

# USTA NorCal Hall of Fame

Matt Lucena | Class of 2025



## Matt Lucena: Team Player Par Excellence

by *Joel Drucker*

Lonely a sport as tennis can be, for Matt Lucena, it's always been about collaboration. Matt's tennis journey began in Chico. All through the '80s, he spent hour after hour playing tennis with his buddies at the Chico Racquet Club. "All my friends were playing," said Matt. "We had a group of seven to 15 kids, older players, everybody. I'd be out there every day, all day -- from eight in the morning until six at night. It was just so much fun to go there because that's where my friends were."

Given that communal approach, it's logical that Matt views his years playing college tennis as a major highlight. At UC Berkeley from 1988-'92, Matt studied political science and blossomed into a superb doubles player, becoming the NCAA's

number one-ranked doubles in '90 and '91. In '90, Matt and Doug Eisenman won the NCAA doubles title. A year later, showcasing his versatility, Matt took the title with Bent-Ove Pedersen.

"Those were great years," said Matt. "I was healthy, it was fun, and we had really good teams. Going to play the NCAAs in Athens, Georgia was competitive and enjoyable."

In addition to his parents, Syl and Carol, Matt gives much of the credit for his success to his college coach, Scott McCain. "He was great," said Matt. "He was always there for us, whether you wanted to practice at seven a.m. or five at night. He taught me a lot about competing, how even if you're playing poorly, or not feeling good, you compete."

Matt subsequently enjoyed an excellent pro career, rising to a career-high ranking of 62 in the world in doubles. Once again proving his ability to thrive with any partner, Matt in '91 reached the quarterfinals of the US Open alongside Pedersen and two years later partnered with NorCal Hall of Famer Brian MacPhie to once again advance to the last eight. Players Matt and his partners beat during that time included Grand Slam champions Michael Stich, Petr Korda, and Luke Jensen.

Another peak moment for Matt came at the '95 US Open. Joining forces with Stanford star Meredith McGrath in the mixed doubles match, the Lucena-McGrath duo won five matches without the loss of a set, including victories in the last two rounds versus Hall of Famers Mary Pierce and Gigi Fernandez. Said Matt immediately after the victory, "I don't know what else to say except that we tried to keep it fun."

Through all this, consider Matt Lucena tennis' ultimate team player.

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This tribute was written by Joel Drucker. USTA NorCal Hall of Fame inductee Joel Drucker ('24) is the historian-at-large for the International Tennis Hall of Fame. His work has appeared in such outlets as *Inside Tennis*, the *New York Times*, Tennis.com, Tennis Channel, HBO and CBS.

## **Matt Lucena: Tennis Accomplishments**

- **Juniors**
  - Ranked #1 in NorCal juniors '87
  - Won National Grass Court junior doubles '87
- **UC Berkeley**
  - Three time All American '90, '91, '92
  - Twice ranked #1 in college doubles '90, '91
  - Winner of 5 ITA/NCAA National Doubles Championships
    - Volvo All American Doubles Champion '89 (w/ Doug Eisenman)
    - Rolex National Indoor Doubles Champion '90 (w/ Doug Eisenman)
    - NCAA Doubles Champion '90 (w/ Doug Eisenman)
    - Rolex National Indoor Doubles Champion '91 (w/ Bent-Ove Pedersen)
    - NCAA Doubles Champion '91 (w/ Bent-Ove Pederson)
- **ATP**
  - Career high doubles ranking 62
  - Quarter-finals US Open doubles '91 (w/ Bent-Ove Pedersen)
  - Quarter-finals US Open doubles '94 (w/ Kelly Jones)
  - US Open Mixed Doubles Champion '95 (w/ Meredith McGrath)
  - Round of 16 US Open doubles '96 (w/ Mark Kiel)
- **Other**
  - Member of Cal Athletic Hall of Fame
  - Member of Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITF) Hall of Fame