

2012 USTA Northern California Tennis Hall of Fame: Steve Cornell



Steve Cornell

Steve Cornell has been passionate about tennis throughout his entire life. His involvement includes having been an accomplished junior player, earning two NCAA championships, was a founding member of the Berkeley Tennis Club Foundation, is a USTA committee member and he is an avid volunteer.

Growing up in Oakland in the 1960's, the entire Cornell family would play on the courts at Davies Tennis Stadium on the weekends. "For us, tennis is very much a family venture," says Steve, who has played numerous tournaments with both his father and his children. "Parent involvement is very important and we've passed that down through the generations."

The influence paid off and Steve reached the #1 NorCal junior ranking in the Boy's 12s, 14s and 18s; he reached a national junior ranking of #7. "The competition in NorCal at the time was incredible," Steve explains. "We had incredible coaching, which really helped. You can't do it alone; you need a solid support system."

Two back-to-back NCAA Championships, in 1970-71, while on the tennis team at UCLA continued to fuel Steve's passion for the game. Coached by Glen Bassett and sharing court space with fellow teammates Jimmy Connors, Jeff Borowiak and Jeff Austin, Steve was thrilled to be on one of the stronger collegiate teams of the time.

Deciding to return home after college rather than turn pro, Steve married his high school sweetheart, Rainy, and join the family neckwear business that his father had built from the ground up.

With two sons and one daughter, Steve is thankful to live in an area with a large number of tournaments, which meant that he could continue to play tennis without ever having to be far away from his growing family. Throughout his senior career, Steve has won one Gold Ball and has earned a top 10 NorCal ranking six different times, reaching #1 three of those times. He has also earned a USTA national top 10 ranking in the 35s, 40s, 45s, 50s and 55s. Steve won the National Indoor Championships in 2000 and along with his children, has won numerous bronze balls. One of his most fulfilling moments was receiving the Trabert & Talbert Sportsmanship Award with his sons.

Steve's volunteer endeavors have been extensive. He explains, "Tennis has given me so much, so I thought, how can I give back?" His proudest achievement has been as one of the founding members of the Berkeley Tennis Club Foundation, which was established in 2007. As president, he has led the foundation in its efforts to provide funding for under-privileged juniors and for wheelchair tennis programs.

"Part of my success in tennis was having great coaching; it is incredible to give other aspiring players that same opportunity," says Steve. Childhood friend and the Director of Tennis at the BTC, Lynne Rolley says of Steve, "The thing about Steve is that he is passionate about tennis in so many different areas. He has excelled in so many ways and he is constantly looking at ways to better tennis for Northern California."

Steve also gives back by participating on several USTA committees, including, the USTA Senior International Selection Committee, the USTA NorCal Adult Tournament Committee and he was the Chair of the NorCal Sanction & Scheduling Committee. In 2008 Steve received the Adult Tournament Volunteer of the Year Award.

"If it wasn't for NorCal tennis I wouldn't have had the opportunity to accomplish what I've accomplished," says Steve. "I share this honor not only with my family but with a lot of friends; you can't get an honor as prestigious as this without the help and support of a lot of people."