) league play with the QS format. Schools are using it as a PE unit both indoors and outdoors as well as for before- and after-school care. The Town of Morrisville recently had a QS Day, and Fuquay-Varina set-up courts for use during their street festival. QS materials from the Western Wake Tennis Association (WWTA) and USTA grants are being rolled out constantly and could be in your child's school by the Fall.

**How can we get started now?** There is no need to delay! While the Town of Cary's Cary Tennis Park is the only local facility with permanent QS courts (and one of only a few in the country – they are free of charge to Cary residents but you must check-in at the front desk), you don't need a QS court to take advantage of the concept. Any court will do. In fact, many instructors teaching QS do not use the small courts for their entire program. "The ball and the racquet make all the difference in the world," says Robert Edwards, Vice President of Community Relations for WWTA who has been instrumental in getting QS to our area.

With QS balls (available at Target for approximately \$4 for three oversized balls and \$2 for low-compression balls) and a QS, or a lightweight junior, racquet (\$15-20), your child will be set.

Your child can even play QS Junior Team Tennis. Many private clubs and towns are offering it for the 8 & Under and 10 & Under age groups. The Cary Tennis Park even has a QS Tournament that will be held in conjunction with the North Carolina Closed Junior Tournament beginning on August 14th. The tournament – featuring both regular junior play and QS junior play – is open to NC residents on a first-come, first-served basis (contact the Park for entry requirements). Your child

**Have we missed something or someone? Let us know! We welcome any and all feedback on our website and magazine as well as any ideas for future articles at [www.activealex.com](http://www.activealex.com). We especially welcome word on any organization offering one of our 40 Active Alex Activities that we may not know of.**

## WHERE ARE QUICK START PROGRAMS?\*

The following organizations are currently offering QuickStart lessons, camps and/or Junior Team Tennis (JTT). The schools are offering QuickStart programming in PE classes and/or before- and after-school care. More organizations and schools are constantly being added.

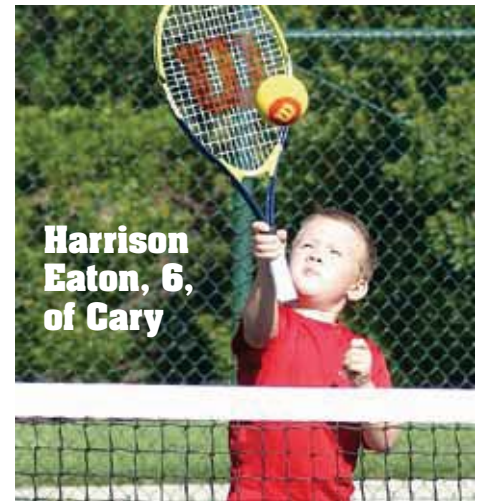
Town of Apex	Brier Creek Country Club	Green Hope Elementary School
Town of Cary/Cary Tennis Park	Kildaire Farms Racquet & Swim Club	Holly Grove Elementary School
Town of Fuquay-Varina	YMCA – Kraft Family	Holly Ridge Elementary School
Town of Holly Springs	Lochmere Swim & Tennis Club	
Town of Morrisville	MacGregor Downs Country Club	*As of April 2009
	Prestonwood Country Club	
	Sunset Ridge Racquet & Swim Club	
	NC State University Club	

should have already had an introduction to tennis and understand the basics of the game to enter. "And with QS scoring," says Patrick Henson, "an entire three-set match could actually be as quick as 20-25 minutes!"

**What's the best way to teach my kids tennis?** "By playing," says Steve Walker, also a Town of Apex instructor. "While lessons are a great way to start, as in any sport, improvement comes with practice. Even having them play catch with a QS ball or playing popcorn where you bounce the ball on the tennis racquet, serves to improve their eye-hand coordination and get them ready for the court or any sport." The best thing is to get them out there on a consistent basis and with the help of the QS concept, they will be rallying.

Tennis is one of those lifetime sports that only requires one other person to play, and it allows development of eye-hand coordination and body movement/positioning.

The QS format makes tennis a more viable activity for kids of all ages. Tennis is seeing a boom – especially in our area. In 2008, North Carolina provided 38% of the total growth in national USTA youth and adult memberships. And with Wimbledon and the U.S. Open giving us the itch to play —go with the flow! See you on the courts!



**Harrison Eaton, 6, of Cary**



**Two happy gymnasts hang out before class at GymCarolina.**