

## 2011 USTA Northern California Tennis Hall of Fame Meredith McGrath



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As a junior tennis player former pro Meredith McGrath had starry-eyes for Stanford.

"It was the only school on my radar; going to Stanford was an easy choice, I was probably one of the easiest recruits ever," says Meredith. "I didn't even go out on an official visit, I just blindly knew it was where I wanted to be."

The journey to Stanford and subsequent WTA Tour began when Meredith was seven years old at the family's summer cottage; looking for something to do she fatefully signed up for the local tennis camp. "I loved it right from the start," says Meredith. An all around athlete Meredith also participated in basketball, soccer, speed skating and gymnastics, but by 12 years old she decided to focus primarily on tennis. "I had a lot of success right away along with a good amount of positive feedback; that played a big part in me wanting to do it more," Meredith explains.

It was also the start a successful Juniors career; Meredith won three consecutive US Open Girls Doubles Championships; in 1987 and 1988 with Kimberly Po and in 1989 with Jennifer Capriati. She also won the Wimbledon Girls Doubles Championships in 1988 and 1989, and was the runner-up in the Wimbledon Girls Singles Championship in 1989.

Despite the pressure to turn pro after high school Meredith chose to accept a full scholarship to Stanford, in 1989, to work with the famed Stanford women's tennis coach Frank Brennan. As a freshman she earned All American and finished the season ranked as No. 2 singles and No. 1 doubles.

"Meredith was the 1990 NCAA doubles champion on probably the greatest team in NCAA history and went on to have one of the most distinguished professional careers of any intercollegiate player," says Coach Brennan.

The next year Meredith embarked on the WTA Tour full-time, "I had decided I wanted to go to school despite pressure to turn pro, but I knew that I would only be there for one or two years. Frank had let me play pro tournaments while I was at Stanford; in 1990 I was ranked 90 in the world so the time was right to leave school," says Meredith.

During her ten-year career as a pro Meredith reached a career high ranking of 18 in singles and 5 in doubles. She earned three singles titles, at Oklahoma City, Eastbourne and Birmingham, and in 1995 she captured the US Open Mixed Doubles championship with Matt Lucena, defeating Gigi Fernandez and Cyril Suk 6-4, 6-4.

The pinnacle of her career, when she reached the semifinals at Wimbledon in 1996, was a bittersweet moment for Meredith, "It was one of the last tournaments that I ever played," she explains. "I had won Birmingham two weeks before but I had fallen in the finals and hyper extended my knee. I continued playing; I was in pain but I was playing so well that I didn't want to stop." Meredith felt her knee becoming worse during each round of Wimbledon; by the time she reached the semifinals she could barely walk.

Having suffered a fractured femur and tibia, Meredith would undergo three surgeries over a two-year period. Though she made several attempts at rejoining the tour, her injuries proved too great to make a full comeback. Instead she returned to Stanford and finished her degree.

Residing in Santa Clara, Meredith's focus these days is on her two sons, aged five and seven.