

2014 USTA Northern California Tennis Hall of Fame Bill Maze



Bill Maze



Bill Maze, Stanford 3-time All American

As a top-ranked junior player, Stanford All-American and ATP tour professional, Bill Maze has competed on the biggest stages tennis has to offer.

Yet, at age 58, Maze couldn't be happier than where he is today -- in his 19th season as head coach for women's tennis at UC Davis.

"Coaching doesn't feel like a job," Maze said.

He reflected on his father, George, a legendary name in California tennis. "Dad used to take me out, watch me at the tournament, help me get better.

"Help the women get better and get a check at the end of the month," Maze said. "Can't beat that."

That Bill and his siblings became involved in tennis is no surprise. George Maze Sr. "loved tennis absolutely," Bill said. "He wasn't a pushy dad. He got us out there and it was fun."

George, a Cal grad, played at the Berkeley tennis club. After serving in the Navy during World War II, he moved the family to Bakersfield, where he and his wife Sheila were avid players. George became a board member and chair of the Bakersfield Racquet Club, and ultimately would become intensely involved in both the Northern and Southern California tennis associations.

"There wasn't a lot to do" in Bakersfield, Bill recalled. He and his older siblings George Jr. and Joan would go to the club and spend hours swimming, playing ping pong and -- of course -- tennis.

The younger George and Joan ultimately follow their father's footsteps and play at Cal. George Jr. would become an attorney and is a past president of the Northern California Tennis Association.

Bill, meanwhile, was developing at a high level as a player. In 1972 -- with his dad watching -- Bill captured the national 16-and-under title in Kalamazoo, MI. Two years later, Bill would be runner-up in the 18s.

The Mazes by then had moved back to Northern California, and George had continued his volunteer involvement in the sport. George had a vision -- start an annual competition between SoCal and NorCal juniors that would help them get ready for annual U.S. National Junior Championships.

Sadly, George Sr. died suddenly in 1973 after suffering an aneurysm on the tennis court. Upon his death, the two California sections moved forward and created the Maze Cup, which has been contested annually since. Participants have included Pete Sampras, Lindsay Davenport, Michael Chang, Bob Bryan and Brad Gilbert.

Maze said his mother ensured the family remains closely associated with the event. "Mom would say, 'Listen kids, this is a great event, honoring your father. Everyone's put in so much work.' We make sure to take part each year."

By the late '70s, Bill was establishing himself as a high-level talent. Attending Stanford, he was a three-time All-American and captain of the NCAA championship teams in 1977 and '78. As a junior, he won the prestigious Rafael Osuna Award for sportsmanship. He graduated from Stanford with a B.S. in economics.

Stanford's coach left an indelible mark on Maze. "Dick Gould made it fun every day," Maze said. "He didn't take himself too seriously, didn't take us too seriously. Very positive. Always would listen, moving forward. Great philosophy." Maze has tried to incorporate that philosophy into his own coaching.

As a senior at Stanford, Maze's partner was a lefty named John McEnroe. Maze would embark on a pro career, and collaborated with McEnroe there too; the pair won two ATP doubles titles.

With McEnroe, "I learned to never let up," Maze said. "We'd get up a break, I think I'd naturally relax a bit. He'd be nervous, twitching. He'd say, 'Willie, let's get another break, I want to get out of here.'"

Maze said the two touch base perhaps once a year, and McEnroe has found time to support Maze in his work at UC Davis. In 2005, McEnroe played an exhibition against Wayne Ferreira to help with the dedication a new tennis center on campus. Recently, McEnroe was in Sacramento playing in a PowerShares event. He hooked up Maze and four of his players with tickets, and the young women were thrilled to meet Johnny Mac and James Blake.

Maze played six years on the ATP tour, getting inside the top 200 in singles and in particular establishing himself as a solid doubles player, reaching No. 87. He played in all four Grand Slams and enjoyed the opportunity to travel and see new places. Maze's game was serve-and-volley, emulating one of the greats from Bakersfield, Dennis Ralston.

One of Maze's best memories as a pro was playing Hall of Famer Manuel Orantes at the French Open, a one-time World No. 2 and U.S. Open champion.

"I had lost to him love and one at the U.S. Open," he said. "Played at the French a few years later." Even on clay, Maze decided to stick with his serve-and-volley style and in a competitive match lost in four sets. Afterward, "He treated me like I was Orantes," Maze said. "Couldn't have been a nicer guy."

An arthritic knee now limits Maze's movement on the tennis court, but his coaching career has moved ahead full-steam. After serving as director of tennis at Harbor Bay Club in Alameda, Maze spent five successful years as head coach of the women's team at University of the Pacific in Stockton.

At Davis, Maze has compiled a winning record while earning league Coach of the Year honors three times and visiting the NCAA Division II championships at least eight times.

He said he loves being on court and seeing his players improve. And he enjoys the variety of the job -- "recruiting, fundraising, being a psychologist, cleaning the courts, driving a bus."

That his career has led to a NorCal Hall of Fame induction is humbling. "I'm flattered and extremely honored," Maze said. "Kind of hard to put into words."

"I was a strong junior, good college player, OK pro. I loved coaching. I never won a national title as a college coach. So I'm honored to be included with people of this caliber."