

## 2011 USTA Northern California Tennis Hall of Fame Larry Stefanki



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Larry Stefanki's professional playing and coaching career began when his family relocated to Los Altos from Illinois. "We lived across the street from Los Altos High School; my older brothers Steve and John started playing and I followed suit," Larry explains.

Though he also had a passion for baseball, basketball and wrestling, tennis eventually became his main focus, as he explains, "Tennis really suited me; I loved every part of it - the running and the geometry of playing inside a rectangular box - it never got old."

Along with playing on the Los Altos High School team, Larry participated in NorCal juniors tournaments. "Tennis was huge at the junior level when I was growing up. Playing in that type of competitive environment drives you to become better," he explains.

It was the legendary coach Tom Chivington that drew him to Foothill College his freshman year of college. "My brothers went to Foothill so I have known Tom since I was 10 or 11. Tom is a real special guy; he understood how competitive I was. He'd believe in you and back you and those are qualities that you need in a coach." As a freshman Larry played #3 singles and doubles, and was the first player to win both singles and doubles State Championships in one year. He then earned a three-year full scholarship to UC Berkeley, playing under Bill Wright, where he played #1 singles and earned All American status.

As a player on the pro tour Larry earned a career high ranking of 30 in singles and 24 in doubles (with Robert Van't Hof). He credits Northern California coach Tom Stow for helping him improve the fundamentals of his game. Larry earned three singles titles; two in Nigeria in 1980 and 1981, and the Masters Series Indian Wells in 1985. "There's nothing like playing," Larry says. "I loved both the traveling and the competition; I would sign up everywhere I could, all over the world."

Stefanki's notoriety as a coach came after helping John McEnroe climb back up the rankings to No. 8 in the world toward the end of his career. "Everyone said McEnroe was done, washed up, but you can still play the game at a high level in your later years. It was very gratifying to see his improvement during his last two years."

From there Larry helped Patrick McEnroe and his doubles partner Jonathan Stark rise from a ranking of 175 to 40. And then another tennis bad boy, Marcello Rios, crossed his path; Larry helped Rios reach the No. 1 spot in the world rankings, after starting out at No. 125 "Rios could control the ball better than anyone, besides McEnroe, but he didn't like to work."

Next Larry coached Yevgeny Kafelnikov and helped him also reach a No. 1 world ranking along with an Olympic gold medal, the Australian and French Open championships. Tim Henman reached the No. 4 ranking under Stefanki's guidance, as well as numerous semifinal rounds at Wimbledon. Fernando Gonzalez went from a career high ranking of 19 to No. 5 with Stefanki as his coach, during which time he won an Olympic silver medal and was a finalist at the Australian Open. "At 25 or 26 years old Fernando was still willing to make changes. He was a lot of fun to work with," says Larry.

Currently Larry is coaching the top ranked American player Andy Roddick, who again reached the top 5 ranking after an epic Wimbledon 2009 final against Roger Federer. "Andy and I have a great relationship; he's very competitive and hates to lose even a point. He's very smart, very aware and quick. He knew he had to do hard work to stay at that high level."

After Roddick, Larry hopes to work with juniors near San Diego, where he resides with his wife Kelly and three sons, Clay, Will and Joe.

[Read the Inside Tennis interview](#) of Larry during this year's Wimbledon.