



**MIDWEST**

## **USTA/Midwest Section History**

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*The USTA/Midwest Section has a deep history, one that includes great players and a network of volunteers and staff that has helped shaped the sport of tennis on a national and international level.*

### **The Beginning**

The USTA/Midwest Section (Western Tennis Association) has a rich tennis history spanning over a hundred years. It was five years before the turn of the 20th century that the Western Lawn Tennis Association was founded on July 13, 1895, when about 20 of the leading tennis players in the Midwest came together at the Chicago Beach Hotel in Chicago, Illinois. Initially, the Western Lawn Tennis Association (WLTA) governed all tennis clubs west of the Alleghenies, thus the "Western" name. However, Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky broke away and created the Tri-State Tennis Association until they merged again in 1920.

Depending on which criterion is used, the sectional boundaries in 1895 or the current boundaries, tennis came to the Midwest via Cincinnati or Chicago. Cincinnati saw the first tennis court constructed, first tennis club, the nation's oldest league and one of the first national circuit tournaments.

However, because Cincinnati was part of the Tri-State Tennis Association, to some historians Western tennis began in Chicago. The city hosted several prestigious tournaments and many of the earliest events. Chicago may claim the start of tennis in the Western Lawn Tennis Association because it hosted the first Western Tennis Championships.

As the end of the 19th century came to a close, tennis was starting to explode in many directions. In 1896 the WLTA joined the United States National Lawn Tennis Association (USNLTA).

### **1910-1920**

Historically, the USTA/Midwest Section has had a strong influence in the governance and rules and regulations of the USTA. The section's powerful influence started to emerge at national meetings. For example, in 1910 the section wanted national clay court championships created so Western leaders made presentations at the USNLTA 's Semi-Annual Meeting in New York. The creation of these events passed without dissent.

At the time the section was becoming "clay court country" because it was more economical to install and maintain clay courts instead of the customary grass courts. Clubs in the WLTA scrambled to hold the first National Clay Court Championships, and the Omaha Field Club hosted the first event held at its club in 1910 with a crowd of 5,000 watching the finals.

As a result of clay court play, participation began to grow and the game gradually changed. In 1914 Cincinnati took over the event and the Cincinnati Tennis Club held the first National Clay

Court Championships in what is today USTA/Midwest Section territory. At the same time, the Cincinnati Municipal Recreation Commission constructed the first public tennis courts, resulting in 120 public courts, 26 of them lighted, and began offering free instruction to beginners.

Other Highlights of the 1910s:

- The Chicago District Tennis Association was founded in 1914 and was cited as a national model;
- Western's first tournament was held under the lights at the Cleveland Tennis Club in 1916;
- Alternate formats were beginning to develop in the section with handicap tournaments, leagues with A-B-C divisions, southpaws' tournaments and inter-city competitions;
- "Patriotic Tournaments" were held in 1917 and tournament revenues were given to the Ambulance Corps to help with the efforts of World War I;
- In 1917 the section admitted its various districts to membership, thus establishing the relationship that exists between the section and the districts.

## **1920-1930**

In 1920 the Western Lawn Tennis Association's boundaries and bylaws were restructured. Its jurisdiction was reduced to include the state boundaries of Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan and Wisconsin, minus small sections of Illinois in the metropolitan St. Louis and Quad Cities areas. The Western boundaries were downsized to their approximate configuration today. Ohio and Indiana joined the WLTA and Kentucky went to the Southern Lawn Tennis Association. Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas and Missouri left the WLTA and united with Oklahoma to create the Missouri Valley Lawn Tennis Association. By 1923 the WLTA had 10 districts covering 120 clubs and 12,000 members.

In 1926 the Kentucky counties of Boone, Campbell and Kenton, across from Cincinnati, were transferred from the Southern Lawn Tennis Association to the Western Lawn Tennis Association, and the name of the Southern Ohio Lawn Tennis Association was changed to the Ohio Valley Lawn Tennis Association.

Player Development, as it is known today, was becoming a major focal point in tennis with the goal being mass development of junior players. Tennis leaders thought that by expanding the pool of players, mass programs would eventually produce 30 to 40 top-notch players.

Additionally, the section had a corner on national boys' events. The Chicago's South Side Tennis Club hosted events in 1922 and the Culver Military Academy in Culver, Indiana, hosted them from 1924 until 1940. The events were transferred to Kalamazoo in 1940, and the USTA Boys' 16 and 18 National Championships are still held there today in what is currently known as "the Zoo".

Other Highlights:

- In 1927 the Chicago-based Wilson Sporting Goods Company conceived and implemented the clinic concept;
- In 1925 the Western Lawn Tennis Association hosted the first US Intersectional Team Championships in Chicago;

- Mary K. Browne, USTA/Midwest Hall of Fame member, became the first American touring professional;
- In 1928 Chicago hosted the first USNLTA Annual Meeting that was held in the West.

## **1930-1940**

Although the nation was gripped in an economic depression, the thirties were a bountiful time for tennis in the WLTA. Many great tennis players came out of the section during this time: George Lott, Frank Parker, Helen Fulton, Virginia Hollinger, Bill Talbert, Seymour Greenberg, Gardner Larnered, Bobby Jake and a host of other players emerged.

Junior competition was on the minds of tennis leaders. Western's Colonel James Bishop of the Culver Military Academy led the charge and developed the USLTA Junior Davis Cup. It was instituted in 1937 and the following year the USLTA Junior Wightman Cup was started.

### Other Highlights:

- In 1933 Harry Knox of Chicago became the first Western man to assume the USLTA Presidency;
- Chicago held the first indoor tennis tournament in 1935 in the WLTA;
- In 1935 eight of the 25 leading male juniors (18-and-unders) and 13 of the leading boys (15-and-under) were from the WLTA;
- The USLTA Annual Meeting came to Cincinnati in 1935.

## **1940-1950**

Once again war had an impact on the nation and tennis in the 1940s. Not as many people were playing and tennis balls and shoes were hard to come by because of the shortage of rubber. However, tennis was recognized for its value to the public. Tennis tournaments were used to raise money for relief agencies such as the USO, Army and Navy Relief and the Red Cross. The 1942 National Championships raised \$9,137 for the American Women's Voluntary Services agency.

### Other 1940s Highlights:

- Bobby Riggs was ranked number 1 in the section in 1941;
- Jean Hoxie and her husband Jerry of Hamtramck, Michigan, established the nation's first tennis camp;
- In 1948 Chuck DeVoe of Indianapolis was the runner-up in the first Orange Bowl Tournament;
- In 1949 the first Western Junior Davis Cup Round-Robin was held in Oak Park, Illinois, with five districts represented.

## **1950 to 1960**

Harry "Cap" Leighton of Chicago began the campaign to revise the junior tournament categories. He wrote an article calling for the number of junior divisions to be increased from two (15 and 18-and-under) to three (14, 16 and 18-and-under). He believed the change would level the playing field, giving younger players a chance to compete on even ground. The change would give players the opportunity to compete against others their own size. Years later Cap's vision would become a reality.

On the administrative side, and under the leadership of Western Financial Committee Chairman George Barnes of River Forest, Illinois, a United States Lawn Tennis Association Enrollment Program was adopted in 1958. Assessments for membership were three dollars for adults and one dollar for juniors. The funds were much needed and created a way to track how many people played tennis.

Other Highlights of the 1950s:

- In 1953 Colonel James Bishop of Culver, Indiana, became the second Western man to assume the USLTA presidency;
- The national and international debate on "open" tennis began as the decade drew to a close.

## **1960 to 1970**

Open tennis was simmering on the back burner at the start of the decade but Western led the long fight to get open tennis on the front burner. The association recognized the benefits of open play which was a much different view of participation held by other regions of the country.

The association's support of open tennis was due to the fact that its major metropolitan cities were grounded in public park play. Western's philosophy was that tennis was for everybody and the association realized that without open tennis the pros would eventually go their own way.

In April 1968 in Paris, the International Tennis Federation made it official and approved 12 tournaments to allow amateurs and pros to compete together. USLTA legislation followed and open play was finally here.

Other Highlights:

- In 1960 George Barnes was elected as the USLTA President, the third Western man to hold that role;
- Cleveland, Ohio, was center stage for Davis Cup and Wightman Cup in the 1960s, hosting seven Davis Cup ties and four Wightman Cup competitions;
- The USLTA revised the junior age divisions in 1962: Boys' and Girls' 12, 14, 16 and 18-and under;
- The feed-in consolation was conceived by Helen Schockly from Chicago and was adopted nationally in 1962;
- Charleston, West Virginia, received widespread media recognition for its meteoric tennis growth in 1963. This coal mining community saw thousands of its residents turn to tennis as a means of family recreation, fitness and fun;
- Sixteen West Virginia counties became part of the Western Lawn Tennis Association and the Ohio Valley Lawn Tennis Association in 1964;

- Late in the decade the Nielsen Tennis Stadium on the campus of the University of Wisconsin was constructed.

## **1970 to 1980**

During the 1970s the game moved indoors for most of the players in the section due to the construction of indoor tennis facilities. These new indoor facilities provided tennis players the opportunity to play the sport year-round.

Other interesting highlights:

- In 1971 the section's USTA membership was 7,704;
- The association's 1972 budget was \$8,100;
- The ATP and WTA were formed in 1972;
- In 1973, Billie Jean King, now residing in Chicago, and Bobby Riggs, who lived for a period of time in Chicago in 1941, played in the Houston Astrodome while millions of people watched King defeat Riggs in the "battle of the sexes".
- A new Disciplinary Committee was formed in 1973, now called the Grievance Committee;
- Northern Michigan became the 14th and final district in the Western Lawn Tennis Association in 1974;
- On December 4, 1974, the Western Tennis Association was officially incorporated in the state of Ohio;
- In 1975 the word "Lawn" was officially dropped from names of the United States Tennis Association and all sectional and district associations;
- Stan Malless of Indianapolis was the fourth individual from Western to serve as the USTA President for a two-year stint from 1975-1976;
- In 1977 the US Open was played at Forest Hills for the last time;
- The double strung (spaghetti) racquet was invented by West German Werner Fischer, and used in 1977.
- Joseph Carrico became the fifth person from the section to be President of the USTA in 1979.

## **1980 to 1990**

After a half-century of emphasis on junior development, the time had come to implement a USTA program that focused on adults. The USA League Tennis Program was born in 1980. Various levels of USTA summer leagues were played using the National Tennis Rating Program (NTRP) which provided a vehicle for local teams to advance to district, state, sectional and national championships. Leagues grew in popularity and so did USTA enrollments.

In the second season of the league program, the WTA led the nation with more than 7,000 participants.

Other interesting highlights:

- Joe Grover gave a presentation on using a computer for rankings at the 88th Annual Meeting of the Western Tennis Association in Cincinnati on December 6, 1981;

- In 1981 for the first time ever, a Sectional Umpires Council went over the 400 mark in certified officials. There were now 401 certified officials in the Western Section;
- The first complete computer generated rankings were produced and used for the 1982 Junior Rankings;
- The first Western Yearbook was published in the Spring of 1982;
- Sixteen of Wisconsin's Minneapolis-area counties were transferred to the Northwestern Section establishing the current boundaries of the USTA/Midwest Section in 1982;
- The process to gain entry into the Western Closed Championships was changed in 1982 to a quota system based on the districts' percentage of USTA junior membership in the USTA to the section's overall USTA membership;
- In 1984 John F. Hennessey, George M. Lott, Jr., Frank A. Parker and James C. Stewart became the first four inductees into the USTA/Midwest Section Hall of Fame. Eleven years later, the Thomas Markin Racquet Center, on the campus of Kalamazoo College, became the home of the USTA/Midwest Section Hall of Fame;
- In 1989 the USA Player Development Program was created. Western was awarded 16 Area Training Centers designed to bring the top 20 boys and girls from designated geographical areas together for 50 hours of training and competition;
- David Markin from Kalamazoo, Michigan, served as USTA President from 1989-1990, becoming the sixth person from Western to serve as president.

## **1990 to 2000**

Following the retirement of long-time Western Tennis Association's Executive Director Kay Schubert, the sectional office was moved from Springfield, Ohio to its current home in Indianapolis, Indiana in 1991. Following Kay Schubert's retirement, Anne Hauerwas was hired and served for two years. Long-time volunteer and Past President of the Association, Patricia Freebody was hired as Executive Director in 1993. After three years, Freebody was promoted to the Director of Community Development for the USTA in White Plains, New York. Former Director of Player Development, Mark Saunders was named the section's fourth Executive Director on April 18, 1996.

To provide opportunities and financial support to young tennis players through charitable activities, the Western Youth Tennis Foundation was created in September 1992 (now called the Midwest Tennis and Education Foundation).

On the first day of the 104th meeting of the Western Tennis Association in Toledo, Ohio, a new chapter was added to the rich history of the association. On December 5, 1997, one hundred-two years, four months and 22 days after being formed in Chicago, Illinois, the Western Tennis Association changed its name to the USTA/Midwest Section. The name change officially took effect on January 1, 1998.

Other highlights:

- At the Annual meeting in Toledo, Ohio, on December 8, 1991, a motion to restructure the section along state boundaries to create five state associations failed miserably;
- Tom Gullikson, formerly of Wisconsin and a Western standout, was named the 36th U.S. Davis Cup captain in October of 1993;

- J. Howard "Bumpy" Frazer of Cincinnati was elected as the USTA President for two years from 1993-1994. Bumpy was the seventh person to serve as President from the Western Tennis Association;
- Touch Tone Tennis, an interactive voice response system (IVR), was piloted in the state of Ohio in 1995 and implemented section-wide in 1996 for league and tournament registration;
- At the time of his death (May 3, 1996) from a brain tumor at the age of 44, Tim Gullikson was the coach of Pete Sampras, the No. 1 player in the world for six years (1993-1998);
- Beginning as a pilot program, the first USTA Member Appreciation Day was held at the ATP Championships in Cincinnati on August 4, 1997, with nearly 300 USTA members attending. In 1999 the section hosted five of these events for its members;
- In October 1997 the USTA/Midwest Section instituted its first five-year strategic plan designed to bring community tennis into the forefront of growth and participation in the sport;
- In 1998 the section released \$350,000 of its reserves to push revenues down to the community level through Strategic Direction Initiative grants to the districts;
- Art Long of Woodruff, Wisconsin, was commissioned to sculpt a permanent award for the association in 1998 under the leadership of Awards Committee Chairman Joanne Jansky (Wausau, Wisconsin);
- In January 1998 a new, three-tier junior tournament structure was implemented to provide players, parents and coaches the opportunity to better select events that would provide a more level playing field;
- The most ambitious effort by the USTA was initiated when the USA Tennis Plan for Growth was launched in January 1998 with over \$36 million dollars earmarked for community development initiatives;
- USTA/Midwest Section's website was launched in early 1998;
- The Davis Cup came to the Midwest on two occasions in 1998. In July the US team, with Midwest standout Todd Martin, defeated Belgium 4-1 in Indianapolis in the second round. Then in September, Italy defeated the US 4-1 in Milwaukee in the semifinals;
- In 1999 Safire, the section's official ranking program, was rewritten in a Windows format and standing lists and player records were published on the Internet on a monthly basis for the first time;
- The USTA/Midwest Section accounted for 20,178 new players in 1999 through the USA Tennis Plan for Growth in its first year. By having the participants complete a yellow-registration card, an optical scanning process was used to record and track these new players;
- Sectional volunteers numbered 378 and the association had 16 full-time and 4 part-time employees in 1999;
- In 1999, the section began distributing monies to the district through Performance-Based Initiative Funding (PBIF). This funding mechanism was a mirror image of what the USTA was doing with the sections;
- Chuck DeVoe of Indianapolis, Indiana, Aaron Krickstein (formerly of Grosse Pointe, Michigan,) and Wes and Georgina Muthig of Brighton, Michigan were inducted into the 1999 USTA/Midwest Section Hall of Fame on Saturday, December 4, 1999. The final ceremony of the 20th Century was held at the Omni Netherlands in Cincinnati in conjunction with the USTA/Midwest Section's 106th Annual Meeting.

## 2000 to Present

Individual USTA/Midwest Section membership reached record levels and exceeded the 72,000 mark for the first time. The USTA/Midwest Section met its challenge to increase the diversity of the association's volunteer network by achieving the USTA Multicultural Participation Committee's 1-2-20 initiative, a quota-based initiative to have at least one minority on the section's board, two minorities serving as committee chairs, and 20 minorities appointed to sectional committees. The section exceeded the goals by having three minorities serving on the Executive Committee, two minorities serving as committee chairmen and 21 minorities serving on sectional committees.

The USTA/Midwest Section was a leader in moving forward in utilizing TennisLink as the new online registration system for USA League Tennis. Safire, the official ranking program, was rewritten to provide an interface with Star Companion Pro and Tournament Management system to automatically download draws directly into the system.

The USTA/Midwest Section's current home, a 25,000 square foot office building funded by the Midwest Tennis & Education Foundation, was completed in June 2006. The facility houses the Section, the Foundation, and provides a permanent home for the Midwest Tennis Hall of Fame, which opened December 2, 2006.

### Other highlights:

- Barbara Wynne of Indianapolis, Indiana, and John Powless of Madison, Wisconsin, were inducted into the USTA/Midwest Section Hall of Fame on Saturday, December 2, 2000 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin;
- Seeding and ranking lists are now published on a weekly basis;
- Midwest Tennis News, the official newspaper publication, was launched in July 2001;
- USTA/Midwest Section teams captured the gold medal at the AAU Junior Olympics in 2001;
- The USTA/Midwest Section Boys' and Girls' 16 Intersectional Team won the national championship in 2001;
- J. Howard "Bumpy" Frazer of Naples, Florida (formerly Cincinnati, Ohio) and the late Dr. Howard Dredge of Springfield, Ohio were inducted into the 2001 class of the USTA/Midwest Section Hall of Fame on December 1 in Cleveland, Ohio;
- In September 2002 the first ever USTA/Midwest Section USA Team Tennis/Competitive Training Center Challenge was held in Indianapolis;
- The USTA/Midwest Section Boys' and Girls' 16 Intersectional Team, Girls' 18 USTA Fed Cup Team and Boys' 18 Junior Davis Cup Team swept the national championship titles in 2002;
- The inaugural USTA/Midwest USA Wheelchair Tennis Sectional Championships were held in Middleton, Ohio, in October 2002;
- Vic Braden of Vista Santa Rosa, California, (formerly Monroe, Michigan, and Toledo, Ohio) and MaliVai Washington of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, (formerly Swartz Creek, Michigan) were inducted into the USTA/Midwest Section Hall of Fame on December 5, 2002 in Grand Rapids, Michigan;
- USTA/Midwest Section membership exceeds the 73,000 mark for the first time;
- The USTA/Midwest Section launched its "Midwest Tennis on Tour" marketing initiative, complete with graphically decorated vehicle and trailer, in an effort to increase tennis participation across the Section. In 2005, "Tennis on Tour" covered over 17,000 miles, visited 26 cities, and reached 14,000 participants.



- Gene Buwick of Ft. Myers, Florida, (formerly of Glen Ellyn, Illinois) and Patricia Freebody of White Plains, New York, (formerly of Chicago, Illinois, and Indianapolis, Indiana) were inducted into the USTA/Midwest Section Hall of Fame on December 6, 2003 in Chicago, Illinois.
- The USTA/Midwest Section implemented a full-time sales force in 2005 by establishing Tennis Service Representatives (TSRs) to help assess community needs, market tennis, and provide resources to help local organizations develop and increase tennis programming;
- In 2007 the association ended the year with 1,256 USTA Organizational Members making us the No. 1 Section in the USTA at the time;
- During 2007, volunteer-based Youth Tennis Associations were established in 12 communities to organize and manage Team Tennis with an emphasis on new 10-and-under programs, resulting in close to 1,200 more junior players;
- The Association hit record membership levels in 2012, ending the fiscal year by surpassing 90,000 individual members.
- The town of Midland, Mich., was named the winner of the USTA's "Best Tennis Town" search, the first-ever initiative designed to identify and reward the American communities—from small, rural towns to large, urban metro areas and everywhere in between—that best exemplify the passion, excitement, spirit and impact that tennis brings to the local level;
- The USTA/Midwest Section was honored in 2009 as the Racquet Sports Industry Section of the Year.