

Hall of Fame Class of 2009 Linda Gates



Linda Gates

The World begins at Stanford; “The opportunity that Frank Brennan gave me to play at Stanford can’t be taken lightly,” exclaims former pro tennis player Linda Gates. Brennan, the legendary Stanford women’s tennis coach, had such a profound affect on Gates’ game that she jumped from a world ranking of 364 to 55 in her first full year on the WTA Tour.

Those aspirations began when Gates was 7 years old, in her Northern California hometown of Hillsborough. Tennis was a family activity so when her older brother started taking lessons and playing tournaments, Gates naturally followed along. It helped that girls were allowed, as she explains, “I had always liked sports, but at that time there weren’t many opportunities for girls. Tennis was one that was organized and I really enjoyed it.”

Gates reached the #1 ranking in Juniors national doubles, was ranked #16 singles, in the nation, Northern California #1 in 16 singles and #1 in 18 singles and doubles. As a teenager she also won several sportsmanship awards, which she views as her greatest Juniors accomplishments.

Her achievements caught the eye of several prominent California schools; in a decision that would be surprising to most, Gates turned down offers of full scholarships to both UCLA and UC Berkeley for the opportunity to attend Stanford – on just a partial-scholarship. “I grew up watching Stanford tennis and it was a place that I always dreamed of going. It’s a phenomenal school, both academically and athletically. It’s tough when you are 17 or 18 and confronted with these decisions – that they offered a half scholarship was enough. I would have gone even if they hadn’t offered me anything”

Accolades at Stanford include having earned All American status for all four years, NCAA Doubles Finalist, 1983, NCAA Singles Finalist; Doubles Champion 1984 and NCAA Singles and Doubles Champion, 1985. “I wasn’t a junior phenom and my game was kind of rough around the edges. But I made huge improvements under Frank’s coaching; I developed slowly, but was pretty complete by the end of college.”

Additionally, Gates won the Arthur Ashe Sportsmanship Award in 1984, an especially special honor, as she explains, “I was very proud of that award; I looked up to Arthur Ashe for many years.” She also won the Broderick Award as National Collegiate Player of the Year, 1985 and was elected to Stanford University Hall of Fame in 2001.

A shoulder injury ended her pro career a year later in 1986, but Gates’ accomplishments on the pro tour in that short time show how talented a player she had become. In 1985 alone, Gates made it to the Australian Open quarter-finals, doubles, with partner Alycia Moulton, won both the singles and doubles titles at the OTB International Open in New York, got to the round of 32, singles, at the US Open (defeated by Carling Bassett) and was a finalist at the Japan Open (defeated by Gabriella Sabatini).

While rehabilitating her shoulder in 1986 Gates returned to her Alma Mater to help out with the women’s team. She volunteered at Santa Clara University in 97-99 and was again a volunteer assistant for Stanford in 2007 and 2008.

Today Gates and her husband, who was also a Stanford and National level player, live in Atherton with their three sons, aged 12, 10 and 6.

“I feel very lucky to have been a part of NorCal tennis. When I used to play USTA tournaments as a kid I never thought about it as competing in a sport as much as going out and having fun and playing with your friends. But I got to take lessons from phenomenal teachers, like Nick Carter, Ken Walsh, John Hubbell, Bill Maze and of course, Frank Brennan – the area is so rich in tradition, has unbelievable people involved at all levels and has a very cohesive, family feel to it. I was very fortunate.”

