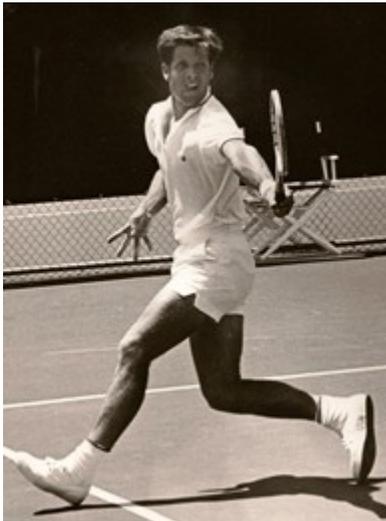


## 2014 USTA Northern California Tennis Hall of Fame: Rich Anderson



Rich Anderson



Rich Anderson played D-1 tennis for San Jose State.

Some 30 years ago, Rich Anderson faced a big decision.

Anderson, a standout player and college coach, had built a powerhouse tennis program at Canada College. From 1971 through 1983, the school won 11 conference titles, eight NorCal championships and eight state championships.

But Anderson had excelled in academics as well, and was working on a computer programming project at his school targeting fitness. A physics colleague pulled him aside and told him: We'd like you to teach computer science. You'd have to go back to school and get more credits in math and technology. But Canada College will pay for it.

As Anderson weighed the choice, his wife Darcy and his young sons were foremost in his mind. Anderson's father had died in a car accident when he was 2 ½. Rich had never really gotten to know him. Anderson was not only tennis coach at Canada, he was running physical education and athletics. He longed for more time with his boys.

So Anderson moved into the classroom. Today, he has the unique distinction of being both an athletic Hall of Famer and earning a Teaching Excellence Award from the California Community Colleges Math Council.

The decision to give up coaching "was a big step and it worked out wonderfully," Anderson said.

Teaching "afforded me the opportunity to be home every single afternoon," Anderson said. He coached his kids' soccer teams, helped them with their homework. Both sons – Kevin and Jeff – went on to earn postgraduate degrees. Jeff has followed in his father's footsteps, earning a PhD in mathematics and teaching at Foothill College.

Anderson retired from the classroom in 2006 and remained active at Canada through 2010, but his passion for tennis never waned.

He has continued through the years as a ranked player in his age group, and has maintained a strong reputation for his knowledge of coaching, called upon often as a speaker and presenter.

Several of his students went on to become notable coaches themselves. One of them, Brad Stine, coached former World No. 1 Jim Courier. Another, Casey Curtis, has been instrumental in the development of current Canadian star Milos Raonic.

Anderson now is enshrined in four Halls of Fame – California Community College Tennis; San Jose State Athletic; Canada College Athletic, and USTA NorCal. Anderson could not have envisioned this as a teenager growing up in San Francisco.

"I finished my junior year of high school maybe 5-foot-tall," he said. Anderson had played basketball and baseball, but got hooked on tennis going out to Golden Gate Park.

"That was a mecca in those days," he said. "Any day out there you'd see four or five Top 10'ers in Northern California. Sometimes the top players in the country, or in the world."

When the better players saw kids coming back day after day, they might take them under their wing, pass along some tips. "Someone said to me, 'Be a student of the game,'" Anderson recalled.

Anderson picked up tennis quickly. He had a good serve, and developed a strong serve-and-volley game. He caught a break when one of the better players approached him to set up a match.

That player was Tom Brown, one of the storied amateur tennis champions of his day. In 1946, Brown had won the doubles and Mixed titles at Wimbledon. Brown lost the Wimbledon singles final to Jack Kramer in 1947.

Anderson was thrilled to be approached by Brown; he knew Brown only played with people good enough to help him maintain a high level.

"We played five sets. He killed me," Anderson said. But Anderson continued to play hard throughout. "I knew if he respected me, we'd play again."

That fall, the two played at least 15 times. "I never got a set," Anderson said. "But I learned how to play tennis. Next spring, I beat him four times in tournaments."

The encounters with Brown greatly informed Anderson's coaching methodology. His teams played hard, best-of-five-set challenge matches, figuring that would make best two-out-of-three seem easy.

He also incorporated some of the style of his San Jose State coach, Butch Krikorian. "He made tennis fun," Anderson said. "No rules, he never yelled at you. He just expected you to be a good sport and to try hard."

Anderson would win conference singles and doubles championships for San Jose State in 1964 and 1965. He then started teaching tennis, juggling his schedule so he could sample the pro circuit.

Anderson joined with another Golden Gate Park regular, Cecilia Martinez, playing mixed doubles at Wimbledon in the 1960s. In singles, while he didn't make it past qualifying, he did have a thrill – sharing a limo ride with the great Jack Kramer. "He knew Tom Brown, we talked about that. He was very personable," Anderson said.

Anderson quickly became known as a top junior college coach, taking Modesto to second in the state and earning state Coach of the Year honors in 1978 while at Canada.

Anderson gained notice of influential tennis figures like Dick Gould and was hired for high-performance development coaching, working with the likes of Michael Chang.

Anderson also did individual coaching with stars of the era including Chip Hooper, Erik van Dillen, Peanut Louie and Brazilian doubles star Carlos Kirmayer.

Anderson considers his latest Hall of Fame selection icing on the cake after being several decades removed from an active coaching career.

"It's tremendous recognition of what I've contributed to tennis in Northern California," Anderson said.