

2008 USTA Northern California Tennis Hall of Fame Mark Fairchild



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Late bloomer, but caught up: "I beat Sampras and Florian"

"Being inducted is the culmination of all the tennis I've ever played: all the great people I've played against and all the great people I've partnered with."

Mark Fairchild grew up in Aptos and started playing tennis at the Seascapes Sports Club. "I was nine or 10 years old and I was happy just messing around until I got to high school," says Mark. It was in high school that Mark got "the bug" as many of us refer to it. He played on his high school team, where a teammate named Mark Ramos, the No. 3 player in NorCal, ignited his competitive urges. "From that point on I got really serious about tennis," comments Mark.

After high school Mark went to West Valley College and was the No. 1 singles player. He then transferred to the University of the Pacific, where he was also No. 1. After receiving a bachelor's degree in mathematics, Mark went on the pro tour where he experienced perhaps his greatest victory. "I was playing a money tournament near Nice, France, against a Frenchman, Jean Philippe Florian. He was ranked No. 2 in France and he had about 5,000 people there rooting for him. There was not one person there rooting for me. I beat him – in three sets and on the clay. What a day."

Another notable victory: "I beat Pete Sampras once, 6-2, 6-2. He was 14 years old but you could see the incredible talent even then."

Today Mark and his wife Jill live in the San Joaquin Valley where he is head tennis professional at the Modesto Fitness and Racquet Club, a job he has held since 1991. Mark's sister, Kirsten, who played tennis for the University of Texas at El Paso, and writes for the Santa Cruz Sentinel (and Inside Tennis). His parents, Robert and Irene, are retired in Southern California. All play tennis. "I'm actually the least competitive person in my family," quips Mark.

While he is not teaching tennis, Mark volunteers his time helping govern the sport for other teaching professionals in the U.S. He is a vice president and director of the United States Professional Tennis Association (USPTA) with responsibilities for budget, tournaments, and multicultural outreach. He also serves as a liaison between the USPTA and the ATP.