

Hall of Fame Class of 2013 Phil Cello

Phil Cello has contributed to the Northern California tennis community for over 30 years as a coach, volunteer and community advocate. He owns and operates the Cello International Tennis Academy, has participated in NorCal Player Development camps, is a past USTA NorCal president and has been honored with the USTA NorCal Service to Tennis Lifetime Achievement Award in 1988.

A native of Davis California, Phil started playing tennis at the age of nine. "My father was a professor at University of California, Davis; a bunch of professors started playing tennis at noon everyday on the school's only two courts. I started playing with them."

His passion for tennis, along with his tactical knowledge, quickly grew and Phil was teaching tennis for the city recreation department by the time he was 15. As a college student at UC Davis, Phil experienced the competitive sports world for the first time. "It's really what tennis is all about," says Phil. "It's a wonderful, competitive sport."

With just 22 credits to go, and on the advice of his college tennis coach, Phil decided to leave the University and embark on a tennis teaching and coaching career. His first job was as the Tennis Director at the Green Valley Country Club in Fairfield. He transformed the small club into one of the leading tennis centers in Northern California.

"I enjoy teaching because I can always come up with an answer for something," Phil jokes. "I have great visualization and communication skills, so I can see what a player needs to develop and help them to do it successfully."

After 16 years at Green Valley, Phil became a founding partner in the Rancho Solano Country Club, a 20-acre tennis, swim and golf facility. The club was sold in 1994, which is when Phil opened the Cello International Tennis Academy. At the time, his facility was one of the first year-round academies in Northern California.

"We limit the amount of kids that we have at the academy to about 10 or 12 at a time. This allows us for individual skill development and one-on-one coaching," Phil explains, "Each player has their own individual coaching needs; we like to build relationships and help them to develop great technical skills."

Outside of his academy, Phil is very active in training Juniors for national and international events. For the past 12 years, Phil has coached the US Team at the annual Nike Junior Tour International Masters, an event consisting of 33 competing countries. He also continues his relationship with China Tennis, for whom he has helped coach players competing on the Beijing City Team. He is working with Nike Sports Camps to provide state of the art video analysis for the players attending the tennis camps. And he has been involved with the USTA player development efforts.

Phil also regularly donates his time to participate on several USTA committees and boards. In 2000, he was honored by the Northern California USPTA as Outstanding Teacher. That same year he was honored by Inside Tennis Magazine as the Best Coach of the Decade in Northern California.

Throughout his over 30 years of being involved with tennis in Northern California, Phil has maintained that the most rewarding aspect are the relationships that he has developed with the students and the tennis community. "The most wonderful and giving people are here in Northern California," says Phil. "I am thankful to everyone that has helped me along the way. In particular I would like to thank Betty and Bob Cookson; the two of them took me under their wing and it was incredibly helpful to be around such bright and successful people."

