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Our Guiding Lights

This is the 14th year we’ve picked our Champions of Tennis award winners, and every year, these awards become more and more popular among those involved in this sport. It is exciting for us to recognize individuals, organizations and companies that truly contribute to the mission of growing this game and business, and that’s one of the reasons why our Champions of Tennis issue is one of the most fun for us to put together.

What’s particularly pleasing for me is when I hear from an award winner that recognition in Tennis Industry somehow helped his or her organization or business in growing the game. Many have said the national recognition provided by our awards have helped in gaining funding and support for grassroots programs or facilities, or in pushing a project through at the local level, or even in helping government officials or others take their local tennis organization more seriously.

In putting together the short stories about our award winners, it’s always striking to note how many honorees genuinely try to deflect the credit from themselves and praise the “team,” acknowledging those who helped them. In a business that often takes itself way too seriously, I find this incredibly refreshing.

This tendency of our award winners to spread the credit around and point out those who helped along the way struck me in a particular, poignant way this year, as right now, one of my most important “team” members struggles to stay with us.

I know dealing with aging parents is nothing new; it seems like everyone I know is in some way facing these issues. It was difficult two years ago when, in this space, I mentioned my father’s decline. Now, my mother, a true guiding light for me, faces the same challenges. While it breaks my heart to see her going through this, it’s also causing me to think more and more about the influences in our lives that shape us, make us who we are, and cause us to care and work to make things better.

My parents always encouraged us to be active and play all sports, including tennis. Growing up in the 1920s and ’30s, they knew not only the importance of being “serious” about life and career, but also about how important a well-rounded life is. They have been a most important and consistent part of my “team” throughout my life, and by their examples, taught my sisters and me subtle, selfless lessons about caring for others, caring for a cause, doing what’s right, forgiving and moving on, and not worrying about grabbing credit. They’ve been the ultimate advocates for “team” play, and in fact created an amazing family “team.”

Like our Champions of Tennis, we all have had people in our lives who have shaped us in both obvious and subtle ways—the “guiding lights” for our lives and careers. Whether you call them mentors, advisors, counselors, best friends, or even parents, I’d very much like to hear about your own personal “guiding lights.”

Peter Francesconi, Editorial Director
peter@racquetech.com
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Asics Debuts BZ 100 Performance Racquet

Asics America announced Dec. 9 the introduction of the BZ 100, the company’s first-ever performance tennis racquet designed to give competitive players controllable power.

"With the launch of the BZ 100, we are introducing to the market racquet technology options that have never been available, and we strongly believe it will positively impact players’ performance," says Kevin Wulff, president and CEO of Asics America Corp. “The tennis category is a key focus for Asics globally as we move into 2015. We’ve seen great success with our tennis footwear and expect this innovative racquet will follow in the same footsteps.”

The BZ 100 features Asics’ new patent-pending Bending Zone technology, which adjusts the flex distribution in the frame, giving players the ability to better control the ball without sacrificing power, says the company. Asics says it reduced the height of the throat by 30 percent compared to an average player racquet, resulting in a substantial reduction in the stiffness of the frame and a larger “sweet spot.” The optimized flex, says the company, will also result in a reduction in vibrations and less drag in the head.

The BZ 100 is 27 inches, 11.2 ounces strung with a more rounded 100-square-inch head shape. Suggested retail is $189. Visit AsicsAmerica.com.

K-Swiss Unveils New Brand Identity

K-Swiss has introduced a new brand identity that celebrates its place as the only heritage American tennis brand. The new look brings the brand back to its founding roots in 1966 and is characterized by a directional logo, classic 1966 typeface and signature Brunner Blue colorway inspired by the blue color on U.S. tennis courts.

“With the resurgence of K-Swiss and our brand positioning around heritage American tennis, it was time to refresh the elements of our brand identity,” says Barney Waters, CMO of K-Swiss Inc, which is based in Westlake Village, Calif. “We’ve managed to modernize the symbols while retaining the elements that have long-term equity, such as the color combination and the shield.”

The new minimalist shield logo retains the classic K-Swiss Five Stripes trademark, though the orientation of the stripes has changed—the stripes now point upward.

The red, white and blue K-Swiss logo has long signified America as the place where the brand was introduced, but now a new color has been introduced, Brunner Blue. Named for K-Swiss’ founders, brothers Art and Ernie Brunner, the color matches the shade of blue found on America’s tennis courts, including at the US Open. The color will be introduced into all K-Swiss branding elements, including the logo, packaging, retail displays and website.

The company’s signature “Classic” shoe, the first all-leather tennis shoe, made its debut at Wimbledon, and almost 50 years later, is still considered a style staple. K-Swiss relaunched its brand in 2009 and it is now distributed in more than 80 countries.

WTT Celebrates 40 Years

Mylan World TeamTennis commemorates its 40th season with a yearlong marketing and promotional program that includes special events and fan engagement initiatives. The 2015 WTT season will run July 12-Aug. 2, with finals that will air live on ESPN2. ESPN 3 will also broadcast a number of matches throughout the summer.

“As we celebrate our 40th anniversary, Mylan World TeamTennis maintains its pioneering spirit and commitment to push the boundaries of our sport in the name of fan entertainment,” says founder Billie Jean King. “Throughout our rich history, Mylan WTT has been a showcase for world-class competition as well as the fundamental values of gender equity, access and community.”

Gerflor Buys Connor Sport Court

Gerflor, a global leader in the design and manufacture of resilient flooring, has acquired Connor Sport Court International. In a statement, Gerflor said the two companies’ combined resources will enhance their ability to offer more innovative solutions and improved services to customers, including worldwide sport associations.

“The acquisition of Connor Sport Court International is an extremely exciting development for Gerflor, as it brings a world-class organization into the Gerflor family to strengthen our position as a world leader in sports surfaces. It is also a major step to strengthen our Group sales footprint in North America,” says Bertrand Chammas, CEO of the Gerflor Group.

“We look forward to being part of the Gerflor Group,” adds Ron Cerny, CEO of Connor Sport Court International. “It provides the unique opportunity to further expand our sales throughout the world and provide truly complementary solutions to our customers.”

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Gugel Honored at IART Symposium

Master Racquet Technician John Gugel, the 2012 Tennis Industry Magazine Stringer of the Year, received the “Lifetime Achievement” award during the 2014 IART Symposium, held at the end of September at Saddlebrook Resort in Tampa, Fla. “John has done it all in our industry, from tournament stringing to designing racquets,” said IART Executive Director Tim Strawn. “He’s the consummate professional who is long overdue recognition for his contributions to the racquet sports industry.”

The five-day IART event focuses on those in the racquet sports industry who work in the service side of the business. “We added new speakers this year and covered some new ground, all of which was well received,” Strawn said. “Classes on successful Pro Shop Management, a new class presented by Babolat’s Lucien Nogues on “Ball Effect,” and a new and improved six-hour racquet customization class were included in the program.” This was the organization’s eighth conference and plans are under way for 2015. Strawn also announced that Ron Rocchi of Wilson, a participant from the symposium’s start, will be the new creative director of the event. For more information, visit gssalliance.com.

U of Florida wins TOC Fall Invitational

The University of Florida became the first repeat winner at the USTA Tennis On Campus Fall Invitational as the Gators defended its 2013 title with a 25-18 win over Auburn University at the Palmetto Dunes Tennis Center in Hilton Head Island, S.C. By reaching the final, both Florida and Auburn qualify for the 2015 Tennis On Campus National Championship in Cary, N.C., April 9-11, 2015.

NYJTL Honored by Bronx Chamber

New York Junior Tennis & Learning (NYJTL) President and CEO Dr. Deborah Antoine accepted the inaugural Bronx (N.Y.) Builder’s Award from the Bronx Chamber of Commerce in October. The NYJTL was honored for its work in building a new $26.5 million tennis, community and educational center in the heart of Crotona Park, called the Cary Leeds Center for Tennis & Learning, the result of a public/private partnership with the City of New York. The grand opening of the 10 indoor/10 outdoor court facility is scheduled for April.

In addition, Todd Martin, CEO of the International Tennis Hall of Fame & Museum, and Doug Conant, Chairman of Avon Products and Founder & CEO of Conant Leadership were honored by the NYJTL at its 29th annual Leadership Awards Luncheon recently. The luncheon also raised $1.7 million to complete the Cary Leeds Tennis & Learning Center.

Tecnifibre Partners With ProWorld Tennis

High-performance tennis equipment

Head Introduces New Graphene XT Speed Line

Head has introduced its new Graphene XT Speed racquet line, endorsed by World No. 1 Novak Djokovic and combining “an iconic new design and the improved Graphene XT technology into one speedy package,” says the company.

The line is based on the use of graphene, the strongest yet lightest material in the world, and Head says with the updated technology, Graphene XT now features a 30 percent stronger material structure that has been “engineered to optimize the racquet’s weight distribution to where players need it most. As a result, racquets with Graphene XT feature a 10 percent better energy transfer for a higher ball speed and faster game.”

Graphene XT Speed models are the Pro, MP A, S and Rev Pro. New to the Speed line are the Rev and MP A models, which feature Adaptive String Pattern (ASP) technology that allows the player to exchange the grommet strips and choose between a 16/16 pattern for more spin or the 16/19 pattern for more control. Three models (MP A, Rev Pro, S) are available now; the Pro will be available Jan. 12.

• Pro: Tour version with highest weight at 11.1 ounces, 100-square-inch head size, 22-mm constant beam, 18/20 string pattern.
• S: 10.1 ounces, 100-square-inch head, 22-mm constant beam, 16/19 string pattern.
• MP A: 10.6 ounces, 100-square-inch head, 22-mm constant beam, adaptive string pattern of either 16/19 or 16/16.
• Rev Pro: 93 ounces, 27.4-inch length, 98-square-inch head, 25/22.5/24 mm beam, adaptive string pattern of either 16/19 or 16/16.
USTA’s Gordon Smith Honored By University of Georgia

USTA Executive Director Gordon Smith, an SEC champion and former captain of the Georgia men’s tennis team, is the 2014 recipient of the UGA’s Bill Hartman Award. Smith was recognized in November at the Georgia-Auburn football game and will receive the award during the UGA Circle of Honor Gala on Feb. 6.

Named for the late Bill Hartman, Georgia’s long-time kicking coach and chairman of the Georgia Student Educational Fund, the Hartman Award, presented annually since 1992, is one of the highest honors given to a former UGA student-athlete. Only former varsity athletes who have received a baccalaureate degree from Georgia can be considered for the award.

A native of Rome, Ga., Smith won a state title at Darlington School, and later earned a scholarship to play for Dan Magill at UGA. He served as captain of a Bulldog team that swept the SEC title each of his four years from 1972 to 1975. He was a two-time all-SEC selection and, as a senior, won the conference doubles championship with current head men’s tennis coach Manuel Diaz. Smith graduated magna cum laude in 1975 with a bachelor’s degree in journalism, and he earned his juris doctorate with honors from UGA in 1978.

Ashaway’s MonoGut ZX and MonoGut ZX Pro are now available in black. At 17 gauge (1.22 mm), MonoGut ZX Pro is a thinner, lighter string, designed to provide better elongation, snap-back and playability for players who do not require the added durability of the 16L (1.27 mm) gauge MonoGut ZX string.

Both strings are of 100% Zyex monofilament construction, which provides exceptional dynamic stiffness and arm-friendly gut-like playability, says Ashaway. The total lack of polyester increases elongation and decreases stiffness for comfortable soft power.

USTA Honors Grassroots Tennis at TDW

The 2014 Tennis Development Workshop, held in Atlanta in November, celebrated grassroots heroes and organizations that have gone above and beyond to make the game accessible to everyone.

“Celebrating the outstanding work of our peers raises the bar for all of us,” said USTA President Dave Haggerty during this year’s awards presentation. “The USTA is proud to honor individuals and organizations who have exceeded expectations in delivering positive experiences in physical activity, social connection and opportunities for bright futures.” Award winners include:

- Eve F. Kraft Community Service Award: Rex Maynard, Belton, S.C.
- USTA Faculty Member of the Year: Leah Friedman, Chicago
- Janet Louer USTA Junior Team Tennis National Organizer of the Year Award: Leslie Jackson, Fort Smith, Ark.
- USTA Adaptive Tennis National Community Service Award: ACEing Autism
- Community Tennis Association of the Year: Greater Columbus Tennis Association, Ohio
- NJTL Chapter of the Year: Tennis Success, Corpus Christi, Texas

USRSA Announces New MRTs/CSs

- Master Racquet Technicians
  - Michael Alexiou - Toronto, Canada
  - David Darling - Alpharetta, GA
  - Scott Gates - Cumming, GA
  - John Koenig, Maynard, MA
  - Devin Leal - Toronto, Canada
  - Michael Pournaras - Charlotte, NC
  - Michael Sims - Lbilburg, GA
  - Thomas Staub - Charlotte, NC
  - Steven Struck - Surprise, AZ
  - Raymond Wendeln - Sun City, AZ

- Certified Stringers
  - Michael Alexiou - Toronto, Canada
  - Anthony Nazzaro - Somers, NY
  - John Koenig, Maynard, MA
  - Rex Maynard, Belton, S.C.

Correction to USRSA Fall Digest

- Instruction notes in the Fall 2014 Stringer’s Digest are incorrect for the Dunlop iDapt 98, Dunlop iDapt 100 and Dunlop iDapt 105.

The correct note should read: “If stringing 1-piece, short side must be installed on side of frame with “S” marked near bottom of grommet strip. If stringing 2-piece, starting knot must be tied on side of frame with “S” marked near bottom of grommet strip.”
People Watch

- Ken McAllister of Austin, Texas, is the recipient of the National Public Parks Tennis Association’s 2014 Hollis and Jean Smith Lifetime Achievement Award presented during the USTA Semi-Annual Meeting in New York in September. McAllister has served on the NPPTA Board since 2000 and as its president for the past 10 years. He has been the executive director of USTA Texas for 24 years.

- Matt Olson is the new executive director of the USTA New England Section. Olson has been the ED of USTA Atlanta and the Atlanta Youth Tennis & Education Foundation since 2003. USTA Atlanta is the largest Community Tennis Association in the country, with more than 50,000 adult and junior players.

- Van Barry is the new executive director for the USTA Texas Section, taking over from longtime ED Ken McAllister, who is retiring.

- Tecnifibre and American squash player Gilly Lane have signed a multi-year racquet and strings agreement. Lane played professionally from 2007 to 2012 and currently is the assistant squash coach at the University of Pennsylvania, U.S. Men’s Team player/coach, and U.S. Junior Boys’ assistant coach. He plays with the Tecnifibre Carboflex 125 racquet and 305+ string.

- Germany’s Andrea Petkovic won the final Fed Cup Heart Award of 2014 in recognition of her performance during Germany’s semifinal victory against Australia in Brisbane in April.

- Racquetball legend, coach and Hall-of-Famer Cliff Swain has joined Ashaway Racket Strings’ roster of sponsored players.

- The International Tennis Hall of Fame and International Tennis Federation honored Helena Sukova of the Czech Republic with the 2014 Fed Cup Award of Excellence.

- Former World No. 1 Patrick Rafter has been named as performance director for Tennis Australia, one of the top jobs in Australian tennis.

- Former world No. 1 Kim Clijsters will be the new tournament director for the BNP Paribas Fortis Diamond Games, played in Antwerp in February.

- Pro player Aleksandra Krunic of Serbia, who came through the qualifying rounds and reached the round of 16 at the 2014 US Open, has signed with Octagon sports management.

- Dorothy “Dodo” Cheney, an icon of American tennis and a 2004 inductee of the International Tennis Hall of Fame, passed away on Nov. 23 in Escondido, Calif., at age 98. Cheney first started playing as a young child and was an active competitor well into her 90s, winning an extraordinary 391 gold balls.

- Keith Callahan of the Manchester (Mass.) Athletic Club was named Facility Manager of the Year by the USPTA New England Division at its meeting in November.

- Texas Tennis Hall of Famer Bob Mapes died Oct. 31 at age 86. The Texas tennis icon played at Baylor and began his tennis coaching career in 1953.

- “The Secrets of Spanish Tennis,” which features key Spanish methods and philosophies, is now available for sale from New Chapter Press. The book is written by New York-based high-performance tennis coach Chris Lewit, who spent the last seven years visiting many of the top Spanish academies and studying their teaching methods. It’s at bookstores and available on Amazon.com.

- Micky Lawler is the new president of the WTA, reporting to WTA Chairman and CEO Stacey Allaster. Lawler was the former managing director of tennis for Octagon.

- Former British doubles player Ross Hutchins, who successfully overcame cancer and then retired from competitive tennis recently at age 29, has been named the ATP World Tour’s new vice president of player relations.

- Tavistock Development Co. has announced that Taj Adhav will oversee the development of the burgeoning sports innovation and performance cluster at Lake Nona, Fla., which will feature the USTA’s “New Home of American Tennis.” Adhav is charged with identifying and attracting innovative businesses and ideas to the development in Orlando.

- The Junior Tennis Champions Center in College Park, Md., has hired Ben Capuccitti as senior coach and Anastasia Revzina as staff professional.

- Andy Murray is now a spokesman for the World Wildlife Fund.

- USTA Southern will induct three into the section’s Hall of Fame in January: Brenda Carter of Charleston, S.C., John Sadri of Charlotte, N.C., and Fran Chandler of Jackson, Tenn.

- Head Penn junior players Jordan Barth of Minnesota, Jordan Cooperrider of Florida, and Connor Laffey of Oregon represented the U.S. National Junior Racquetball team at the 2014 International Racquetball Federation’s World Junior Racquetball Championships held in South America in November.

- Nicolas Chua of the University of Chicago and Megan Humphreys of the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater are the winners of the 2014 James O’Hara Sargent Sportmanship Awards, presented by Rolex Watch, USA, at the USTA/ITA National Small College Championships.
WTA Signs Largest Media Right Deal

The WTA Board of Directors approved a ground-breaking 10-year media agreement with Perform of more than $525 million, the largest live media rights and production venture in the history of the WTA and in women’s sports.

“This is a game-changing and historic moment for our fans and for women’s sport,” says WTA Chairman and CEO Stacey Allaster. “Our new broadcast strategy to produce all 2,000 main draw singles matches in partnership with Perform will deliver exponential global exposure for our players, tournaments and partners.”

The agreement introduces WTA Media, a joint endeavor between both organizations that will deliver unprecedented premium content to tennis fans worldwide. WTA Media, together with tournaments, will produce all main-draw singles matches and the semifinals and finals of all doubles matches from 2017. Furthermore, WTA Media will increase its production of news content by 40 percent. It will also deliver additional magazine shows and significant off-court content to support the WTA’s mobile, digital and social media strategy.

Aussie Open Series Uses Plexicushion Prestige

California Sports Surfaces has announced that the Australian Open and Australian Open Series of tournaments will once again be played on Plexicushion Prestige. Plexicushion Prestige was first installed in Melbourne in 2008 and has since expanded to the series events across Australia.

The Hopman Cup, Brisbane International, Apia International and the World Tennis Challenge all lead up to the Australian Grand Slam, so tournament organizers and Tennis Australia wanted the court surfaces to be consistent.

Plexicushion Prestige is a resilient acrylic system, consisting of SBR and EPDM granules, which has been rated as a Category 4 Medium-Fast surface by the ITF, meaning all the courts across the series should have a similar bounce and similar footing.

Like the USTA with its US Open color in 2005, Tennis Australia created its own original color scheme, utilizing a two-toned blue combination called Velocity Blue and True Blue. For more information, visit www.plexipave.com.

Adidas Introduces New Barricade 2015

Adidas’ newest shoe is the Barricade 2015, which has the most design updates since the shoe’s inception 15 years ago. The Barricade 2015 is lighter and more flexible, says the company, and available in new colorways.

The shoe provides stability and durability, and features a synthetic-mesh toes shell for maximum flexibility, says Adidas.

“Analyzing our player’s on-court performance was an essential part of the design process,” said Thomas Weege, VP for Heartbeat Sports Design. “By redesigning some core elements of the shoe, we have managed to create a design that is a real departure from previous Barricade designs, while still retaining the core qualities of absolute stability and durability.”

The Barricade 2015 will be available in January for $140.

Mason Promoted to President of Head USA Racquet Sports

Greg Mason has been named president of Head USA Racquet Sports. Mason, who previously was vice president of sales and marketing for Head USA, also serves as the president of the TIA.

“Greg has been the driving force behind the incredible success of our racquet division in the U.S. over the last five years,” said Kevin Kempin, Head North America’s CEO and president. “Both the Head and Penn brands have achieved record growth due to the efforts of Greg and his team.”

Mason joined Head USA in August 2000 and has held a variety of key positions in the sales and marketing groups. He also continues to serve as TIA president, a position he has held for the past two years.
Short Sets

- The Czech Republic beat Germany 3-1 in November to win the 2014 Fed Cup Final, the country’s third title in four years.

- Scotland will host the U.S. vs. Britain first-round Davis Cup tie March 6-8 in Glasgow.

- Tennis legend Roger Federer will face Grigor Dimitrov at the annual BNP Paribas Showdown on Tuesday, March 10, in Madison Square Garden in New York.

- Lacoste is an Official Partner of the Miami Open and will be the official and exclusive tennis and casual apparel and footwear outfitter of the tournament. The five-year partnership also includes two retail spaces on-site, and the creation of a co-branded collection that will be sold in the U.S. and in Lacoste boutiques in February.

- In a three-year deal, German automaker Audi is now the official vehicle of the BNP Paribas Open in Indian Wells, Calif.

- USPTA is partnering with 2XU, an Australian-based compression apparel brand, to offer a new benefit. USPTA pros save 40 percent on purchases for personal use, and members who purchase for their club pro shop or facility will receive a 5 percent contribution to their Retirement Gold+ plan. To access the discount code, Professional-level members should log into uspta.com and click on the 2XU logo. The USPTA also is renewing its partnership with Rezilient Direct to continue to give members in the U.S. the opportunity to purchase additional health coverage.

- Tennis Central (tenniscentral.net) is a new app (for Android and Apple) that provides adults players with a tool to learn from the world’s best coaches and experts. It features over 150 lessons and courses.

- The TIA has named Payment Alliance International a strategic partner for merchant processing services. More than 700 TIA member companies, organizations and tennis businesses now have access to a full suite of innovative and cost-effective merchant services and solutions. Visit tennisindustry.org.

- TGA Premier Youth Tennis recently established its first franchise in Massachusetts. Peter Dunlop, a technology and telecommunications executive, has acquired geographic rights to TGA in the Southern Boston area. TGA also has opened a second franchise in Seattle. Chandler Lewis, a recent graduate of the University of Washington and a former high school varsity tennis coach, acquired the rights to the east side of the Greater Seattle area.

- The U.S. National Indoor Tennis Championships has been renamed the Memphis Open, and Erin Mazurek will serve as the tournament director. It will be played Feb. 9-15. The USTA partnered with The Racquet Club of Memphis, which has hosted the U.S. National Indoor Tennis Championships since 1977, to purchase the tournament from San Jose-based Sharks Sports & Entertainment.

- Pacific Brands has sold the Dunlop and Slazenger brands in Australia and New Zealand to International Brand Management & Licensing (IBML). IBML already owns the brands outside of Australia and New Zealand.

- The Tose Tennis Center at the U.S. Naval Academy’s Brigade Sports Complex in Annapolis, Md., recently converted to energy-efficient LED sports lighting by Ephesus Lighting of Syracuse, N.Y. The Tose Center has six outdoor courts and serves as the home courts for the academy’s men’s and women’s Division 1 tennis teams. It was one of seven outdoor sports venues, three indoor sports arenas, and five other locations at the Naval Academy to switch to Ephesus LED.

- Billie Jean King’s Eye Coach training aid is now being distributed to coaches and students in the UK through the new company Tennis Coach Club Ltd.


- The WTA announced its Aces for Humanity initiative benefiting the USANA True Health Foundation has raised more than $25,000 for the not-for-profit charity. The WTA donated $10 for every ace served by its seven USANA Ambassadors—Genie Bouchard, Madison Keys, Monica Puig, Sloane Stephens, Samantha Stosur, Zhang Shuai and Zheng Jie—with a $5 donation for all other aces served at Premier-level events. Collectively, the seven USANA Ambassadors hit 412 of the 4,314 aces.

- U.S. boys and girls won the overall titles at the 2014 Junior Davis Cup and Junior Fed Cup Finals in Mexico in September. Sixteen boys and 16 girls teams took part in the finals of the ITF’s world junior team competition for players aged 16-and-under, out of a total of 170 teams from 94 countries.

- The Billie Jean King Leadership Initiative launched in November “to move the needle on issues impacting diversity and inclusion by inspiring future leaders and motivating those in positions of power to promote diverse identities and challenge the status quo.” King presented the inaugural “Inspiring Leader” awards to Valerie Jarrett, senior advisor to the President of the United States, and Gracia Martore, president and CEO of Gannett.
space from the back of the fence, thereby allowing the court to be used for regular play as well.

The patented, one of a kind product is backed by a full two-year warranty, and the all-season design allows the unit to remain in place year round, although it can be easily disassembled and installed in the event of severe weather. Visit pickup-wall.com or call National Sales Manager Mike Puc at 561-315-2158.

Paul Kid Named Volkl U.S. Sales Manager

Volkl Tennis has announced that industry veteran Paul Kid has joined the company as the U.S. national sales manager. The announcement was made at the company’s annual sales meeting in San Diego recently, where four new racquets were introduced.

The four new frames, all Super G updates, are the Super G 1 with Power Arm, Super G V-1 MidPlus, Super G V-1 Oversize, and Super G 7.

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**Tennis Racquet Performance**

**Specialty Stores**

**January-September, 2014 vs. 2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>% change vs. '13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Units</td>
<td>514,600</td>
<td>534,492</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>$148.16</td>
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<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Top-Selling Racquets at Specialty Stores**

**By year-to-date dollars, Jan.-Sept. 2014**

1. Babolat Aero Pro Drive 2013 (MP)
2. Babolat Pure Drive GT 2012 (MP)
3. Babolat Pur Drive Lite 2012 (MP)
4. Babolat Aero Pro Team 2013 (MP)
5. Head Graphene Radical MP (MP)

---

“Hot New Racquets”

(introduced in the past 12 months)

1. Head Graphene Radical MP (MP)
2. Wilson Juice 100 S (MP)
3. Babolat Pure Strike 100 (MP)
4. Head Graphene Radical Pro (MP)
5. Wilson Juice 100 2014 (MP)

---

**Top-Selling Tennis Shoes at Specialty Stores**

**By year-to-date dollars, Jan.-Sept. 2014**

1. Asics Gel Resolution 5
2. Prince T22
3. Nike Air Max Cage 2013
4. Nike Zoom Vapor 9.5 Tour
5. Babolat Propulse 4

---

**Top-Selling Strings at Specialty Stores**

**By year-to-date units, Jan.-Sept. 2014**

1. Babolat RPM Blast
2. Prince Synthetic Gut Duraflex
3. Wilson NXT
4. Wilson Sensation
5. Luxilon Alu Power
(Source: TIA)
BRING MORE PLAY TO YOUR PROGRAMS AND GROW YOUR BUSINESS

REGISTER YOUR PLAY DAYS

YouthTennis.com

Tap into the flourishing Youth Tennis market and give your programming a boost by registering your Play Day. National media drives parents to YouthTennis.com to look for tennis close to home – register so they can find you!

“The site has great organizer benefits, including resources to help us plan and promote our events.”
Claudio Armandi
Junior Program Director
Yonkers Tennis Center
Yonkers, New York

“A parent told me that since the Play Day, her son wants to play every day and she’s signed him up for USTA Junior Tournaments.”
Barb Reuth
10 & Under Specialist
Naperville Tennis Club
Naperville, Illinois

“Offering competitive play opportunities for every color ball will stimulate more play and more revenue for the club.”
Jeff Rothstein
Regional Director of Junior Tennis Programming and Development
Centercourt Athletic Club
Chatham, NJ

“Through Play Days, kids are more engaged and get better. As they show improvement, they tend to stay committed.”
Kevin Kowalik
Director of Tennis
Homestead Country
Prairie Village, KS

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2014 year in REVIEW

2014 has been an exciting year for the Tennis Industry Association, which celebrated its 40th anniversary working collaboratively with industry businesses and organizations to grow the sport and the business of tennis. With the “tennis economy” remaining stable, tennis participation saw an uptick in number of players, and tennis executives and providers flocked to several TIA-produced industry gatherings designed to spur growth. Challenges, of course, still remain, but thanks to the efforts of thousands in this industry, the TIA continues to take steps toward long-term growth for all stakeholders.

JANUARY

• TIA celebrates its 40th anniversary as the industry’s not-for-profit trade association.
• CareersInTennis.com, the industry’s leading online job platform, is re-launched with a new responsive design, making the site compatible and more user-friendly across all digital platforms, including smartphones and tablets.
• Year-end 2013 wholesale equipment shipment reports are released, showing a 1% increase in string and ball unit sales and a 17% increase in Red, Orange, and Green ball sales. Racquet dollar sales are down nearly 8% over 2012.
• TIA launches a Software as a Service program with tech companies that help tennis providers manage and grow their businesses.
• TIA conducts the annual “Tennis Facility and Retail Census,” helping to ensure accurate tennis provider data is being delivered to industry websites such as PlayTennis.com.
• TIA officially announces launch of a global tennis research initiative to measure participation in 20 countries and wholesale tennis equipment shipments in 27 countries.

FEBRUARY

• The TIA’s annual Economic Index is released, showing that the 2013 U.S. tennis economy, at $5.55 billion, is stable vs. 2012.
• Representatives of the TIA travel to Orlando, Fla., to attend the CMAA World Conference.
• TIA attends the 2014 PTR International Tennis Symposium and Trade Show. Cardio Tennis is on the morning schedule and coaches from across the country participate in training courses to become Licensed Cardio Tennis Professionals.
• TIA supports the launch of the “Coach Youth Tennis” program, a collaborative effort of the USTA, PTR, USPTA, and USOC.
• TIA releases the 2013 Dealer Trends Study, highlighting trends in equipment, apparel, and the specialty tennis retail market.

MARCH

• The TIA holds the inaugural “Future of Tennis Summit” in Indian Wells Calif., during the BNP Paribas Open, bringing more than 300 attendees together to focus on collaborative growth efforts.
• The TIA holds its Spring board meeting at the Renaissance Esmeralda Indian Wells Resort & Spa.
• Jason Bernstein, senior director of programming & acquisitions for ESPN, joins the TIA Board of Directors.
• The “Restring for Spring” campaign—a collaborative effort by the TIA, USRSA, industry manufacturers, and specialty tennis retailers—launches, encouraging consumers to restrung their racquets and visit local retailers for equipment “tune-ups.”
• TIA supports “World Tennis Day” by encouraging tennis providers across the country to offer tennis play events to bring new consumers into the game.
• TIA completes its PlayTennis.com sweepstakes promotion by awarding a grand prize of two US Open tickets. In all, more than 500 prizes are given away in the September 2013-March 2014 sweepstakes.
• The TIA attends the 2014 IHRSA Convention and Trade Show in San Diego.
• TIA supports the SFIA’s annual National Health Through Fitness Day in Washington, D.C., lobbying Congress to pass bills that help curtail the inactivity pandemic in the U.S.
The TIA holds its second annual “Tennis Owners & Managers Conference” (T.O.M. Conference) in Charleston, S.C. More than 100 club owners and managers attend. Cliff Drysdale is a keynote speaker and attendees enjoy tennis at the 2014 Family Circle Cup.

The TIA distributes a national wire release focused on PlayTennis.com, which receives more than 650 million media impressions nationwide.

Cardio Tennis continues its growth, with more than 1.5 million players participating in the program in 2013, up 9% over the previous year, according to the Physical Activity Council’s Participation Report.

New updates are launched on PlayTennis.com that allow consumers to sign up for the site using their Facebook accounts, along with having search features that are more easily viewable on mobile devices.

The inaugural Tennis Media Award is presented to Chuck McGill, sports editor for the Charleston (W.Va.) Daily Mail, during the 55th Annual Awards Weekend of the National Sportscasters and Sportswriters Association.

The TIA Specialty Store retail audit reports show a 2% increase in racquet sales for the month of April 2014.

TIA announces it will return to Indian Wells, Calif., for 2015 industry meetings: The 2015 Tennis Summit and 2015 T.O.M. Conference.

TIA is in London for the ITF Ball and Racket Manufacturer meeting and the newly formed TIA Global Tennis Council meeting.

The 2014 Physical Activity Council’s “Sports, Fitness, and Recreation Participation” report is released, showing 4% growth in total players and 5% growth in frequent players (those playing 21+ times per year). The report also indicates another 13 million consumers “consider themselves a player” but haven’t played in the past year.
JULY
• New data from the Physical Activity Council shows tennis is the only traditional sport among the Top 10 sports in terms of participant growth, adding 658,000 new players in 2013.
• The TIA partners with the Emirates Airline US Open Series to promote a sweepstakes on PlayTennis.com to win free Emirates Airline US Open Series gear and US Open tickets.

AUGUST
• The Tennis Show 2014 is held at New York’s Grand Hyatt, with 54 tennis organizations exhibiting their latest products and services.
• Over 1,000 industry professionals attend the event and more than $10,000 in prizes are given away.
• Prior to The Tennis Show 2014, TIA invites media to a special preview/reception.
• The 7th annual TIA Forum plays to a standing-room-only audience at the Grand Hyatt New York and outlines the state of the industry and the association’s plans for industry growth.

SEPTEMBER
• Try Tennis Free is re-emphasized in September with participating facilities and teaching professionals from across the country offering free introductions to tennis for new and returning players.
• TIA supports Nickelodeon’s World Wide Day of Play and the USTA’s Tennis Play Events by encouraging providers to participate during the month of September.
• A new online directory of tennis industry business and organizations is launched on TennisIndustry.org.
• TIA again partners with American Express as an official partner of Small Business Saturday.
• TIA begins process for the annual Consumer Reports, which provides insight into tennis consumer buying, playing and tennis media consumption habits.
• The 2014 Cost of Doing Business Facility study is released, outlining key metrics impacting the supply side of the tennis industry.
• PlayTennis.com’s Player Dashboard is enhanced for better mobile compatibility and to make it easier for potential playing partners to connect with one another.

• Jim Baugh, a former TIA president, is the ninth inductee into the Tennis Industry Hall of Fame.
• TIA holds its Summer board meeting in New York during the US Open.
• Todd Martin joins the TIA Board of Directors as a representative of the International Tennis Hall of Fame, as Mark Stenning retires from the ITHOF after 35 years.
• A manufacturer’s panel is held during the US Open to discuss the impact of industry efforts and how manufacturers can work collaboratively to grow the game.
• In a TIA-organized media blitz during the US Open, TIA President Greg Mason appears on Bloomberg News and Fox Business News and highlights the current state of tennis and how the sport is well-positioned for growth. TIA Executive Director Jolyn de Boer is interviewed by CNBC on tennis and efforts to grow the game.
OCTOBER

• TIA representatives travel to Lake Nona, Fla., to meet with the USTA and Tavistock Development Group to discuss the “New Home for American Tennis.”

• A new research measure of “core” tennis players (those playing 10+ times/year) is introduced as a new benchmark for measuring growth, with over 10 million core players in 2013.

• TIA representatives travel to the NRPA Conference in Charlotte, N.C.

• With the success of Try Tennis Free in May and September, coaches and pros are encouraged to offer it year-round.

• Q3 Census Reports conducted by the TIA indicate a growth of 8.5% in unit shipments of Red, Orange, and Green tennis balls.

• TIA representatives deliver a State of the Industry update at the PTR’s annual “Directors of Tennis Conference” on Hilton Head Island, S.C.

• TIA announces a continuation of the TIA-NSSA Annual Media Award for tennis-specific stories that focus on the growth of tennis at the grassroots level.

NOVEMBER

• TIA’s Q3 2014 Census Reports show an increase in unit shipments of string, total ball, and ROG ball shipments for the quarter compared to the prior year. Racquet shipments remained flat.

• TIA representatives travel to Atlanta to participate in the annual USTA Tennis Development Workshop. An industry tools and resources session was well received.

• The annual TIA Dealer Trends study is released to industry partners, highlighting specialty tennis retailers’ sentiment about the industry and equipment for 2014.

• TIA undertakes a Tennis Pro Compensation Study in conjunction with SMS and with support from the PTR and USPTA.

• TIA’s annual Tennis Participation report shows significant increase in the “latent demand” for tennis. From 2011 to 2013, latent demand for tennis increased over 25%.

• TIA research shows that playing tennis in public parks grew by nearly 3%, to 52.3% of all play occasions in 2013.

• TIA announces dates for two important events in 2015: the TIA Tennis Summit on March 17-18 and the Tennis Owners & Managers Conference (T.O.M. Conference) on March 18-19, with both to be held in Indian Wells, Calif.

• Q3 Census Reports conducted by the TIA indicate a growth of 8.5% in unit shipments of Red, Orange, and Green tennis balls.

• TIA representatives deliver a State of the Industry update at the PTR’s annual “Directors of Tennis Conference” on Hilton Head Island, S.C.

• TIA announces a continuation of the TIA-NSSA Annual Media Award for tennis-specific stories that focus on the growth of tennis at the grassroots level.

DECEMBER

• TIA develops a calendar for 2015 highlighting upcoming industry events, which is mailed to tennis industry business and organizations and is available in the TIA Store at TennisIndustry.org.

• TIA continues to line up key speakers for the TIA Tennis Summit (March 17-18) and Tennis Owners & Managers (T.O.M.) Conference (March 18-19), both held in Indian Wells, Calif., during the BNP Paribas Open.

• Cardio Tennis is featured in episodes of “On Court With USPTA” on Tennis Channel.

• Representatives from the TIA attend the American Sports Builders Association Technical Meeting in Ponte Vedra, Fla., and the ITA Coaches Convention in Naples, Fla.

• The TIA with its research partners compile data for annual participation reports, U.S. and global tennis marketplace research reports, and TIA Economic Index profile.

Visit TennisIndustry.org for a short, informative video on key stats and facts about the State of the Tennis Industry.

As we move into 2015, the TIA is more focused than ever on key initiatives and platforms to achieve our mission: To promote the growth and economic vitality of the tennis industry. We look forward to the continued support and involvement of all industry stakeholders. Visit TennisIndustry.org - Get involved, get informed and support your industry. THE BUSINESS OF TENNIS — powered by the TIA.
PLEXICUSHION PRESTIGE,
THE SURFACE OF THE
AUSTRALIAN OPEN
TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIPS AND THE AUSTRALIAN OPEN SERIES

Plexipave
TENNIS SURFACE SYSTEMS

australian open

California
SPORTS SURFACES
It was a pretty revolutionary idea for this industry: Get the USTA, PTR, USPTA, and U.S. Olympic Committee to collaborate on a curriculum that would improve the quality and standards of teaching tennis to kids. And make it a requirement of certification to become a teaching pro in both the PTR and USPTA.

In promoting the Youth Tennis initiative and getting more kids to take up tennis and stay with the game, experts knew there needed to be consistency in how kids were being taught tennis, and that there had to be buy-in among key tennis provider organizations. The result, after many meetings about curriculum and program details, is Coach Youth Tennis, which was launched at the beginning of 2014 and has been receiving high marks from tennis providers across the country.

But just as impressive is how the CYT curriculum is being delivered to providers. The program consists of six online courses and a face-to-face workshop. “There had never been an online coaching education platform for tennis in the U.S.,” says Paul Lubbers, the USTA’s director of coaching education and performance. “When we started working on this more than two years ago, it was a real collaboration. Now, it’s part of the certification process for the PTR and USPTA, and part of the pathway to becoming a teaching pro.”

Educating Thousands
In the 10 months since CYT went live, there have been nearly 21,000 online course installments completed by nearly 8,700 unique users. In that time, more than 3,300 participants completed the CYT process by attending an on-court workshop (more than 200 workshops have been held throughout the U.S. since February). The only cost to participants is a $15 registration fee for the 3.5-hour workshop (at which they receive a CYT manual); all the online courses are free.

Coach Youth Tennis requires a simple, one-time registration. The six online courses take between 20 and 40 minutes each to complete. After each course, participants can print out a form showing it was successfully completed. After completing all six courses and taking the workshop, tennis providers can print out a participation recognition form.

“The courses we’ve prepared in conjunction with the USPTA, PTR and USOC have been overwhelmingly accepted by a wide variety of tennis coaches, recreational coaches, parents—everyone across the board,” says Kirk Anderson, director of coach education for the USTA. “We’ve realized that when people can get information and courses and take them at their own time and at home, that’s really the way we need to take a look at how we’re delivering education in the future.”

“The online courses have been incredibly well received,” adds Fred Viancos, director of professional development for the USPTA, “and not only by the people going through it for certification, but by many of our members going through it for
For more on Coach Youth Tennis, including signing up to take the free online courses and on-court workshop, visit coachyouthtennis.com.
The Wit and Warmth of Vic Braden

By Joel Drucker

Everything from its elite background to the code of individualism can make the tennis world rather exclusionary and lonely. But the minute you met the late Vic Braden, all of that would melt away. Say hello and you became a friend. Say more and you entered a delightful roundtable.

Though he would have heartily denied it, Vic was one of tennis’s true geniuses. Most people would be fortunate to master humor or science. Vic commanded both. As he once said, “Laugh and win, laugh and lose, laugh and learn—and hit the ball 6 feet over the net.”

To millions, Vic had burst on the scene in the 1970s, a clever instructor on television offering such tips as “air the armpit” on the backhand or “show me a dinker and I’ll show you a room full of trophies.”

But long before those heady tennis boom years, Vic was among the many who’d laid the groundwork for tennis’s growth. Coming of age in Michigan, he’d started at Kalamazoo College—while living in a storeroom. There’d come a stint playing on the barnstorming pro tour, Vic playing the likes of Bobby Riggs, Jack Kramer and Pancho Segura.

Even more, Vic was a student of the game. Hitchhiking across Michigan to watch Don Budge play, Vic punched tiny holes in a 3x5 index card so he could closely inspect Budge’s superb backhand. That was just the start of a quest for knowledge that constantly put Vic on the leading edge in such areas as video analysis, scientific studies, brain scans and much more.

All the while Vic was able to do his work with kindness, grace and a constant spirit of inclusion. Kramer was so impressed by Vic’s skills that he put him to work on the pro tour as all-purpose tour organizer. One special task required handling the fiery Pancho Gonzalez. No doubt the patience Vic had honed as an elementary school teacher came in handy.

In the early ’60s, when Kramer sought to build a new club in Southern California, Vic found the land, helped build the club and became its first tennis director. With Vic at the helm, the Jack Kramer Club became a new tennis mecca, a spawning ground for dozens of superb players, including such pros as a quartet of Austins (Pam, Jeff, Tracy, John), top tenner Eliot Teltscher, Pete Sampras and Lindsay Davenport.

Vic was the head man at Kramer Club for a decade. His lessons were informative and theatrical, members sitting courtside to learn and to laugh. By the early ’70s, Vic left the Kramer Club and started the Vic Braden Tennis College. Soon his colleges expanded, Vic branching into skiing, dance, music.

Knowing Vic professionally was always joyous. In the late ’90s we collaborated on a *Tennis* magazine cover story on brain typing, a means of understanding how people learned and the implications for everything from, as Vic put it, “stroking to choking.”

In the wake of that piece, we spoke frequently on the phone, Vic always available to offer insights. Each year we’d spend time together in Indian Wells at the BNP Paribas Open. To sit at a table with Vic, his wife Melody and such colleagues of Vic’s as Andy Fitzell was a fantastic form of tennis graduate school, a free flow of ideas flavored as much by Vic’s interest in the thoughts of others than his own beliefs.

Vic’s humor and curiosity were shaped most of all by his strongest asset: empathy. He was well aware of the fragility within each of us. I too saw Vic’s heart first-hand when we each lost loved ones—his daughter, my wife—to the ravages of a nasty disease called lupus.

So, on Oct. 6 at age 85, Vic arrived in Heaven.

God: About time. What a waiting list you have. I want to hit over the ball and have a topspin backhand.

Vic: Well with all due respect, if you came over the ball it would hit your toe. Try it this way.

God: Now that’s a miracle.

Vic: Keep it up and you’ll be famous by Friday.

And the Lord is laughing. But also learning.

Oakland-based Joel Drucker has covered tennis since 1982 for a variety of print and broadcast media, including *Tennis Channel*, *Tennis* magazine, USTA Magazine and dozens of general-interest publications.

“Pioneers in Tennis,” an occasional column in *Tennis Industry*, draws attention to trailblazers in the sport. Have someone to suggest? E-mail TI@racquettech.com.
This issue marks the 14th year that we’ve named our Champions of Tennis winners, honoring the often-unsung heroes of this sport who go above and beyond in helping to make a difference in tennis, and in the business of tennis. We hope they inspire you, too, to continue to move this industry forward.

CONGRATULATIONS TO:

BAHRAM AKRADI · ARMY NAVY COUNTRY CLUB · DAVID YAMANE · TRANS TEXAS TENNIS
ALLAN IVERSON · YOUR SERVE TENNIS · JOE & SHIMA GROVER · ELLEN MILLER · SIMON GALE
INNERCITY TENNIS FOUNDATION · INDIAN WELLS TENNIS GARDEN · JACK NEWMAN · MERCER COUNTY PARK T.C.
LAURIE MARTIN · DC DEPT OF PARKS & REC · PAUL WALKER · SIGNATURE TENNIS · THE TENNIS CONGRESS
NIGEL PUGH · RANDY MATTINGLEY · USTA INTERMOUNTAIN
At first blush, it might seem a stretch to pick as Tennis Industry’s Person of the Year the founder, president and CEO of a chain of fitness clubs. But, Life Time Fitness is no ordinary string of clubs, and Bahram Akradi is no ordinary CEO. In fact, when it comes to tennis and, well, all things fitness related, Life Time is quite extraordinary.

“We want to make sure that whatever sports we offer, we do it in the absolute best fashion,” says the 53-year-old Akradi. “We spend an enormous amount of time creating a sense of place, we work hard to cast the right staff and to make sure our programs are second to none.”

And it’s that story that has taken the Chanhassen, Minn.-based Life Time Fitness from $1 million in revenues in 1992 to a $1.3 billion company today, and from a single club, to now having 25,000 employees at 113 facilities, with more on the way. There are more than 800,000 memberships (including family memberships), which translates into “a couple of million” men, women and children belonging to a Life Time club.

**Tennis Investment**

Tennis-wise, Life Time has been investing in the sport for years, and it’s hit on a formula that provides top-notch facilities, amenities and programs for its tennis players. The company now has more than 200 courts at 20 locations, including 128 indoor courts, making Life Time Fitness the largest operator of indoor courts in the U.S.

“We are building tennis, and continue to look for opportunities,” says Akradi, who was always into fitness but started playing tennis later in life. In fact, the newest Life Time facility, opened in November in Henderson, Nev., near Las Vegas, has 12 courts—four outdoors and eight indoors. In typical Life Time fashion, the indoor courts are cushioned Rebound Ace in a beautiful facility.
thing from racquet sports, to swimming, to fitness classes, to basketball, weightlifting, aerobics—the roster is nearly endless. The rows of aerobic machines are truly impressive. Many locations have a café that serves healthy food. And there are areas for entertaining, relaxing and socializing.

Focus on the Customer

“When I started Life Time, I had looked at how we were doing business in this industry as a whole, and I was disappointed in the fitness industry’s perspective on how they dealt with customers,” Akradi says. “Everything was from a business owner’s point of view, but it wasn’t the best product, service or program.

“We wanted to design a club that in all ways suited the members. So, we have a month-to-month membership. We give our customers a long leash for money-back guarantees. We wanted to do everything right for the customer.”

That thinking also is why Akradi offers the Rebound Ace surface. “When Life Time does something,” adds Lappin, “it does it top shelf. I really enjoy Rebound Ace; it’s much softer. It adds a few hundred thousand dollars to the bill, but for our customers, it’s worth it. It’s our commitment to giving a first-class product.”

With tennis, Akradi is hoping to work more with the USTA “to build a program where we can sponsor and pay for kids on a regular basis,” he says. “I really want Life Time to impact tennis in America in a big way.”

Akradi himself plays tennis once or twice a week and sees the sport as important in the overall scheme of health and fitness. In addition, he still keeps very active with other fitness activities, including biking and cycling.

But his passion is in giving customers what they want and need—and doing it in the best way possible. “That’s allowed us to evolve and get better all the time,” he says. —Peter Francesconi

“I didn’t want to have tennis when I first started,” Akradi admits. “When you look at revenue per square foot for tennis versus other things, it’s a head-scratcher. But we ended up buying a club and excess land near Detroit, then bought Wellbridge clubs, and before we knew it, we were doing tennis. Now, I love the sport. And as we delivered the complete spectrum of athletics, I wanted to offer tennis along with squash and racquetball.”

Life Time, says Greg Lappin, the company’s national tennis director, is very committed to the sport. “The business plan for new builds is to attract the top 20 percent of the market, so wherever they purchase property, they try to have land for tennis,” he says.

Lappin says Akradi figured out that, while tennis may not be as lucrative per square foot, tennis players are much more committed. “With fitness people, one-third may leave every year,” Lappin says. “The tennis attrition is 10 to 12 percent at the better facilities, and that’s what we’re finding. Our member retention is excellent. And when you look at who spends the most in ancillary expenditures, in clubs that have tennis, it’s the tennis members. They stay longer, and they spend more,” and they will travel further to play.

The story of Life Time Fitness, though, wouldn’t be complete without touching on Akradi’s story. The son of an Iranian air force officer, Akradi was 17 years old when he left his home in Tehran in 1978, just ahead of the Iranian revolution. He moved to Colorado, where he lived with an older brother, washed dishes at a restaurant and enrolled in his senior year in high school.

Akradi took college courses at Pikes Peak Community College then at University of Colorado–Colorado Springs for electrical engineering. He also worked the graveyard shift at a Nautilus fitness club. From there, he started selling memberships, then in a few years co-managed a Nautilus club in Minnesota. He soon was looking for new locations to open up Nautilus clubs.

Along the way Akradi, who had always been into working out and keeping fit, developed his own strategy about how to run a successful, customer-centric health and fitness business. In 1992, he left behind a big salary and struck out with his first Life Time Fitness location, in Brooklyn Park, Minn.

Now, the massive, elegant Life Time facilities offer every-
PRIVATE FACILITY OF THE YEAR

Army Navy Country Club

One of the lessons to be learned from the Army Navy Country Club of Arlington, Va.—TT’s 2014 Private Facility of the Year—is that a historic and military past does not preclude a cutting-edge vision of tennis’s future.

Situated on what was once Fort Richardson, a key outpost for the Union Army’s defense of Washington, D.C., the club began serving as a recreation facility for military families in the 1920s. Current membership, including non-military families, is about 2,400 local households, with thousands more “absent” members worldwide. Tennis’s importance is demonstrated by the more than 1,100 adults who opt-in for regular updates, 500 or so frequent adult players and, on average, 150 junior program participants.

Recognized as the USTA’s 2014 Green Facility, the newly renovated $57 million facility boasts energy-saving LED lighting. Playing surfaces include 14 clay courts (10 of which are lighted), two outdoor and six indoor hard courts, and eight 36-foot courts.

Director of Tennis Joseph Wang oversees directors of adult and junior programs, four teaching pros, and full-time heads of both the maintenance and pro shop operations. Staff development is a constant, and programs cover all ages and ability levels. The club also hosts charity pro-ams, USTA league play and junior tournaments. According to Wang, the two main challenges going forward are “managing growth” and “keeping things fresh and innovative.”

—Kent Oswald

Tips For Success

- Don’t hire clones. Build a staff around overlapping competencies.
- Cross-train staff on all areas of business and help them develop the business skills they will need to move up.
- Recognize that serving the community is often another way to serve membership.
- Be on the lookout for advances, whether it is new ways to teach or more efficient ways to construct the facility.

STRINGER OF THE YEAR

David Yamane

In just over six years, David Yamane of Big Time Tennis in Winston-Salem, N.C., went from stringing racquets for friends in his garage to stringing for Kei Nishikori a few weeks before he made the final at the US Open. And from his shop on the campus of Wake Forest University, he services the men’s tennis team, local USTA League players and juniors, as well as ATP players when he works at tournaments.

Yamane modestly attributes his success to “hard work, good business practices and some luck.” But we know there’s a lot more to it. And that’s why Yamane is Tennis Industry’s 2014 Stringer of the Year.

“After I met David, we started talking through stringing and possible racquet changes to suit the way I play,” says client Jackie Hege. “His professional manner and meticulous detail in tracking my preferences is refreshing. Many people who have a small business tend to lose those details.”

Yamane has a thirst for knowledge. “Becoming an MRT in 2008 was important in establishing my credibility,” he says. “But even more so, what I learned about equipment, stringing, and customization was invaluable to serving customers well, and thereby generating more business.”

His willingness to use that knowledge to help his clients is the reason Yamane’s business continues to grow. “David is my go-to guy,” says customer Jim McCormick. “He has a very in-depth knowledge—way beyond most people in the business.”

Adds client Steve Kash, “David’s service is the best I’ve ever had.” —Bob Patterson
**The slogan for Houston-based Trans Texas Tennis is, “We take your game seriously”—an attitude that has been finely crafted after nearly three decades in the business.**

In fact, says regional manager Steve Wright, the company has developed not only a wealth of information about the sport, the athletes and the industry, but also a sense of how to build things right, deliver top customer service, and create an outstanding finished product—all of which helps to make Trans Texas Tennis TI’s 2014 Builder/Contractor of the Year. “I think people are realizing that having really good tennis facilities is good for their communities,” says Wright. “A lot of revenue can be generated. People want a decent place to play and they now know a tennis facility doesn’t just mean a fenced-off rectangle painted green. They want space between courts, landscaping, spectator viewing areas. Plus, a lot of people are asking for 36- and 60-foot court lines; they know there are grants available.”

Wright, who has been in the industry since the 1980s and a Certified Tennis Court Builder since 1996, says contractor certification is another point in the company’s favor, adding credibility to proposals.

The best part for him? “The end result. Especially if it turns out well for everyone, and comes in within the budget.”

—Mary Helen Sprecher

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**Tips For Success**

- Throughout the entire project, always treat clients with the utmost respect.
- Respond to emails and phone calls promptly. “Even if you don’t have an answer at the moment, take the time to call them back,” Wright says. “Never leave them hanging.”
- Listen to what people want; don’t always assume you know what they should have.

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**SALES REP OF THE YEAR**

**Allan Iverson**

Combine knowledge and passion and you have a good sales rep. Add decades of experience and a willingness to (literally) go the extra hundred-plus miles, and you have the 2014 **Tennis Industry Sales Rep of the Year**—Allan Iverson, Babolat’s sales representative in Los Angeles, Orange and Santa Barbara Counties.

Describing his connection to the game, Iverson, a USPTA P-1 with more than two decades of teaching experience, explains, “I love tennis. Starting from the first time striking a tennis ball until now, it feels great to hit the tennis ball. This led to a passion for all things tennis. From teaching to tennis equipment, I enjoy it all.”

In 2012, Iverson was Babolat’s National Salesperson of the Year. “Allan is a passionate tennis professional with high energy and excitement for the brand,” says National Sales Manager Mickey Maule.

Rich Francey, Babolat’s national key accounts manager, recalls Iverson’s evening return from a sales meeting as the start of a 125-mile round trip in southern California traffic to make sure Babolat would have representation the next day at what was an inconveniently-scheduled demo day. “He sells the brand, and his knowledge of the brand is better than anybody I have worked with,” says Francey.

Adds Cari Buck, client services manager at The Tennis Channel, “Allan is the ultimate professional, easy to work with and always there when you need him.”

—Kent Oswald

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**Tips For Success**

- Keep learning about your products.
- Understand and communicate not just the technical features, but the “brand promise.”
- Follow your passion into the marketplace, and what looks like hard work will never feel like it.
When it comes to promoting this sport, it's hard to surpass the passion, dedication and success that Joe and Shima Grover radiate. This husband-wife team from Richmond, Va., have been promoting and advocating for tennis from the greenest grassroots levels to the national scene, and they are Tennis Industry's 2014 Tennis Advocates of the Year.

"Joe and Shima are perfect examples of tennis advocates," says Carol Welder, a former USTA national board member and current chair of the USTA's CTA and Public Parks Committee, on which Joe serves. "Joe has served locally for many years, including as president of the Richmond Tennis Association. He has served at the section level and on numerous national committees, including on the USTA board of directors. Shima is a tireless advocate for getting all people involved, finding programs for the disabled, for 10-and-under players, for wounded warriors, and more. They have a passion for introducing tennis to all."

Three years ago, the Grovers helped start a series of low-cost clinics for kids in historic Battery Park, and more recently were instrumental in creating what is now the Westover Hills Tennis Complex in a city park. Last year they were recognized with the Volunteer of the Year Award from the Virginia District.

"We do our best to work with our city's park and recreation department to improve public courts and programs for kids, adults and seniors," Joe says. "We regard this as our primary calling."

—Peter Francesconi

Tips For Success

- Look at all tennis opportunities for adults and seniors, and use red, orange and green balls with them, because it makes the game easier to play and more fun.
- Park and recs need active programs that make tennis a regular activity, for all ages.
- Build relationships with local governments, agencies and schools.

When you talk about long-term tennis retail success, you can't ignore Your Serve Tennis in Atlanta. In 2001, YST and its founder and president, Dale Queen, won TI's first Pro/Specialty Retailer of the Year Award, and now the retailer is back as our 2014 award winner.

A lot's happened in those 14 years, but one constant is Your Serve Tennis's commitment to serving the Atlanta tennis community and helping this game to grow. Queen founded YST in 1976, and the retailer now has eight stand-alone stores in the area, in addition to supplying smaller shops at two public facilities. YST is the official retailer for the Family Circle Cup in Charleston, S.C., and the BB&T Atlanta Open, and the retailer also works with some schools and provides product for community events, especially initiatives to get more kids in the game.

"I think people are beginning to understand they should shop in their community and support local small businesses," says Adam Queen, Your Serve Tennis's vice president. "The unique thing about any retailer in this industry is that anything we sell can be purchased elsewhere—except for our service. How we treat and service our customers sets us apart. They like being helped, like doing business locally, and like it when someone knows their name." —Peter Francesconi
Founded in 1952, InnerCity Tennis (ICT) in Minneapolis initially helped young people with limited means thrive physically, emotionally and socially within the game of tennis. More than 60 years later, the program is still going strong, as ICT serves nearly 4,000 youngsters with free and low-cost programming, using tennis as a vehicle to develop world-class citizens. And for all its success, InnerCity Tennis is TT’s Community Tennis Association of the Year.

ICT delivers a wide variety of tennis and academic programming, including summer tennis at 23 city parks; free indoor lessons during the winter; Academic Creative Engagement (ACE), an accredited out-of-school time curriculum for grades 3-5 supporting academic achievement, health/wellness and social/emotional skills; adaptive tennis; and Cities Academy, a comprehensive tennis training system for kids of all ages and abilities.

In recent years, ICT, which was named 2014 USTA Northern Member Organization of the Year, has expanded its focus in serving the entire tennis community after the purchase of the Reed Sweatt Family Tennis Center, servicing an average of 3,500 adults and juniors a week.

“InnerCity Tennis offers opportunities for all players, both on and off the court,” says Maiysha Warren, USTA National Manager of Community Tennis Associations. “It is a model organization and continues to grow the game by positively impacting the lives of all it touches.” —Lisa Mushett

Tips For Success

- InnerCity Tennis is home to the 1,500-member Senior Tennis Players Club, the largest group of its kind in the country. Many of these seniors volunteer with ICT’s youth programming.
- ICT works directly with the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board and Minneapolis Public Schools, further expanding its footprint in the community.
- Measure success by the impact on young peoples’ values and life skills, not athletic achievement.

GRASSROOTS CHAMPION OF THE YEAR

Ellen Miller

Talk to teaching pro Ellen Miller about tennis, and her passion for the sport, and for spreading the word about it, overtakes you. Whether youngsters or adults, she says forcefully, “Their ‘first touch’ of tennis has to be really good, or they won’t come back.”

Miller, who lives in Washington, D.C., devotes her time to helping people have not only that great “first touch” of tennis, but also every subsequent touch with the game. And for 2014, she is Tennis Industry’s Grassroots Champion of the Year.

“I’m a big fan of Ellen’s,” says USTA Director of Coach Education Kirk Anderson. “She does a great job and is passionate about teaching. She really understands it.”

Certified by the PTR, USPTA and USTA High Performance, Miller played tennis at Rice University and has a master’s in elementary education. And she firmly believes in the 10 and Under Tennis methodology. “Why do people play? To hit a ball and have fun with others,” she says. “And if that ball is too fast for them, we need to figure out another way to do it.” That’s why one of Miller’s passions is using red, orange and green balls for all ages.

Miller is a Youth Tennis workshop faculty member and a frequent presenter at provider events. She also contributed significantly to the Coach Youth Tennis courses and videos.

“Tennis has evolved to using low-compression balls, smaller courts, smaller racquets,” she says. “That’s where the game is going to take off.” —Peter Francesconi

Tips For Success

- Ask people for help. “My ‘willingness to be stupid,’ has really helped me out,” says Miller.
- The game is changing all the time, so stay current with education.
- Be willing to steal good ideas and adapt them to your own situation.
For many youth tennis providers, it comes down to passion—for tennis, and for sharing the sport with kids. And that’s clearly what helps drive Simon Gale, the general manager of the Yonkers Tennis Center (YTC) in New York. “Simon put his reputation and job on the line years ago when he changed his club to a 10 and Under Tennis format,” says Kirk Anderson, director of coach education for the USTA. “He was one of the very first facilities that made the complete change, and is now very successful. But he had to fight the early battles.”

For his passion and foresight in reaching out to youngsters and getting them into the game, Gale is the inaugural winner of a new Tennis Industry Champions of Tennis Award—our Youth Tennis Provider of the Year.

A year before the USTA pushed what was then called “QuickStart Tennis,” Gale started changing how YTC delivered tennis to kids. He saw how his 6-year-old daughter started playing soccer: two practices then a game. “I’m watching these kids thinking they need more practice, then realized it’s not about the lessons, it’s about playing the game,” he says.

YTC changed its philosophy, and took clinic time and made it play time. “Parents get it because they see it in every other sport,” Gale says. “Our retention rate has increased considerably, with 70 percent of kids coming back. Kids are playing the game quicker. Our pros’ lessons are much better. “Success for us is knowing we’re doing the right things for the kids.”

—Cynthia Sherman

For two weeks in March, the Indian Wells Tennis Garden in Indian Wells, Calif., draws the world’s best players to the BNP Paribas Open, the largest combined WTA and ATP World Tour event in the world.

In 2013, a major renovation and expansion further enhanced its reputation. The $70 million project included an 8,000-seat stadium with three restaurants, redesigned practice area and other enhancements.

However, the reason for its selection as Tennis Industry’s Municipal Facility of the Year is the myriad of activities available the rest of the year. Featuring 29 hard courts, the full-service tennis club offers 10 and Under Tennis, private and group lessons, leagues, mixers, clinics and camps for juniors and adults, and more. It also hosts tournaments, concerts and a variety of special events.

Tournament director and COO Steve Simon reached out to others in his role for guidance. “As I learned more,” he recalls, “I enjoyed the job more.”

Think big picture. Few facilities have the financial resources for a major capital campaign. However, it’s a good investment for all to put themselves in the place of key influencers in order to create an enhanced experience within their respective budgets.

Tips For Success

● Get rid of the perception that ROG and short courts are for beginners.
● Parent education is huge. They need to understand what’s next. Take advantage of “lobby time”—when parents are in the lobby waiting for their kids.
● Get kids involved teaching other kids. YTC has a Coach in Training program, where older youngsters who’ve come up through the program help to teach younger kids.
The Austin Tennis Academy in Texas was founded as a junior tennis training facility. “It’s what separates us from other tennis facilities,” says Jack Newman. “Our business model is totally junior-tennis-driven programming, from kids as young as 5 to college. We have some adult programs, but not much, and they know they’re second-class citizens here.”

Under the direction of Newman, who is the CEO and a head coach—and is Tennis Industry’s Junior Tennis Champion of the Year—the academy prides itself on “helping junior tennis players reach their full potential,” according to the mission. The ATA’s track record with its young charges shows the ATA is developing “citizens of significance, not only of success.”

“As one of the leading developmental coaches in the country, Jack has consistently produced not only top players, but top human beings—thereby ensuring the future of our sport, and the strength of character of its participants,” says Steve Cobb, director of competitive tennis for USTA Texas.

ATA has 12 hard courts and two new red clay courts, and was one of the pilot programs for using red, orange and green balls. The academy also has kids playing 36- and 60-foot tennis.

“We use tennis as a way to understand what you can become and what you can achieve, and that you can accomplish anything in life,” Newman says. —Peter Francesconi

Tips For Success

- If you make decisions based on what’s best for the student, it’s very difficult to go wrong.
- Help students identify and define what their tennis dream is, especially with elite players.
- Parents are a part of the team and have to be involved in the process. “In many instances, they also have to be educated,” Newman says. “You have to share your experiences with parents to help them make good decisions.”

All it takes is one look around the Mercer County Park Tennis Center to understand why it is such a sought-after venue, why it has won three national awards, and why it now is Tennis Industry’s 2014 Public Park of the Year.

The Center, situated on 19 acres in a 2,500-acre park, began in 1981, and it just kept improving. A maintenance schedule was developed for the 22 outdoor courts, a six-court indoor center was built, and blended lines and lights were added. Programs prospered, and players came from near and far to join the popular leagues, drills, and tournaments, and play in the special events.

The Center has hosted USTA League sectionals, US Open Sectional Qualifying, and high school and collegiate tournaments, as well as the huge 2014 Special Olympics USA Games. The county also developed a permanent display for the Mercer County Tennis Hall of Fame and housed it in a new building that also serves as tournament headquarters.

“Thousands of people use our Tennis Center each year,” says Director of Tennis Marc Vecchiolla. “Mercer County Executive Brian Hughes and Park Commission Executive Director Kevin Bannon have been immeasurably supportive and extremely proactive with upgrades. When people visit from outside the county, they are so impressed by what was accomplished here. ‘The County of Mercer is tremendously proud of our beautiful tennis facility.’”

—Ann LoPrinzi

Tips For Success

- Maintain a clean/safe, well-manicured facility.
- Provide friendly and knowledgeable service.
- Offer a range of programs for a diverse community and all levels.
As the tennis coach at the all-girls Xavier College Prep in Tempe, Ariz., Laurie Martin has a lot to balance. Not only have her Gators won three consecutive Arizona state Division 1 titles, but she also maintains teams with nearly 100 students on them. In fact, her no-cut freshman team has about 60 girls, which is more than 20 percent of the entire freshman class. Significantly, Martin was named to the USTA’s 2014 No-Cut Coach All-Star Team, and now, she is TI’s choice for High School Coach of the Year.

“Laurie’s ability to lead and maintain a high school girl’s tennis program with so many student-athletes is nothing short of remarkable,” says Glenn Arrington, the USTA’s national manager for high school tennis. “The impact of allowing so many young girls to participate and be a part of a team at their school is vitally important in today’s society. Laurie is a great role model for high school coaches.”

Martin, who is a USPTA-certified pro, divides the freshman girls into 10 different color teams, then schedules them for practice two or three times a week on the school’s six courts. Since many of the freshmen on her team are beginners, she’ll also use red, orange and green balls to get them playing and improving.

Xavier Prep pulls in students from surrounding schools. “What the freshman program has done,” says Martin, “is given these girls an instant sense of belonging to our school.”

—Peter Francesconi

Tips For Success

- Communication is huge for parents and students. Martin puts everyone on a group email list.
- You have to be extremely organized. “I have it written down by the minute what we’re doing the entire hour and a half.”
- Martin’s assistant and volunteer coaches always have drills and activities scripted out.

There are more than 140 public tennis courts in Washington, D.C., which fall under the Tennis Division of the city’s Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR). Serving a population of 800,000, the DPR engages youngsters and adults of all ages, skill levels and economic levels in city-wide tennis programs, training opportunities and tennis events—all at little or no cost to participants.

In addition, the DPR has a key partnership agreement with the local CTA, the Washington Tennis Association. Through instructional programs, Play Days, tournaments, competitive leagues and social events, “DPR continues to offer optimal access to courts and play opportunities city-wide, along with convenient and affordable programming,” says Chris Miller, the marketing and communications manager for the USTA Mid-Atlantic Section. “DPR’s tennis program is committed to growing the sport.” And because it does it so well, Washington, D.C. Parks & Rec is TI’s Park and Rec Agency of the Year.

DPR Tennis Director Jeri Ingram credits the passion that her staff brings to grassroots tennis, citing as an example the “Tennis Under the Lights” summer program, which brought out juniors and adults twice a week to play and drill from 9 p.m. to midnight, and included a pot-luck dinner. “Everyone loved it,” Ingram says. “Programs like these require passionate, dedicated employees to be successful.”

—Robin Bateman
Paul Walker

Paul Walker played recreational tennis most of his life, but when he was wounded in the military in 1994, he “was looking to find out how to be an athlete again.” Then in 1997, he was invited to a three-day wheelchair tennis camp led by the legendary Randy Snow. “From that point on, I started playing, then playing tournaments, then got the competitive juices flowing and kept getting better,” he says. In about four years, he threw his hat into the ring in the Open division.

Since then, he’s been one of the key wheelchair figures in the U.S. And he’s Tennis Industry’s 2014 Wheelchair Tennis Champion of the Year.

In 2002, Walker, from Lakeland, Fla., started coaching an able-bodied high school team, and in 2005 was asked to be head coach of the USA Women’s National Wheelchair Tennis Team, which he did until 2012, leading the team to two No. 4 finishes and consistently in the top five of women’s programs worldwide. Now he is a national Juniors coach, and in his 12th year of high school coaching, where he’s led his team to six straight district titles and was twice named Polk County High School Tennis Coach of the Year. He regularly coaches for the USTA and ITF at wheelchair tennis camps and has a passion for working with injured service men and women.

“Paul is the very definition of a dedicated wheelchair tennis advocate,” says Dan James, the USTA national manager of Wheelchair Tennis. “The sport is lucky to have him carrying its torch.” —Peter Francesconi

Tips For Success

- First and foremost, you have to love the sport and make it your passion.
- Find ways to make it fun, even when you’re being competitive. Keep a sense of humor.
- Don’t lose touch with the grassroots.

WHEELCHAIR TENNIS CHAMPION OF THE YEAR

Signature Tennis Facility Developer of the Year

For Signature Tennis of Woodstock, Ga., installing Youth Tennis lines isn’t just a job; it’s a commitment to the future of the sport.

“There’s no question about it,” says Mike Imbornone, president and founder of the 11-year-old company. “All the feedback that I get from tennis directors at country clubs, health clubs and so on is telling me it makes a tremendous difference in the way kids learn the sport.”

Imbornone describes his company’s role in Youth Tennis as being akin to that of a pioneer, and the USTA’s Maiysha Warren agrees.

“Signature was the contractor that completed the courts for two key USTA initiatives: our Court 3K celebration at Grove Park in Atlanta in 2011 and Atlanta’s 2012 American Express Fresh Courts site at Burdett Tennis Center,” she says. “They also have done other cool conversion projects. They are actively promoting 36- and 60-foot tennis to their clients.”

Imbornone, along with Signature VP Bill Osterhold (and the company’s newest employee, Imbornone’s son, Matt), keep the crews busy year-round. The private and club market they serve tends to be heavily invested in the sport. “They realize it’s not just a tennis court—they want to make sure it’s extremely appealing to their players,” says Imbornone. “They look at the long term.”

—Mary Helen Sprecher

Tips For Success

- When taking on a new job, forget how much you sold it for. “If you base your decisions on cost not being a factor, you will always make the right decision for the client,” Imbornone says.
- Build your reputation based on making sure the final job is right.
- Commit to building 36- and 60-foot courts, to grow the future of the sport.
The Tennis Congress

The goal, says P.J. Simmons, founder of The Tennis Congress, “is to help raise the bar for amateur player development. You get these people together and it re-energizes them. Many tell me the experience was not just game-changing, but life-changing.”

Aren’t familiar with The Tennis Congress? You’ll most likely hear more about this event in years to come. The inaugural Tennis Congress was held in 2013 in Atlanta, and for 2014, the event took place over four days in October in Tucson, selling out with more than 220 adult tennis junkies attending sessions from 67 faculty members (80 players came back from the first year). Tennis Industry was so impressed from comments by both the passionate recreational players and tennis instructors who attended that we created a new Champions of Tennis category and picked The Tennis Congress as our inaugural winner of the Innovative Tennis Event of the Year award.

The Tucson event had nearly 400 customized classes and larger group sessions, covering everything from the geometry of the court, to advanced doubles strategy, to footwork, specific strokes, yoga, pilates and much more. “About 95 percent rated it either good or excellent,” Simmons says. “The atmosphere when you bring together those who love the sport so passionately, and somehow find a deeper connection to the sport—there is unbelievable energy and sense of community.” —Peter Francesconi

Tips For Success
● Keep the mission top of mind: helping adults improve.
● Focus on curriculum development and innovation. To keep things fresh and bring new ideas, Tennis Congress brought in about 40 new faculty for its second year.
● For true improvement, you want players to take ideas and techniques back home and continue to work.

From academy owner to tennis director for private country clubs to, now, director of tennis for the City of Fremont, Calif., Nigel Pugh has learned a lot in his more than 20 years. Throughout it all, his philosophy has been “to enjoy what I’m doing and make sure it’s fun for the people I’m working with, too.”

Pugh, who is TI’s 2014 PTR Member of the Year, was born in Australia and played the junior circuit, securing a spot on the Australia Junior Davis Cup Team. Now, he oversees 42 courts, including 18 at the award-winning Fremont Tennis Center, which recently added three permanent 60-foot and two 36-foot courts. His staff of 21 has all gone through the Coach Youth Tennis curriculum, and 14 of the pros are PTR certified.

“Our philosophy is that we’re lifelong learners, so we can be better instructors, better people and provide better service to the community,” says Pugh, who won the 2014 PTR/USTA Community Service Award. “One of the most rewarding things for me is to now be involved in outreach to the entire community. We have a big outreach program.”

A PTR clinician and tester and USTA national faculty member, Pugh has earned professional certification in all four PTR education pathways. He also completed certification for USPTA, Tennis Australia and the Australian Professional Coaches Association.

“Nigel is one of those special people who finds the time to conduct PTR courses and he does a great job,” says PTR CEO Dan Santorum. “He truly makes a world of difference.” —Peter Francesconi

Tips For Success
● You need to enjoy what you’re doing and have fun.
● Deliver more than you promise. “We do what we say we’ll do, and then some,” Pugh says. “That’s why our program has had such huge growth in the last year.”
● Always seek more education, for yourself and your staff.
Randy Mattingley has devoted his life to tennis, making significant contributions to the USPTA, USTA, and teaching professionals throughout the country. Most recently, Mattingley, of Kingwood, Texas, was honored with the USPTA’s 2014 Alex Gordon Award for the Professional of the Year during the Tennis Teachers Conference. Now, he is our choice as Tennis Industry’s USPTA Member of the Year.

A USPTA-certified pro for 35 years and a Master Professional, Mattingly has been the director of tennis at the 26-court Clubs of Kingwood since 2008. He’s served on the USPTA Executive Committee for 18 years and held positions on the USPTA national board, national committees and the USPTA Texas Division board. He is also a two-time USPTA Texas Professional of the Year (1994 and 2014).

Throughout his career, the Texas native has spoken at more than 40 regional and national conventions. He also sponsored and mentored at least 20 new USPTA members between 1984 and 2012. Among his many accomplishments, Mattingley contributes to his community by hosting several tournaments and fundraisers benefiting numerous charities.

“Randy has dedicated his life to bringing new people into the game, improving those who were already in the game and furthering the USPTA mission to ‘elevate the teaching standards of professionals and coaches,’” says USPTA CEO John Embree.

Mattingley admits he first joined his high school team because “all the freshman cheerleaders went out for tennis. … But the sport has changed my life. It’s meant everything in my life, really.”

—Peter Francesconi

Tips For Success

• To grow in your career, learn how to put together a resume and how to interview.
• A good director of tennis needs to be a good administrator, planner and organizer—and needs to be very diplomatic.
• Whether a tennis teacher or director, your goal should be to get more people playing tennis and having fun.

USTA SECTION OF THE YEAR

USTA Intermountain

Three years ago, based on the results of a complete analysis of the section, USTA Intermountain restructured and created a new strategic plan that emphasized getting section resources down to grassroots tennis programs.

“It made a lot of sense,” says Rob Scott, who’s been the USTA Intermountain executive director since 2012. “Now, our structure is one of our greatest strengths. We’re managing from the bottom up, not the top down, and we recognize that tennis must grow at the grassroots level. We’ve also reduced ‘bureaucratic inertia,’ so things are getting done.”

As a result, the section is working together and has seen solid growth in many programs and initiatives, including Play Days, locally branded Junior Team Tennis and Adult Leagues. And for 2014, Intermountain is TI’s USTA Section of the Year.

“We’ve embraced the unique strengths of our six districts (Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming), rather than holding them at arm’s length,” Scott says. “Our district EDs are where the rubber meets the road. We work together as one unit, and it’s really exciting.”

Scott also credits the Intermountain board of directors and his staff. “We have a diverse board who are all very engaged in the tennis community. They have a vested interest in seeing tennis grow, and want to make sure the pipeline is full of youth players who will grow into tennis consumers of the future. Our staff is all very passionate about what they do. They’re not only great professionals, they’re fun to work with. We definitely enjoy that and support each other.” —Peter Francesconi

Tips For Success

• Intermountain does “provider workshops” throughout the section, pulling in teaching pros, facility owners/managers, retailers, and parks and recs to talk about growing the game.
• Nurture relationships with staff and volunteers at every level and stop “operating in silos.”
• It’s about getting tennis players, not necessarily USTA memberships.
The string industry finally seems to be tapping the brakes on the expanding universe of strings. Last year, we explained that most of the established string brands in the U.S. seemed to be slowing the introduction of new strings, but the number of new brands entering the market had still resulted in a growth rate in the number of strings available that seemed almost out of control. But, this year, we did not see as many new brands enter the market and the existing brands still reduced the number of new introductions. So, while the market did still grow again this year, it didn’t grow as fast as it has been growing for years.

One of the big reasons for the continued growth is that manufacturers are hesitant to discontinue models of string because it seems like every string has at least some loyal users. This is probably because stringers are not pushing enough of their customers to try the new, improved strings being introduced. Too often, the whole conversation between stringer and client is, “Same string? Same tension?” So, a lot of players aren’t even trying any of the new offerings.

The USRSA now has lab-test results for a little over 900 models of string. We don’t know anyone who can say they’ve actually played with all the different models available, or who can say they know what every string on the market feels like. That’s why our String Selector tool is still growing in importance. It offers an apples-to-apples comparison of all the different models on the market because all the strings were tested using the same exacting procedures.

What does this mean for you? Stringers and retail shops can use the information in our String Selector to find models that offer exactly what their customers are looking for. Note that this year, we’re changing how this information is being presented. We are moving away from trying to pigeonhole every string into one of four categories (Natural Gut, Nylon, Polyester and Kevlar). We’re doing this for multiple reasons. First, because the manufacturers are not introducing many new Natural Gut or Kevlar strings. Second, because over the last few years, some Polyesters are being made softer than some Nylon strings. Third, because many of the new introductions don’t fit neatly into the Nylon or Polyester categories; rather, many of them belong in both categories (or neither). This is because companies are now mixing nylon fibers with polyester fibers as well as a myriad of other proprietary materials. So, instead of grouping the strings into subgroups, we’re letting each string’s measurements tell its story.

For advice on how to most efficiently use this information, make sure you read the section on “Using the String Selector.” For a better understanding of the string graph, read “The Geography of Feel,” and the “Test Procedure” section offers information on how the strings are tested.

Once again, to help save the rain forest, we’re only presenting specs for the new strings introduced since our String Selector last year. If you’d like to see the specs for other current strings on the market, visit our website, www.tennisindustrymag.com. Just click on the latest issue’s cover, then choose the past January issues to find which issue included the string you’re interested in.

Remember, though, that USRSA members have access to even more powerful tools—String Spec Search and String Selector—on the Members-Only section of the website, www.racquettech.com.

String Spec Search allows the user to choose the brand and...
model of string they are considering and see the specs of that string without having to search through the whole list of 900 strings. The String Selector tool allows the user to enter the brand and model of string a player is currently playing with as well as the changes they would like to make in their string. The tool then goes through all the strings currently available and returns a list of string that meets the requested changes.
1 Start by finding the string your client currently uses in the appropriate list.

2 Note the string’s stiffness and tension loss numbers, go to the appropriate map and find the dot located at these coordinates.
   - If your client is completely satisfied with their current string and doesn’t want anything different from their next string, dots in the neighborhood (very close to their current string’s dot) will likely play similar.
   - If your client is happy with how long their string plays well, but doesn’t love the feel of their string, try something on the same vertical level, but farther to the right or left. Strings to the right should feel stiffer (or more crisp), while strings to the left should feel softer (or more comfortable).
   - If your client is happy with how their string feels, but not with how long it feels that way, try something in the same column, but higher or lower. Strings higher on the chart should soften (or loosen) up more quickly, while lower strings should hold their initial feel longer.

3 Once you’ve found a dot that seems interesting, note the coordinates and look them up in the table.

---

**The Geography of “Feel”**

Finding Your “Feel Good” Location

- Softer strings are to the left, stiffer strings to the right.
- Strings that lose more tension are at the top; those that lose less are at the bottom.
- All strings on the same vertical line should feel about the same, no matter the tension.
- All strings at different locations on the same horizontal line will feel different from each other.
- Stringbed power increases to the left.
- Player supplied power increases to the right.
- Stringbed control increases to the right.
- “Arm friendly” strings are to the left.
- “Feedback” intensity (shock) increases to the right.
- Feel consistency over time tends to increase toward the bottom.

---

**Test Procedure.** All strings were tensioned to 62 pounds and allowed to sit for 200 seconds. Then the string was hit five times with a force equivalent to hitting a 120 mph serve. The tension loss represents the total amount of the relaxation over both time and impact. The stiffness value is a calculation derived from the amount of force created at impact to stretch the string. Lower values represent softer strings and lower impact forces. Higher values represent stiffer strings and higher impact forces.

**Hybrids:** To look up a hybrid combination, you must look up each string separately. If it is a pre-packaged hybrid, most packaging indicates the name of each string. There are a few hybrids using strings that aren’t sold on their own. Those strings are included in our lists. They will be listed as the name of the hybrid with (main) or (cross) after the name. For example, Head Protector 16 (main) is the string used for the mains in Head’s Protector 16 string.
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**Ask the Experts**

**Your Equipment Hotline**

**Q** Old stringing machine parts
I came across parts to a True-Tension stringing machine. I have the feet for the stand but no leg(s), the tensioner, the top platform with holes for securing the racquet, and the top platform mounts. I don’t even know if they’re worth anything. What should I do with them?

**A** It’s difficult to imagine anyone still using a True-Tension machine, despite the fact that they were so highly regarded when they first came out. However, for parts to any “legacy” stringing machine such as this, you’re probably best off contacting TennisMachines.com. USRSA members can also run a free classified ad in Tennis Industry magazine.

If after this you still haven’t found a home for them, you could offer the parts on eBay, probably the last step before taking the metal to your local recycling facility.

**Q** Frame markings
A customer just dropped off a brand-new racquet that is not in the Digest yet. The frame has dots next to the grommets at 7 and 9 at the throat and head, but I do not know what they are supposed to indicate.

**A** It’s not really codified yet, but typically grommets with dots next to them are for main strings.

**Q** No room for the knot
I just strung a couple of racquets last night using the two-piece method, and I noticed that the knot for the final cross is in an extremely tight place for a knot, as the main runs very close to the grommet and frame. I was actually only able to tie half of a knot—although it seems solid enough.

Have you run into this before? What would you do in this situation? I felt like if I tied a normal knot it would’ve pushed up against the main and caused that string to not be straight.

**A** Yes, you will run into this on various racquets. You just have to do the best you can.

On nylon and poly, consider using a half-hitch with an extra pass of the tail of the string through the loop of the knot before cinching down, so it is more compact to begin with. There can still be contact with the main, but we’ve never had a problem with buzzing, which is more important than the straightness of the main (especially on those racquets where the outside mains aren’t parallel to begin with).
**Q** Tension overshoot

I just got a new Babolat Star 5 stringing machine this week. I’ve read about how people say there is an “overshoot problem” on the Star 5, but the overshoot is actually the machine in user-defined pre-stretch mode, correct?

**A** Correct. If you have pre-stretch turned on, the machine will pull to the higher tension before going back to the reference tension. That’s the only way it could possibly work. This holds true for any electric machine that offers machine pre-stretch, not just the Babolat units.

**Q** Racquet listing missing

I have a racquetball frame to string, but the listing for this racquet is missing from recent paper digests. The last edition it is in was Spring/Summer 2013.

**A** Periodically, we prune some of the older listings to make room for newer listings. All listings—old and new—are available online 24/7 at racquettech.com in the members-only section.

**Q** Flying with strung racquets

How are strings affected when strung racquets are checked into airplane cargo? Are commercial airplane cargo areas pressurized like the cabins? If they are not pressurized I would think that the string tension is affected. Is this correct?

**A** As far as we know, air pressure has no effect on either racquets or strings, but temperature does. If you take your racquet with you in the passenger compartment, the temperature differential is minimal. However, if you check your racquet as baggage, the temperature extremes can and will affect the stringbed. Therefore, you should either carry on your racquets, or plan on having them restrung once you reach your destination.

Of course, temperature extremes are not found only in airplane cargo holds. The temperature in the trunk of your car can also kill your strings, as we showed in “The Effect of Temperature on String Tension,” which we published in the March 1985 issue of The Stringer’s Assistant.

**Q** Machine calibration

I want to check the calibration on my electric stringing machine, but the calibration procedure in the manual seems daunting. Is it OK to check the tension at different reference tensions and, if everything looks fine, skip the calibration mode and the more drawn-out instructions?

**A** Yes. You only need to go into calibration mode to make changes. If the machine is pulling accurately without changing the calibration, you are good to go.

—Greg Raven

---

Image: Build it Right Tennis Court. For more information or to find an ASBA builder, supplier or professional visit us at www.sportsbuilders.org or call 1-866-501-ASBA (2722). CEU-eligible program provider.
Babolat Origin 17

Origin is a novel monofilament nylon string made from a bio-sourced, innovative polyamide called Pure Combo. Polyamide is usually sourced entirely from the petroleum industry, but Pure Combo is partially made up from a vegetable source. Babolat tells us that the result is a material that requires 20% less fossil fuel than a traditional nylon, creating a more environmentally friendly material with equivalent performance.

As its most powerful synthetic, Babolat’s Origin is designed for anyone looking for more power and comfort from their string. Babolat believes Origin’s power can help club and competitive players alike. Club players who want more power, but need more durability than natural gut provides, will appreciate a full stringbed of Origin. Competitive players who need the same attributes will use Origin in a hybrid.

Origin is available in 16 (1.30 mm) and 17 (1.25 mm) in Natural, Black, and Fluoro Red. It is priced from $19 for sets of 40 feet. For more information or to order, contact Babolat at 877-316-9435, or visit babolat.us. Be sure to read the conclusion for more information about getting a free set to try for yourself.

In the Lab

We tested the 17-gauge Origin. The coil measured 41 feet 4 inches. The diameter measured 1.25 mm prior to stringing, and 1.23 mm after stringing. We recorded a stringbed stiffness of 77 RDC units immediately after stringing at 60 pounds in a Wilson Pro Staff 6.1 95 (16 x 18 pattern) on a constant-pull machine.

After 24 hours (no playing), stringbed stiffness measured 72 RDC units, representing a 6 percent tension loss. Our control string, Prince Synthetic Gut Original Gold 16, measured 78 RDC units immediately after stringing and 71 RDC units after 24 hours, representing a 9 percent tension loss. In lab testing, Prince Synthetic Gut Original has a stiffness of 217 and a tension loss of 11.67 pounds, while Babolat Origin 17 has a stiffness of 188 and a tension loss of 14 pounds. Origin 17 added 13.3 grams to the weight of our unstrung frame.

The string was tested for five weeks by 38 USRSA playtesters, with NTRP

### Playtester Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ease of Stringing (compared to other strings)</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>much easier</td>
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<tr>
<td>somewhat easier</td>
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<td>about as easy</td>
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<tr>
<td>not quite as easy</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>not nearly as easy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Overall Playability (compared to the string played most often)

| much better | 2 |
|            |   |
| somewhat better | 8 |
| about as playable | 12 |
| not quite as playable | 14 |
| not nearly as playable | 2 |

### Overall Durability (compared to other strings of similar gauge)

| much better | 2 |
|            |   |
| somewhat better | 14 |
| about as durable | 16 |
| not quite as durable | 4 |
| not nearly as durable | 2 |

### Rating Averages

From 1 to 5 (best)

| Playability | 3.4 |
| Durability  | 3.5 |
| Power       | 3.3 |
| Control     | 3.4 |
| Comfort     | 3.6 |
| Touch/Feel  | 3.4 |
| Spin Potential | 3.1 |
| Holding Tension | 3.5 |
| Resistance to Movement | 3.3 |
ratings from 3.5 to 6.0. These are blind tests, with playtesters receiving unmarked strings in unmarked packages. Average number of hours playtested was 29.1.

Origin is extraordinarily easy to install, whether as a full stringbed or as half of a hybrid job. It’s not surprising, then, that no playtester broke the sample during stringing, and none reported problems with coil memory, knots, friction burn, or other problems.

On the Court
It is one thing to claim traditional performance with a new-technology string, but Origin delivers. Our playtesters rated Babolat Origin well above average for Comfort, Tension Retention, and Touch/Feel; characteristics you expect in all the best nylon strings.

No playtester reported premature fraying or peeling, none reported buzzing, and three reported notching.

Conclusion
Babolat has long been one of the leaders in what might be called 100 percent organic strings with its famous natural gut line. How fitting is it that Babolat would develop a partially organic nylon string?

If you think that Babolat Origin might be for you, fill out the coupon to get a free set to try.
Not so long ago I received the shock of my life. I strolled into the main clubhouse of the facility where I had worked for 21 years. I grabbed my mail, spoke to the club secretary and was headed back to the tennis complex to start my day, but the general manager pulled me into his office—then summarily offered me the terms of my dismissal. What?!

A couple of weeks later I finally came to terms with the fact that this is what has been going on in corporate America for ages. Mid-level employees are being fired with little or no warning and their severance is … well, a severance. No parting gifts, just 90 days’ salary, clean out your desk and best of luck to you. Wow, what an awakening.

Needless to say, I was distraught, having poured my life into this club and to the service of its members. Initially, I felt management had robbed me not only of my career, but also of my passion. I reasoned that I would never again find this perfect fit, this place where I have the respect of my peers and from those who seek me out simply because of my reputation within the industry.

So, is there something to be learned here? Is there a moral to this story? The answer is an unequivocal yes.

First and foremost, know why you chose this career. I chose tennis because I have a passion for teaching, not just the game, but for all that goes with it. If that is truly my motivation, then that is something that lives inside me, something that neither the general manager nor board of directors can take away. A friend in a similar situation recently told me not to worry because all they could take from me was my job. Obvious, but sage. If you have your arms around why you do what you do, then where you turn next is much easier.

Another lesson to be learned comes from a more practical point of view. What will I do if I haven’t found work when my severance runs out? Financially, you must plan for a worst-case scenario. Most financial planners will tell you that you need about six months of your normal income in savings for these types of emergencies. Another friend who was fired two years earlier had encouraged me to start socking away cash, but I didn’t heed his advice because I thought I was different and that my situation was different. Not that I was above it all, but I just wasn’t going to do anything to get myself fired, and I didn’t.

We all recognize the work climate just doesn’t look the same as it did 30 years ago. Very few people remain with the same organization for a lifetime or like me, even 21 years. As a tennis professional, there is very little likelihood you will remain in the same job more than 10 years, especially given the state of the country club industry. So be ready for the inevitable.

Although I am an Elite Professional in the USPTA and Professional in the PTR, I have come to realize that many job listings are asking for a Master Professional as their preference now. That certification may be all that separates you from your dream job. So, begin documenting all that you do professionally. Years later, it is pretty difficult to remember all that I have done within my industry and even more difficult to get documentation on those things that occurred years ago. You will need all of that if you decide to apply for Master Professional in either organization.

So why take the time to rehash all of this? I think mainly because it is cathartic. Another reason is that if I am a teacher first, then I need to share what I have learned. I came out of this a touch jaded, but I think I am wiser from the experience, and I will certainly pay closer attention to what is going on around me in the future.

I offer this encouragement to each of you fellow pros, especially you younger ones. Love your job; just don’t fall in love with it. Be optimistic about the future, but know that your show can be cancelled if they hire a new producer. Also, take care of business as it pertains to your financial and professional future. Begin today.

Mark Rearden is the Head Tennis Professional at Palmetto Tennis Center in Sumter, S.C. A career tennis professional, he is a certified PTR pro and an Elite Pro with the USPTA. He authors a weekly newspaper column titled “Mark My Words.”

We welcome your opinions. Please email comments to TI@racquetTECH.com.
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A s many of us have been involved with the USTA either at the national, section or even district level, we have heard a message over this past year about the Urgent Imperative facing the association at present. The USTA rallying cry for its volunteers is to recognize the challenges ahead if the current trends continue with baby boomers aging out.

For the USPTA, we have our own rallying cry. Our Urgent Imperative is what I would rather call our Professional Imperative – that being “to elevate the standards of tennis-teaching professionals and coaches,” which you all know is our mission statement.

In collaboration with PTR and the USTA, we each agreed that having a continuing education component of 12 hours or 6 credits over three years (deadline is December 2016) is vital if we are to enhance the livelihood of our professionals. When you think about it, it is not that much to ask. Every other industry requires some form of continuing education in order to stay in business, to keep a license to practice, etc. And in most cases, the continuing education requirement in other fields is far more extensive than what we are asking our members to complete.

But it is more than just having to comply with a requirement. Each one of us should have a quest for learning, a genuine desire to improve. As the proverb says, “It is what you learn after you know it all that counts.” Unfortunately, so many of our members have the attitude that continuing education is unnecessary; that it won’t help them in their jobs because they think they know all that they need to know. They are trapped in fixed attitudes and habits.

How do we reach them? How do we get them more engaged in the association so that they too can take advantage of the many educational opportunities available to them? Make no mistake, there is a core group of our membership base (approximately 20 percent) who regularly attends conferences, participates in webinars, seeks education forums with allied organizations, etc. But activating the other 80 percent of our colleagues is our biggest hurdle.

There always seems to be an excuse as to why people won’t pursue continuing education. “I can’t afford to take time away and lose my lesson income;” “I am too busy;” “I am a Director of Tennis and don’t need to go to conferences;” “It’s too expensive;” “I didn’t know about the event.” Sound familiar? The fact of the matter is that these are convenient reasons for people who do not want to invest in their careers. You have to want to gain more knowledge and advance your expertise; it does not happen unless you are committed to doing so. As they say, “You can lead a horse to water but you can’t make it drink!”

In a recent blog by Bill Taylor, “The Best Leaders are Insatiable Learners,” he quoted from a speech delivered by John Gardner where he talked about “Personal Renewal,” which is “the urgent need for leaders who wish to make a difference and stay effective to commit themselves to continue learning and growing.” He also said that “the best leaders aren’t just the boldest thinkers; they are insatiable learners.” Are you an insatiable learner?

In that same blog, Roy Spence’s book, “The 10 Essential Hugs of Life,” is mentioned where he says, “Seek out new sources of inspiration, visit a lab whose work you don’t understand, or attend a conference you shouldn’t be at.” Bottom line: we have to keep trying new things if we expect to stay young. “You are only as young as the new things you do” is a quote from Jim Collins, author and business leader.

Thus, the questions for our members are simple: Are you learning as fast as the world is changing? Are you as determined to stay interested as to be interesting? And, are you giving your customer base the absolute best experience by using new techniques and fresh ideas that you picked up at an educational event?

We created November’s National Education Day as a way to take education to more communities than ever before. More than 45 events were held across the country that attracted both the seasoned education veteran as well as a new crop of Under 30 professionals, along with many members who previously were not as involved in USPTA activities. While the numbers of participants are still being tallied as of this writing, there is no doubt that hundreds of USPTA Professionals took advantage of the opportunity to network with colleagues and hear from local and national speakers. This inaugural endeavor was deemed a success by all concerned and will serve as a stimulus for future programs to get education out to the masses.

Many of these National Education Day seminars/workshops were offered at no charge to our members. There are plenty of other FREE options (i.e., Coach Youth Tennis, webinars) that make continuing education as easy as possible. It is not about the USPTA making money on these workshops.

One other note for your consideration: competition for jobs, especially the most prestigious in your area, will become more intense as the years go on. How you separate yourself from others may well come down to who has achieved more continuing education credits. If I were a potential employer and considering two equal candidates, the tie-breaker may well be which person has invested more in their career advancement.

We have two years to get 100 percent compliance of our membership with the continuing education requirement. Spread the word among your colleagues and friends. Encourage those who have been less interested in furthering their expertise to become involved. Accept the mission of elevating our standards. Buy in to the Professional Imperative that is continuing education. We will all be better for it. »
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Vice President’s Message

USPTA Professionals are Celebrating an Anniversary

by Gary Trost

The change of membership from P1, P2 and P3 to Elite Professional and Professional is about to celebrate its first anniversary in January 2015. There is favorable feedback from the membership and the tennis industry regarding the changes that we have made. Since all applicants who pass the Certification Exam become Professional-level members, there is no longer confusion over what it means to be a P1, P2 or P3. Also, there is only one Professional level to upgrade to, which has clearly defined objectives.

This new structure resonates with the tennis industry, especially among those who are interested in becoming USPTA members. Between Jan. 1 and the end of September 2014, USPTA saw a 36 percent increase in new applications. Employers are learning that USPTA Professionals have the skills and education that they need to perform their jobs well – and the new education requirements will ensure that they continue to learn and grow.

Elite Professionals find that they are more easily recognized for their high grades and hard work for having achieved this status. The tennis industry has embraced the change, recognizing Elite Professionals as the leaders in education and experience. They are the ones being sought out by clubs to lead their facilities. Many employers and general managers are posting jobs with USPTA Elite Professional listed as a minimum requirement. They understand the membership change and are requesting this level of professional to service their membership. I would hope that all of you who achieved this status would have sent a letter to your supervisor advising him/her of your achievement.

To upgrade to an Elite Professional you must:

A) Earn 90 percent or higher grade on private lesson, group lesson, stroke production exams
B) Earn 16 specialty course credits and 24 APC credits
C) Make a passing grade on the Elite written exam (online)
D) Pass the stroke analysis exam (online)
E) Pass the Elite feeding exam

There are great testers in your area who want to help you achieve your goals. They would be very interested in hearing from you and helping you in any way that they can. There are great testers in your area who want to help you achieve your goals. They would be very interested in hearing from you and helping you in any way that they can.

Head Testers and divisions:

- Eastern – Ron Dyson 585-736-2950
- Middle States – Mark Contrella 302-854-8691
- Florida – Glen Howe 850-856-0187
- Mid-Atlantic – Ted Meyer 204-446-8651
- Northern – Roger Boyer 612-802-5718
- Texas – Tom Ingram 512-466-3348
- Southern – Tommy Wade 205-242-6861
- Missouri Valley – Bunny Bruning 515-229-4378
- Midwest – Mike Lange 630-873-0380
- Pacific Northwest – Ted Sayrahder 206-778-0701
- Intermountain – Hassan Humayun 702-556-5517
- California – Mike Van Zutphen 480-282-2159
- Nor Cal – Sid Newcomb 650-364-6272
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- Southwest – Mark Frampton 602-952-7234

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December 2014

Dear USPTA Member,

Change is tough.

It is a well-known adage that most people are creatures of habit, and as a result it takes an extra effort to make a move and to try something new.

2014 is coming to a close and with it the first year of the Prince partnership with the USPTA. Unfortunately, as you know, at this time last year Prince was not allowed to interact with any USPTA members, and as a result started 2014 at a disadvantage in terms of tennis ball booking contracts and USPTA pro affiliations. As we look forward to 2015, we are ahead of the game in terms of timing and communication in order to ensure that as a business, we provide the highest level of service to the USPTA membership. As such, over the next few weeks as existing ball and equipment contract arrangements come up for renewal, I would like to raise a “Call To Action” across the USPTA membership and ask that you now make that extra personal effort and move your brand allegiance for both your tennis ball needs and for your personal equipment over to Prince.

John Embree and I have known each other and worked together in tennis for almost 30 years. We share the same beliefs for our sport and the same desire to make the Prince/USPTA partnership a mutually successful arrangement. Success of this partnership for both parties is based purely on performance criteria (payments per pro signed and per can of balls sold), and there is only so much that we can personally do to facilitate performance success, and with it drive income and growth for both the USPTA and Prince organizations. The core of our mutual success lies with each and every USPTA member. You have it in your power to “commit and profit” with your engagement to support the Prince/USPTA partnership by becoming a Prince staff member; by adopting the Prince/USPTA tennis ball program; or by taking Prince into your pro shop as either the exclusive or second brand stocked.

Don’t forget that Prince is fully committed to providing qualifying members with retirement dollars on all sales made through the Retirement Gold+ program.

In 2015 Prince will launch the Prince/USPTA Tour and Play & Stay tennis balls. These high-quality, highly durable balls all have the USPTA logo prominently placed on each ball and on the new tube labels. The new Prince Textreme racquets will launch in March and will provide superior performance across traditional grommetted frames. Initial feedback from top specialty dealers tells me that this collection will bring a significant “wow” to the market in the spring. All of the Prince 2015 booking programs are designed to maximize our direct support for your business with several unique aspects that are focused on driving your profitability – our wall management program for qualifying dealers being one such program.

Prince remains “The American Tennis Company” with much of its history linked closely to the USPTA. Prince is ready to go again and grow its share aggressively over the coming year based on a new and successful USPTA partnership program. Your support is now needed to drive this process in 2015.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Mike Ballardie
CEO
Prince Global Sports
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USPTA News

USPTA Mourns the Passing of Vic Braden

Tennis icon Vic Braden passed away Oct. 6, 2014. He was a long-time supporter and advocate for the USPTA and a giant in the tennis industry. A private ceremony was held in November.

Braden impacted tennis as a player, teaching professional and broadcaster. In 2013, he was inducted into the USPTA Hall of Fame. In addition, he was recognized throughout the industry, notably winning the USTA’s award for Contributing Most to Tennis in America, the ATP Children’s Tennis Award, and the International Tennis Hall of Fame Education Merit Award. Braden was named USPTA Professional of the Year and was inducted into the USTA’s Midwest Hall of Fame. He was also inducted into the Kalamazoo College Athletic Hall of Fame in 1986, and his alma mater recognized his achievements in 2008 with an honorary degree.

Braden’s love and passion, The Junior Tennis Ambassadors Inc., provides free tennis instruction for adult volunteers who will supervise young elementary and junior high school tennis coaches, and the Junior Medical Ambassadors program, which features elementary and high school students serving as medical advisers for fellow students in areas with high occurrences of obesity and diabetes.

To make a tax-deductible donation to The Junior Tennis Ambassadors, Inc., a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, go to vicbradenmemorial.com/donations, or send a check to Junior Tennis Ambassadors Inc., 23582 Via Paloma, Coto de Caza, CA 92679.

Vic Braden: 1929-2014
By Bill Simons, publisher of Inside Tennis magazine

The late, great Vic Braden began coaching Tracy Austin when she was 2 and went on to advise Muhammad Ali. He pioneered the concept of a tennis college, and cooked up more scientific research than a Ph.D. He gave more clinics and offered more tips than just about any other mortal. He has turned about as many phases as Vin Scully, lost almost as much weight as John Madden, and was the only pro we knew of who referred to a player’s fast-twitch fibers.

Born in Michigan, based in Coto de Caza and universally recognized in tennis circles, Braden was one of the game’s great enduring figures.

He so enriched my life, and the lives of countless others. Such heart, such curiosity, such courage. A groundbreaking pioneer who loved sports and loved tennis and, more than anything, loved people. Always so positive, so quick with a quip, he told his pupils he’d “make them famous by Friday.”

The man was a scientist, cerebral and serious, yet also a fun-loving elf with a sparkle to his presence. Once, before addressing a USTA meeting, he asked with a glint in his eye, “Can I have a glass of water, if it’s within your [$150 million] budget?”

The man was a lover of life and all things tennis – little and large.

The man was an expert in brain types.

But there was no type like Vic.

He was a force, a spirit, like no other. He could be blunt, telling us, “If you can walk to the drinking fountain without falling over, you have the physical ability to play tennis well.” Yet, he also spoke of nirvana, saying, “The moment of enlightenment is when a person’s dreams of possibilities become images of probabilities.”

All the while, Braden delighted in debunking esoteric theories. He insisted, “Basically, the reason you choke is that you don’t have the strokes.” He added, “Everybody says ‘be natural’... [yet] nearly everything I’ve seen about tennis that’s natural is wrong.”

Irreplaceable and irrepressible, he popularized the game in its boom daze. Now, his place should be in the Hall of Fame.

Yes, he will be so missed. Yet we will always embrace the wonder of the man from Michigan.

View more of this article and other tributes to Vic Braden at ADDvantageUSPTA.com. Published with permission of Inside Tennis magazine.
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Finally, a way to protect chain link fences from high wind damage

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**TECHNICAL OVERVIEW:** Each section exerts a minimum of 15 pounds of vertical vector force, providing the engineered right amount of ballast to other successive unit allowing in normal-sports-playable winds. When constant wind velocities exceed 20 mph, the Ballasted Windscreen system provides a progressively increasing degree of wind force relief thru a series of opening “wind gates”; those units on the fence side in the wind direction. For winds up to 95 mph, wind force reduction may approach 47%, depending on fence post spacing, post diameter, pipe gauge, and steel quality. With units in tied-up position, the net wind force on fence may approach 93% less than that exerted on the same fence with conventional windscreen of same size fully attached to it.

**NORMAL POSITION:** In calm to low winds, units stay in vertical position. Ballasted PVC pipe is in the reinforced pockets at bottom, and top is attached thru grommets.

**STORM POSITION:** As winds increase, ballasted units open to allow potentially damaging high wind velocities to blow thru, helping to protect both the FENCE and the WINDSCREEN.

**TIE-UP FEATURE:** Built-in hook & loop strips at top allow one person to roll up and secure entire unit in less than 30 seconds. SAVES COSTLY LABOR TIME in last minute pre-storm preparations. Also useful for better tournament viewing.

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USPTA News

2014 National Education Day

USPTA and its 17 divisions held educational events throughout the country for the National Education Day initiative. Lots of great ideas, concepts, drills and more were exchanged, and we hope to keep hosting these events to make YOU a better tennis-teaching professional. Here are some highlights:

Northern California Division

Forty participants enjoyed a free specialty course, “Drills That Work,” with local pros sharing their best drills in four categories: 10 and Under, Adult Team Practices, Advanced Juniors, and Social Formats. The event was held at the Fremont (Calif.) Tennis Center.

Middle States Division

The Middle States Division held its annual conference coinciding with National Education Day. 125 attendees enjoyed presentations by Emilio Sanchez-Vicario, Mark Kovacs, Oscar Wegner, Butch Staples, David DiLucia, and Rodney Harmon. The U30 group was well represented as was the women’s group. Diane Selke was the national guest and presented the awards at the annual banquet. Pictured above from left: Sanchez-Vicario, DiLucia, Anthony DeCecco, Wegner and Harmon.

Pacific Northwest Division

Pacific Northwest celebrated National Education Day on Nov. 12 at the Stafford Hills Club in Portland, Ore. The presenter was Glen Coblens, a member of Sports Psychology Institute Northwest who has been consulting with athletes and teams for more than 20 years. His topic was “The Mental Game for Tennis Directors & Coaches.” Participants, front row, left to right: Trenton Corvino, Siamak Hajarizadeh, Bill Fletcher and Glen Coblens. Back row, left to right: Roger McKee, Walter Seidel, Farhad Roshanaie, Brian Leahy, Anders Bergkvist, Hunter Lipscomb, Cristobal Valverde, Adam Gagnon, Ruth Turner and Brent Waddle.

San Diego Division

The San Diego Division held three events for National Education Day. The first on Nov. 1 was College Knowledge where they had five college coaches, a conditioning expert and scholarship advisor give advice to 60 people in attendance (22 USPTA pros and the rest parents and high school kids wanting to learn about college tennis). The event was free. The second event held on Nov. 5 was a Tennis Pro Free Lunch seminar with Ed Collins talking about taking students from intermediate to the advanced/tournament level. Twenty-three USPTA pros attended the free event. The third was a specialty course by Dave Hager on “Games-Based Teaching for Decision Making, Mental Toughness and Conditioning.” Twenty-eight USPTA pros attended.

Southwest Division

The Southwest Phoenix event for National Education Day was held at Paradise Valley Country Club in Phoenix and had 12 attendees. Todd Ellenbecker was the speaker.
Missouri Valley Division

Intermountain Division

Mid-Atlantic Division

Midwest Division

Southern Division

Nashville, Tenn.

Memphis, Tenn.

Birmingham, Ala.

Sherwood, Ark.
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Arthur Ashe Kids Day 2014

The USPTA once again hosted a court at Arthur Ashe Kids Day on Saturday, August 23. USPTA Elite Professionals Jeff Rothstein and Mark Savage co-led the design and implementation of the day’s event for the USPTA court activities. “With over 200 children per hour making their way through the USPTA court, our goal was to make sure we had plenty of activity stations where kids could filter through and still feel like they were getting an awesome tennis experience.” said Savage.

Volunteers for the day were USPTA Professionals, USTA members and the Army men’s and women’s tennis teams. The men and women from Army played an integral part with the flow and instruction for the children for the day. The court theme held various games designed specifically for kids 10 and under. The volunteers and kids had wonderful interaction with lots of rallies, high fives, and laughter.

Paul Fontana, USPTA Executive Director for the Eastern Division, was positioned at the final station to hand out the cool USPTA kids sunglasses and say “thank you” to all who came through the court.
One thing that I love to do is watch my children play sports. It can be the most exhilarating experience or one of the most frustrating. Remembering that your children should be on the court because they want to and not to fulfill your dreams can be difficult. Your children will gravitate to and be successful at tennis if they feel progression, a sense of belonging, and pride in themselves for playing. While we all fail sometimes (parenting is full of guilt), following the suggestions below will help ensure you have a happier, healthier young athlete.

**DO:**
- Treat your child the same whether he or she wins or loses.
- Try to have fun and enjoy the tournaments and the travel. Your unhappiness can breed a child’s guilt.
- Look relaxed, calm, positive and energized on the sidelines. Your attitude will help the child play better.
- Make friends with other parents at tournaments. Socializing can make the event more fun.
- Get involved if the child’s behavior is unacceptable during a match play. Your child doesn’t want to be labeled a jerk.
- Let the coach do the coaching. Too much input can confuse the child.
- Understand that the child needs a break from tennis occasionally. It doesn’t mean the child is quitting or burning out; they just need a break.
- Be there when the child loses or gets discouraged. Be an understanding listener, not a fixer.
- At the same time, give the child some space when he or she loses. Your youngsters will want to be alone for a while, then he or she will be OK. Don’t press the conversation; they will talk about it when they are ready.
- Keep your sense of humor. When you laugh and have fun, your child’s stress level takes a big drop.

**DON’T:**
- Say, “We’re playing today.” Instead, say, “You’re playing today.”
- Get too pushy. Having them fulfill their obligations (pre-paid clinics or playing the consolation draw) is different than forcing them to play.
- Turn away when the child behaves in an unsportsmanlike manner on the court.
- Tell the child what he or she did wrong after a tough match. The last thing they want is your criticism immediately off the court. Be a source of strength to them, not someone they wish to avoid.
- Ask the child to talk with you immediately after a loss.
- Make enemies with your child’s opponent’s parents during a match.
- Act negatively or angrily (verbal or non-verbal) on the sidelines unless your child is acting in an unsportsmanlike manner.
- Your child is watching more than you think. Their winning or losing cannot determine your approval of them.
- Make your life your child’s tennis.
- Make your child feel guilty for all the time, money and sacrifices you’re making for his or her tennis.
- Think of your child’s tennis as an investment for which you expect a return.
- Live out your own dreams through your child’s tennis.
- Try to take the coach’s job away. Be the parent.
- Compare your child’s progress with that of other children, especially siblings.
- Badger, harass, or use sarcasm to motivate your child. It may work in the short term, but they will rebel to your threats or mistreatment.
- Threaten or use fear to improve your child’s tennis discipline.

I hope you will use these suggestions for the betterment of your children. We were blessed with parents that used these principles to assist and nurture our tennis games and lives. Be the type of tennis parent your children deserve.

Todd Upchurch is an Elite Professional and USPTA Southern Division President. He is CEO at Serve it UP Tennis Academy and director of Upchurch Tennis in Charlotte, N.C. Follow Todd on Twitter at @toddupchurch.
Master Pro Corner

What is a USPTA Master Professional Worth?

By Tom Daglis, USPTA Master Professional

You have spent countless hours working toward and earning a classification called USPTA Master Professional, and often your clientele or tennis consumer base is not aware of your significant accomplishment. I offer these tips for current and aspiring USPTA Master Professionals:

1. **Market** yourself as a USPTA Master Professional. That means the designation should be on your business cards, email signature, club newsletter articles in your salutation, in your posted bio in the pro shop, any signage around the club, on your teaching baskets, etc. There are fewer than 160 USPTA Master Professionals in the world!

2. **Price** yourself as a USPTA Master Professional. You are the expert and your experience and knowledge should carry the greatest pricing. If you manage a staff, your lesson fees should be at the top of the consumer pricing chart.

   - By the way, consider pricing your time based on prime time! For example, if you were to sell indoor court time, the prime time selections are normally 9-11 a.m. and 7-9 p.m. These time slots are sold at a higher rate since they are in higher demand. If you teach at these times, your lesson rates should reflect a higher rate. Consumers are accustomed to paying for premium service and availability, and your time is at a premium!

3. **Mentor** your peers as a USPTA Master Professional. Consider meeting with your teaching pro peers every other month and offer discussion groups to solve any problems or concerns the local teaching professionals are encountering in their daily lives. You have already experienced many of these problems and are the best resource to assist your surrounding professionals!

4. **Give** back to the tennis industry as a USPTA Master Professional. You have contributed much to the industry in order to secure your USPTA Master Professional status, but don’t let that initiative die. Make it a good habit to continually offer your expertise to the industry and continue to grow this great sport of tennis!

A USPTA Master Professional is the highest recognized classification our organization has to offer and is an earned level of professionalism that other industry organizations can relate to. CMAA (Club Managers Association of America) and the PGA both identify with this distinction because they offer similar attainable acknowledgements through rigorous educational accomplishments. This means a USPTA Master Professional may have an advantage when applying for club positions managed by these two organizations. In addition, compensation packages may reflect this earned certification, and offer greater opportunities for a better standard of living.

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(4 credits for PTCA I segment)

Dec. 9 Redwood City, Calif.
Dec. 9 Minneapolis
Dec. 11-12 Houston*
Dec. 13 Omaha, Neb.
Dec. 13-14 Boca Raton, Fla.
Dec. 14 Hilton Head Island, S.C.
Dec. 15 Naples, Fla.
Dec. 15-16 Fresno, Calif.
Dec. 29 Des Moines, Iowa

* This course is held at the USPTA World Headquarters.

Exam reservations must be made at least 21 days prior to the dates listed. Each date includes an exam, upgrade and PTCA I unless noted. Exam cancellations must be received no later than 14 days before the exam, or a cancellation fee will be charged accordingly.

Applicant: late cancellation fee – $95; failure to cancel – application fee is forfeited. Certified members: late cancellation fee – $25; failure to cancel – $25 plus the upgrade fee is forfeited. Registration for another exam will not be accepted until cancellation fees are paid.

Conventions

Jan. 23 Northern Division Convention (5 credits) Fridley, Minn.
Jan. 24 IHSTCA Winter Workshop Aurora, Ill.
Jan. 30 Eastern Division Convention (5 credits) White Plains, N.Y.
Jan. 30 Detroit Tennis Workshop Troy, Mich.
Feb. 5 Midwest Division Convention (5 credits) Indianapolis
Feb. 6 California Division Convention (5 credits) Los Angeles
Feb. 7 Southwest Division Convention (5 credits) Phoenix
Feb. 7 Intermountain Division Convention (5 credits) Centennial, Colo.
Feb. 13 Southern Division Winter Workshop Memphis, Tenn.
Feb. 15 Hawaii Division Convention (5 credits) Honolulu
Feb. 19 Texas Division Convention (5 credits) Horseshoe Bay, Texas
Feb. 19 Missouri Valley Division Convention (5 credits) Kansas City, Kansas
Feb. 21 Northern California Division Convention (5 credits) Stanford, Calif.
Feb. 27 Mid-Atlantic Division Convention (5 credits) Virginia Beach, Va.

TAUT Workshops

Dec. 14 Fayetteville, N.C.
Dec. 19 Scottsdale, Ariz.
Dec. 20 Kissimmee, Ariz.
Feb. 20 Eau Claire, Wis.

Go to www.coachyouthtennis.com for more workshops or to register.

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Register your Accredited Professional Coach (APC) and specialty course credits earned with the USPTA SmartCode Education System. This uses your smartphone to instantly register your attendance to all seminars and specialty courses earning APC.

To use the system at a seminar, general session or specialty course, you must scan two QR codes. One QR code is on your conference badge. The second QR code will be in your conference notebook and cannot be scanned until the end of the session or the beginning of the next session.

If you do not have a smartphone, you may use someone else’s. Forms are available upon request.

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• USPTA Elite Professional **Bob Mapes** died Oct. 31, 2014, in Florida. Mapes played college tennis at Baylor University where he earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees. He was hired as the first tennis coach at Carroll High School in 1960. In 1962, Mapes became the head professional at the H-E-B Tennis Center, a position he held for 32 years, while simultaneously coaching the University of Corpus Christi Tennis Team from 1962 until 1973. His collegiate win-loss record was 118-28-2. After retiring from the tennis center in 1997, Mapes returned to Carroll to again lead the Tigers tennis team. He led the team for three seasons as the head coach while grooming a successor. The team reached the state finals in 2002, where they ended the season ranked second in the state. Mapes was inducted into the Texas Tennis Hall of Fame in 1994 and the International Tennis Association National Intercollegiate Hall of Fame in 1999. Mapes’ additional honors include the Texas Tennis Association Sessions Award, the USTA’s National Merit award and a year as president of the Texas Professional Tennis Association.

• Former UCLA women’s tennis standout **Rochelle “Shelly” Solomon**, a member of the program’s first national championship team in 1981, died Oct. 7, 2014, in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. She was 51. Solomon was a star player for the Bruins during the 1981-82 seasons. She earned All-American honors during both of her seasons at UCLA. Solomon went on to play professionally on the WTA Tour, achieving a top 60 singles ranking. Solomon, a USPTA Professional, graduated magna cum laude from UCLA with a B.A. in Political Science and later graduated magna cum laude from Nova University Law School in 1991. She was a member of the Florida Bar since 1992, worked as Assistant State Attorney in Broward County, was Partner and Of Counsel for Coral Springs Law firm, and volunteered for Legal Aid Services. Shelly was also a Certified Life Coach and a member of the Broward County Women Lawyers’ Association.

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• A team of juniors from Tennis Addiction (Exton, Pa.) won the WTT Philadelphia Freedoms 10U Tournament held at the Episcopal Academy in Pennsylvania. The team was coached by USPTA Professional Anthony DeCecco, TA Owner and USPTA Middle States president. This 10U tournament was held in June 2014.

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