

Hall of Fame Class of 2009 Graydon Nichols



Graydon Nichol

Super Senior Player Graydon Nichols is a true testament that tennis *is* a sport for a lifetime! From a small farm in Fresno to the world stage, at 84 years old Nichols holds the #1 ranking in singles for men's 80's in the United States and the #4 on the international circuit.

Tennis is a passion for Nichols that started when he was 8 years old, along with his 7 brothers and sisters. His oldest sister, Lucille was the first to play on the local team at Clovis High School but the entire Nichols family soon followed. "Lucille talked our father into getting the posts and net; we didn't have any coaching or anything, just homemade strokes. We took a piece of the farm and made a court out of it. It was too muddy to play in the winter but in the spring and summer we would chop the weeds off the court and use the ashes from the fireplace and string to make singles and doubles lines."

Nichols record proves that pristine courts and expensive equipment are not needed to become a champion; along with his top US and World ranking, Nichols international achievements include playing on ten Senior International Cup Teams from 2005-2008 and playing captain in 2006, 07 and 08 for the Gardner Mulloy Cup (New Zealand 07, Turkey 06, 08). His 2008 record was 13-1 and he made it to the finals of all entered tournaments. Plus, Nichols played for the Bitsy Grant Cup from 2001-2004 (men's 75), the Crawford Cup in 1997 and 1998 (men's 70), and his Nichols ITF World Singles titles consist of one 75s doubles, two 80s singles and two 80s doubles. European Championships comprise one 75s singles, one 75s doubles and one 80s doubles.

Nichols USTA achievements are just as impressive; 12 Gold balls in singles and 19 Gold balls in doubles, 15 Silver balls and six Bronze balls. Singles titles comprise two 70s, two 75s and eight 80s. Just as impressive in doubles, where he earned two 70s; five 75s and twelve 80s doubles. Nichols also participated in three Father-Daughter hard court events with daughter Carolyn, in 03, 06 and 08.

A consistently top ranked senior player, nationally Nichols made it to #1 in 70s, 1996; stayed in the top 5 for 2000-06 and has remained in the top 10 since the mid 1990s. Internationally Nichols hit the #1 spot in 2007 and currently remains in the top 5.

Nichols spent his freshman year of college playing tennis at Fresno State before transferring to UC Berkeley, where he majored in engineering. Unfortunately his studies didn't leave much time for the court. After UC Berkeley, Nichols earned a graduate degree in agriculture and plant science from UC Davis and has been involved in agriculture for over 50 years.

Nichols introduced tennis to his three children and six grandchildren. His oldest daughter, Carolyn, played for Stanford, his second daughter, Eileen is also a Stanford alumni and his son, Chuck, followed his footsteps to UC Davis where he was a member of the very first Davis crew team.

Nichols wife of almost 55 years, Virginia, is an accomplished senior player in her own right. She won a world championship in Perth, Australia, women's 75s doubles in the late 1990's – which was also her very first time playing on grass. The Nichols' are currently members of the Visalia Racquet Club in Visalia, CA.

Tennis has always played an important part of Nichols life, as he says, "Tennis has been a pleasure. My life is all the better for it; I'm certainly a lot fitter than if I had not played all these years. I enjoy it for the competition and the fun. It's such a wonderful sport, truly a sport for a lifetime."