

STRING PLAYTEST

USRSA Playtesters put **Velociti TurboPoly 16L** through its paces

INDUSTRY NEWS

Youth Athletes United buys franchisor **TGA Premier Sports**

GROWING THE GAME

TIU Appreciation Tour celebrates the sport in key markets

TECHNOLOGY

Slinger acquires sports tech firm **PlaySight Interactive**

January 2022 / Volume 50 / Number 1 / \$5.00

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CHAMPIONS OF TENNIS 2021

Our annual awards honor individuals and organizations who continue to make a difference in this industry.



Congratulations

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CARLA MAGERS	HOWARD COUNTY DEPT. OF REC & PARKS
MIKE BALLARDIE	LARRY NEWTON
HOUSE OF TENNIS	ADVANTAGE CLEVELAND
SECOND SERVE PODCAST	JIM HAMM
LONGFELLOW TENNIS & SWIM CLUB	LAKE NORMAN TENNIS ASSOCIATION
JORDAN ZIMMERMAN	TENNIS CHAMPIONS
QUICKSTART TENNIS OF CENTRAL VIRGINIA	MARGIE ZESINGER
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Incorporating USPTA pg. 57
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Contents *January 2022*

DEPARTMENTS

- 4 Our Serve
- 7 Industry News
- 20 Letters
- 22 Industry Initiatives
- 26 String Playtest: Velociti TurboPoly 16L
- 29 Champions of Tennis Awards

INDUSTRY NEWS

- 7 Slinger to acquire sports tech firm PlaySight
- 7 PTR International Symposium set for Feb. 8-10 on HHI
- 7 USPTA names 2022-2023 Board of Directors
- 8 Youth Athletes United buys TGA Premier Sports
- 8 Get ready for National Tennis Month
- 8 Industry loses longtime leader Jane Brown Grimes
- 8 Electrum Pickleball named official paddle of PPR
- 10 USPTA improves pickleball certification with IFP Academy
- 10 Jigsaw offers 'Pickleball Cocktail' for active players
- 12 Brad Carroll named new president of Acrytech
- 14 2021 US Open champions donate artifacts to HOF
- 15 Peoplewatch
- 16 ASBA offers Pickleball Court Construction online course
- 16 Specialty store retail sales
- 18 New Adidas Essnova Carbon pball paddle available now
- 18 ITF World Tennis Number official rating system in UK
- 19 Short Sets



Champions of Tennis

2021

Page 29

CONGRATULATIONS TO:

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DAVID LEE



p.57

59

USPTA's New Footwear and Apparel Endorse

67

Tennis Players and Coaches Should Consider Yoga

70

Understand the Power of 'Sowing and Reaping'

73

USPTA Adds New Pickleball Certification

PLUS

59 From the CEO

61 President's Message

64 Master Professional's Corner

67 Member Feature

61 USPTA Master Professionals

73 Pickleball Certification

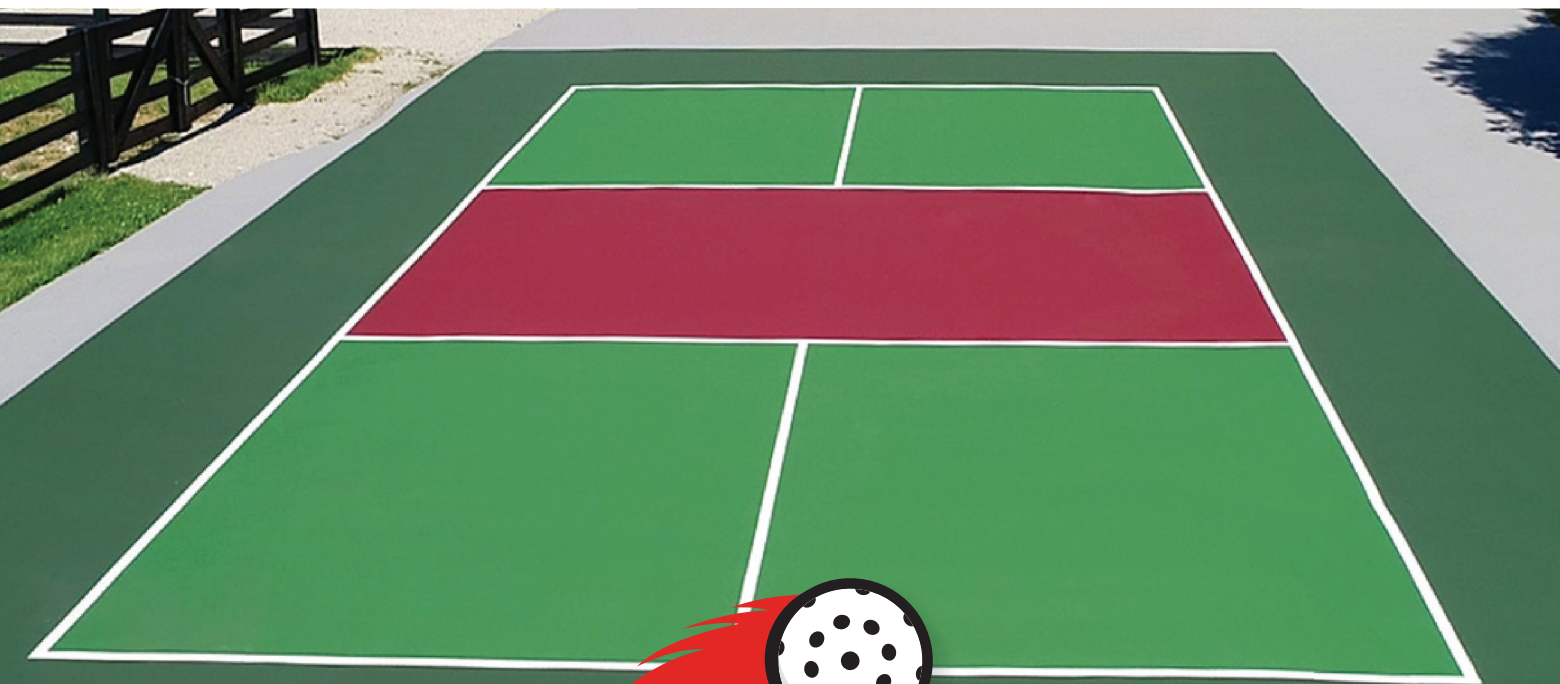
75 ThanksUSA Scholarships

76 Membership Update

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Honoring Achievements of a Lifetime

As *RSI* enters its 50th year, we celebrate the champions who make this sport shine.

This issue of *Racquet Sports Industry* represents a milestone: It's "Volume 50, Number 1"—our first issue of our 50th year.

Fittingly, this January 2022 magazine also is our Champions of Tennis issue. This is the 21st year we've had the pleasure, and honor, of recognizing dedicated people, organizations and companies who continue to work tirelessly to better this industry and this sport.

Many years ago, I realized that one thing we too often take for granted in this industry is recognizing and honoring our own, those who are doing amazing things for this sport—*especially* at the grassroots levels. Creating these awards, and watching them grow to the 26 categories in which we're honoring our winners in this issue, has been one of the most satisfying things I've done.

But "amazing" may be a misleading word. Our winners are often simply doing what they love and what they do best—and they're putting their passion and hard work into it.

While we're only able to recognize a few dozen in this issue, we know there are thousands of others throughout the country who also deserve praise for all they do for tennis. I encourage all entities—including local and regional organizations, and USTA Sections—to continue to find ways to honor, recognize and publicly appreciate their own.

For our part, at *RSI* magazine, we're thrilled with the support we receive from those in the tennis community for our Champions of Tennis awards. What's particularly gratifying to me—and this happens at least once every

year—is that after our issue comes out, I'll be contacted by someone who received an individual award, or whose organization was honored. They'll tell me that because of *RSI*'s Champions of Tennis award, they were able to gain more community, section or national support, or were able to get a grant to help them grow the game—or, in one incredible instance, our recognition actually helped to save their youth tennis organization by showing how important it is to the community.

In this issue, we've created a new honor, our "Lifetime Achievement Award," and as you'll see, our inaugural winner is someone who so many people have had the good fortune to cross paths with—John Callen, the longtime executive director of USTA Southern.

John, who is retiring this January, has led the USTA's largest section for 32 years, and in the process has had a hand in changing this game for the better in many ways. I think we can speak for many when we say his knowledge, enthusiasm, experience, kind nature and gentle guidance will be greatly missed in this industry.

So, appropriately, we start our next half-century at *Racquet Sports Industry* honoring a lifetime of accomplishments in this industry.

Not bad for just our *first* 50 years.

Peter Francesconi

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TENNIS TECH

Slinger to Acquire Sports Tech Firm PlaySight Interactive



Slinger announced it will acquire PlaySight Interactive, a pioneer in sports video technology, data capture, high performance analytics and automated video production.

Coupled with recent acquisitions of Foundation Tennis and GAME-FACE.AI, PlaySight expands Slinger's footprint in the global tennis market; enhances its R&D and AI video capabilities; taps into automated production, live streaming, data and analytics, as well as media and content opportunities; and accelerates its growth into new sports with a proven global platform, says Slinger.

PlaySight will also bring a growing, recurring revenue stream of sports clients and content subscribers to Slinger.

"This is a historic day for Slinger ...

supporting our evolution into a leading global connected sports company," says CEO Mike Ballardie. "PlaySight pioneered the deployment of AI video technology and analysis in tennis and other major sports, and is now among the largest tech providers in the market. Our goal is to create a full suite of 'Watch, Play and Learn' solutions, the three largest commercial activities in every sport."

The transaction is valued at an estimated \$82 million.

"Slinger is the right company to take our technology platform to new heights," says PlaySight Interactive Co-Founder and CEO Chen Shachar. "We share many commonalities, from the launch in tennis to the focus on consumer and sports connectivity. Mike and his team have very bold aspirations

to build a leading global brand powered by AI technology, and we are thrilled to join their team and add our capabilities and experience."

Since its inception, PlaySight has attracted investment from industry leaders including Billie Jean King, Novak Djokovic, Chris Evert and Pete Sampras, along with PlaySight Ambassadors Darren Cahill, Ana Ivanovic, Tommy Haas and Paul Annacone.

PTR International Symposium Set for Feb. 8-10 on HHI

• The PTR International Tennis

Symposium is back for 2022 and will be held Feb. 8-10 at the Sonesta Resort and Van der Meer Shipyard Racquet Club on Hilton Head Island, S.C.

In addition to networking and idea-sharing, more than 30 on-court and classroom presentations will be available from industry leaders on topics including coaching, tennis business, marketing, programming and more. Symposium attendees can earn up to 25 hours toward Continuing Education and Professional Development.

The Symposium also includes the PTR Annual Meeting, Awards Breakfast and Awards Banquet, along with a Tennis Trade Show, demo courts to try out products, and Cardio Tennis. The event concludes with the Head Dinner Party and Casino Night. Visit ptrtennis.org for more information and to register.

Slivocka to Lead 2022-2023 USPTA Board of Directors

• The USPTA recently announced its Board of Directors for the 2022-2023 term:

President: Richard Slivocka of Wichita, Kan.

First Vice President: Trish Faulkner of Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.

Vice Presidents: Tracy Almeda-Singian of Florida; Mark Faber of Toledo, Ohio; Jason Gilbert of Florida; Kevin Theos of Birmingham, Ala.

Immediate Past President: Feisal Hassan

Legal Counsel (non-voting): George Parnell ▶

Get Ready for National Tennis Month in May

• Tennis providers and organizations across the country are encouraged to once again promote May as National Tennis Month—a time to get out on the court and experience the fun, competition and long-term health benefits of the life-time sport of tennis.

For National Tennis Month, players, organizations, facilities, retailers and tennis manufacturers are encouraged to promote local programs and activities at parks and facilities to showcase tennis and spread the word about the sport and its benefits, and to help players and non-players alike find courts and play opportunities in their communities.

Stay tuned for more information and resources to help promote the sport locally, and share the hashtag #NationalTennisMonth.

Electrum Pickleball Named Official Paddle of PPR

• PPR (Professional Pickleball Registry) and Electrum Pickleball recently signed a multi-year partnership agreement in which Electrum will be an Official Pickleball Paddle of the PPR.

“Electrum makes two of the hottest paddles in pickleball,” says PPR President & CEO Dan Santorum. “The fact that PPR clinician and world No. 1 doubles player Collin Johns plays with Electrum speaks volumes. PPR is thrilled to be partnering with such an up and coming brand.”

Industry Loses Longtime Leader Jane Brown Grimes

• Jane Brown Grimes, a transformative tennis industry leader who held roles as president and CEO of the International Tennis Hall of Fame, managing director of the Women’s Professional Tennis Council (precursor to today’s WTA), and chairman, president and CEO of the USTA, died at home in New York City on Nov. 2. A lifelong New Yorker, she was 80 years old.

In 2014, Brown Grimes was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame in recognition of her extraordinary contributions to the sport. In recent years, she was a Ph.D. candidate at Cambridge University, where she had done substantial work on a doctorate focused on women’s tennis history.

Brown Grimes’ service to the sport began in 1977 when she was recruited by tennis greats Bill Talbert and Sarah Palfrey



YOUTH TENNIS

Youth Athletes United Acquires TGA Premier Sports

TGA Premier Sports, the largest youth sports franchisor specializing in youth tennis, has been acquired by Youth Athletes United, one of the largest youth sports and enrichment brands. TGA has been a key brand for introducing children to the sport of tennis through in-school and community-based enrichment and camp programs.

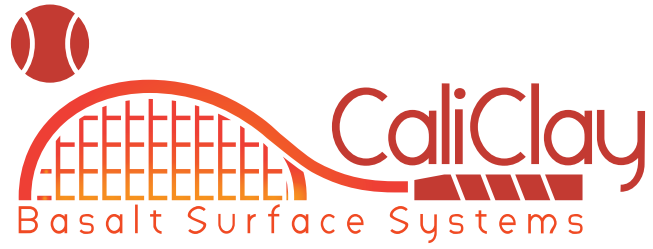
“We’re on a mission to become the largest and most encompassing youth sports organization in the country,” says Adam Geisler, CEO and co-founder of Youth Athletes United. “With the acquisition of TGA, [we’re] adding 40 franchise owners and the extended curriculum for one of the most popular individual sports that impacts children.”

TGA focuses on athletes ages 6-14, providing introductory tennis enrichment programs at schools, parks and rec centers. TGA then partners with local tennis facilities to bridge participants to more traditional recreational

programming that include camps, Play Day Series, USTA Junior Team Tennis and Junior Tournaments.

“Eighteen years ago, TGA was founded with a vision that sports can change lives and with a mission to create a pathway for our kids in communities nationwide to be introduced to tennis,” says Joshua Jacobs, founder and board advisor at TGA. “Under Youth Athletes United, TGA franchisees and current and future TGA tennis players have a greater platform and more resources to continue growing the sport of tennis.”

The move will impact Youth Athletes United consumers, TGA franchise owners, and the tennis industry. As a part of the acquisition, franchisees will be met with opportunities like the latest in technological offerings, a flexible work schedule, no required brick-and-mortar site, and a resilient business model that offers classes that will further grow the sport and increase player development opportunities.



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Danzig and Philip Morris executive Joseph F. Cullman 3rd to open a New York City development office for the International Tennis Hall of Fame. She served as USTA president from 2007 to 2008.

USPTA Improves Pickleball Certification with IFP Academy

• The USPTA has partnered with the International Federation of Pickleball Academy to launch a new and improved USPTA Pickleball Certification.

Beginning Jan. 1, 2022, USPTA members may obtain USPTA Pickleball Certification by the newly trained 17 USPTA Division Head Pickleball Testers or at any IFP Academy official training center. USPTA Division Head Pickleball Testers have experience with the sport, both as players and teachers, and will receive extensive in-person training by the IFP Academy.

The IFP Academy is a pickleball training, certification and rating company specializing in accreditation and training in more than 62 countries. The USPTA, working with the IFP Academy, plans to build out its network of USPTA Pickleball Certification Testers across

the country to accommodate the increasing demand for Certified Pickleball Instructors. Included in the cost of the USPTA Pickleball Certification is a one-year pickleball training and continuing education membership with the IFP Academy.

Contact membership@uspta.org.

Jigsaw Offers New 'Pickleball Cocktail' Electrolyte Drink Mix



• **Jigsaw Pickleball Cocktail is a sugar-free, orange-flavored electrolyte drink mix that contains as much potassium as two bananas. The manufacturer says the drink**

supports healthy, relaxed muscle tone on the court, replenishes electrolytes, and promotes healthy energy levels. The product is endorsed by top pickleball professionals Simone Jardim and Ben Johns, among others. For more information, visit JigsawHealth.com.

30 Earn USTA Wheelchair Tennis Certification at JTCC

• Marking one of the largest certification trainings that USTA National has facilitated, 25 coaches at the Junior Tennis Champions Center (JTCC) in College Park, Md., along with five additional coaches, officially earned USTA Wheelchair Tennis Certification in October.

Designating JTCC as the facility with the most certified coaches in the country, the landmark achievement was also the largest certification class the USTA has implemented. USTA National Manager of Wheelchair and Adaptive Tennis Jason Allen presented to the coaches three critical topics that differentiate wheelchair tennis from able-bodied tennis: disability, sports wheelchairs and movement.

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RETAILING

Sports Gear Vending Machine Debuts at Pickleball Tourney

The Sport Box Pro Shop (sportbox.pro), an automated vending machine cabinet for sports gear, debuted this past spring at the 2021 Minto U.S. Open Pickleball Championships in Naples, Fla.

Mike DeLazzer, who was a co-founder of the automated DVD vending system Redbox and is a partner in this Instant Retail Systems offshoot, says he was confident from the start that there would be interest in a vending kiosk for pickleball, based on the interest shown in the system in Europe selling padel equipment. But he did not expect orders for 500-plus to follow the demonstration of the pickleball vending cabinet in Naples.

Ideal for use during hours when a

sales venue is closed or for facilities too small to support on-site management, the retail kiosk offers flexibility of product mix, and a nearly hands-free operation. Paddles, racquets, balls, accessories, clothing and almost anything else a player could need or want can be available for sale or rent, or as a demo.

Customer access is provided by Instant Retail Systems' downloadable Lova app. Security as players help themselves, payment processing, and even inventory management if desired are handled through a combination of software, QR readers, RFID scanners, and 3D cameras—all part of the Instant Retail Systems vision of revolutionizing pro shops around the world.

—Kent Oswald

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PTPA Launches Curriculum for Professional Tennis Players

• The Professional Tennis Players Association (PTPA) recently launched its "Courtside Curriculum." The PTPA member benefit will offer all players personal and professional development provided by leading global experts in business and finance, communications and branding, relationship wellness, mental health and women's leadership. PTPA was founded by pros Vasek Pospisil and Novak Djokovic.

Courtside Curriculum has been engineered to address the specific needs of professional tennis players. It is aligned with the movement's mandate to provide resources and services to professional tennis players while working to create transparency and fairness throughout decision-making in professional tennis.

Four Honored with 2021 USTA Umpire Awards

• The USTA has announced four winners of

its 2021 Umpire Awards. Doug Rice, Lynda Hinshaw, Scotty Moore and Beverly Kris Jaeger-Helton are the winners of the Nicholas E. Powell Award, Woodie Walker C.A.R.E. Award, Jr. McGovern Award, and John T. McGovern Award, respectively.

The four awards honor individuals who serve the game of tennis with distinction in their capacity as officials and/or chair umpires. They were given out in November at the 2021 Annual Umpire Awards virtual event.

"We are fortunate to have talented and dedicated officials such as Doug, Lynda, Scotty and Beverly, who are truly making an impact in growing tennis at the grassroots level," says Sean Cary, USTA managing director of Competition Operations. "Their leadership, work ethic and passion for the game are just a few of the reasons why they're so deserving of this recognition."

Brad Carroll Named New President of Acrytech



• Acrytech Sports Surfaces, a leader in manufacturing sports surfaces paint and coating systems, has promoted Brad Carroll to president. The role was previously held by Caldwell Robinson, who will maintain his CFO position.

In his new role, Carroll will handle daily operations and focus on streamlining operations with the goal of becoming a more productive and efficient organization. He joined Acrytech in 2018 as national sales manager and was promoted to vice president in December 2019. Prior to joining Acrytech, he owned and operated a water filtration and coffee company.

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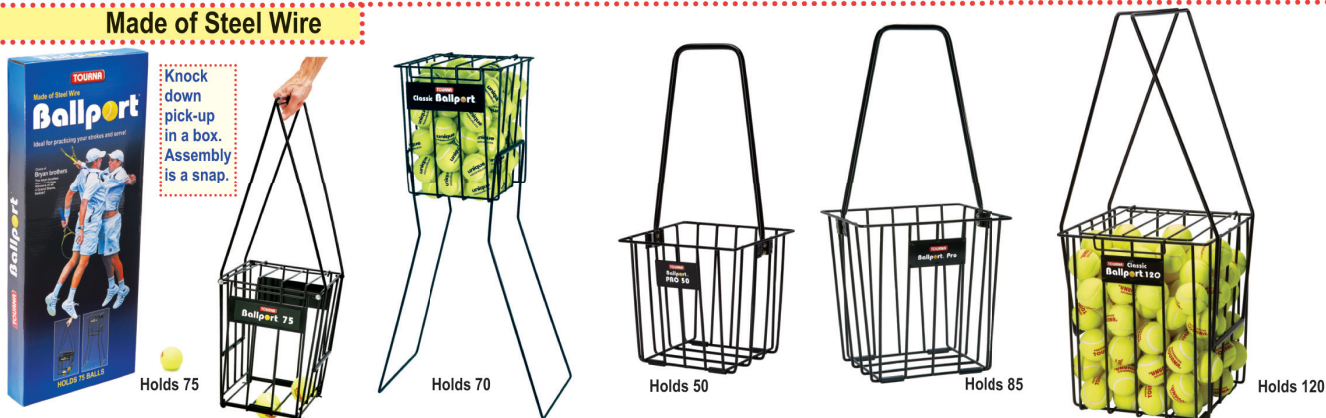


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TENNIS HISTORY

2021 US Open Champions Donate Artifacts to HOF

The 2021 US Open singles champions, Daniil Medvedev and Emma Raducanu, each gifted items from their major victories to the permanent collection at the International Tennis Hall of Fame Museum in Newport, R.I.

Moments after Medvedev's win over world No. 1 Novak Djokovic, the first-time Grand Slam champion handed a racquet from the championship match to ITHF President Stan Smith. Raducanu gifted to the Hall of Fame the Nike outfit that she wore in her two weeks in New York.

"We are grateful to Emma and Daniil for recognizing the importance of the Hall of Fame's mission to preserve tennis history for future generations and for providing this special piece of tennis history to the museum," Smith said.



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People Watch

► Ryan Burbary, currently in his senior year studying Finance & Accounting at the University of Colorado's Leeds Business School, recently re-launched the Velociti brand of premium tennis string, grips and accessories (see the String Playtest of the TurboPoly 16L on page 26). As the owner and CEO of Velociti, Burbary plans to expand the company's market presence through retail, wholesale and online distribution channels. Visit VelocitiTennis.com.

► Jorge Andrew of West Columbia, S.C., and Andy Andrews of Raleigh, N.C., will be the 2022 inductees into the Southern Tennis Hall of Fame. The induction ceremony will be Jan. 15, and will include the 2021 inductees—USTA President Mike

McNulty and Susan Sloan of Lexington, Ky., whose 2021 ceremony was postponed due to the pandemic.

► Patrick O'Keefe is the new director of tennis at Sea Pines Resort in Hilton Head Island, S.C. He replaces Job de Boer, who retired in June after 30 years. O'Keefe previously served as director of tennis at Hidden Valley Country Club in Salem, Va.

► Russell Dendy is the new executive director of USTA Mississippi, succeeding Geoff Norton, who is retiring after serving in the position since 2016.

► American John Edward "Budge" Patty, a 1977 International Tennis Hall of Fame inductee who was ranked No. 1 in the world

in 1950, died on Oct. 3, at the age of 97. For more than 70 years, Patty lived in Europe, most recently in Switzerland. He was a four-time major champion.

► U.S. men's pro player Jensen Brooksby is a brand ambassador for eyewear maker Christopher Cloos. Brooksby will also collaborate on the creation of his own line of sunglasses and blue light glasses.

► Patrick Mouratoglou, longtime coach of Serena Williams and founder of the Mouratoglou Academy, is partnering with HALO Hydration, an electrolyte drink mix.

► Former USTA Southern California CEO Marla Messing was named interim CEO of the National Women's Soccer League.

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ASBA Offers Pickleball Court Construction Online Course

• In recognition of the growth of pickleball—and the corresponding need for court builders with pickleball facility-specific expertise—the American Sports Builders Association has launched the “Fundamentals of Pickleball Court Construction,” an online continuing education course.

“Working with a builder who holds this certificate will give consumers peace of mind that their contractor is knowledge-

able in all aspects of building pickleball courts,” notes ASBA Courts Division President Randy Resley. “This program is a great step forward for the association and will help set higher construction standards.”

The course includes information on court dimensions and design, building new courts, lines, lighting, ADA compliance and more. The pickleball court construction course is free to ASBA members and available to nonmembers for \$199. Visit sportsbuilders.org.

Tennis Racquet Performance at Specialty Stores

Jan.-Sept. 2021, vs. 2020 and 2019

Units	2021	620,683	
	2020	417,850	
	% change vs. '20		49%
Dollars	2021	\$102,180,000	
	2020	\$65,189,000	
	% change vs. '20		57%
Price	2021	\$164.63	
	2020	\$156.01	
	% change vs. '20		6%
	% change vs. '19		-3%

Top-Selling Racquets at Specialty Stores

By year-to-date dollars, Jan.-Sept. 2021

Best Sellers

1. Babolat Pure Drive 2021 (MP)
2. Babolat Pure Aero 2019 (MP)
3. Wilson Clash 100 2019 (MP)
4. Wilson Pro Staff 97 V13 2021 (MP)
5. Wilson Pro Staff 97 RF V13 (MP)

“Hot New Racquets”

(introduced in the past 12 months)

1. Babolat Pure Aero Rafa 2021 (MP)
2. Head Radical MP 2021
3. Babolat Pure Drive Lite 2021 (MP)
4. Babolat Pure Drive Team 2021 (MP)
5. Babolat Pure Drive 107 2021 (OP)

Top-Selling Tennis Shoes at Specialty Stores

By year-to-date dollars, Jan.-Sept. 2021

1. K-Swiss Hypercourt Express 2
2. Asics Gel Resolution 8'20
3. K-Swiss Hypercourt Supreme
4. Nike Zoom Cage 4 2020
5. Nike Zoom Vapor Pro 2021

Top-Selling Strings at Specialty Stores

By year-to-date units, Jan.-Sept. 2021

1. Babolat RPM Blast
2. Wilson NXT
3. Solinco Hyper G
4. Wilson Sensation
5. Luxilon Alu Power

(Source: Tennis Industry Association)



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ITF World Tennis Number Now Official Rating System in Britain

• Britain's LTA has announced the introduction of the ITF World Tennis Number (WTN) for players of all levels—making Britain one of the first countries to introduce the new rating system. The ITF says the WTN has been designed to provide a significant boost to grassroots participation and recreational competition.

Likened to the handicap system in golf, the World Tennis Number will operate with one simple scale for all players ages 10 and over, for players of all abilities from beginners to top players.

Updating every week, players will be given a number from 40 to 1, with recreational players starting close to 40 and top-level players being close to 1 (players with an ATP/WTN world ranking will all be rated simply as "Pro").

The WTN rating system is designed to make it easier to find evenly matched opponents. In addition, for the first time in Britain, the ratings system will also include a separate doubles rating. For more info, visit WorldTennisNumber.com.

EQUIPMENT

New Adidas Essnova Carbon Pball Paddle Available Now

Distributed by All Racquet Sports, the new Essnova Carbon CTL HD pickleball paddle from Adidas offers power with its high-density polypropylene honeycomb core combined with "3K Carbon" composition. Yet, as its name implies, the paddle provides control for precision shots, along with comfort, says the manufacturer. For more information, contact info@allracquetsports.com or 602-738-0230.





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Short Sets

► Trading and Logistics Group will bring the Slinger Bag and Slinger brand to tennis players in Puerto Rico. Based in San Juan, the company will work with Slinger to roll out a grassroots campaign aimed at tennis retailers, recreational players, college players and coaches. Slinger also announced its entry into the Brazilian tennis market through a distribution deal with DLD.

► A Serena Williams autographed rookie card from 2003 was sold at New Jersey-based Goldin Auctions recently for \$44,280, which was a record for any women's sports card. It supplanted the previous mark, held by a 1992 S.I. for Kids Mia Hamm rookie card, which sold in late June with Goldin Auctions for

\$34,440. The Williams card was bought by Alt, an alternative-asset trading platform, on behalf of a private client.

► The Academia Sanchez-Casal has changed its name to the Emilio Sanchez Academy and is expanding its locations worldwide. The academy has locations in Naples, Fla., Atlanta, Barcelona and China, with plans to open a facility in Dubai in 2022.

► The USPTA and the Japan Professional Tennis Association renewed their partnership for an additional three years, beginning in January 2022. The two organizations have been working together since May 1982.

► Carlos López Toledo, the founder of the Eco Tennis Cuba program in Havana, is look-

ing to add "Street Pickleball Cuba" to his offerings for children and youth in Cuba, through workshops, clinics and exhibition matches. For more information, and to help support his tennis and pickleball programs in Cuba, contact him at carloslopeztenniscuba@gmail.com.

► East Chop Tennis Club in Vineyard Haven, Mass., established in 1910, has appointed Beyond The Baselines as its executive search consultant in its search for a club manager.

► Sports Turf Company, based in Whitesburg, Ga., is celebrating 30 years in the athletic construction business. The company builds tennis courts, running tracks, natural grass fields and artificial turf fields.



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Letters to the Editor



Tennis on Campus Response: A+

Thank you for bringing attention to Tennis on Campus ("Our Serve," November/December 2021). It's rare to have a tennis program take off and succeed as easily and as quickly as TOC. The program in New England has almost tripled in size, to 36 schools, since 2009. This past October, we had our Sectional event with 28 schools and 275 players, after canceling the event in 2020 due to COVID-19. The energy, enthusiasm and high quality, competitive matches make it one of the best USTA events of the year.

TOC continues to be an essential bridge program to keep players in the game and to bring talented leaders into our industry. As a former TOC captain myself, I look forward to seeing the program continue to grow in New England.

Sarah Wishart
Senior Manager
Recreational Programs & Events
USTA New England

Your comments about re-prioritizing TOC are 100 percent on target. At a time when participation is up, we must have a place for these future players and potential coaches and pros to go when they arrive on campuses. The USPTA, PTR and coaching associations should continue their support of this USTA program.

Ken McAllister
Retired USTA Texas Executive Director

I loved your editorial on TOC. It will behoove the USTA and industry to take action. This is one initiative for which we cannot afford to lose focus.

Ajay Pant
Chaska, Minn.

Your "Our Serve" was spot on. The TOC program was a huge success! Years ago, I sat in on a TOC national meeting that mentioned a college was going to drop its varsity program, but due to the outcry from TOC players, they felt they couldn't. In addition, the facility I managed hosted several Sectional TOC Championships; the players were among the



best behaved and most courteous tournament players I've dealt with in my 45-year tennis career.

A program that promotes competition, team camaraderie, leadership and lifelong health benefits while growing the base of tennis should have the full support of the USTA.

Larry Haugness
Springfield, Mo.

I am a product of the TOC program, and I would most likely *not* be involved in tennis today if it weren't for TOC. I can think of dozens of my former teammates who, now nearly 15 years since our days playing TOC, are still active USTA League and tournament players. Had we not had the structure of TOC, I do not think many of us would be as active in tennis.

Steve Strecker
Babolat VS N. America/Middle America

TOC provides a long list of benefits for students, schools and our sport. In my 30 years of volunteering at all levels of the USTA, I haven't seen another program more deserving of additional investment of time, resources and promotion from this industry.

Ted Reese
Cary, N.C.

We welcome your opinions and comments.
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Industry Initiatives

TENNIS PROVIDERS

Tour de Force

Tennis Industry United's 'Appreciation Tour' celebrates the sport in key markets.

The Tennis Industry United initiative, formed in 2020, aims to bring the tennis industry together by utilizing the collective strengths and resources of key industry organizations to grow the sport.

In late September through early November, this collaborative energy was brought forward in four key tennis markets, as the USTA Engagement and Services Team, led by Glenn Arrington and Justin Landis, partnered with local tennis organizations in Atlanta, Dallas, Denver and Scottsdale to host two-day Tennis Industry United "Appreciation Tour" stops. The events were held at the Atlanta Athletic Club, Las Colinas Country Club in Dallas, Halcyon Cherry Creek and Randy Ross Tennis Center in Denver, and Saguaro Hotel and Phoenixian Tennis Center in Scottsdale.

"The purpose of these events was to celebrate the recent surge in

tennis participation and to build upon our national collaboration to grow the sport, and to focus it locally and 'thank' the local delivery system—teaching professionals, manufacturers, retailers and community tennis leaders—for all they do to keep tennis thriving in their communities," says Landis, USTA sales manager.

The first night featured a cocktail reception for local tennis providers at which key industry data and metrics were presented. Attendees also received the *2020 Health of Tennis Industry Report*, which they were encouraged to share with their staff and in their communities. There also was a raffle for door prizes, such as a Theragun, US Open tickets, tennis equipment and more.

The next day included professional development seminars, featuring interactive on-court sessions focused on activities for welcoming new players and

Cardio Tennis was on the agenda in Scottsdale (below left), while in Denver (below), providers and industry execs had the chance to reconnect.

advancing their skills. Attendees had the opportunity to participate in and learn more in sessions that focused on Cardio Tennis, Drills for Welcoming New Players, Building a Pickleball Program, Sports Science and Injury Prevention, and Youth and Adult Progression.

More "Appreciation Tour" events



Thanks to the dedication and passion of these local leaders, we continue to see a bright future for tennis, as the sport continues to grow.

are currently being planned for the spring, including possible stops in the Boston, Kansas City, Chicago and Raleigh-Durham areas.

"The four events this fall drew hundreds of tennis providers, who enjoyed the camaraderie with their industry peers," says Arrington, the USTA's director of Sales & Partnerships. "Thanks to the dedication and passion of these local leaders, we continue to see a bright future for tennis." ■



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Jeff Williams,
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StringPlaytest



EQUIPMENT

Velociti TurboPoly 16L

BY BOB PATTERSON

TurboPoly is a hexagonal (six-sided) monofilament, co-polyester string with a softer feel than most polyester-based strings, according to the manufacturer. TurboPoly features sharper edges than a typical geometric string, which enhances bite on the ball, improving spin capability. The string comes unpackaged, in a simple coil, as the company is reducing its environmental footprint and preventing single-use packaging from ending up in landfills.

TurboPoly is available in 16L in black, and priced from \$7.85 per 41-foot set. For more information or to order, contact Velociti at sales@velocititennis.com, or visit velocititennis.com.

Be sure to read the conclusion for more information about getting a free set to try for yourself.

In the Lab

We tested the 16L gauge TurboPoly.

The coil measured 46'9". As with all geometric or shaped profile strings, the diameter of the string will vary. We measured the diameter at 1.23-1.34 mm prior to stringing, and 1.22-1.32 mm after stringing. We recorded a string-bed stiffness of 70 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), string-bed stiffness measured 64 RDC units, representing a 9 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 Velociti TurboPoly 16L has a stiffness of 295 and a tension loss of 16.18 pounds. TurboPoly 16L added 17 grams to the weight of our unstrung frame.

The string was tested for five weeks

Playtester Ratings:

Ease of Stringing

(compared to other strings)

Much easier: 0

Somewhat easier: 3

About as easy: 20

Not quite as easy: 11

Not nearly as easy: 4

Overall Playability

(compared to the string played most often)

Much better: 0

Somewhat better: 1

About as playable: 4

Not quite as playable: 21

Not nearly as playable: 11

Overall Durability

(compared to other strings of similar gauge)

Much better: 11

Somewhat better: 14

About as durable: 11

Not quite as durable: 1

Not nearly as durable: 0

Rating Averages

From 1 to 5 (best)

Playability: 2.8

Durability: 4.6

Power: 3

Control: 3.7

Comfort: 2.8

Touch/Feel: 2.6

Spin Potential: 3.8

Holding Tension: 3.4

Resistance to Movement: 3.8

by 38 USRSA playtesters, with NTRP ratings from 3.5 to 5.5. These are blind tests, with playtesters receiving unmarked strings in unmarked packages. Average number of hours playtested was 22.3.

Stringing

More than half the testers reported that the string was about the same or easier to string than their usual string, while 11 testers found the string to be not quite as easy and four found it to be not nearly as easy. No playtester broke samples during stringing; eight reported problems with coil memory; four reported problems tying knots; one reported friction burn; and five reported other problems.

On the Court

Velociti TurboPoly 16L scored high marks for overall durability, with all but one tester rating it the same or better; 14 testers rated it better and 11 rated it much better. It also received

high marks for Spin Potential, so the manufacturer's claims seem to be well validated among our 38 testers. Only one tester broke the string during testing, after six hours of play.

No playtesters reported premature fraying or peeling. One reported buzzing and eight reported notching, with the average test time of 22.25 hours on court.

Conclusion

Velociti TurboPoly 16L is well-suited for 3.5- to 5.5-level players looking for durability and spin in a softer-feeling polyester-based string. Our test results validate the manufacturer's claims of durability and spin potential. The price is also attractive.

If you think that Velociti TurboPoly might be for you, fill out the coupon to get a free set to try.

Playtester Comments

"A very tough, durable control string which I would use as main string for a hybrid restringing." 3.5 male baseliner

with moderate spin using Prince O3 Speedport Black strung at 45 pounds CP (MSV Hex 19)

"I was satisfied with the performance; it was better than expected. Spin and durability were fantastic. It lost too much tension around 16 hours to do anything other than hit balls from the baseline. Overall, I believe it performed well for poly." 4.0 male baseliner with heavy spin using Dunlop 200G strung at 60/58 pounds CP (Prince Synthetic Gut w/ Duraflex 17)

"The crosses glided smoothly, surprising for a hexagonal cross-section string. The play was exceptional, much better control and easy access to additional spin on both serves and hard groundstrokes. This string certainly has a place in my inventory." 5.5 male baseliner with heavy spin using Head Graphene 360 Speed MP strung at 50 pounds CP (Luxilon ALU Power Big Banger 1.25 17)

"From the first hit, I knew this would be a string I would recommend to every level of player. The control and feel jumped out at me immediately. That did not dissipate during the entire playtest. The control of this string was evident on every shot, including volleys, serves and drop shots. This string receives high marks from me." 4.5 male all-court player using Prince Tour 100 ESP T strung at 50/54 pounds LO (Prince Prism Diablo 17)

FREE PLAYTEST STRING PROGRAM

Velociti will send a free set of TurboPoly 16L to the first 200 USRSA members who cut out (or copy) this coupon and send it to: USRSA, Attn: Velociti String Offer, 1000 Peachtree Industrial Blvd., Suite 6-492, Suwanee, GA 30024-6777, or fax to 760-536-1171, or email the info below to: stringsample@racquettech.com. Offer expires Jan. 31, 2022. Offer only available to USRSA members in the U.S.

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2021

Champions of Tennis



This issue marks *Racquet Sports Industry's* 21st year honoring our annual Champions of Tennis.

We created these awards to recognize the many, often-unheralded heroes of this sport and this business.

These individuals and organizations continue to go above and beyond in helping to make a difference in this industry, and we hope their stories and their service are an inspiration to thousands of dedicated “champions” across the country, who continue to move this sport forward every day.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



John Callen

The USTA congratulates John Callen on being named the inaugural recipient of Racquet Sports Industry magazine's "Lifetime Achievement Award."

His leadership, passion, vision and commitment to the continued growth of tennis have inspired us all to raise our game. Congratulations, John—well played!

Your friends and colleagues at the USTA.



Lifetime Achievement Award

John Callen



► Over the span of half a century, including the last three decades as the executive director of the USTA's largest section, John Callen's contributions to the tennis world have been vast. He was a noted junior and college player, has been a stand-out coach and volunteer, and, ultimately, a leading tennis executive who has set a high bar in this industry.

Now, as he heads toward retirement at the end of January, after serving as executive director of USTA Southern for the past 32 years, *Racquet Sports Industry* magazine

is thrilled to honor Callen as the inaugural recipient of RSI's Lifetime Achievement Award.

Under Callen's leadership, USTA Southern has been at the forefront of growing grassroots tennis, including fostering USTA League expansion; Junior Team Tennis formation and growth; and hosting an array of junior and adult tournaments throughout the section's nine states. The section has a robust adult program, including the largest Combo and Mixed Doubles leagues in the country. Over his three decades, the section's USTA

membership skyrocketed to 187,000, representing about 25 percent of total national membership.

As the Southern Tennis Foundation executive director, Callen oversaw approximately \$5 million going to NJTL programs, junior tournament players and college students. In 2021, he was honored by the Southern Tennis Foundation with two \$30,000 scholarship funds in his name.

"I've had many mentors," former USTA Southern President Paula Hale told Callen recently on a Zoom call announcing the scholarships, "but I've

never learned more from anyone than I've learned from you—about how to interact with people, how to get things done, the value of the work and just the joy of what we do."

Callen grew up in Birmingham, Ala., where he was student body president and went undefeated in high school dual matches. He went on to play at Georgia Tech, where he served as co-captain. In 1974, he began a 15-year tennis pro career as head professional at the Indian Hills Country Club in Big Canoe, Ga., and as the athletic director at the Standard Club.

Callen was a founder of the Georgia Tennis Hall of Fame, founding member of the Georgia Tennis Patrons Foundation and founding member of the Atlanta Lawn Tennis Association Foundation. He served as Georgia Tennis Association president from 1982 to 1983 and was also elected to ALTA's Board of Trustees. Now a resident of Johns Creek, Ga., with his wife of 45 years, Frances, he's also a member of four Halls of Fame: Southern Tennis, Alabama Tennis Foundation, Georgia Tennis Foundation and Georgia Professional Tennis Association.

"I know how much you've impacted the Southern Section," said former Southern President and current USTA President Mike McNulty. "You've done it for 32 years, and we are all better because of it." —Ron Cioffi

Congratulations



John Callen Lifetime Achievement Award

There is no one more deserving of this inaugural award than John. Thank you for your lifetime commitment to the sport of tennis. Your impact is immeasurable in the Southern Section and beyond.

From your friends and fellow Executive Directors

Van Barry, Texas
Laura Bowen, Florida
Mary Buschmann, Missouri Valley
Becky Cantellano, Northern
Tara Fitzpatrick-Navarro, Mid-Atlantic
Trevor Kronemann, Southern California
Rosa Maria Martinez, Caribbean
Eric Mitchell, Southwest

Matt Olson, New England
Ron Romano, Hawaii Pacific
Mark Saunders, Midwest
Rob Scott, Intermountain
Jenny Schnitzer, Eastern
Alison Vidal & Darren Wenger, NorCal
Matthew Warren, Pacific Northwest
Ben Zislis, Middle States



Person of the Year

Toni Wiley

► When Toni Wiley joined the award-winning Sportsmen's Tennis & Enrichment Center as a consultant and board member in 2007, she said she planned to help the Dorchester, Mass., facility "right the ship" before moving on to the next challenge.

Yet while sharing best practices for managing expenses and operations related to the 53,000-square-foot building owned by the nonprofit organization, Wiley experienced an unexpected revelation.

"I fell in love with the club's mission and potential to do so much good in the community," says Wiley, who is *RSI*'s Person of the Year for her dedicated leadership as executive director of Sportsmen's since 2008, and for her influence in this industry. "These kids grow up to become not only great tennis players, but phenomenal citizens, and Sportsmen's plays a role in that. It's easy to get hooked. This is exactly where I want to be and where I want to make a difference."

Founded in 1961, Sportsmen's earned the distinction as the first nonprofit indoor tennis club built by and for the African-American community. The year-round tennis



Tip for Success

Become involved. Toni Wiley serves on a number of boards and committees in order to guarantee a seat at the tables where decisions are made.

center, with seven indoor and seven outdoor courts, provides academic, wellness and social development programs alongside recreational and competitive tennis instruction for more than 400 adult members and 5,000 juniors.

While Sportsmen's role in improving life opportunities for youth in Boston's Blue Hill Corridor is legendary, Wiley says it took several years for the center to rebound from financial struggles that threatened to close its doors during the early days of her tenure.

"It's great to own your facility and be in charge of your own destiny, but you can't pay the electric bill with goodwill—and operating expenses never stop," says Wiley, who has led the charge for new philanthropic support to cover low-cost and free programs for families in need. In addition, adult recreation and competitive tennis programs welcome diverse players and help fund its mission.

Partnerships have also contributed to its breadth of programming. With Wiley at the helm, Sportsmen's and the Boston Police Department implemented "Volley Against Violence," which has served as the model for the USTA's Serve & Connect program. In 2015, the center launched its Center for Community Wellness in partnership with Brigham and Women's Hospital to offer a free fitness center open to the public, as well as health and nutrition programs to promote well-being and prevent chronic illness.

Sportsmen's is also a proud partner of the Boston Public Schools, one of the largest members of the USTA's National Junior Tennis & Learning Network and the only New England chapter to receive its ICON Award.

For her part, Wiley was awarded the 2019 Eve F. Kraft Community Service Award—one of the USTA's highest honors—and serves as a member of the USTA New England Board of Directors, USTA National Diversity & Inclusion Committee and American Tennis Association board.

But for Wiley, it's all about keeping the children of her community front and center.

"We've had kids that have really struggled to find their way, and those are the success stories that stay with you," notes Wiley, who grew up just down the street from the center. "You've got to have a job that feeds your soul. I'm glad this is mine." —Cindy Cantrell



I fell in love with the club's mission and potential to do so much good in the community. These kids grow up to become not only great tennis players, but phenomenal citizens, and Sportsmen's [Tennis & Enrichment Center] plays a role in that. It's easy to get hooked.

**Tip for Success**

By working with schools, annual tournaments, the USTA, leagues and more, a municipal facility becomes an invaluable community asset—one worth investing in to keep in top shape.

INDIAN SCHOOL PARK TENNIS CENTER

Tip for Success

Be very clear on the scope of work involved, manage the expectations of all sides and stay within the schedule—even if it means putting in a few weekends.

CARLA MAGERS



Municipal Facility of the Year Indian School Park Tennis Center

► Scottsdale, Ariz., is tailor-made for tennis, 365 days a year, so a solid public tennis infrastructure is a must. City courts need to be readily available, in excellent condition, and filled with programming and events. And that's a good summation of Indian School Park (ISP) Tennis Center, RSI's Municipal Facility of the Year.

In 2019, a \$2.2 million bond was approved to overhaul ISP, and the extensive renovation included rebuilding all 13 courts, upgrading them with new LED lighting, fencing and windscreens, along with renovating office space and more. The tennis center has a demanding schedule: Nearly 17,000 reservations were made in the last year, and it's home to three high school teams, state high school championship events, and 15 other annual events—including a first this year, a USTA League National Championship. Twenty-six club or USTA League teams also call ISP their home.

"The renovation was quite a project, but it was needed," says Andy Passmonick, Scottsdale's tennis operations supervisor. "We're able to do more now with the park than ever before, and that's good for the tennis community." —Jeff Sikes

Builder/Contractor of the Year

Carla Magers/ Gerald Perry Tennis Courts



► Trends in court construction may change, such as using post-tensioned concrete or LED lighting, but other things never should—such as offering quality work and being forthright in your business dealings. And that's what helps to set apart Gerald Perry Tennis Courts and its owner, Carla Magers, who is our Builder/Contractor of the Year.

Magers, whose "real" job was as a college professor, worked part time for GPTC through the 1990s. In 2001, then-owner Gerry Perry showed up at the back of her classroom and told her he wanted her to buy the company and continue their quality and award-winning work. Magers took the challenge to heart, remaining true to the principles on which the company was founded in 1953: integrity and quality construction.

"I am so fortunate to be working with a really good crew at GPTC," says Magers, a Certified Tennis Court Builder. "There are so many great people in this industry, and they're all so good to do business with."

—Mary Helen Sprecher

Tip for Success

As a professional in the tennis industry, take every opportunity you can to increase your knowledge about the sport and about the business of tennis.

GREG LAPPIN



Tennis Industry Service Award

Greg Lappin

► After completing his eligibility at the University of Minnesota, Greg Lappin knew he wanted to stay in tennis. He quickly learned the business side was where his passion lay. Now, his more than 40-year dedication to growing this

sport and business is being honored with *RSI's* Tennis Industry Service Award.

Taking best practices he saw as a teaching pro, Lappin merged them together in developing two of the largest and most innovative clubs in the country: Flagship Athletic Club in Eden Prairie, Minn., (1985) and Rochester Athletic Club in Rochester, Minn. (1993). He then was hired as the national tennis director by Life Time Fitness as it entered the tennis space.

In his career, Lappin has served on the IHRSA and TIA boards of directors and has won multiple awards,

including the Integrity Award from the Minnesota Better Business Bureau. He is a longtime local and national USTA volunteer and has served as Northern Section president and a member of the national Nominating Committee. He currently is the chairman of the USTA Delivery Council.

"To be successful in any business, you must find your passion and keep learning new skills," Lappin says. "There is always more to learn so one can continue finding solutions to new challenges and opportunities." —Lisa Mushett



OTCQB: SLBG

CONGRATULATIONS MIKE BALLARDIE!

What a year it has been. From the tennis world embracing the Slinger Bag with open arms, to the acquisitions of Foundation Tennis, GAMEFACE.AI and PlaySight, to setting course on a new, bold connected sports vision powered by technology. We are excited to continue to reimagine the sport of tennis under your leadership.

THE SLINGER TEAM

Slinger®



**Tip for Success**

Have an unbelievably good product, bring in significant talent, and understand what consumers want regarding analytics, match play and coaching.

MIKE BALLARDIE

Commercial Executive of the Year

Mike Ballardie

"We want to evolve Slinger Bag into a connected sports company," says CEO Mike Ballardie.



► Portable tennis ball machine maker Slinger Bag has had a banner year, and its momentum continues thanks to the efforts of CEO Mike Ballardie. Over the past few months, he has been focused on developing Slinger into a "connected sports company,"

as evidenced by a recent flurry of acquisitions.

In June, Slinger acquired Foundation Tennis, a pioneer in tennis software applications for tennis club and facility administration. In September, the company purchased GAMEFACE.

AI, an artificial intelligence technology that can provide instant analysis of biomechanics. Then in October, Slinger added PlaySight Interactive and its Smart Sports AI platform, which provides live streaming and performance sports video data

capture and performance analytics.

"We are becoming a content-driven company, making it easier for consumers to play, watch and learn a sport," says Ballardie, a sports industry veteran who previously worked for Prince, VF Corp. and Wilson. "Right now, we have 1.5 million users across all platforms, and that will grow to 10 million over the next three to five years."

In 2021, Slinger's revenues hit \$30 million across all platforms, and Ballardie projects 2022 revenues of \$40 million, with \$150 million a target within five years (with 60 percent of that subscription-driven). Over the next year, he plans to use the tennis market to prove the Slinger concept, then expand into other racquet sports. In 2023, he says, the company will launch into baseball, softball and, eventually, basketball.

"We're a new-age tennis company," Ballardie says, "and we're making the game more exciting by making significant changes in the way the sport is being presented to consumers." —*Judy Leand*

COURTESY SLINGER

USTA Southern Congratulates John Callen

The first recipient of the
Racquet Sports Industry

Lifetime Achievement Award



2021 RSI Champions of Tennis

Jennifer Edmonson

Wheelchair Tennis Champion of the Year



Jim Hamm

Adaptive Tennis Champion of the Year



Lake Norman Tennis Association

Adult Tennis Provider of the Year



Second Serve

Grassroots Champion of the Year

Erin Conigliaro (left) & Carolyn Roach



CONGRATULATIONS

JOHN CALLEN



FROM YOUR SOUTHERN FAMILY

Alabama	Mississippi
Arkansas	North Carolina
Georgia	South Carolina
Kentucky	Tennessee
Louisiana	



**Tip for Success**

No matter how much you love tennis, success as a retailer depends on focusing on serving the customer, as much as on serving the game.

HOUSE OF TENNIS

Tip for Success

Make tennis more accessible and relatable to recreational players.

CAROLYN ROACH & ERIN CONIGLIARO
SECOND SERVE PODCAST



Pro/Specialty Retailer of the Year House of Tennis

► “Welcome to the House”—that’s the sign consumers see when they go to the House of Tennis (houseoftennis.shop) in Las Vegas, Nev.

“Welcome” is the vibe that greets everyone at this 3-year-old shop, which is *RSI*’s Pro/Specialty Retailer of the Year and has already become the go-to site for racquet enthusiasts in the neon capital.

Babolat National Sales Director Bryan Ogle sees their success as the result of planning and hard work: “It is not a hodgepodge of product stuck on various racks and pegs with no real harmony to it. Brands are represented very well; they understand the word ‘partnership.’”

“Their set-up is consumer-friendly,” adds Dave Dwelle, tennis national sales director for Yonex. “Owner Ray Gillip sets the tone with the staff to make all customers feel welcome.”

Further helping to foster this welcome environment is the spacious layout and seemingly bottomless inventory, as well as a ping-pong table and area to view televised matches. Customers can simply hang out and enjoy, whether waiting for a racquet to be restrung, or to just be with the educated and customer-centric employees.

—Kent Oswald



Grassroots Tennis Champions of the Year Carolyn Roach & Erin Conigliaro Second Serve Podcast

► Every week, from their base in the Cary, N.C., area, Carolyn Roach and Erin Conigliaro co-host the Second Serve Podcast (secondservepodcast.com), geared toward adult recreational players. Topics run the gamut—including coverage from National Championships, dealing with tennis insecurities, exchanging team lineups, advice from teaching pros, and rules USTA players should know, but often don’t.

“It’s refreshing to hear Carolyn and Erin talk about the players that we all are,” says Kelly Gaines, executive director of USTA North Carolina. “It is great to hear about the pros, but their podcast is so relatable to all of us who play at our parks, facilities and clubs. League play is what most of us can relate to. They have done a great job!”

Roach created the podcast and Conigliaro, her friend and business partner, is a graphic designer who makes it look good in all aspects. The podcast is on all major platforms, including Apple Podcasts, iTunes, Spotify and Google Podcasts. There’s also a YouTube channel. —Judy Leand


Tip for Success

Charge the price you need to in order to deliver the services you promise your members, but make sure they feel it is “fair” for what they get.

LONGFELLOW TENNIS & SWIM CLUB

Private/Commercial Facility of the Year

Longfellow Tennis & Swim Club



► Laury Hammel, owner of Longfellow New Hampshire Tennis & Swim Club in Nashua, N.H. (and founder of the Longfellow Health Clubs, with facilities in Massachusetts and Utah), explains his businesses’ success in terms of the “three P’s”: a good physical plant, top-notch teaching pros, and a variety of well-run programs.

Deliver on those tangible elements, he explains, and you’ll build the intangible—a sense of community where members feel support and joy as they deal with each other and with staff. And, as *Racquet Sports Industry’s* Private/Commercial Facility of the Year, Longfellow more than delivers.

But there’s another, unmentioned “P,” too:

providing services with passion—whether that’s running the town’s recreational tennis program, collaborating with Advantage Kids to assist the underserved, serving as a key USTA partner, or providing elite levels of customer service.

The Nashua club, which was closed and in significant disrepair when purchased in 2018, now

includes eight indoor and eight outdoor courts, and provides its growing membership with programs ranging from clinics to league and tournament play, junior lessons, community fundraisers, clinics, camps and summer programs, including aquatics. —*Kent Oswald*

COURTESY LONGFELLOW TENNIS & SWIM CLUB, USTA MID-ATLANTIC

Tip for Success

Team tennis is one of the most impactful ways to engage established players into the larger tennis community.

JORDAN ZIMMERMAN



Junior Tennis Champion of the Year Jordan Zimmerman

► When it comes to creating young champions, Jordan Zimmerman not only gets the best out of juniors on court, but he also inspires young tennis players to be active in their communities and give back to others.

Certified by both PTR and USPTA, Zimmerman recently led a team of teens in USTA Mid-Atlantic's Junior Team Summer Community Challenge, which encouraged and rewarded team play and community service. His team won the overall title.

As a director at the Junior Tennis Champions Center in College Park, Md., Zimmerman, who also is pursuing a master's in Professional Tennis Management, launched "The One Hit Wonders"—a team for girls geared to activism and community engagement.

"Jordan recognizes how much good can come when young athletes are inspired to not only be great on the court, but become champions for and within their local communities," says Rachel Kros, director of competition and youth play at USTA Mid-Atlantic.

—Lauren Hoffmann



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2021 CHAMPIONS OF TENNIS!

USTA
MISSOURI VALLEY

Larry Newton
Youth Tennis Provider of the Year

Carla Magers, Gerald Perry Tennis Company
Builder/Contractor of the Year

and
John Callen, USTA Southern
Lifetime Achievement Award

USTA Northern California
would like to congratulate

John Callen



for receiving the
Lifetime Achievement Award



**Tip for Success**

Think outside the box! Imagine new, creative ways to use tennis to enrich kids' lives. Develop non-traditional funding sources. Forge unexpected community partnerships.

QUICKSTART TENNIS OF CENTRAL VIRGINIA

Tip for Success

Time management is the key to being a successful tournament stringer, but you also need to be a team member and know when to ask for help, and be willing to help your teammates.

ROGER GOUGH



Community Tennis Association of the Year

QuickStart Tennis of Central Virginia

► QuickStart Tennis of Central Virginia focuses on youngsters in underserved communities in central and southside Virginia. In the 30 communities it serves, QSCV's goal is happy, healthy, active and literate children.

When Covid hit, QSCV quickly realized the challenges it presented when it comes to access to healthy activity, nutrition and education, so it launched "Reading for Racquets," which paired tennis with literacy and nutrition. A goal was to build "home libraries" for kids to improve reading skills and scores and to build awareness for nutrition.

During the 2020-2021 school year, QSCV distributed six to eight books per student to more than 2,800 disadvantaged and at-risk youngsters. Tennis and reading are a dynamic duo to QSCV because they both are skills that have a lifelong impact.

"QuickStart Tennis of Central Virginia is well-deserving of recognition as *RSP's* Community Tennis Association of the Year," says Alex Chan, associate director of community services at USTA Mid-Atlantic. "They invest in their community, championing tennis and making it accessible to as many people as possible." —Mikiya Ellis-Glunt

Stringer of the Year

Roger Gough



► USRSA Master Racquet Technician Roger Gough has been stringing racquets for more than 30 years—at stores, pro shops and major professional tournaments.

Gough annually provides racquet services for the Tiburon and Fairfield Men's USTA Challengers and the Berkley Women's \$60,000 event, and he's been a regular stringer at the Oracle Challenger Series, including Newport Beach and Houston. His resume also includes stringing at the Western & Southern Open in Cincinnati, the BNP Paribas Open at Indian Wells, and many other professional tournaments. In addition, he's a member of the Head, Yonex and Priority One tournament teams.

But that's not the only reason why he's *Racquet Sports Industry's* Stringer of the Year. When Gough isn't on the road at pro events, he services frames for clients through RG Tennis Services at his home shop in Davis, Calif. And, most importantly, his dedication to the profession includes constantly sharing his experiences and knowledge with others.

As a former certified teaching pro, it certainly doesn't hurt that he intimately knows the game and what players want and need. —Bob Patterson

CONGRATULATIONS FROM USTA MID-ATLANTIC



USTA
MID-ATLANTIC

2021 CHAMPIONS OF TENNIS

**CTA of the Year:
QuickStart Tennis
of Central Virginia**

**Tennis Advocate
of the Year:
David Lee, USTA
Advocacy
Committee
Chairman**

**Junior Tennis
Champion of the
Year: Jordan
Zimmerman**

**Park & Rec Agency
of the Year:
Howard County
Rec and Parks,
Md.**

**Commercial
Exec/Sales Rep of
the Year:
Mike Ballardie,
Slinger Bag**



We are proud of the work being done to grow tennis for ALL in the Mid-Atlantic Section. To learn more about the impact tennis is making in the region and how you can get involved, visit www.usta.com/MidAtlanticImpact

**Tip for Success**

With major building and renovation projects, be realistic about cost estimates, and construction timelines—which will build trust within your community.

LISA & DOUGLAS GOLDMAN TENNIS CENTER



Public Tennis Facility of the Year

Lisa & Douglas Goldman Tennis Center

► Something old is incredible and new again.

For 125 years, San Francisco's Golden Gate Park tennis facility has built a reputation as the "cradle of champions," counting Billie Jean King, Rosie Casals, Peanut Louie Harper and Brad Gilbert among its alums. With a \$27 million renovation, the site evolved into the newly renamed Lisa & Douglas Goldman Ten-

nis Center. Now, it's been named *Racquet Sports Industry's* Public Tennis Facility of the Year.

"The Lisa & Douglas Goldman Tennis Center renovations have allowed the facility to offer extensive community programming and outreach for years to come," says Beau Fieldsend, USTA manager of Infrastructure Services.

The state-of-the-art, four-acre institution, with

construction funded primarily through donations from Bay Area philanthropies, includes 16 courts, (including one stadium style), five pickleball courts and a 7,800-square-foot clubhouse with lounge, showers, lockers, kitchen, patio, garden—and a classroom dedicated to offering education opportunities through San Francisco's Park and Recreation's youth tennis

programs. Facilities operator Lifetime Activities is also coordinating all levels of year-round programming, including kids camps, local tournaments, beginner to advanced tennis lessons for all ages, Cardio Tennis and more.

—Kent Oswald

Tip for Success

Get involved. Tennis is such a great outlet for juniors, but they can't enjoy it without volunteers who make their experience special.

LARRY NEWTON



Youth Tennis Provider of the Year Larry Newton

► Larry Newton is a legend on the Omaha tennis scene. He first became involved with the Omaha Tennis Association when his kids were growing up, and since then, he's served in a variety of roles. Currently, he chairs the Junior Play Committee for USTA Missouri Valley, and is vice chair of the USTA National Local Play and Competition Committee.

While his dedication to the game is evident through his volunteering record, his commitment to junior tennis has made the game more accessible and fun for all youngsters. That dedication is why Newton is *RSI's* Youth Tennis Provider of the Year.

Among many accomplishments, Newton was instrumental in helping launch the USTA Junior Circuit program and PlayTracker tool. He also was a project leader for the Net Generation Pathway Regulations. He's run over 100 junior events in his career and has spent six years as an administrator for USTA Regional Competition Training Centers, growing his player pool from 20 to more than 300. —Mark Collins



Congratulations

Person of the Year Toni Wiley

CEO, Sportsmen's Tennis & Enrichment Center

Longfellow Health Clubs Private/Commercial Facility of the Year



USTA
NEW ENGLAND

**Tip for Success**

Tennis instruction is not rocket science. By taking a common-sense approach to instruction, players of all ages and ability levels will benefit.

KEN DEHART

USPTA Member of the Year

Ken DeHart

► Ken DeHart of Portola, Calif., first discovered tennis as a college freshman, and by his senior year was the No. 2 singles player and co-MVP of his team. After earning a Master's degree, he became a high school boys' tennis coach. But his enthusiasm and drive didn't stop there.

DeHart joined the USPTA in 1976 and attended every USPTA World Conference and Division Conference, so he could learn from his peers. He then went on to serve as tennis director at several clubs and he became a USPTA Master Professional in 1990. His many

achievements include being a two-time USPTA Southwest and two-time USPTA Northern California Professional of the Year. He has also served on the USPTA National Education Committee, Master Professional Committee and, coming full circle, has presented

at several USPTA World Conferences and Division Conferences.

"The USPTA was proud to present Ken with the George Bacso Lifetime Achievement Award at our recent 2021 World Conference in Las Vegas," says USPTA CEO John Embree. "Ken has been a USPTA member for over 40 years and has served in numerous leadership roles, but perhaps the most amazing thing about Ken, after many years in the sport, is his tremendous passion for teaching tennis." —Judy Leand

Ken DeHart, who joined the USPTA 45 years ago, has played and taught tennis since he was 19 years old.



Congratulations

RSI CHAMPIONS OF TENNIS



2021 Intermountain Winners

Public Park of the Year:

Jaycee Park Tennis Courts • Cheyenne, WY

Pro/Specialty Retailer of the Year:

House of Tennis • Las Vegas, NV

2021 Intermountain Hall of Fame Inductees & Annual Award Winners

HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES:

Joan Birkland • Colorado

Marie Robertson • Wyoming

ANNUAL AWARD WINNERS:

Barbara Clark Award (Diversity & Inclusion):

Dolores Larsen • Weiser, ID

Family of the Year:

Buckingham Family • Boise, ID

Nikos Ridle Award (Junior Sportsmanship):

Cole Brashear • Las Vegas, NV

Inaugural RSI Lifetime Achievement Award

Rob Scott, USTA Intermountain Executive Director, congratulates John Callen, USTA Southern Executive Director, on his RSI Lifetime Achievement Inaugural Award.



**Tip for Success**

Don't just be a "sideline coach"—get out and play tournaments and leagues to remind your young players that you have more than just "experience." Lend your support to area and regional events.

AMY BADGER

Tip for Success

Don't forget, communication works both ways—not only does the word need to go out about programs, but players need to know someone is listening to them.

HOWARD COUNTY RECREATION & PARKS



High School Coach of the Year Amy Badger

► Tennis coaches are teachers at heart, so it's only natural that so many of them lend their talents and time to high school tennis. Albuquerque Academy girls' tennis coach Amy Badger has given more than two decades of her time to the school, and it's been time well spent, as the trophy case has been well stocked since Badger came aboard in 2000. Among the highlights: She led the school to four New Mexico high school state team championships, and 25 of her players have won state singles or doubles titles.

A former No. 1 player at the University of New Mexico, Badger leads with a voice of experience and calm. Her players learn valuable lessons about not only where best to serve when down break point, but learn the value of teamwork, camaraderie and the importance of being civic-minded.

"The teachers I had and the challenge to learn tennis captivated me from the start, and that challenge still keeps me involved today with these girls," says Badger, *RSI's* High School Coach of the Year. "Doors were really opened for me because of this great sport, and I try to show that journey to these girls." —*Jeff Sikes*



Parks & Recreation Agency of the Year Howard County Recreation & Parks

► Creativity and communication are the two words that come to mind for Alex Chan, associate director of community services for the USTA's Mid-Atlantic Section, when it comes to describing Howard County's Department of Recreation & Parks.

"They are the best. They make things happen," says Chan. "I work with several departments of park and recreation, and Howard County is so open to new ideas and to being very innovative."

The organization is generous with sharing its concepts, he notes. During the early part of the pandemic, Howard County shifted to offering virtual tennis lessons so that new players, as well as returning athletes, could hit the courts ready to play once in-person camps were offered again. Howard County also is active on social media, posting short instructional videos to help keep juniors and adults engaged. And another key to its success is the strong, positive relationship the Rec & Parks department has with the local school system, helping to promote and offer tennis to youngsters. —*Mary Helen Sprecher*

Tip for Success

Foster an inclusive environment and make sure adaptive athletes know they belong in the game and on the court.

JIM HAMM



Adaptive Tennis Champion of the Year Jim Hamm

► Thanks to Jim Hamm's energy, passion and leadership, Special Populations Tennis is widely recognized as a flagship organization for adaptive tennis well beyond its home state of Georgia and USTA Southern.

"Special Pops Tennis, through the leadership of Jim, is now known nationally as the gold standard for adaptive tennis programming," says USTA Georgia Executive Director Darren Potkey. "We're very blessed to have Jim here in Georgia."

For all he's done to advance adaptive tennis, Hamm is RSI's Adaptive Tennis Champion of the Year.

Hamm, the executive director of Special Populations Tennis, based in metro Atlanta, helps to provide a fun and inclusive environment that focuses on enriching lives. From training academies to league play to tournaments, Special Pops Tennis helps athletes build self-confidence and life skills through social interaction with each other.

"My greatest reward is to get to know an athlete as a whole person and then share my love for them through a common interest in tennis," Hamm says. —Lindsey Davila



Congratulations on your well-deserved success from the United States Professional Tennis Association.

Thanks to individuals and organizations like you, the sport and business of tennis have never been better.

**USTA Northern California
would like to congratulate**

Roger Gough



**for being named
Stringer of the Year**



Champions of Tennis 2021



Tip for Success

Forge strong community partnerships and attract good groups of volunteers who have a passion for the game.

LAKE NORMAN TENNIS ASSOCIATION

Tip for Success

Passion and commitment to wheelchair tennis will increase awareness in communities—and help to change lives.

JENNIFER EDMONSON



Adult Tennis Provider of the Year Lake Norman Tennis Association

► The Lake Norman Tennis Association is rapidly growing tennis in North Carolina, and particularly shines in its opportunities for adult beginners. For example, in 2021, LNTA's "Try Tennis" program attracted more than 200 adult players and is now converting those enthusiasts into leagues. Another popular offering is the "ServeAces Mini-Tennis Bar League"—ServeAces is a play on "cervezas," the Spanish word for beer—a social league that plays in bars and breweries with pop-up nets, foam balls and 21-inch racquets.

"ServeAces started in 2016 with 64 players, and there are now more than 500," says LNTA Executive Director Amy Brandon. "Some have converted into our Try Tennis program and others are now USTA players and league captains." Brandon, along with LNTA President JD Weber and the organization's board, continue to add innovative programming, thus earning LNTA RSI's Adult Tennis Provider of the Year award.

"From the beginner to the most advanced, from clubs to the parks to the breweries, LNTA has programs to make tennis fun and help the sport grow," says Kelly Gaines, executive director of USTA North Carolina. —*Judy Leand*

Wheelchair Tennis Champion of the Year Jennifer Edmonson



► Jennifer Edmonson is a pioneer when it comes to wheelchair tennis. More than 25 years ago, she volunteered at the Cajun Classic in Baton Rouge, La. About five years after that, she took on the role of tournament director. The tournament is a Super Series event on the UNIQLO Wheelchair Tennis Tour and easily one of the premier wheelchair tennis tournaments in the country, twice winning USTA Southern Wheelchair Tournament of the Year honors.

But Edmonson's service goes much further. She is in her second term as chair of the USTA Wheelchair Tennis Committee, and she's served on Southern's Wheelchair Tennis Committee since 2013, including as chair since 2019.

"Jen represents what is best in a volunteer for the USTA, and it just so happens she is doing her fabulous work in wheelchair tennis," says Jason Harnett, manager/head coach for Wheelchair, part of USTA Player & Coach Development.

Adds Cee Jai Jones, USTA Southern director of Diversity, NJTL & Grants: "Jennifer is the heart and soul of wheelchair tennis in Louisiana, USTA Southern and the country."

—*Ron Cioffi*

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR WELL-DESERVED RETIREMENT!



*John Callen, USTA Southern
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of the Year**
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**Grassroots
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*Second Serve
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**Tip for Success**

There is strength in numbers—chances for success are greater when multiple entities collaboratively and consistently show support for public tennis projects and programs.

JAYCEE PARK TENNIS COURTS

Tip for Success

Don't force your audience to come to you, but meet them where they are and where they are comfortable, whether it is in schools, on courts or via Zoom.

ADVANTAGE CLEVELAND

Public Park of the Year Jaycee Park Tennis Courts

► Cheyenne may be best known for its Frontier Days, but this Wyoming city has a robust tennis community, too. When the Jaycee Park public tennis courts fell into disrepair, just blocks away from the Frontier Days site, the tennis community stepped up.

"The well-used courts at Jaycee Park had safety concerns, elevating the need for repair," says Jason Sanchez, deputy director of Community Recreation & Events for the City of Cheyenne. "We partnered with USTA Wyoming to make a case to allocate funding from the 2019 mill levy grant."

The grand opening for the two renovated courts took place in October 2020 and included a free adult/senior clinic, courtesy of an AARP "Small Dollar, Big Impact" grant secured by the Cheyenne Tennis Association.

"In times of tight budgets, a strong tennis culture and vocal tennis community is crucial to advocate for this sport and for our courts," says Josh Cossitt, director of Frontier Park Tennis Center and the concessionaire for Cheyenne Parks & Rec summer tennis programming. "The Cheyenne tennis community has consistently shown up in support of public tennis over the years." —Peg Connor



NJTL Chapter of the Year Advantage Cleveland

► Advantage Cleveland Tennis and Education (advantagecle.org) has, since 2010, helped the city connect with its storied tennis history. But that isn't the only reason it is *RSI's* National Junior Tennis & Learning (NJTL) Chapter of the Year.

During these pandemic times, the program has taken exceptional care to deliver outstanding fitness, wellness, literacy, STEM and creative expression classes to elementary and junior high school students from more than 70 schools, with high school- and college-age students serving as models and mentors. All of this has been coordinated online and in person as safe practices allowed.

Whether virtual or in person, tennis remains the attractive force. The goals of Advantage Cleveland's programs are to develop character, encourage education and enhance a productive citizenry.

"We are looking at the whole student, making sure that they have everything they need to be successful on and off the court and in the classroom," says Executive Director Liz Deegan. —Kent Oswald



COURTESY USTA WYOMING; ADVANTAGE CLEVELAND; PTR

Tip for Success

Be open to learning new things and new parts of the industry, and never back away from an opportunity.

MARGIE ZESINGER



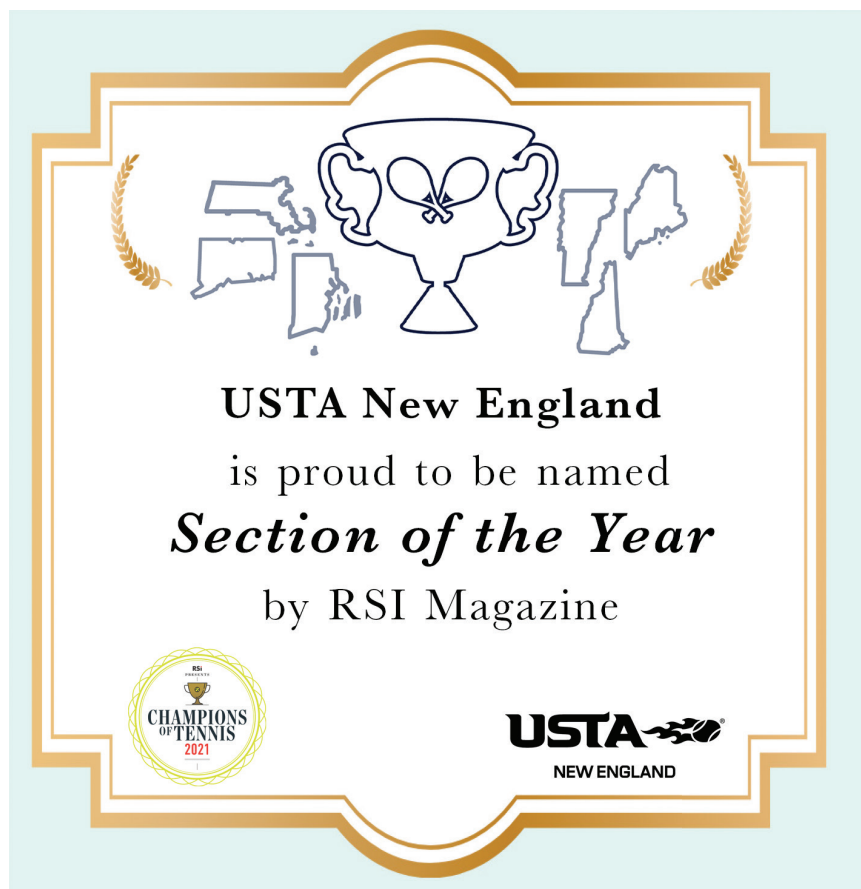
PTR Member of the Year Margie Zesinger

► As head of female tennis at IMG Academy in Bradenton, Fla., Margie Zesinger regularly presents at international coaching symposiums and conferences. During her career, she has coached world-ranked Top 10 junior players, women NCAA Division I singles champions, and junior females through their pro careers, helping them win their first professional titles and reach career highs in the WTA rankings.

But her experience doesn't stop there. She's also coached full-time at the ITF pro circuit level and the WTA tour, and worked alongside some of the best American junior girls at USTA and Team USA national camps.

"The most important mindset for any coach is to be willing to be open and try anything," Zesinger says.

"Margie has many accomplishments in her illustrious career and does a fabulous job running the female tennis program at IMG," says PTR President and CEO Dan Santorum. "She is an outstanding role model." —Judy Leand



**Tip for Success**

As with tennis itself, recognize the challenges your opponent brings, but play your game the best that you can.

USTA NEW ENGLAND



USTA Section of the Year USTA New England

► This past year posed exceptional challenges for the sport, yet many USTA sections continued to move the dial in terms of tennis participation and activity. But USTA New England stands out as *RSI*'s USTA Section of the Year, for both its activity on the court and virtually.

"We've introduced the sport to thousands of people on public courts during one of the toughest times in history, and we have long-term plans to continue the momentum," says USTA NE COO and Executive Director Matt Olson.

New England's "Tennis in the Parks" program, run in conjunction with Wilson, started two years ago with 450 junior-to-adult beginners in nine towns—and since has grown to more than 2,000 participants in 50 towns. Registration for leagues grew nearly 60 percent during the same period, helped by the section's social media outreach using the hashtag #iamatennisplayer as a rallying point.

April was again "Provider Appreciation Month," highlighting the section's coaches, tournament directors and teachers. And to prepare for a return to "normal" times, there's been an increased focus on the new USTA New England Tennis & Education Foundation to enhance fundraising for NJTL chapters and aid underserved tournament players and wheelchair and adaptive athletes.

Exceptional times; exceptional section. —Kent Oswald



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GREG LAPPIN
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LARRY NEWTON
Youth Tennis Provider of the year

JIM HAMM
Adaptive Tennis Champion of the year

KEN DEHART
USPTA Member of the Year

JORDAN ZIMMERMAN
Junior Tennis Champion

PHIL PARRISH
*DIRECTOR, LONGFELLOW CLUB
Private/ Commercial Facility of the Year*

Tip for Success

Tennis play and participation increase in communities when dedicated, passionate volunteers advocate for the sport.

TENNIS CHAMPIONS



Innovative Tennis Event/ Initiative of the Year Tennis Champions

► Recognizing that tennis thrives in communities of like-minded enthusiasts, the USTA has formalized an innovative grassroots effort dedicated to engaging individuals who advocate for tennis locally, earning the Tennis Champions program *RSi*'s Innovative Tennis Initiative of the Year award.

The 500 Tennis Champions throughout the country “truly love the sport and want everyone in their communities to get involved in tennis,” says Stacey Fieldsend, the USTA's national manager for Tennis Engagement, who spearheaded the program with Izzy Hortman. The USTA serves up monthly challenges to the Champions, with tools and resources provided, designed to help them engage players and non-players in their communities. As incentives, Champions receive exclusive promo codes and coupons, educational webinars and networking opportunities.

Hortman calls the inaugural 2021 class of Champions “the most passionate group of people I’ve had the pleasure of working with,” noting their commitment and dedication has inspired the USTA to increase the program to 750 Tennis Champions in 2022. —Cindy Cantrell

CONGRATULATIONS FROM USTA NORTHERN TO RACQUET SPORTS INDUSTRY MAGAZINE'S ANNUAL CHAMPIONS OF TENNIS AWARD WINNERS!



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USTA
SOUTHWEST

Congrats also to USTA Southern's
John Callen on his Lifetime Achievement Award

CONGRATULATIONS

John Callen

Lifetime Achievement Award



USTA 
MIDDLE STATES

Tip for Success

How do you grow tennis in your community? Start a program! Resource guides are available from USTA National and from USTA sections, and grants are available as well.

DAVID LEE



Tennis Advocate of the Year David Lee

► From the moment you meet David Lee, you understand he's committed to giving everyone the chance to play and experience the lifelong benefits of tennis. He's played his entire life and shares his passion for the sport widely, both in the USTA Mid-Atlantic Section and nationally. For all of his efforts, Lee is *Racquet Sports Industry's* Tennis Advocate of the Year.

"David's advocacy extends through the many avenues of tennis he's involved in—from captaining USTA League teams, to coaching JTT, to volunteering locally and nationally, and serving in leadership roles," says Lindsey Keeler, chief programs officer for USTA Mid-Atlantic. "He's truly an advocacy champion."

Lee, from Gaithersburg, Md., is serving his second term as chair of the USTA National Advocacy Committee, supporting tennis advocacy efforts across the country to help spread the word about the benefits tennis brings to people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds. He served on the USTA Mid-Atlantic board of directors and is the current president of the Montgomery County Tennis Association.

—Lauren Hoffmann

USTA Northern California
would like to congratulate

Ken DeHart



for being named
USPTA Member of the Year





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January 2022

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Outside the
Box 64

Tennis Players
Should Consider
Yoga 67

**Sowing
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Pickleball 73
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New Footwear and Apparel Endorsee

John R. Embree, USPTA CEO

In the November/December issue of ADDvantage, I extolled the virtues of our past partnership with Fromm Tennis as our footwear and apparel supplier of Nike that concluded at the end of November, 2021. I also mentioned that we were working on an arrangement with a new supplier that would be announced soon thereafter. Drum roll please...

I am incredibly excited to announce that Tennis Warehouse took over this category beginning last month, December 1. It is a multi-year agreement that will offer a wide range of benefits to our membership that we have not been able to offer previously. Under the terms of this agreement:

- 1** Members will be able to select from a variety of brands for their footwear and apparel needs, including Nike. In addition, because many of our members have an affinity for other companies, you will now be able to wear the brand of your choice and still be a part of the USPTA endorsement program.
- 2** USPTA members will still receive 30 percent off MSRP on personal products and up to a 40 percent discount off MSRP on products for your pro shop.
- 3** Members enrolled in our Supplemental Savings Program will still get a 5 percent contribution of

of total pro shop purchases to their retirement account.

- 4** Custom embroidery is available for personal merchandise and retail in your shops, whether it be USPTA branded or your facility name.
- 5** Tennis Warehouse has multiple warehouses across the globe that will service members more efficiently than ever before. Besides having their original west coast location in San Luis Obispo, CA, they have recently opened a state-of-the-art distribution center outside of Atlanta, making it much quicker to ship products to east coast customers. In addition, our members who reside in Europe or Australia can, for the first time, get USPTA endorsed products in the countries where they live. It's fantastic!
- 6** Finally, Tennis Warehouse believes there is a branding opportunity for the USPTA when they produce television commercials. Since they conduct a wide range of advertising during various tennis telecasts, wouldn't it be terrific to see the USPTA logo at the conclusion of their various spots? We have not had the wherewithal to promote our brand with consumers since our instructional show ended on the Tennis Channel — so, what

better way to do it than with our new partner, Tennis Warehouse!

As most everyone in our industry knows, Tennis Warehouse is the “go-to” company for product reviews, demo programs, expert stringing services, and excellent customer service. With every manufacturer going customer direct and so many online shopping options in today's economy, Tennis Warehouse is no longer viewed as the enemy of pro shops. Instead, they are the leading retailer in our industry, without question.

Having dealt with the leadership at Tennis Warehouse since its inception, I can vouch for their commitment to support our members at the grassroots. In fact, two of the top three officers of the company were colleagues of mine at Wilson. Suffice to say, we have had a long history together.

This is a new day for the USPTA and its membership. Working closely with Tennis Warehouse for USPTA footwear and apparel makes sense on a variety of levels and I look forward to building this partnership in the coming years. You will hear much more about the programs and promotions that Tennis Warehouse will be launching for our members in the weeks ahead. Thanks in advance for jumping on this bandwagon and giving them your support. I will be shocked if the experience that you have dealing with them is not top drawer!



TENNIS WAREHOUSE

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Wilson

RETURN TO THE WILD

The new Blade v8 celebrates the return to your natural element of competitive tennis — renewed and reconnected to the game you love.





Keeping Your Eye on the Ball

Richard Slivocka, USPTA President

I can't communicate enough about how excited I am to be writing my first column as USPTA National President. It is such a tremendous honor, and I am not taking this opportunity for granted. We have had such outstanding leadership since the inception of our great organization, and it is humbling to be a part of this exceptional group.

First, I would like to thank the immediate past president, Feisal Hassan, not just for all his hard work and passion for our association, but for the leadership he has shown the USPTA, the board, and myself over the past two years. We've had a rollercoaster of a time, like most in our country, yet Feisal has done an outstanding job navigating these challenging and ever-changing waters. I would also like to thank the previous Board of Directors and the Executive Committee for their tireless commitment and vision in helping shape our organization.

And so, I am happy to say that our association is doing great! We are coming out of a difficult period, having still produced financial and membership growth. We currently show a 3.2 percent increase in membership, which is truly amazing during a pandemic. At the time of writing, we stand at roughly 11,400 total members with a positive surplus of revenue through the midway point of the fourth quarter of 2021. The USPTA has also added four brand new endorsees to our association — Tennis Warehouse, Fiix Elbow, StringPing, and Apeak Tennis. If you aren't familiar with these new companies and how they will support our members, I encourage you to reach out to

the national office or our website, www.uspta.com.

As we continue to be the industry leader in developing and delivering content for tennis-teaching professionals, we were able to get back to business per usual by conducting our first in-person World Conference in two years. The 2021 World Conference in Las Vegas was a tremendous success! While we didn't have our traditional Vegas turnout, we did welcome 689 attendees back to the only tennis industry merchandise and trade show to take place worldwide since the pandemic, rivaling many of our other World Conferences. The National staff was outstanding, and the event was consistent with our world-class standards. We look forward to offering you another tremendous conference in New Orleans come september!

Now it's time to look to our future. We are currently working on selecting the members of our national committees and task forces, as we've had an unprecedented number of applicants this year for committee positions. The Board and I are incredibly excited to get these committees formed and placed into action, reorienting to a focus on the DNA of our organization — how can we help you, the member? We want to make these committees more interactive with the membership, continuing the initiatives Feisal developed during his tenure as president, especially towards becoming a more diverse association. Feisal did an outstanding job with this, as did the Diversity, Education, and

Inclusion committee members. We will continue to put this at the forefront of our association. The USPTA wants to be more in tune with what you, the member, need and want from your trade association. The board and I will work hard over the next two years to make sure that we help you in any way possible.

The new Board of Directors will be meeting for the first time in January at our World Headquarters in Orlando. We have a great group, and I am looking forward to working with them and seeing what we can accomplish.

I am entering my 21st year as a member of the USPTA. And like many of you, this association has given me so much, and I take pride in everything we do and what we stand for. As members of the USPTA, we must remain committed to growing our association and our industry. We are at a crucial time for our association. We must continue to reach out to our youth and mentor and inspire the next generation of teaching professionals. ★

Feisal Hassan, Richard Slivocka, and Jason Gilbert at the 2021 USPTA World Conference in Las Vegas.





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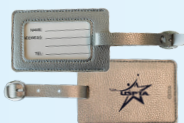
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Thinking Outside the Box

Avis R. Murray, USPTA Master Professional

The Bass Rocks Golf Club recently celebrated their 125th anniversary. Each department of the club engaged in some way in the observance of this momentous occasion. While the golfers participated in a Pro-Am, the club held a massive gala with 320 members attending for a delicious meal, dancing, recognizing the staff and board of governors, as well as a very special fireworks display.

For the tennis portion of the occasion, there was an all-day event that began in the morning with a tennis clinic presented by Traci Green, who has been the Harvard University Head Tennis Coach for the last 13 years. Traci trained under Arthur Ashe, Serena and Venus Williams, Chanda Rubin, and Ajay Pant — winning a Gold Ball at the age of 14. Traci led some tremendous doubles drills with the club members — one of the day's highlights!

After the clinic, members participated in a Davis Cup Tennis competition — which included organizing 12 countries with three-to-four members representing each nation. Players were notified of the country

they were representative of and advised to bring one “favorite dish” from said country, plus any accessories.

Each player was then given a sticker of the country's flag to wear. Taking it a step further, many dressed in traditional garb representing the country, some waved flags and banners with many more creative ideas on full display.

The national anthem of each country played as competitors were announced and paraded on court. Over 42 members were divided into two groupings with six countries in each division. Because we had only three courts to work with, this was the ideal breakdown of facilities and participants. Each group housed a mixture of performance levels — creating an equal playing field for five rounds of triples (or quadruples). Abiding by the rules described on the next page, here's how you too can set your own unique Davis Cup style tournament using the parameters we've adopted. Although you may adopt any country you'd like, the grouping of the teams we selected was as follows:

Group 1

United Kingdom, Georgia, Greece, USA, Canada, and Japan

Group 2

Thailand, Argentina, France, Italy, Czech Republic, and Australia

The celebratory day ended with everyone enjoying a cookout on the club's deck as many “different and crazy” prizes were presented.

Lastly, each participant was given two special gifts honoring the club's 125th anniversary — a tennis towel embroidered with a design painted by local artist and tennis player, Jill Demeri, and a 125th anniversary tennis ball key chain.

The Tennis Anniversary Committee was comprised of USPTA Master Professional and Director of Tennis Avis Murray, Lynne Salah, President of Bass Rocks Tennis, Debbie Kaufman, Diana Blitz, Anne Bresnahan, USPTA Professional Derek Geary, and tennis staff Megan Hood, Caleb Willett, and Christopher Noyes. ⚡

Members participating at the Parade of Nations at the 125 anniversary of Bass Rocks Golf Club!

Photo Courtesy of Avis Murray



Davis Cup Style Tournament

RULES OF PLAY:

**TEAMS WITH FOUR PLAYERS WILL PLACE THREE MEMBERS
ON THE BASELINE, I.E.**

- ONE PLAYER IN EACH ALLEY AND ONE ON THE BASELINE IN THE MIDDLE. THE FOURTH PLAYER WILL BE FORWARD AROUND THE "T" SERVICE LINE.
- TEAMS WITH THREE PLAYERS WILL PLACE TWO PLAYERS ON THE BASELINE IN EACH ALLEY, AND THE THIRD WILL BE FORWARD ALONG THE "T" SERVICE LINE.
- THE PLAYER IN THE RIGHT-HAND BASELINE CORNER WILL BE THE FIRST SERVER AFTER A SPIN OF RACQUETS AND DECIDE WHETHER TO SERVE, RECEIVE, PICK A SIDE, OR GIVE THE OPPOSING TEAM A CHOICE.
- THE SERVER HAS TWO SERVES, MAY SERVE UNDERHANDED OR OVERHANDED COOPERATIVELY.
- THE RECEIVER MUST RETURN THE SERVE BEFORE THE POINT IS IN PLAY.
- AFTER EACH POINT, BOTH TEAMS WILL ROTATE COUNTERCLOCKWISE IN ONE POSITION.
- WITH THIS ROTATION, THE SERVER CHANGES ON EACH POINT PLAYED AS WELL AS THE RECEIVING TEAM.
- SCORING WILL BE NO AD WITH THE DEUCE POINT BEING SERVED FROM THE RIGHT-HAND CORNER. TEAMS DO NOT SWITCH SIDES.
- ALL TEAMS WILL PLAY A TOTAL OF FIVE GAMES, I.E., 4-1, 3-2, 5-0.
- THE BALLS BEING USED ARE GREEN DOT LOW COMPRESSION, WHICH HELPS MAKE FOR LONGER AND MORE FUN POINTS.
- BALLS ARE LEFT ON THE BENCH FOR THE NEXT GROUP AND SCORES ARE REPORTED TO THE TENNIS STAFF WHEN FINISHED.
- BE CAREFUL NOT TO OVER-HIT THE BALL AT THE NEAR PLAYER IN WHAT WE CALL "THE HOT SEAT."

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Tennis Players Should Consider Yoga!

Margit Bannon, USPTA Certified Professional

How I ended up teaching “Yoga for Tennis” might surprise you, considering that I didn’t like yoga one bit when I first tried it! At the time, I was suffering from a lower back injury that I sustained a few months after graduating from Miami University (OH), where I played tennis on scholarship. Upon the suggestion of my therapist, I tried some evening classes that were being held at their office. I can still see it to this day: walking into a dimly lit room with my beach towel in hand (not yet owning my own mat) and feeling utterly lost at the back of the room. I was introduced to “postures” where I had no idea what I was doing, and I hated the feeling of being “bad” at yoga, naturally comparing myself to others in my peripherals. I was slipping on my towel, and surely, I wasn’t burning any calories because we were moving too slow to break a sweat! Because it was so different from what I had experienced in the past, yoga felt like a major waste of time.

It took me a while to try yoga again — this time in a gym setting where I began going once a week after workouts. I slowly enjoyed the challenge so much that I sought out classes with my gym pass all over the city, whenever and wherever I could — in-between teaching tennis for a living.

At first, it was still extremely hard. I was trying to find a balance between overdoing and underdoing it with regard to activity, teaching, and my previous injury. But also because with yoga, I was asked to do the complete opposite from what I had learned on the tennis court. I needed to slow down and pay attention — and gradually, it began to fill the void of all those hours I spent training for tennis in an aging body that suddenly needed more care after years of abuse.

In the beginning, all I cared about was healing my lower back through postures that offered opportunities for strength and a better range of motion. As yoga teachers, we often say that you come into “the

practice” for what you want to get out of it, but later find that you become interested in other facets of yoga, and that’s precisely what happened for me. But let’s start with the obvious reasons you should give yoga a shot as a tennis player — at any age and ability level!

Injury Prevention

Because of tennis’s repetitive nature for both recreational and competitive players alike, overuse injuries are common. According to a USTA Sport Science Committee injury tracking study, 861 Junior tennis players were studied to understand the most common injuries sustained. In this order, they are lower back, shoulder, ankle, knee, and wrist. Out of the 861 players, a total of 41 percent of all players reported injury, with one-third of players reporting a second injury. This data tells us that players don’t fully recover from their initial injury before suffering subsequent harm. We know how vital the kinetic chain is, and if one area is hurt, there’s a good chance of overloading another location in the body. Remember that you’re coming into the practice for what you’d like to gain. Where is your current tennis training regimen lacking? Is it strength, flexibility, balance, or agility you’re lacking? Yoga is here to help!

Recovery

With yoga styles labeled as “hot” and “vinyasa flow” maintaining popularity, tennis players new to yoga might be fooled into thinking that rigorous types of practice are “where it’s at.” Because, as players, we’re used to keeping a quicker



Photo Courtesy of Margit Bannon

USPTA

United States Professional Tennis Association



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- The IFP Academy is a market-leading pickleball training, certification, and rating company.
- Accreditation and training available in over 62 countries across the globe.



PADEL

- USPTA Professional Padel Certification is offered by All Racquet Sports.
- On-court teaching and learning experience by AFP Academy Master Certified Trainer, Marcos Del Pilar.



PLATFORM

- The USPTA offers two levels of Platform Certification; Platform Professional & Elite Platform Professional.
- Receive all of the same benefits & pay the same annual dues as current Certified Tennis Professionals.

Photo Credit: Kevin Karczewski / USPTA



Margit Bannon (Left) and USPTA CEO John Embree (Right) at the 2021 USPTA World Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada.

tempo, training that is often punishing in nature is considered a plus. Instead, assuming you're already taxing yourself physically, allow yoga to bring a balance to what you are previously doing. In other words, just because you can stand on your hands doesn't mean you should. Take a different approach to yoga in alignment-based and restorative style yoga classes where moving slower and passive openings are offered. In the latter, you'll be encouraged to lie on the ground and use props such as blankets, bolsters, and blocks. These poses are held for extended periods, working towards long-term flexibility, allowing you to recover quicker from the next time you practice on court. At first, your greatest challenge may be that you're not being asked "to do" as much physically when lying still, but after a while, the body and mind adjust, and it feels like a glorious release (as if you've given yourself a massage) by the time your session is done!

Focus

Who doesn't need to find better focus throughout their day? Maybe you've noticed that you need this improvement throughout the course of a tennis match or practice. Where does your mind go when you're working on a stroke? Is it pulled in a million directions? Is it even

postures of yoga that you use to prevent injury and aid in recovery are a pathway to finding better focus as you become more aware of sensations within your body. This change happens as you connect with your breath and as you become more comfortable with slowing down. When we slow down, we have the opportunity to notice the patterns of our minds and the

stories we tell ourselves that are often unproductive to the game of tennis! So the first step is in noticing, and when we do, it's a literal game-changer — not just in tennis but in life! You may have heard the saying; you are what you think?! Ponder how powerful that is and how beneficial it could be if you were to catch yourself before responding in a certain way on court or before going down the rabbit hole of negativity. In other words, the first step is recognizing the problem.

on court with you? How do you respond to a bad call or when you're not playing your best? Are you reactive, and does this trickle into your ability to perform? Are you using your time efficiently in between points and changeovers? Chances are, you've said yes to at least one of these questions.

The physical

Here's a simple Yoga for Tennis drill you can try on court: Practice a simple "mini tennis" drill with a partner with the only goal of watching the ball as closely as you can. Notice how many times your mind goes to something other than the task at hand. Your mind will naturally move elsewhere as it gets accustomed to what you are doing: the work is catching and redirecting yourself back to what you are doing. You have now practiced yoga in action!

Yoga for Tennis

In summary, there's a reason why tennis professionals such as Novak Djokovic have gravitated towards yoga as a way to improve their tennis lifestyle. So come into yoga for what you'd like to enhance within your game and surprise yourself with how much more your tennis world opens up! ✨





Sowing and Reaping

Michael C. Alcott
USPTA Elite Professional



When playing tennis, you need to know a fundamental principle of life and tennis — the power of sowing and reaping. Tennis is about sending the ball to a specific court area, anticipating, and then receiving the ball. At its core, it's a big game of throwing and catching — only you are using a racquet to both send and receive. Understanding where to send the ball (sowing) can help you anticipate where the ball will be coming back percentage-wise (reaping). This is a basic fundamental I call “directionals.” The basic fundamental of directionals are as follows: cross-court begets cross-court, down the line begets down the line, lob begets a lob, and drop shot begets a drop shot. If you understand these fundamentals, you can build a solid foundation to develop a plan for your strategy and tactics.

Photo Credit: BalanceFormCreative

The directional principles are derived from the idea that it's easier to hit the ball back where it came from. In doing so, the player's racquet is striking the ball perpendicular to the vector of the incoming ball, giving them the most significant margin of error. Changing the direction of the ball means that the player is not hitting squarely behind the incoming shot. Instead, they are actually hitting the ball off-center of perpendicular. Knowing these universal directionals is foundational. Yet, it doesn't mean that your opponent will follow these patterns every time. Also, knowing these directionals doesn't mean that you have to follow them every time either. It helps to know where your primary target lie.

Primary targets are targets that give you the biggest margin of error. I say targets because cross-court and down the line are not targets — they are directionals. However, there are many targets along a directional. A primary target gives you the longest distance between the location you are hitting the ball from and the target where you are sending the ball. It is usually a target that is located along a cross-court directional. A tennis court is 78 feet long. However, hitting from the deuce court corner of the court to the deuce court corner on the other side of the net yields a distance of 82.6 feet, which gives you another 4.5 feet of real estate to place your shot. Going for a target in the cross-court direction means you will also be hitting over the lower part of the net. Both the lower net and the most prominent area to hit, make this shot primary. Secondary shots happen when you are hitting towards a shorter target from you and usually over the higher part of the net. This forces you to get the ball up, clear the net, and come down sooner to land inside the boundaries. Choosing whether to hit a primary or secondary target has to do with time and space. Just remember that you are responsible for where you hit the ball. There are consequences, both good and bad, as to

where you send the ball. Will you be ready to sow what you reap? Will you defend your opponent's primary shot based on where you send the ball? Positioning yourself so that you are defending their primary shot is essential. Doing so can alter your opponent's perception or tempt them to hit a secondary shot.

So how do you know if you should hit your primary or secondary shot? The following example should help you understand your options. If your opponent hits a backhand from their ad court to your ad court, you can choose to position yourself to hit a forehand from the ad court.

We call this running around the backhand.

If you decide to hit your primary target, you will send the ball with your forehand from your ad court back to your opponent's ad court. We call this an inside-out forehand. Hopefully, you are attacking the ball with your forehand and forcing them to hit a backhand. Again, this has to do with time and space and whether your opponent can run around their backhand. Can they strike a forehand, or are they forced to hit a backhand? In doing so, you are hitting to the longest distance of the court and over the lowest part of the net. If, however, you decide to hit your forehand from the ad side of your court (in this same example) and change the ball's direction, sending it down the line to your opponent's deuce court — that would be your secondary target. We call this an inside-in forehand.

It is secondary because you are changing the ball's direction, hitting a shorter distance, and the net is slightly higher as the ball crosses the net closer to the alleys.

Practice hitting your shots back to where the ball came from to increase your shot-making

percentage. As you get closer to the net, the height of the ball and having more time and space allow for more options. It becomes easier to change the directions of the ball and successfully hit a secondary target. When you are playing, think about your opponent's response to the shot that you hit. Did they follow the directionals that are described above? Did you sow what you reaped? If not, were they successful? If they were successful, why? Are you giving them too much time and space? I hope this helps you understand how to anticipate your opponent's shots. The more you play, the better you get at anticipating shots. The better you get at anticipating shots, the more time you will have to set up on the ball, take it earlier, and reduce the time your opponent has to make their next shot. ★



USPTA | IFP Academy

The United States Professional Tennis Association (USPTA), Inc. partners with the International Federation of Pickleball Academy (IFP Academy) to offer a new and improved USPTA Pickleball Certification.



Beginning January 1, 2022, USPTA members may obtain USPTA Pickleball Certification by 17 newly trained USPTA Division Head Pickleball Testers or at any IFP Academy official training center within its extensive network. In addition, all USPTA Head Division Pickleball Testers have extensive experience with the sport, both as a player and a teacher, and will receive immense in-person training by the IFP Academy.



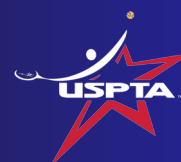
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New USPTA Pickleball Certification

John R. Embree, USPTA CEO

As most of you are aware, the USPTA contracted with the International Pickleball Teaching Professional Association (IPTPA) to conduct pickleball certification for our members. Even with COVID wreaking havoc on the industry beginning in 2020, the IPTPA could still certify hundreds of USPTA professionals when we commenced our partnership back in November of 2018. Unfortunately, at that time, the USPTA did not have the expertise internally to adequately handle pickleball certifications, which is why we reached out to Seymour Rifkind and his association to assist us with this process.

With the expiration of that agreement in late October 2021, and with the increased interest amongst USPTA professionals who are delivering the sport at their facilities, the USPTA determined that it would be in our best interest to take control of pickleball certification and handle it in house under the USPTA banner. I want to thank Seymour and his team, personally, for aiding the USPTA

over the last three years, for their guidance and expertise as we became more familiar with this growing category.

Starting January 1, 2022, the USPTA will model its pickleball certifications similarly to our previous tennis testing certifications. Each division has selected a Division Head Tester for Pickleball (a USPTA member) who is an advocate of the sport, has taught the sport for at least two years, and has an extensive playing background. These 17 Head Testers received extensive in-person training at one of two-weekend workshops in December by the IFP Academy, a market-leading pickleball training, certification, and rating company run by Robert Elliott, specializing in certification and training across the globe in 62-plus countries. Robert also happens to own Engage Pickleball, one of the premier top 3 global brands in pickleball equipment — and is also a US Open and Tournament of Pickleball pro-level medalist, former Division 1 tennis player, and instructor at Nick Bollettieri satellite training centers.

Now that these Head Testers are IFP Academy trained, they can host certification training for additional testers to work within their respective divisions or conduct certification exams for USPTA professionals who want to be USPTA Pickleball Certified. The application fee is \$229, of which \$30 will go to the IFP Academy

for a one-year pickleball training and continual education membership. With that membership, USPTA professionals will be able to access basic educational content from IFP Academy for that year. Pros will also be able to upgrade for \$100 to access unlimited video content and educational tools.

Suppose a division would like an instructor from the IFP Academy to conduct a certification (because the Division Head Tester is unable to run the test). That can easily be done with the cost for the application fee being the same \$229. Because of the extensive network of IFP Academy instructors throughout the country, they would be happy to assist in as many certification events as needed. They also provide a comprehensive virtual pickleball certification program tailored for tennis professionals.

Partnering with the IFP Academy won't take long for the USPTA to establish an extensive network of pickleball testers across the country. With the explosion of pickleball everywhere, USPTA professionals have a responsibility to deliver what their customers want. Thus, if facilities or clubs demand pickleball programming and instruction, USPTA members must be prepared to provide that service. If they don't, they may not be long for their job.

This is an exciting time for our association as we enter this new certification phase for USPTA professionals in 2022. Like it or not, pickleball is here to stay. Having a USPTA Pickleball certification will be a valuable asset for pros looking to move up in their careers.

Carley Rozpedski (left) and John Embree (Right) at the 2021 USPTA World Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada.



Photo Credit: Kevin Karczewski/USPTA

UNIVERSAL TENNIS WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE USPTA MEMBERS AND CLUBS FOR PARTNERING WITH US IN 2021.

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level-based play and growing the sport.



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2021-2022 USPTA/ThanksUSA Scholarship Recipients

Jean Pletchette, Director of Sports Initiatives, ThanksUSA



Kathleen

Kathleen knew from an early age that she wanted to live her life caring for animals.

An ambitious student,

Kathleen became a certified veterinary assistant while still in high school. She has completed an Associate of Arts in Animal Sciences degree and with the financial support of a \$3,000 USPTA/ThanksUSA scholarship, is pursuing a bachelor's degree in Zoology at the University of Central Florida. "I am sincerely honored to receive the USPTA/ThanksUSA scholarship. I thank you for your generosity and for supporting my education, says Kathleen"

The daughter of a disabled Army veteran, Kathleen attributes much of her success to her father's emphasis on education. "My dad has always promoted academics and making him proud is what influences me to push hard and strive to make my goals a reality."

Working towards admittance to veterinary school, Kathleen continues to participate in activities that enhance her academic pursuits. She helped establish the pre-veterinary Animal Lover League at Santa Fe College, researched marine life in Belize, interned with the Lube Bat Conservancy, and secured her first paying job as a veterinary technician at the University of Florida College of

Veterinary Medicine.

Although veterinary school is the next big step for Kathleen, she is also considering joining the United States Army as a member of the Veterinary Corps. Eventually she hopes to work with large animal species in a zoological park.



Ayriana

A \$3,000 USPTA/ThanksUSA scholarship is helping Ayriana realize her dream of becoming a nurse.

Ayriana became interested in the healthcare field after caring for her grandfather during his final years. She enrolled in classes at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and secured a job as a medical assistant in an OBGYN practice. "I gained a lot of experience and knowledge that I can take with me into a future nursing career," says Ayriana.

Married to an active-duty Army Specialist, Ayriana faced tough academic decisions when her husband received orders to Colorado. "This was my first move as a military spouse, a new mother, and a student." Though she was eager to transfer to a new school, Ayriana learned one of the most unfortunate, but common roadblocks faced by military spouses: not all credits transfer between colleges in different states. Even with this new obstacle, Ayriana enrolled in the Nursing

program at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. Shortly after beginning classes, the COVID pandemic threatened to derail her education once again.

"I honestly felt that I could have given up and waited until the pandemic passed, but I told myself that I needed to push through for my family. Life will continuously throw obstacles, but anything can be overcome if you persevere."


Today, Ayriana continues to persevere knowing that she has the generous support of the USPTA/ThanksUSA scholarship. "I am honored to have been selected as the recipient of this scholarship. I am incredibly grateful for ThanksUSA and the USPTA for giving me this opportunity to further my education. I am not only pursuing my career goals to better my future, but also the future of my family and patients."



Kenneth

The son of a retired Army Sergeant, Kenneth was awarded a

\$3,000 USPTA/ThanksUSA scholarship

to begin undergraduate studies at the University of the Incarnate Word in San Antonio, Texas. Inspired by his father's Army career as a pharmacy specialist, Kenneth intends to major in pharmacy, eventually earning a Doctor of Pharmacy degree. 

Membership Department Update

Dillon Chustz, USPTA Director of Membership


Rhonda Gibbs has spent her entire tennis-teaching career led by the mantra, “Have racquet, will travel.” Where there is an opportunity to teach and inspire, Rhonda will manifest. I initially met Rhonda at the 2021 USPTA World Conference in Las Vegas, where she was an active and enthusiastic participant. Her vivacious spirit swept through the conference, positively affecting everyone in her path. You can imagine the level of uncertainty we all felt as we kicked off our first major event since the pandemic began. Had we made the right decision to continue hosting an in-person event? Less than five minutes after interacting with Rhonda, we felt justified. You simply cannot beat the experience of interacting with our members in person.

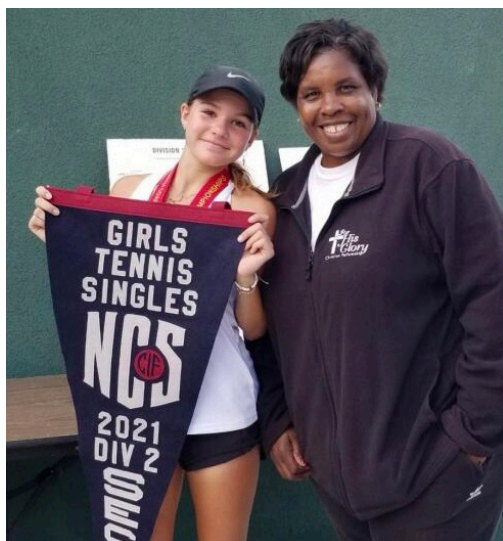
Growing up in Pennsylvania, Rhonda had a unique opportunity that most young athletes can only dream of. As the owner of an asphalt paving company, Rhonda's father built both a basketball and tennis

court at their home, setting Rhonda up for success at a young age. Rhonda eventually went on to play both basketball and tennis for the University of Pittsburgh. My initial reaction to hearing this was envy — what I would have given to have my very own tennis court as a junior player! However, once I learned of the many ways in which Rhonda is evangelizing our sport, paying that good fortune forward, my envy turned to admiration. For over 30 years, Rhonda has relied on her unflinching mentality to keep herself constantly moving, working, and engaging with players from ages 3 to 93.

Currently, she is the executive director of R.L.G. Sports Ministries in Northern California, which runs a home school physical education program to combat childhood obesity. In addition, Rhonda is also the women's head tennis coach at Berean Christian High School in Walnut Creek, CA, where she aims to coach her students "ASAP" (Academically, Spiritually, And Physically). "My students

pros with the former. She reminded us that the clientele of our longtime members would eventually become the responsibility of the members just starting out. When one of our members retires from teaching, it is imperative that their students fall into the hands of the best possible successor. I noticed many heads nodding as Rhonda beseeched everyone to think long term. I would have thought her mantra was, “Have voice, will inspire!”

When writing this article, I came across testimonials from some of Rhonda's former students. The very first review read, "That's how you do it!" This was not the first time that I've read feedback like this regarding one of our members — not by a long shot. I left the World Conference feeling incredibly inspired not only by Rhonda but also by so many of you who introduced yourselves, shared your goals and accomplishments, and reinforced my belief that USPTA pros are the best there is! I hope to see even more of you in 2022! 



come early and stay late,” Rhonda told me at the USPTA 2021 Trade Show. Her students simply want to show up for her.

At our General Membership meeting, members provided input about the future of our association and offered suggestions to their fellow pros. Rhonda urged her colleagues to introduce themselves to younger USPTA members, linking the new generation of teaching



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