

USTA NORTHERN CALIFORNIA  
**HALL of FAME**

CECI MARTINEZ



**Ceci Martinez was a pioneer for women's tennis, pushing to create a professional tour for women to compete in the sport as a living alongside some of the most influential female players of all time. Her work on the local, national and international levels helped pave the way for women to make their mark in tennis communities around the world.**

Born and raised in San Francisco, Ceci was one of Northern California's top junior players. A product of public playgrounds, she lived close to the Dupont Tennis Courts where she first learned how to play, and eventually practiced regularly at Golden Gate Park and the California Tennis Club.

Playing on public courts was a huge factor in Ceci's later success both on and off the courts. The public access was important to Ceci as it created more opportunities for people to attend clinics and be taught by role models in the tennis community. As one of six children being raised by a single mother, Ceci relished the support that she found on the public courts. She also learned independence from working hard to compete in tournaments and find lessons on her own thanks to the public access.

Ceci attended Presentation High School and went on to graduate from San Francisco State University. She represented the school at the USTA Intercollegiate National Championships, winning the singles title in 1966.



During a competitive tennis career that spanned over 20 years, Ceci reached her highest rankings of No. 1 in singles and No. 1 in 35 doubles in Northern California. Her highest national rankings were No. 9 in juniors, No. 11 in women's singles, No. 4 in doubles and No. 11 in 35 doubles. She is also a former Philippine Open Singles and Mixed Doubles Champion, Australian Hardcourts Mixed Doubles Champion, and a Wimbledon quarterfinalist in singles and doubles.

As a professional player, Ceci saw the need to create a professional tour just for women to give them the equal opportunity to do what they loved for a living. The shift was during the height of the Civil Rights and Women's movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and came to a head in the tennis community when most tournaments offered up to ten times more prize money to men than to women. Ceci compiled a Tennis Interest Survey at Forest Hills in 1970 that proved tennis fans were interested in watching women play and would take them seriously as professional players.

She worked with women like Billie Jean King to help launch the first all-women's professional tennis event in 1970,

the Virginia Slims Invitational Tour, at Westwood Club in Richmond, Virginia. Ceci was also a leader in later helping to get the Women's Tennis Association started.



CECILIA MARTINEZ

She was extensively involved with press conferences, speeches, social functions, writing and photography to initially promote the tour, including co-authoring *Tennis Psychology* with Harold Geist. She worked to get media attention for women's tennis and build up the personalities of the female players. Along with the creation of the tour, the additional public exposure sparked tennis fans to invest in female players.

After retiring from the Virginia Slims Professional Tennis Circuit and winning Open tournaments in 10 different countries, Ceci worked as a teaching professional at various clubs throughout the Bay Area, including the San Francisco Tennis Club, The University Club of Palo Alto and the Peninsula Golf and Country Club. She especially enjoyed coaching the women's teams at Glenwood Park and Dupont Tennis Courts, where she first learned to play tennis. From 1988-1992, she coached the NCTA Girls 14's Jr. Excellence and National Zonal teams. She has also served as an advisor to the USTA Northern California Board of Directors.

Working as a teaching professional eventually took its physical toll, so Ceci acquired her Realtor's license in 1988 and worked as a real estate professional through 2004. She closed sales and lease transactions in residential, residential income, and commercial properties.

Since 2007, she has been involved with the Walk to Defeat ALS fundraiser to help find a cure for Lou Gehrig's Disease. Now retired, Ceci stays in shape by competing in performance sports with her two miniature poodles in an active Bay Area dog performance scene. She has trained and handled them to championship titles in Agility, Obedience, and Lure Coursing. She also does regular volunteer work in an assisted living facility with her older poodle, ChaChi, who is a certified therapy dog.