



NORTHERN EXPOSURE

MAGAZINE

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MARCH 2015

In Memoriam

Steve Wilkinson
(1941-2015)





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Bahram Akradi
and **InnerCity Tennis**
Honored By
Tennis Industry Magazine

Bahram Akradi, the founder, president and CEO of the Life Time Fitness chain of clubs, was named Person of the Year and **InnerCity Tennis** earned Community Tennis Association of the Year for 2014 by *Tennis Industry* magazine as part of its "Champions of Tennis Awards," which honors people, businesses and organizations dedicated to improving the sport and business of tennis.

Life Time Fitness, which is based in Chanhassen, Minn., currently operates 113 fitness facilities in the U.S. The company went from \$1 million in revenues in 1992 to \$1.3 billion today, says Akradi. Importantly for tennis, Life Time Fitness has more than 200 courts at 20 locations, including 128 indoor courts, making it the largest operator of indoor tennis courts in the U.S.

"Under Bahram Akradi's leadership, Life Time Fitness has been extremely committed to helping the sport of tennis grow," says **Peter Francesconi**, the editorial director for *Tennis Industry*, the world's largest tennis trade magazine (www.tennisindustrymag.com). "The company has been investing in tennis for years, and it's hit on a formula that provides top-notch facilities, amenities and programs for its tennis players. Mr. Akradi considers the sport to be an important component for a healthy and fit lifestyle, and that's a key to growing tennis in the U.S."

"I love the sport," says Akradi, who plays a few times a week. Akradi says he's hoping to work more with the USTA "to build a program where we can sponsor and pay for kids on a regular basis. I really want Life Time to impact tennis in America in a big way."

Founded in 1952, **InnerCity Tennis** initially helped young people with limited means thrive physically, emotionally and socially within the game of tennis. More than 60 years later, the program is still going strong, as ICT serves nearly 4,000 youngsters with free and low-cost programming, using tennis as a vehicle to develop world-class citizens.

ICT delivers a wide variety of tennis and academic programming, including summer tennis at 23 city parks; free indoor lessons during the winter; Academic Creative Engagement (A.C.E), an accredited out-of-school time curriculum for grades 3-5 supporting academic achievement, health/wellness and social/emotional skills; adaptive tennis; and Cities Academy, a comprehensive tennis training system for kids of all ages and abilities. In recent years, ICT has expanded its focus in serving the entire tennis community after the purchase of the Reed Sweatt Family Tennis Center, servicing an average of 3,500 adults and juniors a week.

"InnerCity Tennis offers opportunities for all players, both on and off the court," says **Maiysha Warren**, USTA National Manager of Community Tennis Associations. "It is a model organization and continues to grow the game by positively impacting the lives of all it touches."



USTA Northern Mourns Death Of Tennis Legend **Steve Wilkinson**

Steve Wilkinson, the longtime men's tennis coach at Gustavus Adolphus College, founder of Tennis and Life Camps and USTA Northern Hall of Famer, passed away on January 21 at the age of 73 after courageously living with cancer for nearly seven years.

A visitation for Wilkinson was held January 30, and funeral services the next day at Christ Chapel on the campus of Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minn. A revered man by so many, over 1,000 people attended the funeral on Saturday, while the wait to pay one's respects to the family at the visitation Friday evening was over 2 ½ hours long as former and current Gustavus players, Tennis & Life campers, coaches, teachers, teammates, tennis supporters, friends, family, opponents and more came from around the world to honor him.

Wilkinson spent 39 years (1971-2009) at the helm of the Gustavus men's tennis program. His teams compiled 929 wins overall, the most victories in the history of collegiate men's tennis.

Wilkinson's squads won two NCAA Division III titles (1980, 1982) as well as 35 Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) titles. His teams compiled an overall record of 929-278 (.769) and a MIAC mark of 334-1 (.997). In addition, his players claimed six national doubles titles, and four national singles titles. He coached 46 players to 87 ITA All-America honors, 103 players to 226 All-Conference honors, and five CoSIDA Academic All-Americans. He was named NAIA National Coach of the Year twice (1974, 1984) and Intercollegiate Tennis Association Division III Coach of the Year three times (1982, 2001, 2003).

Along with his wife, **Barbara**, Wilkinson founded Tennis and Life Camps in 1977. For more than 35 years, the couple impacted generations of tennis enthusiasts by dedicating their lives to improving tennis performance of youth and adults and teaching life skills that can be used on and off the court. The Wilkinsons gifted Tennis and Life Camps to the College in 2010, ensuring that the camp's legacy be felt at Gustavus for decades to come. The Wilkinsons also

created an endowed position at Gustavus in sports ethics and men's tennis, which is currently held by head men's tennis coach **Tommy Valentini**.

"Wilk" as he was affectionately called, also played a key role in the fundraising and construction of the Gustavus tennis facilities, which are considered to be among the finest in the nation.

Wilkinson was an outstanding player in his own right. He played No. 1 singles at the University of Iowa and was one of the best players in the Big Ten. After college, Wilkinson played competitive tennis for many years and was ranked No. 1 in the United States in the 45, 50, 55 and 60-and-over divisions. He represented the United States in the Dubler Cup, Perry Cup and Austria Cup competitions, winning the world championship in Montevideo, Uruguay, in 1989, and finishing second in Berlin, Germany, in 1992.

Wilkinson was involved in numerous national tennis organizations, serving on the executive committees of the United States Professional Tennis Association (USPTA), the Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA), and the United States Tennis Association (USTA). He was inducted into the USPTA Hall of Fame, the ITA Hall of Fame, the Gustavus Athletics Hall of Fame, the USTA Missouri Valley Hall of Fame, the USTA Northern Hall of Fame and the Iowa Tennis Hall of Fame during his incredible career. He also received the International Tennis Hall of Fame's Tennis Educational Merit Award and The Lifetime Achievement Award from the University of Iowa.

Wilkinson is survived by his wife of 48 years, Barbara, two daughters, **Stephanie** and **Deborah**, sons-in-law **Scott** and **Jon**, four grandchildren and many relatives and friends.

He will be missed.



Before Steve by Neal Hagberg



Before Steve, I did not know that an ego could be tamed with one prayer

I did not know that fear could be conquered with a smiley-faced racket

I did not know that winning could mean losing 0-6 0-6

Or losing could mean winning 6-0 6-0

I did not know that simply saying a name could be the key to unlocking someone's soul

I did not know that "thank you" was as important as "I love you"

I did not know that having a vision meant not everyone would like you

I did not know that silence might be the best advice a person can give

Before Steve, I did not know that driving a 10-year old car and living in the same modest house for 40 years could make you rich in what matters

I did not know that Rol-Dri-ing a court - properly - could make one old guy so happy

I did not know that "I could," if I thought I could

Before Steve, I did not know that grief could press you down into your mattress for hours

And only love could make you get back up again

And I did not know that lifting one person up could make everyone around you fly.

Including yourself.

Before Steve, I did not know that the face of life and the face of death are the same:

A smile and a high five



We ARE Northern!

That continues to be our mantra as I begin my term as USTA Northern Section President. Thanks to past-President **Roshan Rajkumar** for that rallying cry, as well as a number of initiatives he started during his term, and which I intend to carry forward during the next two years.

Recently, USTA Northern has refined its strategic priorities in helping support USTA Northern's mission of "To promote and develop the growth of tennis." Our areas of focus are Adult/Senior Play Opportunities, Youth/Junior Play Opportunities, Community Tennis and People/Resources/Structure.

With Adult/Senior Play Opportunities, USTA Northern will continue to focus on its flagship program of USTA League Tennis. In 2014, over 4,000 people played USTA League Tennis within the Section and we hope that number continues to grow with the introduction of new Park and Rec programming and Millennial play opportunities eventually feeding into the Leagues pipeline. We also are focused on alternative adult tournament formats, while still providing traditional "tournament warrior" events. USTA Northern is proud to be playing host to the US Open Section Qualifier (University of Minnesota, June 18-21), the National Public Parks Championships (Sioux Falls, S.D., July 22-26) and the 65 & Over Men's Category I National Championships (Eden Prairie, Minn., August 11-16) in 2015.

With our biggest growth opportunities being kids, USTA Northern continues to emphasize introducing tennis in the schools either through physical education classes or before- and after-school programming. We will train as many providers as possible in using shorter courts, smaller racquets and slower, lower-bouncing balls so kids can have FUN and experience success more quickly on the courts. Junior Team Tennis continues to emphasize skill development, teamwork and friendly competition. Last year, over 2,800 kids participated in USTA Northern Junior Team Tennis – a 10 percent increase from 2013. Finally, the Section is committed to the development of players to be champions at all levels through our Junior Tournaments and High Performance programs.

USTA Northern will focus on developing and enriching current relationships with key partners in regards to Community Tennis. The Section supports facilities, coaches, Community Tennis Associations, National Junior Tennis and Learning programs, teaching professionals and local organizers through on-and off-court trainings, resources



and collaborations. The Section also provides financial assistance through grants and individual scholarships.

Through our full-time staff, the Board of Directors and our committee members, USTA Northern strives to reach as many people as possible in growing the game, while being diverse, inclusive and fiscally responsible. We are also making a greater commitment in marketing and promoting the game and our programs through the many different media (social, electronic, print) available to us.

We are very fortunate to have so many people in our Section who are passionate about tennis and willing to volunteer their talents. Last year, we had a record-number of people apply for committee positions. I want to express appreciation for everything they do as we forge ahead in our quest for tennis becoming more accessible to all ages and backgrounds, as well as promoting the game as a safe and healthy lifetime sport. We are always looking for more volunteers who can give of their time and

talents. If you are interested in sharing your skills, please visit the new Volunteer section on www.northern.usta.com under "About Us" and complete a Volunteer Registration Form. We can, and will, use you!

As a recent member of the USTA's National Sport Science Committee, I saw research showing tennis is one of the best sports for extending a person's life expectancy as it exercises and challenges you both physically and mentally, in addition to the lasting friendships created through the game. We believe that in USTA Northern and hope all players, both frequent and new to the game, experience these great benefits every time they step onto the court.

The USTA's tagline is "Find Yourself in the Game." I hope it has a personal meaning for you. I have heard many wonderful stories of people discovering good things about, and for, themselves through tennis. I ask you to help me and the other volunteers in North and South Dakota, Minnesota and Northwestern Wisconsin by encouraging others to pick up a racquet and "Find Themselves in the Game."

Kathy Lundberg,
USTA Northern President



WELCOME

2015-16 USTA Northern

Committee Members

USTA Northern welcomed its new committee members on January 1, 2015. These positions are made up of our membership volunteers in helping promote and develop the game of tennis across USTA Northern. Anyone within Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Northwestern Wisconsin, who is a USTA Member, can serve on a committee, but need to complete an application form in the fall prior to when the new term begins. Note: The next application period will be in the Fall of 2016.

The primary roles of a committee member include:

1. Recommending ideas, thoughts and changes to Committee Chair, Board and Staff Liaison on any new or existing programs, services or initiatives the Committee oversee.
2. Review, monitor and evaluate those programs and activities connected to Committee duties to ensure the Committee, Board and Staff Liaison meet its goals.
3. Work together with volunteers and staff in the spirit of cooperation and teamwork.

Welcome to the 2015-16 USTA Northern Committee Members and thank you for your service in helping us achieve our mission.

Adult Leagues Committee

Charge: To recommend, support and promote recreational and competitive league team opportunities that motivate and encourage adult players to become frequent tennis players.

Chair: Mike Johnson

Staff Liaisons: Nancy Lundberg, Kelley Okerman

Board Liaison: Julie Whitaker

Members: Joe Abraham, Jim Marolt, Chris Bushaw, Helen Gunther, Rick Lassow, Heather Landrus, Julie Ouyang

Adult League Self-Rate Appeals Committee

Charge: To ensure that self-rate appeals granted are consistent with the intent of the General and Experienced Player Guidelines and NTRP Guidebook. To document, in writing, certain decision and rationale for granting self-rate appeals.

Chair: Bruce Gullikson

Staff Liaison: Nancy Lundberg

Board Liaison: Mike Vidmar

Adult League Medical Review Committee

Charge: To review each formal written request from a player for reconsideration of his/her NTRP Rating based on a permanent, disabling injury or illness.

Chair: Annie Burton, M.D.

Staff Liaison: Nancy Lundberg

Board Liaison: Mike Vidmar

Members: Mike Vidmar, John Niedfeldt-Thomas, Michele Hanson, M.D.

Adult League & Tournament Grievance Committee

Charge: To fairly adjudicate Section level

grievances arising out of the USTA League and Adult Tournament programs.

Chair: Andrew Mushett

Staff Liaison: Nancy Lundberg

Board Liaison: David Fishbaine

Members: Megan Ecker, Sandy McLeod, John Niedfeldt-Thomas, Paul Dalton, Larry Baill, Christopher Gay, Kayla Flynn, Kevin Hamlin

Adult Leagues & Tournaments Grievance Appeals Committee

Charge: To fairly adjudicate Section level grievance appeals arising out of the USTA League program and USTA Adult Tournaments.

Chair: Roshan Rajkumar

Staff Liaison: Nancy Lundberg

Board Liaison: Roshan Rajkumar

Members: Roshan Rajkumar, Kathy Lundberg, Liz Hamburg

CTA/NJTL Committee

Charge: To create, develop and strengthen a Section-wide network of self-sufficient Community Tennis Associations (CTA) and National Junior Tennis and Learning (NJTL) chapters to increase tennis participation at the local level.

Chair: Becky Blue

Staff Liaison: Christine Nickels

Board Liaison: Susan Allen

Members: Kevin Allan, Becky Cantellano, Jessie Daw, Lea Favor, Samantha Smart Merritt, Chuck Provencio

Grants Committee

Charge: To evaluate and improve grant procedures, review applications and thoughtfully allocate appropriate funding to community programs and facilities based on set criteria, Section priorities and need.

Chair: Sue Gregor

Staff Liaison: Christine Nickels

Board Liaison: Brian McCoy

Members: Marcia Bach, Neal Hagberg, Joyce Gavino, Mary Thompson, Mark Welinski

Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Charge: To advise and support staff and volunteers at all levels with promoting and expanding diversity and inclusion as integral parts in all facets of our organization as well as tennis programs throughout the Section.

Chair: Jessie Daw



Staff Liaison: Tony Stingley
Board Liaison: Jessie Daw
Members: Becky Cantellano, Justin Margolies, Hank Philmon, Yinka Taiwo, Kelley Nelson, Mehdi Benyebka, Michael Kantar, Sebastian Adesoro, Song Thao

Junior Competition Committee

Charge: To promote and address all activities associated with junior competition, to find ways to increase participation in all junior competitive events and to recommend and implement improvements to increase tournament play which hopefully will serve to motivate and encourage junior players of various abilities to develop to the highest competitive level possible.

Chair: Scott Boyer

Staff Liaison: Pat Colbert

Board Liaison: Scott Boyer

Members: Kayla Flynn, Aimee Mairs, Lana Knewtson, Craig Gordon, Rich Trella, Felicia Rachiatore, Brad Pauley, Matt Boughton

Junior Player ID Committee

Charge: To identify players for the Sectional Training camps and coaching education.

Chair: Glenn Allsop

Staff Liaison: Pat Colbert

Board Liaison: Lars Ranger

Members: Matt Boughton, Craig Gordon, Justin Jennings, Danny Kantar, Pat Klett, Mark Muntifering, Viet Pham, Kevin Plank, Kris Premo, Steve Tacl, Felicia Rachiatore, Mark Vellek, Sion Wilkins

Junior Team Tennis Committee

Charge: To assist in the Section's efforts to provide increased play opportunities for all junior players by increasing the awareness, demand, and preference for USTA Junior Team Tennis amongst junior players for the purpose of driving participation and membership.

Chair: Scott Sundstrom

Staff Liaisons: Brandon Jackson, Tricia Moorhead

Board Liaison: Matt Boughton

Members: Sebastian Adesoro, Jenny Arnfelt, Matt Boughton, Adam Doll, Lisa Johnson, Andrea Lipovetz, Jon Pickett, Kevin Plank, Sadie Reiners, Lisa Salo, Jeremy Thompson

Finance-Related Committees

Charge: To direct the stewardship of the Corporations' assets and resources in the areas of budgeting, compensation, investments and overseeing an independent auditor.

Audit Committee

Chair: John Wilcox

Staff Liaisons: Mike Goldammer, James Poehler

Board Liaison: John Wilcox

Budget Committee

Chair: John Wilcox

Staff Liaisons: Mike Goldammer, James Poehler

Board Liaison: John Wilcox

Compensation Committee

Chair: Liz Hamburg

Staff Liaison: Mike Goldammer

Board Liaison: Liz Hamburg

Members: Roshan Rajkumar, Kathy Lundberg, John Wilcox, Scott Boyer, Susan Allen

Investment Committee

Chair: Roshan Rajkumar

Staff Liaisons: Mike Goldammer, James Poehler

Board Liaison: Roshan Rajkumar

Members: John Wilcox, Mehdi Benyebka, Lars Ranger, Julie Whitaker, Susan Allen, Justin Gaard

Section Grievance Committee

Charge: It shall operate under the rules and regulations of the Grievance Committee Policy Charter.

Chair: Jeff Baill

Staff Liaison: Mike Goldammer

Board Liaison: Kathy Lundberg

Member: Steve Champlin

Officials Committee

Charge: To advise and support staff and volunteers at all levels with promoting and expanding our officials initiatives which include assignments, recruitment, evaluation and training.

Chair: Tim Kurtt

Staff Liaison: Kristi Bushinski

Board Liaison: Tim Kurtt

Members: Mike Yates, Heather Landrus, Richard Arians

Officials Disciplinary Committee

Charge: To fairly adjudicate violations to the Official's Code of Conduct and substandard performance on court. The committee recommends the action, if any, to be taken to the Officials Council Chair.

Chair: Ron Jacobus, Jr.

Staff Liaison: Kristi Bushinski

Board Liaison: Tim Kurtt

Member: Tim Heck

Disciplinary Appeals Committee

Charge: To fairly adjudicate Section level disciplinary appeals arising out of the Officials Disciplinary Committee.

Chair: Roshan Rajkumar

Staff Liaison: Kristi Bushinski

Board Liaison: Roshan Rajkumar

Members: Kathy Lundberg, Liz Hamburg

Hall of Fame Committee

Charge: To recognize those individuals who have made outstanding contributions to tennis both on and off the court in the Section over an extended period of time.

Chair: David Yorks

Staff Liaison: Lisa Mushett

Board Liaison: Susan Kringlie

Members: Marcia Bach, Bob Larson, Betsy Michel, Dick Riley, Mary Thompson

Awards Committee

Charge: To assure that deserving members of the tennis community receive recognition for their tennis achievements.

Chair: Jay Pfaender

Staff Liaison: Lisa Mushett

Board Liaison: Mehdi Benyebka

Members: Barbara Boden-Zorin, Pam Boorsma, Rochelle Breen, Sue Gregor, Heather Landrus, Hank Philmon, Mike Vidmar, Eric Weisser

Northern Tennis Foundation

Charge: To provide resources and financial support to young people in need who have the dreams, the goals, and the desire to succeed both on and off the court.

Chair: Andrew Holm

Staff Liaisons: Sandy Smith, Christine Nickels

Board Liaison: Justin Gaard

Members: Pam Boorsma, Joyce Gavino, Sandra Henk, Jill Hofacker Williams, Alex Scheglowski, Eric Weisser



NO DISTANCE TOO FAR TO PLAY USTA LEAGUE TENNIS

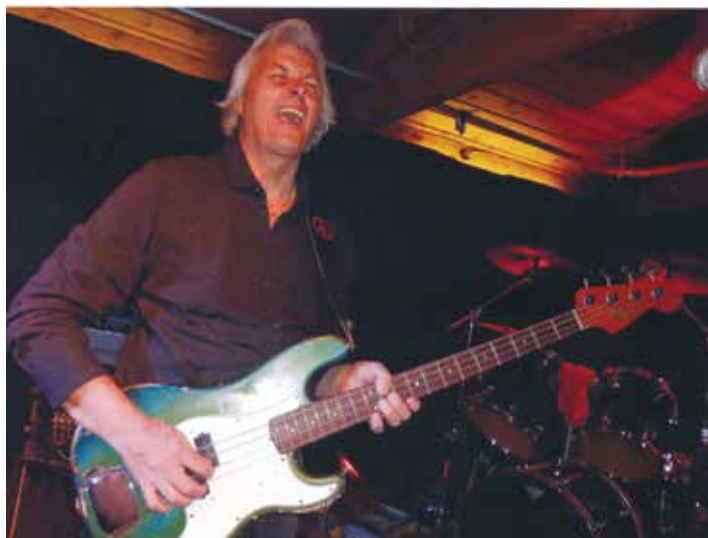
To all USTA League players in the Twin Cities who grumble about having to drive across town for a match, meet **Craig Engelhart**.

On Wednesday's last summer, the Brainerd, Minn., resident jumped into his car around 3 p.m., making the 2 ½ hour drive to the Twin Cities to play USTA League Tennis. After playing his 90-minute match, which usually ended about 8 p.m., he got right back in his car and made the 150-minute drive home. Is that dedication or just plain crazy? Even Engelhart is not sure.

"When I think about it, it is cool, but crazy," the first time USTA Northern League player said with a chuckle. "When I was playing the match, it was cool. When I was driving home, it was crazy. Not growing up in the city, I get lost pretty easily so I'd find myself off the beaten path a lot."

A tennis player all his life, Engelhart's parents played competitively, and when he was about 19 years old, he started playing local tournaments in the Brainerd area. He then moved to Florida in 1971, and met a tennis pro. It was there, he was "bitten by the bug."

Almost 45 years later, Engelhart still plays five days a week during the summer and one day a week in the winter at the only indoor facility within serving distance of Brainerd. He also hits the road to play at least one adult tournament a month, traveling to different locations around Section. In 2014, the tournament warrior played the Sandy Dyer Open at Life Time Fitness - Fridley in May, the USTA Northern Hard Court Section Championships at Baseline Tennis Center at the University of Minnesota in June, the Twin Cities Tennis Challenge benefitting Special Olympics and the Asfora/Clayton South Dakota



Open in Sioux Falls, S.D., in July and the Minnesota Open at Life Time Fitness - Oakdale Village in August.

It was a mutual friend from the tournament circuit who recommended Engelhart to long-time Twin Cities League captain Eric Narvaez. The two, who had actually met 20 years earlier at a tournament, soon reconnected, and after some arm-twisting, became teammates. Their 40 & Over 3.5 team finished a perfect 9-0 during the summer season and Engelhart posted a record of 2-2.

"It was my first time playing Leagues," Engelhart said. "I did not know any of the guys on the team, but I was very happy with how it went. The play was high caliber and I saw many of the guys I had played tournaments with over the years. It made the long drive worth it."

Another reward for braving the deer-laden backroads late at night was Engelhart's team winning the USTA Northern Section Championship (where he had a perfect 3-0 record) and qualifying for the 2014 USTA League National Championships in Tucson, Ariz. At Nationals, the Northern squad tied for first in their flight with a 2-1 record, but did not advance due to winning only seven matches compared to 10 for Midwest. Of the seven matches won, Engelhart earned two of those victories and lost another in a close third-set match tiebreaker.

"We went early to practice and acclimate to the conditions as it is a completely different atmosphere," he said. "The cool thing was there were people from all around the country and the focus was on tennis, camaraderie, sportsmanship and fun. It was probably one of the top 10 experiences of my entire life."

That is high praise from someone who has had a pretty accomplished life when it comes to his other passion - music. Being the youngest sibling in a musical family, he had an extensive gospel background and performed in local choirs, but rock 'n' roll was his music of choice. By 17, he was singing from Brainerd to Florida as a member of the Wild Rice Band and appeared on The Nashville Network's "Be A Star." Later, Engelhart formed the group Silent Partner and is a founding member of Kings Ransom. He has produced singles, albums and CDs, while performing on cruise ships traveling around the world. Kings Ransom is still going strong today, playing over 100 dates a year in Minnesota and the Upper Midwest, and recently, Engelhart and bandmate Joe McGown released a CD entitled "Time Flies When You're Having Fun!"

And he must be having fun, but how does Engelhart keep up with his busy schedule?

"I really enjoy people and I make time to do everything," he said. "I cannot just sit at home, and I know there will come a day that I will not be able to do everything I want. I had a friend tell me to do what I can when I can and that is how I live my life. I appreciate every moment."



Register Now For USTA Northern Spring **ONE Doubles**

1
DOUBLES



GRAB YOUR BEST TENNIS PLAYING FRIENDS and register for this FUN, easy doubles league. All you need are 2-4 players at the same NTRP level. Each team plays only one doubles position each week.

Women play on Tuesday evening and men on Wednesday evening. You must play at your current NTRP level (i.e.-a 4.0 must play at the 4.0 level). Levels offered are 3.0, 3.5, 4.0 and 4.5.

The National Invitational for ONE Doubles is played in Indian Wells, Calif., during the BNP Paribas Open in March of 2016!

NEW FOR THE SPRING: MIXED ONE Doubles on Thursday evening. This league is non-advancing and offered at the combined levels of 6.0, 7.0, 8.0 and 9.0. Partners combined NTRP may not exceed the level of the league.

Teams can choose to play at Baseline Tennis Center or LifeTime Fitness – Bloomington South.

The spring play season runs from April 6 – May 11 and teams will play 4-6 matches.

Team registration deadline is March 13, 2015.

NEED A PARTNER OR ADDITIONAL PLAYERS?
Contact Matchline@northern.usta.com.

For more information, contact Kelley Okerman at Okerman@northern.usta.com or visit northern.usta.com/leagues.



Now offering
**MIXED ONE
DOUBLES!**



A Look Back At NTRP And What It Means Now

by Marilyn Sherman

As USTA League Tennis celebrates its 35th anniversary in 2015, let's reflect on the history surrounding one of the program's integral and sport-changing aspects – the National Tennis Rating Program – better known as NTRP.

Previously, local leagues across the country used varying types of rating systems, ranging from the simple "A-B-C" to the more creative color-coding method, to evaluate a player's level. By 1980, tennis reached a point where a national system was needed to get players across the country speaking the same language. And so the USTA adopted NTRP, with many experts helping fine tune the guidelines surrounding the 2.5, 3.0, 3.5, 4.0, 4.5, 5.0, 5.5 and Open levels.

In the early years, the program initiated a verification system, including expert observers to validate a player's self-rating when first entering league tennis – with the goal of ensuring competitive and compatible play. In 2003, self-rate guidelines were established to improve the entry process for new players to USTA League, from beginners to former college and professional players. In addition, a three-strike disqualification system was initiated that utilizes dynamic ratings from match results throughout the year.

Regulations and computer methodology have changed each year to reflect improvements in the NTRP rating system. As a result in 2014, an astounding 302,479 players received a Year-End rating. Of those, 80 percent with a computer rating remained at the same NTRP skill level. Of the computer-rated players, 13.5 percent were promoted and 6.5 percent were moved down an NTRP level. The self-rating process showed that just over 64 percent of players remained at the same skill level they

provided to the USTA, with 23 percent promoted after 2014, and 13 percent moved down a level.

Fair competition, according to **Darcy Cobb**, USTA League National Manager, is top priority for the country's largest recreational tennis outfit and its 320,000-player constituency. Shifts in ratings, both promotion and demotion, are made based on an algorithm. The make-up of a team should change if players progress in skill – but that should not be viewed as a punishment if it means long-time partners can't play in every level of competition together.

"Players should look at moving up as a reward for working hard on their game and that they have improved," said Cobb. "Congratulations are in order for those who move up a level.

"Those who have moved down can always play up," Cobb continued. "Sections also have combination levels, where you can still play with your core group, whether it's Mixed, Combo or ONE Doubles. We try providing opportunities that keep groups together, while also keeping a competitive balance."

Other figures of note relating to the 2014 Year-End NTRP findings:

- ▶ There were 44,885 players that did not publish (receive a rating)
- ▶ 19,074 players were mixed doubles exclusives
- ▶ 5,611 players were issued tournament ratings
- ▶ 1,029 players were dynamically disqualified

CELEBRATING 35 YEARS



Spring ONE Doubles (Including MIXED) and Summer League Registration Now Open

Registration is going on NOW for Twin Cities Spring ONE Doubles Leagues starting in April and Summer Leagues beginning in May.

For ONE Doubles, find 2-4 people and play one doubles position weekly for 4-6 weeks at either Baseline Tennis Center or Life Time Fitness – Bloomington South. Women play on Tuesdays and Men on Wednesdays. Also... NEW for the Spring is MIXED ONE Doubles which play on Thursdays at both locations.

Summer offers Adult 18 & Over, 40 & Over, 55 & Over and 65 & Over Leagues, as well as 18 & Over Mixed and 40 & Over Mixed. There are plenty of options to "Play Tennis Your Way" this spring and summer. Find one that works for you and get registered today. For more information, contact **Kelley Okerman** at Okerman@northern.usta.com.

Looking For A Team Or Partner? Use Matchline!

Looking for a team or partner to play league this spring or summer? USTA Northern can help with its FREE Matchline Service which places players looking for teams on a squad. We have over a 96% placement rate. For more information, contact Matchline at matchline@northern.usta.com.

USTA Northern Leagues Department Offering Education Series

All captains and players are invited to learn more about USTA Northern League Tennis this spring and summer through our new Captain and Player Education Series. Three sessions are scheduled for the following dates at the USTA Northern Offices at Life Time Fitness – Bloomington South.

- ▶ **Tuesday, March 24:** Captaining A USTA League Team
- ▶ **Tuesday, June 16:** TennisLink; USTA Rules & Regulations
- ▶ **Tuesday, July 21:** NTRP & Everything Ratings

Each session will be offered twice that day – once in-person at the USTA office from 12 Noon to 1:00 p.m. (refreshments will be provided) and later via webinar from 6:00-7:00 p.m. Please RSVP to **Nancy Lundberg** at lundberg@northern.usta.com and indicate session date and time.

Additional information regarding each session's specific subject matter will be announced prior to the event. Any players or captains with specific questions or ideas for material to be covered during these sessions, or future sessions, are invited to e-mail **Nancy Lundberg** at Lundberg@northern.usta.com.



In January of 2012, the International Tennis Federation (ITF) adopted a rule change revolutionizing the game of tennis for kids, and the USTA quickly jumped on board. By now, hopefully everybody has seen these changes throughout USTA Northern emphasizing smaller, lighter weight rackets, lower-compression colored

balls and shorter courts with blended lines incorporated onto a regulation-size court. With these innovations, it is hard not to see the tremendous success kids are now having after only a few play opportunities on the court – a testament to this new way of teaching the game.

In less than five years, I have personally seen the tremendous impact 10 and Under Tennis (or Red, Orange, Green Tennis as we like to call it now because one can use the new equipment and teachings with any new player regardless of age) can do for the sport. But for some reason, not everyone is convinced. I remember overhearing a tennis professional tell a parent the reason we teach Red, Orange, Green Tennis is because “my boss told me to teach it this way so I am doing it.” Another time I heard a parent ask, “Why does my kid need to play with those ‘flat balls?’”

Obviously, we have a little more explaining and educating to do in making believers not in just some of us, but ALL of us so here goes...

Why Smaller, Lighter Rackets? Motor development in a child starts close to the body, As a child grows, coordination works its way to the limbs. A good example of this is watching a younger child catch a ball. They start by catching it with their entire body, almost hugging the ball. Giving a kid a racket that is too big means they simply cannot control it, as it is too far away from their body.

Why Smaller Courts? In order for players to develop proper footwork patterns, they need to be on a court appropriate to the size of the athlete. For kids, proper footwork patterns on a full-size court do not work because the number of steps to contact and recovery are greatly exaggerated. By using a smaller court, kids narrow the space available, thus tracking the ball easier and assisting in proper contact of the ball. During the recovery process, the limited space helps kids return to “ready” in preparing them for the next ball. No other sports uses adult size fields or courts for kids and neither should tennis.

What Does This Do For Athletic Development? A recent study done by Tennis Australia with 12-year-old National level players who use Green balls versus Yellow balls showed the rally tempo was faster with the Green ball. Why you ask? Because the Green ball kids had to move the ball back and forth quicker in setting up points (remember... moon balling doesn't work as effectively with Green balls). They also had to react quicker. Tennis is an open-skill sport which means players are constantly adapting. Kids need to react to the incoming ball, perceive the speed, direction, and height, and anticipate all at once to be successful. You cannot learn these skills if you are standing in a line hitting balls, or if the ball you are playing with is too fast.

What About Those “Dead Balls”? Actually, this is one area I feel most people have a good understating of once they see them in action or use them. Playing with the appropriate-colored ball is where players develop proper fundamentals and good swing paths. Hitting too many balls up and out of your child's strike zone leads to extreme grips and bad habits that are extremely tough to change as they get older. In talking to some of the kids I have worked with in changing

THE *Why* of Red, Orange, Green Tennis

their grip, the response across the board is “it was one of the hardest things I have ever done in athletics.” My advice is make sure your young tennis player has the proper grips and fundamentals prior to hitting thousands of tennis balls so they never have to go through a major grip change, not to mention injuring themselves.

How Does This Help In Court Coverage? This is a BIG one. At a conference I attended a few years ago, I heard an internationally renowned coach say, “American coaches are good at developing great hitters, but not great PLAYERS.” After taking offense, but thinking more about it, he was right. As you can imagine, the transition game (approach/volley) is nearly impossible as passing shots and lobs are just too easy, thus taking the ball early and improving court position on a higher, faster ball will never happen. Often times I find myself asking, “Is the child playing the ball?” or “Is the ball playing the child?” If it is the latter, you will see your child stand way behind the baseline, hitting balls above the shoulders, and playing long, extended rallies with the ball being hit down the middle of the court. It is hard to win a match when you are stuck doing only that.

Now That My Kid Is Actually Playing Earlier, Where Do Competition and Sportsmanship Enter The Picture? Because kids are now learning to play at an early age, they will have to compete and cope with winning... and losing. As a parent of three kids, I know this is tough for kids to learn, but embracing competition and all that comes with it is a great thing and can teach many valuable lessons not only about themselves, but life. Not all competition is healthy for younger kids. The key is finding a comfortable learning environment with friends who have common interests while playing. Effort level and FUN should be the main focus, not winning.

Parents... you also need to remember that your kids are the ones playing and not you. The first question you should ask your child is not if they won or loss, but did they have fun, meet new friends, learn something new, say “thank you” to their coach and friends, etc. It is those life lessons that kids will take with them for years to come, not if they won that third-set tiebreaker against little Johnny. Kids and their parents, who are there to support them, should always follow the golden rule by treating others as they want to be treated.

How Can I Make Sure My Kids Keep Having Fun? Kids have been having fun taking tennis lessons for years and will continue to do so. The biggest difference now is that kids are learning to love tennis. In the past, kids loved playing sharks and minnows because they were moving constantly to avoid the big bad sharks. In tennis it used to be that kids stood in line in what seemed like FOREVER to hit one ball and move to the back of the line. Not anymore! Now we have 7 year olds asking to stay after class to hit more balls and play matches. That is how great “PLAYERS” will develop.

USTA Northern is definitely ahead of the curve in comparison to most of the country when it comes to Red, Orange, Green Tennis. Now it is our job to convince the few remaining doubters that it is really working so that our kids continue to develop a love and passion for tennis that will last a lifetime.



DEVELOPING TENNIS PLAYERS

Ages 4-11



PLAYER AGE	4-6 YEARS	6-8 YEARS	7-10 YEARS	9-11 YEARS
Court and ball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RED court (36'x18') or smaller • Tape as net • Red foam and red felt ball • Larger ball can be used as a teaching aid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RED court (36' x 18') • 2'9" net or tape as net • Red ball 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ORANGE court (60' x 21') (60'x27' doubles) • 3' net • Orange ball 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GREEN court (78' x 27') (78' x 27' doubles) • 3' net • Green ball
Player-centered environment	Fun, active, relaxed, inclusive, positive with frequent changes of activity	Fun, active, relaxed, inclusive, positive and encouraging with emphasis on learning new skills	Enjoyable, active, inclusive, positive with progressive development of existing and new skill base	Enjoyable, active, inclusive, positive learning and reinforcing of new and existing skills
Coach/ player ratio	1:4	1:6	1:4	1:4-6
Goals to fit stage of development	To develop basic skills of movement, catching, throwing and hitting	To develop athletic skills, technical and game skills for the tennis environment	To develop tennis-appropriate athletic, technical, game and competitive skills	To combine tennis-appropriate technical, tactical, physical and psychological skills for competition

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT				
Athletic development	Running, jumping, hopping, twisting, turning, stopping, starting, static balance, catching with two hands	Agility, dynamic balance, bilateral coordination, skipping, hopping, throwing/tossing and catching away from body with either hand, flexibility, strength.	Agility, dynamic balance, complex coordination, linear speed, speed of coordination, strength, flexibility, footwork.	Agility, dynamic balance, complex coordination, multi-directional speed, strength, core strength flexibility.
Technical development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handling racquet • Increasing understanding of ball flight (height, depth and width) • Hitting on forehand and backhand side • Underhand or overhand serve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handling the racquet • Tracking the ball with increased anticipation of bounce position • Increasing understanding of height, depth and width of ball flight • Basic forehand and backhand (GPS: Grip, Preparation, Swing Path) • Overhand serve (grip, stance, arm action, rhythm, contact) • Service return • Basic volley 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing understanding of pace and spin on ball flight • Forehand and backhand (stance grip, shape of shot, types of spin) • Serve (grip, stance, arm action, rhythm, contact, rotation, types of spin) • Service return: with change of direction • Approach shot to volley • Overhead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forehand and backhand (racquet speed and change of spin, hit ball at top of bounce or falling) • Serve (stance, speed, spin on second serve, placement to move opponent, hit ball to rise off court) • Service return: hit rising or falling ball • Approach shot to hit high or low volley
Movement	Developing balance in different movement patterns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forwards, sideways and diagonally forward • Basic recovery movement 	Multi-directional movement including diagonally backwards with loading and recovery	Movement, loading and recovery in all directions
Psychological development	Trying new challenges, effort, following instructions	Concentration, willingness to learn, learning to make choices, respectful, understanding rules, coping with winning and losing, learning to solve problems	Love of the sport, teachability, concentration, problem solving, becoming confident, making choices, learning fairness, taking responsibility	Competitiveness, focus, simple goal-setting, self-motivation, confidence, learning to make decisions, developing self-reliance, understanding winning and losing

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Tactical development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groundstrokes consistent to different zones of court • Serve consistent into service court • Basic positioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistency of depth • Accuracy to move opponent • Positioning to take ball on fall or on rise. • Developing groundstroke strength 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistency of depth with change of pace • Ability to change pace and spin • Serve with accuracy to move opponent • Able to change direction of ball • Positioning and recovery • Developing strengths • Introduce transitioning to net 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistency and accuracy of depth with variety of pace and spin • Improved anticipation skills of opponent to increase shot options • Developing understanding of outcome of opponent's actions on ball • Developing strengths: use pace and direction to move opponent • Recognition of opponent's weakness on short ball • Developing ability to control the point
Game development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reactive • Learning to rally, serve and return serve • Able to score with help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reactive to opponent's shots • Able to rally, serve and return serve • Able to score by self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reactive to opponents shots with improved shot selection • Singles: able to hold the baseline • Doubles: communication, basic positions, use of angles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Singles: increasingly proactive with decision-making • Doubles: changing positions, role of the net player, both players to the net
Social / behavioral development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to share • Learning to say thank you • Like to be with friends • Are center of their world • Need variety of short, new and familiar activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to cooperate with and help other children • Learning to consider other people • Learning through familiar activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to compete against other players • Learning about tennis • Helping other players in the group and sharing • Happy to be with their own gender. Able to help and listen to the coach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respecting partners and opponents, coaches and officials. Can acknowledge others' success. Happy to work with their own gender • Can accept adult opinions as important • Can verbalize opinions /thoughts and can explain well

PRACTICE

Practice format	Small groups	Small groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small groups • Perhaps individual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small groups • Perhaps individual
Length of sessions	30 minutes	45 to 60 minutes	60 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75 minutes group • 30-60 minutes individual
Frequency of sessions	Up to two times per week	Up to 2 sessions with optional additional competition day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group: Up to three times per week • Individual: Once per week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group: Up to three times per week • Individual: Once per week
Other sports and activities	Individual sports and activities that develops agility, balance, coordination, running and sending and receiving skills	Individual and team sports and activities that develops agility, balance, coordination, running and sending and receiving skills	Individual and team sports and activities, with emphasis on enjoyment and skill learning	Individual and team sports and activities, with emphasis on enjoyment and skill learning

COMPETITION

Frequency of competition	Structured, but flexible program	Structured, but flexible program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum 40 competition days per year • Unlimited practice matches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum of 60 competition days per year • Unlimited practice matches
Type of Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent and child sessions • Cooperative games 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play Days • Team Tennis • Local competition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Tennis • Local/state competition • Short sets, timed matches and round robins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Tennis • Individual state/sectional competition • 2 out of 3 "short" sets/round robins and compass draws





CROSSCOURT

Vanessa Sexton Hired As New USTA Northern Executive Assistant

Congratulations to **Vanessa Sexton** (Lakeville, Minn.) who was named the new Executive Assistant for USTA Northern. Sexton replaces **Cory Haugen** who retired in December and can be contacted at (952) 887-5001 or at admin@northern.usta.com.

US Open Member Pre-Sale May 26-30

Save the date as the 2015 US Open Member Ticket Pre-Sale event will be May 26-30, 2015. More information will follow in the coming months.

USTA Northern To Host Member Appreciation Event With Gophers March 29

USTA Northern will be hosting a FREE Member Appreciation Event in conjunction with the Gopher men's tennis team on Sunday, March 29, at Baseline Tennis Center. There will be two Cardio Tennis clinics prior to the match (10:30-11:15 a.m., 11:15-12:00 p.m.) with the Gopher match against Indiana starting at 12 noon. Lunch and prizes too. Space is limited to the first 80 people for the Cardio clinics so register early. To RSVP, contact **Sandy Smith** at (952) 358-3288.

McEnroe, Roddick, Chang & Blake To Play At Target Center In Minneapolis on April 29

Tickets are now on sale for the Champions Shootout featuring tennis legends **John McEnroe, Andy Roddick, Michael Chang** and **James**

Blake April 29 at the Target Center in Minneapolis. Remember: USTA Northern members receive 10 percent off P2-P5 tickets by using the code **USTA10**. USTA Northern is also looking for volunteers to help that day. If interested, please contact **Lisa Mushett** at (952) 358-3282.

Member Appreciation Event As Part Of Champions Shootout

There will be a Member Appreciation Event prior to the Champions Shootout event April 29 at Target Center from 5:30-7 p.m. USTA members are allowed to bring one guest to the event. To RSVP, contact **Sandy Smith** at (952) 358-3288.

USTA Northern Volunteers Named To USTA National Committees

Congratulations to the following USTA Northern volunteers who were named to USTA National Committees for the 2015-16 term: **Margie Champlin** (Wayzata, Minn.) - Awards; **Carolyn Riley** (Minnetonka, Minn.) - Volunteer Development Council (Chair); **Marcia Bach** (Bloomington, Minn.) - Public Parks; **Joan Baker** (Shorewood, Minn.) - Budget; **Jeff Baill** (Wayzata, Minn.) - National Grievance (Vice Chair); **Matt Boughton** (Eau Claire, Wis.) - Junior Team Tennis; **Liz Hamburg** (Rapid City, S.D.) - Local Play & Competition; **Sue Gregor** (Wayzata, Minn.) - Membership (Chair); **John Niedfeldt-Thomas** (St. Paul, Minn.) - Leagues; **Tim Kurtt** (St. Paul, Minn.) - Officials; **Mike Goldammer** (Rosemount, Minn.) - Sportsmanship Task Force, Adult Implementation Group.



ADVANCED COACHING: Filling YOUR Player's Box



Amid its longing for wooden rackets and the lost art of net play, the old school has now turned its far-sighted eye to the player's box and the so-called "entourages" inhabiting it. I can see why blatant coaching, obnoxious model girlfriends and the full staff of coaches and trainers might seem excessive, but what needs to be understood is that tennis is no longer an individual sport. To train, perform and brand yourself at an elite level, it requires an entire team of people. Tennis is no longer a parlor game, friends.

Rather than fight the winds of change, it is always the duty of Hey JB to guide the next generation in the realities of modern tennis. Alas, it is never too early to start constructing your own "team" that you will one day be thanking in an Oscar-worthy, eight-minute speech.

Nonetheless, there are a finite number of spaces in your future player's box. Below is a guide to filling the key positions:

Primary coach (a.k.a. "Longtime Coach") - Having only one coach in your box is a clear message to the rest of the tour that you aren't serious about winning. That or it says you can't afford expensive second opinions. Still, you need the steadying influence of the one who helped mold your game from beginning and whose loyalty is akin to family (i.e. won't jump ship for more money). Actual family in the head coach position is a mistake, though. Too much job security is never a good thing.

Celebrity Coach (a.k.a. "New Coach") - Reading headlines about your opponents hiring big-name coaches can cause you to lose sleep at night, and your peace of mind is critical. You don't want to introduce too much ego into your tight inner circle, though. The key is to find a legend-turned-(happy) family man, reluctant, but willing, to spend a few weeks on the road just for you. Avoid restless **Michael Jordan**-types who openly campaign for jobs and aimlessly criticize the younger players they're pretty sure they could still beat.

Special Consultant (a.k.a. "Part-time Coach") - Bringing in a consultant to address a specific weakness, or as a trial run for the Celebrity Coach position is an ideal practice for the serious tour player. Give the new guy a test drive during off weeks or at non-majors, but be sure to publicize the move favorably so that other players fear your improved serve or new strategic wrinkle. It is also the best way to alert the big names who might be watching at home that you're holding interviews.

Chief of Staff (a.k.a. "Longtime Friend") - Your traveling circus needs a ringleader. You need someone to manage finances, logistics, endorsements, media, human relationships - basically all the real-life responsibilities you're too focused to worry about. Since this job is basically thankless, but requires total trust, it can probably only be done by

family or childhood friends. Best case scenario is an older brother. Worst case is an Eastern European father.

Body Man (a.k.a. "Physio") - Contrary to traditional thinking, the ideal fitness guru is not a tennis guy at all. The body man is your secret sauce. He provides you with the undisclosed, borderline legal, high-altitude, naturally blood-doping training method, that announcers and competitors alike can only speculate on. He may be a former Israeli paratrooper, a martial artist with two PhDs and training in all seven forms of traditional Polynesian healing, or an expressionless old man whose name search produces not a single Google result. The more mysterious, the better.

Parents - Ideally, they prefer to watch on TV. But if either or both must be there, just try to enforce the following rules: 1) Second row, not disturbing the coaches and body man. 2) No marital issues in the box--either keep it in the locker room or separate yourselves. 3) Cheerlead and help babysit the non-tennis people (see below).

Significant Other - Perhaps no role has evolved more in the modern era. Once expected to sit quietly behind Wayfarers, the boyfriend/girlfriend/spouse is now in the unique position of possessing license to be the most obnoxious person in the stadium. Ideally, you have an attention-seeking model or elite athlete from another sport, where trash talking is the norm. Tournament officials have yet to figure what to do when your crazy spouse starts going **Spike Lee** on your opponent at changeovers. They can't be fined for coaching, and no chair umpire or tournament director wants to be the first to threaten a significant other with ejection. The Players Union is stronger than ever.

Random Celebrity Friend - From an image standpoint, it's a safe way to pretend that you're still a human being with non-tennis interests, and suggest what those might be (golf? safe rock music?). From a practical standpoint, it's someone to talk to about tax shelters and agents. Regular people just don't understand. The best part is that famous people like being seen at Wimbledon almost as much as The Oscars, so you literally just have to pick one - post something complimentary on your twitter feed. You'll get a response within 24 hours. **Dave Grohl** has been waiting for an invite since the first Foo Fighters album.

So once you have your entourage figured out, how do you seat them so everyone can be seen and happy? I suggest the following seating chart considerations:

- ▶ First Row is reserved for actual coaches and trainers. Second row for family and friends. Avoid mixing. Shots of coaches fielding questions from boy/girlfriends during matches are only entertaining for fans.
- ▶ Old coach and new coach, if both attending the match, should be separated by the Chief of Staff. He should field opinions from all sources in the coaches/trainers row, manage egos and filter messages for you.
- ▶ Mother's primary job is managing the boyfriend/girlfriend/fiancé, and should always sit directly adjacent. Coaches have a match to watch, and must not be held responsible when the significant other starts talking too much.
- ▶ Father should be in a corner, where his scowling will not infect the mood of the rest of the box.
- ▶ Random Celeb Friend should be seated in opposite corner, next to Significant Other. Significant Other's job is to entertain and babysit any and all box visitors who are not family or coaching staff, and when not otherwise occupied, audibly criticize your opponent's outfit at changeovers.



Section-wide JTT Registration Event Date May 16

USTA Northern is celebrating the start of the 2015 Junior Team Tennis season by hosting a Section-wide Play Day/Registration event on May 16, 2015. All participating organizations will receive yard signs to post around your community announcing your registration event and summer registration. The Section will also compile a master list of all events scheduled that day around the Section and promote them to the masses. To register your event, please visit www.youthtennis.com!

Register Kids Early and Enter Drawing For \$125 Gift Cards From Wilson

USTA National is requiring that all teams have at least three boys and three girls registered into TennisLink this year to be considered an eligible JTT squad. USTA Northern is rewarding those programs who have at least three boys and three girls registered by May 28 and entering them into a drawing for three (3) \$125 gift cards from Wilson. Be a leader and get your players registered early!

USTA Northern Looking To Hire Twin Cities JTT Quadrant Coordinators & Interns

USTA Northern is looking to hire Twin Cities JTT Quadrant Coordinators, as well as summer interns. Applications for both positions are due to **Brandon Jackson** at Jackson@northern.usta.com by March 20, 2015.

Twin Cities JTT Quadrant Coordinator Responsibilities

- ▶ Assist in scheduling Twin Cities leagues
- ▶ Available to guide, monitor and assist coaches with administrative duties
- ▶ Help ensure consistent compliance with rules and regulations
- ▶ Update USTA Northern Social Media channels

JTT Intern Responsibilities

- ▶ Assist in scheduling
- ▶ Coordinate 10 and Under Play Days
- ▶ Check player eligibility
- ▶ JTT Event Support including administrating JTT Area and Section Championships.

For more information about each position, visit www.northern.usta.com, About Us, Job Postings.

JTT Has A New Cost Structure for 2015

- ▶ Twin Cities Local Program Registration Fee - \$8 per player
- ▶ Area Playoff Registration Fee - \$15 per player
- ▶ Section Championships Registration Fee - \$20 per player

Save The Date: Area Playoffs and Locations

July 13-14: Northern MN Area Playoffs in Brainerd, Minn.

July 16: North Dakota Area Playoffs in Fargo, N.D.

July 16-17: South Dakota Area Playoffs in Brandon, S.D.

July 20-21: Western WI Area Playoffs in Eau Claire, Wis.

July 20-21: Twin Cities Area Playoffs in six different cities: Locations TBD

Save The Date: Section Championship Dates

Monday-Tuesday, July 27-28 – 14U Intermediate A/Advanced

Wednesday-Thursday, July 29-30 – 18U Intermediate A/Advanced

Friday, July 31 – 12U Intermediate A/Advanced

Wednesday, August 5 – 10U Intermediate /Advanced

Note: All Section Championships to be played at Baseline Tennis Center.

Twin Cities New Scheduling Options For 2015

Pod Matches

- ▶ Teams will have multiple matches against multiple teams that take place at a single-site location.
- ▶ Expect play to last from 1 PM-4PM. Scheduling will be area based.
- ▶ Dual matches can be set up in addition to or in place of pod matches. Coaches are responsible for scheduling these dates and getting them to USTA Northern Staff to include in the TennisLink schedule.

USTA Northern Looking For Programs To Host JTT Tournaments

USTA Northern is looking for programs to host JTT tournaments. Please contact **Brandon Jackson** at jackson@northern.usta.com by April 17, 2015 to get on the schedule. Dates and locations of all tournaments will be posted by May 1, 2015.

USTA Youth Protection Policies and Procedures (Safe Play Program)

Safe play is designed to help ensure a safe environment for all participants through the use of screening, education and reporting tools. For USTA Junior Team Tennis team coaches/managers, this includes a mandatory Background Screening (Free for two team coach/managers per team and valid for 2 years) and a 30-minute online video. Background screening approval can take up to 10 business days, so coaches are advised to plan ahead. Individuals who do not complete the Safe Play Program will be locked out of TennisLink and not have coach access. For more, visit www.usta.com/safeplay.

New Benchmark Regulations For 2015

The USTA Northern junior tournament standings lists are used to set play level benchmarks. Players who meet the benchmarks stated below as of the first standings list published in April 2015, MAY NOT play in the Intermediate division.

- ▶ For play on a 12 and under Junior Team Tennis team, players ranked in the top 20 in 12s MAY NOT play in the Intermediate division.
- ▶ For play on a 14 and under Junior Team Tennis team, players ranked in the top 40 in 14s or in the top 20 in 12s MAY NOT play in the Intermediate division.
- ▶ For play on an 18 and under Junior Team Tennis team, players ranked in the top 60 in 18s, top 40 in 16s, or top 20 in 14s MAY NOT play in the Intermediate division.

Questions? Please contact **Brandon Jackson** at Jackson@northern.usta.com.



Jessie Aney, Hunter Heck Win Doubles Titles At USTA Winter Nationals

Congratulations to **Jessie Aney** (Rochester, Minn.) and **Hunter Heck** (New Brighton, Minn.), who won doubles titles at the USTA Winter Nationals in Scottsdale and Tucson, Ariz., respectively. Aney won the Girls 18s division with partner **Christina Rosca** of Princeton, N.J. Aney and Rosca, who were the No. 3 seed, defeated **Samantha Hampton** (Vancouver, Wash.) and **Bess Waldrum** (Portland, Ore.) in the finals 6-2, 6-4. Heck and partner **Karl Lee** (Los Gatos, Calif.) won six matches en route to the Boys 12s doubles crown. Heck and Lee, who were the third seed, overcame **Billy Suarez** (Huntington, N.Y.) and **Aidan Mayo** (Roseville, Calif.) 3-6, 6-4, 6-3 in the finals. Heck also was fourth in the Boys 12s singles event, while Aney took home the consolation title in Girls 18s.



Edina Girls Tennis Honored With Minnesota Milestone Award

The **Edina High School Girls Tennis Program** in Edina, Minn., was honored with the Minnesota Milestone Award as Minnesota's most inspiring and influential student-athletes, coaches and athletic leaders were recognized at an award ceremony on Wednesday, Feb. 4, at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul, in conjunction with the 29th Annual National Girls and Women in Sports Day. Some amazing facts about the Edina Girls Tennis Program:

- ▶ They won their 18th consecutive and 33rd overall title (including the three Edina East won when there were two Edina high schools) in 2014.
- ▶ Edina's 18 straight titles, under the leadership of **Steve Paulsen**, are a national record.
- ▶ None of the members of the team were alive in 1996, the last season Edina failed to win the Minnesota state girls team title.
- ▶ Edina's 18 consecutive state championships is the nation's longest streak for girls' tennis in history, and among all U.S. high school sports, it ranks 24th.

Rochester's Ingrid Neel Finalist at Orange Bowl International Tournament

Ingrid Neel (Rochester, Minn.) won nine matches and earned finalists honors in the Girls 18s draw at the prestigious International Orange Bowl Tournament in Plantation, Fla. After a great run through both the qualifying and main draws, Neel finally fell to American **Sofia Kenin** 6-3, 6-3 in the finals.

Don't Miss Out! Upcoming Scholarship Deadlines

Don't miss out on the following great scholarship opportunities. The deadline for the Northern Tennis Foundation Scholarship program is April 20, while the USTA Northern Tennis Camp Scholarship deadline is May 20, and the Positive Coaching Alliance's Triple Impact Competitor College Scholarship program deadline is May 31. For more information, contact **Tony Stingley** at Stingley@northern.usta.com.

Congratulations Winter Level 3 Winners

Congratulations to the USTA Northern Winter Level 3 winners as the boys played at Baseline Tennis Center and the girls at Life Time Fitness - Lakeville.

▶ Boys - Baseline Tennis Center

18s SINGLES - **Toby Boyer** (Ham Lake, Minn.) def. **Jesse Sprinkel** (Minneapolis) 6-2, 6-2

16s SINGLES - **Jackson Allen** (Shakopee, Minn.) def. **Kaleb Dobbs** (Sioux Falls, S.D.) 6-4, 6-4

14s SINGLES - **Sam Dobbs** (Sioux Falls, S.D.) def. **Gavin Young** (Apple Valley, Minn.) 6-1, 6-2

12s SINGLES - **Luke Little** (Minneapolis, Minn.) def. **Sujit Chopuri** (Minneapolis, Minn.) 6-3, 6-3

18s DOUBLES - **Nick Beaty** (Wayzata, Minn.)/**Jesse Sprinkel** def. **Rajadurai Arul** (Shakopee, Minn.)/**Aaron Goodman** (Minneapolis, Minn.) 8-1

16s DOUBLES - **Allen/Dobbs** def. **Ben Ingbar** (Minneapolis, Minn.)/**Jake Kuhlman** (Grand Forks, N.D.) 8-3

14s DOUBLES - **Hunter Heck** (New Brighton, Minn.)/**Joe Mairs** (Edina, Minn.) def. **Michael Cao** (Shoreview, Minn.)/**Varun Iyer** (Rochester, Minn.) 8-2

12s DOUBLES - **Little/Alec Sargent** (Rochester, Minn.) def. **Chopuri/George Nottley** (Lake Elmo, Minn.) 8-4

▶ Girls - Life Time Fitness - Lakeville

18s SINGLES - **Alexis Nelson** (St. Paul, Minn.) def. **Hayley Haakenstad** (Chanhassen, Minn.) 6-3, 6-4

16s SINGLES - **Sophia Reddy** (Eden Prairie, Minn.) def. **Savanna Crowell** (Savage, Minn.) 6-3, 6-2

14s SINGLES - **Lainey Axell** (Plymouth, Minn.) def. **Lauren Ferg** (Eagan, Minn.) 6-1, ret.

12s SINGLES - **Karin Young** (Apple Valley, Minn.) def. **Arlina Shen** (Eden Prairie, Minn.) 7-6 (3), 7-6 (4)

18s DOUBLES - **Haakenstad/Caitlyn Merzbacher** (Eden Prairie, Minn.) def. **Bella Lambert** (Wayzata, Minn.)/**Nelson** 8-2

16s DOUBLES - **Crowell/Grace Goble** (Rapid City, S.D.) def. **Olivia Paradise** (St. Paul, Minn.)/**Frankie Trella** (Eden Prairie, Minn.) 8-4

14s DOUBLES - **Axell/Madeline Suk** (Minnetonka, Minn.) def. **Ferg/Cecilia Obetz** (Minneapolis, Minn.) 8-5

12s DOUBLES - **Nore Ann Heintz** (Duluth, Minn.)/**Lauren Splett** (Mahtomedi, Minn.) def. **Surena Vu** (Maplewood, Minn.)/**Vunissa Vu** (Maplewood, Minn.) 9-8 (1)



JUNIOR Tournament RULES

Congratulations as you are about to hit the court for your first, fifth or even 50th USTA Northern Junior Tournament. The Junior Tournament experience is something each player should cherish as you are improving your game against high-quality opponents in a fun, yet competitive, environment.

As an on-court official at a number of tournaments, I have been asked many of the same questions and seen certain situations occur repeatedly over time. The following should answer some of those questions and also serve as a guide to help not only you, but your entire support system, the next time you take the court.

Be Familiar With The Rules Of Tennis And *Friend At Court*

It is your responsibility as a player to know the rules of tennis. How many of you have read *Friend At Court* which is the official rule book of tennis? Yes...I know it is intimidating, but the Index in the back tells you exactly where to find what rule you need. *Friend At Court* is available online at www.northern.usta.com, or I would recommend buying one (\$7) from the USTA Northern Office and keeping it in your tennis bag.

Checking In For Your Match

Friend At Court says players should check in at the tournament desk prior to their scheduled start time "ready to play." "Ready to play" means you have your tennis shoes on, completed your dynamic warm up, gone to the bathroom, refilled your water bottle, replenished your energy bars, written your pre-match notes, etc. It also means you stay within shouting distance of the tournament desk so when your match is called, you are ready to hit the courts. In the event there are courts available, and both you and your opponent are checked in, you may be called to play earlier.

Warming Up

Spin your racket to determine serve and side before you begin warm ups. Also, remember warm ups are only 5 minutes unless the tournament decides differently. On-court officials will time warm ups in order to keep the tournament on schedule. Be a pro and make sure your body is warmed up before you go on court!

Say The Score LOUDLY Before Every Point

Why is it no one wants to say the score before they serve? I have never figured this out. Over half of the issues officials deal with involve scoring disputes which could be prevented by just saying the score before serving.

Also... did you know not saying the score before serving is grounds for code violations under the Unsportsmanlike Conduct rule? Do everyone a favor and say the score nice and loud before you serve.

Call And/Or Motion The Ball Is Out Immediately

The same principles apply with calling the ball out. Please call and/or motion that the ball is out immediately (and loudly). If the call is not immediate, the official can, and often will, award the point to your opponent.

Coaching

There is NO coaching, except at authorized rest periods (between the second and third set), during the match. This means there should

be no communication between a player and his parents, friends, coaches, etc., at any point during the match. Supporters are allowed to cheer a player's efforts, but cannot say things such as "Hit it to his backhand," "Lob More," etc. If you need to contact your child, or bring your child something during the match, please find the official or tournament director and have them deliver it for you. If a player is receiving coaching, or it appears the player might be receiving coaching, the player is subject to coaching code violations resulting in suspension points (see below).

Code Violations and Point Penalty System

This is the worst part about being an official ... having to give code violations, but it is a necessary evil because players are a representative of themselves, their parents, coaches, clubs, USTA Northern, etc. An official's job is to create a fair and comfortable environment for every player so the game is fun. When it becomes not fun anymore, and one has to worry about code violations and the point penalty system, it is time to evaluate if you should really be on the court anymore, but I digress.

Racket Abuse, Ball Abuse, Unsportsmanlike Conduct - all of you should know what constitutes a code violation (if not, read Table 17 of *Friend At Court*). Did you know the word "sucks" is a code violation (Audible Obscenity)? What about throwing your racquet from the court to your bag on a changeover after losing a game (Racket Abuse)? Or not doing what the official on court has asked you to do such as saying the score (Unsportsmanlike Conduct)?

Whatever the transgression, the first code violation in a match is a point penalty. The second code violation (which does not have to be the same as the first violation) is an immediate game penalty. The third code violation results in an immediate default. You have the right to call for the referee, while you are on court, to appeal the default or the referee will be called by the roving official to confirm the default. Remember, three strikes and you are out!

Did you know with each code violation issued, a report is then filed with the USTA Northern office and suspension points are given? A code violation is worth two points - so a point penalty and a game penalty in the same match are four points - get 10 suspension points in one year and you are taking a 6-month vacation from USTA sanctioned play.

Also, after-match or off-court violations by you, your parent, coach, etc., can result in suspension points for you.

Bathroom Breaks

If there is an official, you must ask the official to leave the court to take a bathroom break. In fairness to your opponent, please try to wait until the set break or changeover to take a bathroom break. There is NO coaching during an authorized bathroom break.



Authorized Break Between The Second & Third Set

There are two types of authorized breaks between the second and third set. If you are playing a full third set, you receive a 10-minute break. If you are playing a 10-point match tiebreaker for the third, you receive a 3-minute break.

Full Third Set & 10-Minute Break: You can go anywhere you want during this break and you can receive coaching. If you need to use the bathroom, you should do this during the 10-minute break. Coaching is allowed during this time. Return on time or if you are one to 4:59 minutes late, you receive a game penalty to start the third set. If you are 5 minutes late or more, you receive a match default. It is your responsibility to know when to return to court and be ready for play. Always check with an on-court official to verify the time.

10-Point Match Tiebreak & 3-Minute Break: You should always remain on the court, just as you do during a set break. You can receive coaching, but have that person come to you on the court or just outside the fence or curtain. If you must take a bathroom break, take it after the 3-minute break is over or you forfeit your opportunity to receive coaching. Just as with any authorized bathroom break during a match, coaching is not allowed. The same penalties for not beginning play after a set break apply to the 3-minute break.

Medical Time Outs

If you are in need of a medical timeout, find an official or the tournament director first and tell them you need a medical timeout.

Most facilities do not have trainers present, therefore you can have one person come and assist you (that person can be a parent, friend, coach, etc.). Once that person arrives and supplies are available – they have three minutes total to treat you and decide if one can continue play.

A bleeding timeout is different in that they must follow all of the above steps, but they receive 15 minutes to stop the bleeding. If it does not stop in 15 minutes, then the player must retire.

There is no coaching allowed during a medical or bleeding time. A player can practice serving during a medical timeout, but cannot use the match balls.

Once The Match Is Over

After shaking hands with your opponent and confirming the score, the winner needs to immediately report the score to the tournament desk. It is very important you do this in a timely manner to help keep the tournament on schedule. Also, collect all three balls from the match and return them to the tournament desk when you report the score. Finally, as a courtesy to the players in the next match, please make sure you clean up any trash on your courts and return the scorecards to 0-0.

These are only selected rules and scenarios. I am sure there are many more situations that will arise over time. If you ever have a question about on-court scenarios, or the rules of tennis, please feel free to contact **Tim Kurtt**, USTA Northern Chair of Officials, at timkurttt@aol.com or at (651) 260-4853.



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Lessons Learned from Watching THE GAME

The first Grand Slam of the year has come and gone, and like every tournament, one can learn a lot from watching the best players in the world compete on an international stage. And now, whether it is the 25 different ESPN channels available, Tennis Channel Everywhere on Apple TV, or just good old You Tube videos, there is no shortage in seeing the best players in the world at the touch of a button and picking up a few "lessons learned" along the way.

It has been said that one studies history to not repeat the mistakes of the past, but just like many unfortunate wanna-be dictators or generals who didn't take note of past happenings, there are many professional and amateurs alike who also do not watch and learn. As the great tactician **Will Ferrell** said, "One needs 'strategy.'"

Over the past decades, a few matches full of "strategy" standout on the courts:

▶ **1975 Wimbledon Men's Final:** Arthur Ashe defeated Jimmy Connors 6-1, 6-1, 5-7, 6-4. This match was one of the biggest upsets in tennis history. Ashe, who had never beaten Connors, changed his tactics and gave Connors, who thrived on pace, a healthy dose of junk. (Note: How many folks at all levels complain about no-pace shots? Learn to develop some!) Ashe also approached down the middle to cut down Connors' angles and hit many lobs over Connors' backhand. Ashe, who was a power player, still attacked, but varied the way he attacked and the rest is history.

▶ **1988 French Open Men's Final:** Mats Wilander defeated Henri Leconte 7-5, 6-2, 6-1. Leconte was coming into the finals with the entire country behind him and his serve-and-volley tactics. More specifically, his chipping and charging on second-serve returns propelled him to his first-ever Grand Slam final. Wilander, realizing that Leconte would attack his second serve and put

him under pressure, countered by making an astounding 70 of 72 first serves in the match. Being the more consistent player of the two from the ground helped Wilander win in straight sets. Lesson learned... Make your first serve, especially if you are playing someone stronger than you.



▶ **1998 Davis Cup:** Jim Courier defeats Marat Safin 0-6, 6-4, 4-6, 6-1, 6-4. Courier, a power groundstroker, was getting blown off the court by an unknown Russian who was bigger and stronger than him. In a brilliant coaching move, Courier's Davis Cup captain **Tom Gullikson** told Courier to slice short and bring Safin to the net. At the time, Safin was devastatingly good from the baseline, but horrifically bad at the net. Courier brought him in and turned what looked to be a route into an amazing five-set win. Lesson learned ... There are three basic strategies in tennis: stay back, go in, or bring your opponent in to the net. Secondary lesson learned ... Safin recognized his net play was abysmal and worked hard to become more than competent at the net as he won both the Australian and US Open later in his career.

This year's recently completed Australian Open also had some key "strategy" and lessons learned that can improve one's game, although one had to stay up pretty late if you were to see the finals live. Thank goodness for ESPN, Tennis Channel, You Tube, DVRs and who knows what the latest invention to hit the market in the last hour is.

While one of the quickest players in the world, this year's men's winner **Novak Djokovic** was the most efficient in terms of court coverage. He covered more court, but less ground, by playing closer to the baseline and hitting shots early on the rise consistently, taking time away from his opponents. He also capitalized on second-serve returns by punishing his opponent's second serve. This reminded me of a quote from the great Australian player **John Newcombe** who said, "If you miss your second serve return, you should punch yourself in the face." That might be a little drastic, but Djokovic showed the importance of jumping on that second serve and immediately putting your opponent on the defensive. Finally, Djokovic chased down every ball which helped to mentally and physically breakdown his opponents in the semifinals and finals as he won the final set in both matches 6-0.

One specific match from the 2015 Australian Open that was full of "strategy" was **Tomas Berdych** drubbing **Rafael Nadal** in straight sets in the quarterfinals. Berdych had lost to Nadal 17 consecutive times coming into the match (Berdych must have been channeling his inner **Vitas Gerulaitis** who famously said, "No one beats Vitas Gerulaitis 17 straight times."), but number 18 turned out to be the charm as he adjusted his strategy and upped his record to 1-17 against Nadal by playing to Rafa's forehand frequently and dictating play without overplaying. Lesson learned ... One can always find a way to beat the thorn in your side if you are persistent and open to changing your tactics. Sometimes to attack someone's weakness, you often have to play to their strength first (i.e. rally to the forehand to attack the backhand like Berdych did).

So remember, take advantage of these cold days and all the new viewing platforms available and watch a little tennis. Who knows... you just might learn some new "strategy" too!



Host A Play Event In March And Receive A \$50 Gift Card

Kick off your spring programming and host an event in March to get new players on the court and in the game. Events can be for kids and families of all ages and skill levels or host a Play Day to introduce kids to the thrill of competition. Visit <http://bit.ly/1AFeASD> to register your play event. The first 2,000 event hosts will receive a \$50 Amazon.com Gift Card. Don't miss out on this opportunity to connect more families to your programs!

World Tennis Day March 10

Celebrate World Tennis Day on March 10 as events will be taking place around the world. The day will be capped off by Roger Federer playing Grigor Dimitrov at Madison Square Garden in New York City on ESPN 2 that evening. For more information about events that day, visit www.worldtennisday.com.



Need Financial Assistance For Events This Spring; Apply Now

Applications are being accepted for a number of grants that assist communities with events and programming including Community Tennis Grants (deadline May 1), Donation Request Grants, Visiting Pro Requests, Equipment Grants, Marketing Grants and more. For more information, visit www.northern.usta.com, Funding & Support, Grants or contact Christine Nickels at nickels@northern.usta.com.

FREE USTA Marketing Materials Available

USTA has developed an ad customization system where you can design marketing materials for use in your community for things such as USTA Junior Team Tennis, USTA League Tennis, 10 and Under Tennis, Youth Registration Night and much, much more. To use this FREE system, please visit www.usta.com/marketingresources.

FREE USTA Membership For Kids 10 and Under

The USTA is offering a free 1-year membership to all first-time members who are 10 and under between now and December 31, 2015. To register your child, visit www.usta.com/membership and enter source code FYF15PRV or call (800) 990-8782.



ICT, SPUT and FWTEC Receive USTA Foundation Awards

USTA Foundation, the national charitable organization of the USTA, completed its 2014 funding cycle by awarding \$741,500 in grants – both program grants and capacity building grants – to 44 organizations nationwide, including InnerCity Tennis in Minneapolis, Fred Wells Tennis and Education Center in St. Paul, Minn., and St. Paul Urban Tennis in St. Paul. All were recognized for their efforts in providing tennis and education to under-resourced youth and individuals with disabilities, as well as those organizations with a need for program infrastructure support.

USTA NJTL Regional A.C.E. Training on May 2-3, 2015 at Fred Wells Tennis & Education Center

Save the date for a USTA NJTL Regional Training on the Academic Creative Engagement (A.C.E.) curriculum May 2-3, 2015 at the Fred Wells Tennis & Education Center. Designed to improve kids' attitudes and behaviors around math, literacy and school climate, A.C.E. is an out-of-school academic curriculum connected to the Common Core State and National Educational Standards and the sport of tennis. Activities encourage academic achievement, health and wellness, and social and emotional skills. For more information, contact Christine Nickels at nickels@northern.usta.com.

USTA Recognized Top Corporation For LGBT Community

Congratulations to the USTA as it was named one of the top corporations in America for LGBT Economic Empowerment by *Affinity* magazine. This year, 85 corporations that established a multi-layered and visible commitment to the LGBT community and value the contributions of LGBT employees, suppliers and customers were honored. These companies not only ensure LGBT equality internally, but also go above and beyond to support LGBT equality outside their operations. Their core values impact the people and communities they serve. The USTA, which was one of only two non-corporations honored, was recognized with such companies as AT&T, Bank of America, General Motors, IBM, Pepsico, Target Corp. and Wells Fargo.

USTA Adds Same Gender Couple Events To Adult Tournaments

The USTA is adding same-gender couples' doubles tournaments to its 2015 adult competition tennis calendar. The groundbreaking announcement opens the door to new play opportunities for same-sex spouses, those in civil unions, domestic partners, and spousal equivalents, making the USTA's popular adult competition more diverse and inclusive. The Plaza Racquet Club in Palm Springs, Calif., is hosting the historic inaugural event in March and other sanctioned same-gender events will be scheduled by the USTA throughout the 2015 calendar year.

"The USTA could not be more excited to offer the opportunity for same-gender couples to play in sanctioned tennis tournaments," said Katrina Adams, USTA Chairman of the Board, CEO and President. "Tennis once again has stepped to the front to break down barriers in order to allow individuals to compete in the game they love with these new sanctioned events."



USTA Northern Introduces Premier Provider Program

USTA Northern achieves its mission of promoting and developing the growth of tennis through important partnerships with local tennis providers. In an effort to publicly recognize and thank those providers who go above and beyond offering tennis programming in their community, USTA Northern has created a Premier Provider Program. Now with a wider range of flexible programming options, running USTA Northern programs is easier than ever.

How Do I Become A PREMIER PROVIDER?

The Premier Provider Program recognizes organizational members that offer all USTA Northern play opportunities for all ages and ability levels, as well as fulfill other requirements including:

Youth Play Days – Play Days are designed for various levels of players to participate in a fun, low pressure, yet competitive setting. A 2-3 hour Play Day allows kids to have multiple matches with and against a variety of players without the threat of elimination. Players must be able to serve, rally and score. For more information, contact **Pat Colbert** at colbert@northern.usta.com or 952-358-3283.

Tennis Festivals/Play Events – Tennis Festivals are an exciting way to showcase the sport to kids and adults as they experience first-hand how tennis is sized right for age and ability levels. By introducing kids and families to this lifetime sport, you can spark their interest in seeking out additional play opportunities. For more information, contact **Tony Stingley** at stingley@northern.usta.com or 952-358-3289 for events in Minnesota or Wisconsin and **Carolyn Kramer** at kramer@northern.usta.com or 701-238-1515 for events in North or South Dakota.

Junior Team Tennis (JTT) – JTT is a combination of practice and match play with an emphasis on skill development, fun, teamwork and friendly competition. The local season consists of competing against other area teams of similar age and ability level. You can join an existing league or start your own. For more information, contact **Brandon**



Jackson at jackson@northern.usta.com or 952-358-3291.

Junior Tournaments – Tournaments are a phenomenal supplement to existing tennis programming, as well as a way to generate interest about tennis in your community. They provide valuable match-play experience that you cannot teach in a lesson or at a practice. Tournaments are broken into age divisions and levels of play to ensure a competitive experience. Find more information about how to become a tournament director by contacting **Pat Colbert**

at colbert@northern.usta.com or 952-358-3283.

Adult Tournaments (Traditional or Innovative) – USTA Northern sanctions approximately 50 adult tournaments hosted by local facilities so players can either strive for a Section or National ranking within a designated age division or supplement other play in a competitive, but fun and social environment. In addition to age division tournaments, players can also play in tournaments based on the National Tennis Rating Program (NTRP). Find more information about how to host a tournament by contacting **Nancy Lundberg** at lundberg@northern.usta.com or 952-358-3286.

Adult Leagues – USTA League Tennis is the country's largest recreational tennis league, providing organized, structured team matches for men and women of all ability levels. Levels are based on the National Tennis Rating Program (NTRP) and range from beginner (2.5) to advanced (5.0). All teams are set up according to a player's NTRP rating. Therefore, players are assured of facing off against someone of

What Are The Benefits Of Becoming A PREMIER PROVIDER?

Many organizations already offer many of the play opportunities listed above, which is great! But being a Premier Providers means that your organization is doing ALL of these things, and should be rewarded. A USTA Northern Premier Provider receives the following benefits:



- ▶ Choice of an Official Premier Provider plaque or banner to display
- ▶ An Official Premier Provider Window Cling
- ▶ Recognition in the Annual Section Awards Banquet Program, Yearbook and USTA Northern Web site
- ▶ Feature story about your organization in Northern Exposure or on the USTA Northern Web site
- ▶ Priority Status for USTA Northern grants (nonprofit organizations only)

How Do I Apply?

For an application, visit the USTA Northern Web site at www.northern.usta.com. Organizations must submit an application by October 1, 2015.

Questions?

Please contact **Sandy Smith** at ssmith@northern.usta.com or at (952) 358-3288 for more details.



comparable ability. USTA League Tennis features local, Area and Sectional playoffs, culminating in a National Championship. Leagues can also be run with as few as 2 people per team! For more information about how to become a league coordinator or start a league in your area, contact **Nancy Lundberg** at lundberg@northern.usta.com or 952-358-3286.

Adult Recreational Play – Adult recreational play comes in many forms including organized social events, regular hitting groups, cardio tennis, lesson programs and more! For more information about adult recreational play options, contact **Kelley Okerman** at okerman@northern.usta.com or 952-358-3287.

Coach Youth Tennis Training – The Coach Youth Tennis program will help anyone working with kids ensure they have a great time and want to keep playing. The program includes six online courses and an on-court workshop component and must be completed every two years. For more information, contact **Tony Stingley** at stingley@northern.usta.com or 952-358-3289.

Permanent Blended Court Lines for 36' and 60' Play – Add permanent blended lines for 36' and 60' play on your traditional tennis courts to expand play opportunities and programming capabilities. Lines are painted in the same color family as the court surface and are not distracting for full court players. All levels of high school, collegiate, and USTA competition can be played on courts with blended lines. For more information, contact **Christine Nickels** at nickels@northern.usta.com.

com or 952-358-3290.

USTA Organizational Membership

– There are five major organizational member types: Schools, CTAs, Clubs, Parks and Recreation and Service providers. However, any entity that actively conducts, controls or supervises tennis activities, or is interested in the promotion of tennis, can become an organizational member of USTA and receive great benefits, such as access to grants, free marketing materials, discounts to background screenings, CTA insurance, magazine subscriptions, referral programs, equipment discounts, and more. To register, call USTA Member Services at 800-990-USTA (8782) or online at www.usta.com/membership. For more information, contact **Sandy Smith** at ssmith@northern.usta.com or at 952-358-3288.



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