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The USTA Missouri Valley publishes *SERVE* three times per year, focusing specifically on the members and events in the section.

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Your feedback is welcomed.



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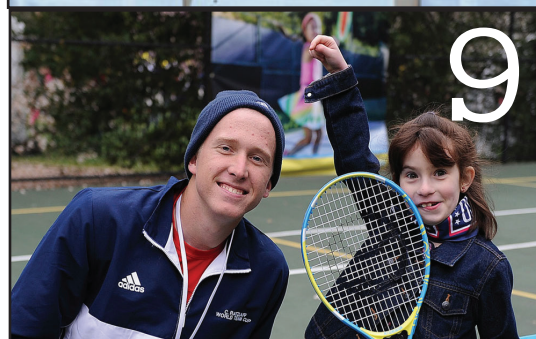
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SERVE

A USTA Missouri Valley Publication

Summer 2018

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Spotlight on...

USTA National Award Winners Steve Gerdes, Grady Landrum & Mark Platt

Grassroots programs are vital resources in spreading awareness and love for the game of tennis. Every year at the USTA Annual Meeting, the USTA honors those programs and individuals that have dedicated their time to growing the game of tennis.

Grady Landrum of Wichita, Kansas, was presented the Brad Parks Award for his outstanding contribution in helping grow wheelchair tennis at the local level. Mark Platt was also selected as the recipient of the Janet Louer USTA Junior Team Tennis National Organizer of the Year Award. Landrum and Platt were honored at the USTA Annual Meeting and Conference, March 16-19, at the Omni La Costa Resort & Spa in Carlsbad, California. USTA Missouri Valley Executive Director Mary Buschmann accepted on behalf of Platt.

Steve Gerdes, of Omaha, Neb., was awarded the Volunteer Exceptional Service Award, which recognizes national committee members who have made exceptional contributions above and beyond expected committee work. He has dedicated 37 years of service to the USTA. During his time with the USTA, Gerdes has served in various roles, including editor of the yearbook and "Friend at Court." His service also continues on the court, as he's been a USTA certified official since 1966.

Landrum's career highlights span over 30 years and include starting programs and tournaments at the grassroots level in three major U.S. cities: the Cornhusker Classic (now named Cornhusker State Games) in Lincoln, Nebraska; the Northwest Wheelchair Tennis Association and the First Pacific Northwest Wheelchair Tennis Championship in Portland, Oregon; and Wheelchair Sports Inc. in Wichita, Kansas. These programs and tournaments are still thriving today.

"Grady Landrum has been an inspirational leader in wheelchair tennis and an asset to our team in organizing and promoting events," said Craig Morris, Chief Executive, Community Tennis. "He is more than deserving of the Brad Parks Award for his dedication to the organization."

Platt has been involved with Junior Team Tennis since 2011. He first organized teams in 2013 and now has at least one team in every intermediate league offered. As part of his work to promote the JTT league, Platt developed two middle school tennis leagues: the Rockwood School District Tennis Program and the Mobile Tennis Academy, serving a total of six area school districts.



Grady Landrum (middle)



Mark Platt

Platt believes in player development both on and off the court. Platt's efforts include the creation of the Rally Tennis for Cancer Care event, which raised \$58,000 in 2016.

"Mark has exhibited hard work and remarkable dedication which has led to a great amount of growth and development in Missouri junior tennis programs over the last few years," said Craig Morris, USTA Chief Executive, Community Tennis. "We are proud to recognize him for his continuous efforts in growing the game on a junior level."

SUMMER

JUNE

USTA National 30s Men's, Women's & Mixed Hard Court Championship (TennisLink ID: 400013718)
June 8-10 in Kansas City, Missouri

Fred Johnson All Stars Adaptive Tennis Event
June 9-10 in Lincoln, Nebraska

USTA Missouri Valley Summer Sweet 16
June 19-24 in Kansas City, Missouri

Men's Pro Circuit \$25,000
Week of June 25 in Tulsa, Oklahoma



Visit USTA.com and
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this summ

2018 SWEET 16

JULY

Men's Pro Circuit \$25,000
Week of July 2 in Wichita, Kansas

Adult 65+ Section Invitational
July 13-15 in Overland Park, Kansas

**Springfield Lasers
World TeamTennis Season**
July 15 - August 5 in Springfield, Missouri

**Junior Team Tennis
Section Championship**
July 23-25 in Tulsa, Oklahoma

Men's Pro Circuit \$25,000
Week of July 23 in Tulsa, Oklahoma

**USTA Zone Championships
(12s, 14s & 16s)**
July 26-30 Various Sites

**USTA Missouri Valley Adult 5's, 0s,
& Open Outdoor Championships**
(TennisLink ID: 404328318)
July 27-29 in Kansas City, Missouri

2018

AUGUST

USTA Missouri Valley Adult League Section Championship I
August 2-5 in St. Louis, Missouri

Men's Pro Circuit \$25,000
Week of August 6 in Edwardsville, Illinois

Section NTRP 50's Singles & Doubles National Qualifier
(TennisLink ID: 400050518)
August 10-12 in Kansas City, Missouri

USTA Missouri Valley Adult League Section Championship II
August 23-26 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

US Open USTA Wheelchair Championships
(TennisLink ID: 400013118)
August 28-September 2 in St. Louis, Missouri

SEPTEMBER

USTA Semiannual Meeting & Conference
September 1-3 in New York City

USTA Missouri Valley Adult League Section Championship III
September 6-9 in Kansas City, Missouri/Springfield, Missouri

USTA Missouri Valley Adult League Mixed Sectional I
September 13-16 in Omaha, Nebraska

Women's Pro Circuit \$25,000
Week of September 24 in Stillwater, Oklahoma

USTA Missouri Valley Adult League Mixed Sectional II
September 27-30 in Tulsa, Oklahoma

USTA

ADULT TOURNAMENTS

Check out
the latest
Missouri Valley
tournaments!

**USTA
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JUNIOR
TEAM TENNIS**

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Tennis Moms: Asuko Han



During the month of May, the USTA honored and paid tribute to tennis moms. We gave thanks to mothers who support their children reaching their goals at every level of the game. Mothers play a critical role in a player's development and we wanted to recognize these special moms. The USTA Missouri Valley honored Asuko Han of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Asuko is the mother of Nathan and Alex Han.

Why is tennis a special part of your life?

Tennis is where we develop our integrity and life skills. The sport is very mental and lonely sometimes, and you have to figure out how to solve the problem on your own. It is a very physical sport, and you can develop great fitness. Also, it is not a contact sport, so that aspect reduces the injury rate compared to other team sports, and I like that part. And if you are on a team, you can develop team spirit, comradery and loyalty. It can be a very social sport that you can play for the rest of your life.

Why do you think it is important for your children to play tennis?

First, the boys love the sport. They enjoy the competition and the comradery they have with friends. They learn so many life skills, such as patience, endurance, overcoming hardships, perseverance, never giving up, respect for coaches, parents and opponents, and how to lose gracefully.

How long have your kids been playing tennis?

Nathan started tennis when he was around 5 years old. We had just moved from Louisville, Ky., and did not have

any furniture in the house, meaning we had a lot of open spaces and walls. At that time, we loved watching a Japanese animation called "Prince of Tennis." Nathan was inspired by the cartoon and started hitting sponge balls against the walls. Alex just followed whatever Nathan did, so he started a little earlier than Nathan.

What are some of your boys' notable tennis accomplishments?

Nathan won a gold ball at the Boys' 14 Hard Court Championships, and he won two Grade 4 ITF junior tournaments. He is currently ranked No. 2 nationally in the Boys' 14s, No. 1 in the Boys' 12s and 14s sectionally, and he represented the U.S. at junior tournaments in Europe.

Alex won a bronze ball in Boys' 14 doubles at the Hard Court Championships, and he won the Missouri Valley Sweet 16 for Boys' 12s and 14s. He is ranked No. 15 in the Boys' 14 nationally, as well as No. 1 in the Boys' 12s and 14s and No. 2 in the Boys' 16 sectionally.

What is your most memorable tennis moment?

When I saw Nathan compete at Les Petit As in France. He played against a French player, and thousands of people were cheering against him. It did not faze him; rather he was pumped up and competed hard. I was shivering during the match.

What has tennis taught you about your children?

They get motivated by positive comments and being praised. They are hard workers, and they are growing into young men with integrity.



SOCIAL LEAGUES



Whether taking a class at your local club, hitting the courts in your neighborhood park with family and friends or playing competitively, tennis is a great way to stay healthy and fit, to make friends and to learn valuable life lessons.

Social Tennis Leagues

One great way to get involved is through social tennis events. Offered throughout the country, these events – think more intramural softball or adult kickball – can satisfy your desire for competition while keeping the focus on fun – meeting new people and hanging out with friends.

Several of our districts have started social tennis leagues for young professionals. Contact the coordinator in your area to sign up for one:

Heart of America:

Sets in the City (Coed League)
Scott Hanover ptcguy@yahoo.com

Missouri:

Springfield Sets in the City (Coed League)
Linda Peters lpmotennis@gmail.com

St. Louis:

Summer Sets in the City (Coed League)
Megan Kovacs leagues@ustastl.com

Play your first USTA section level adult tournament for free!
Contact therrien@movalley.usta.com
Players must be 18-39 and have an active USTA membership.

LEARN MORE AT USTA.COM/SOCIALLEAGUES

LEADING

BY

EXAMPLE



TWO JUNIOR PLAYERS NAMED TO NATIONAL LEADERSHIP TEAM

Nathan Turtledove and Samantha Remis were named to the third annual USTA Junior Leadership Team, which recognizes America's finest junior tennis players who exhibit leadership, sportsmanship and character on and off the court.

Turtledove, a resident of Leawood, Kansas, and Remis, a resident of St. Louis were among 34 players nationwide named to the USTA Junior Leadership Team. Each player was nominated by his or her USTA section for their excellence in tennis and in the community.

"These players are our future leaders, and the values they've shown to embody both on the court and in the community are evidence that our future will be in good hands," said Lew Brewer, the USTA's Director of Junior Competition. "They are the perfect role models for the Net Generation, and they truly deserve to be recognized with the USTA Junior Leadership Team."

Remis, 16, has been ranked among the Top 10 players in the USTA Missouri Valley in the USTA's 14- and 16-and-under standings. She was the 2017 Missouri state singles champion out of John Burroughs and has placed third or higher at a number of USTA Missouri Valley junior tournaments in the last several years. She was the 2017 St. Louis Metro Tennis Player of the Year, has won multiple sportsmanship awards at USTA tournaments and is a part of the USTA Missouri Valley's Leadership Council.

Turtledove, 17, played No. 1 doubles and No. 2 singles for the Missouri Class 1 state champions The Pembroke Hill School in Kansas City, Mo., and was the state runner-up in doubles. He's won numerous sportsmanship awards in USTA competition, is a USTA Certified Official and was named a 2017 Heart of America Volunteer of the Year for his district. Additionally, he's the CEO and Head Stringer of Tdove Tennis, a racquet string and refurbishing company, is

a junior representative and organizer of a clothing, shoe and racquet drive for the Stephanie Waterman Foundation and also volunteers at the Genesis School.

Each year, more than 120,000 players compete in USTA junior tournaments. Players compete in levels of competition through earned advancement in the 10s, 12s, 14s, 16s and 18s age divisions. USTA junior tournaments help kids take their game as far as they want—high school, college or pros—or just have fun competing.

SERVE recently spoke with Turtledove and Remis about their tennis experience and how they lead on and off the court.

Nathan Turtledove: Tennis is not just a sport, tennis teaches you skills for your life. Do you play with integrity and honesty? Are you able to find the good in others and compliment someone else's shot, realizing that it doesn't take away from your own game?

I have learned to look with a long-term view. My coaches have told me to stick to following the process and don't look for shortcuts. How was the last year? What progress have I made? What are my goals for the next 12 months? This doesn't just apply to tennis, but to school, my business, and my life. When I act as a USTA Official, I have a different perspective on a double fault or a bad call. I can really see through a different lens—that it is just one point in a match. In business, it's not just about earning a little pocket money now, but growing and expanding in order to improve my business for my customers and learning how to promote, merchandise, manage inventory, keep books. These all become the life lessons for the future.

I have volunteered and worked with kids in underserved communities. When they play tennis, they have such joy and fun. It is important for me to remember that feeling of

Continued from page 8

enjoyment while playing tennis, for we place expectations and pressure on ourselves. It is the balance of training, competing, stringing, officiating, helping to run tournaments and volunteering that makes tennis a complete lifestyle for me. The key is to always remember, that although tennis may drive you crazy, insane, and mad, at times - it is still just a game, one that I love will never be able to walk away from.

Samantha Remis: Tennis is so much more than just hitting the ball in the court for me. Over the years of playing, tennis has become much more than just a fun, after school activity that I thought it would be. I love to play, which makes the difficult parts of the game all worth it. This love of tennis keeps me from quitting when it gets tough and taught me to never give up on tennis, but also on anything

in life. I have learned to always believe in myself and how to figure things out on my own from being on the court by myself in a close match. I have always been a competitive person, and tournaments have shown me how to use my competitive spirit to drive me farther in a match, which translates to all aspects of life.

Being a good sport is very important to me. I am proud of being known to be a fair opponent, and staying positive throughout matches. I believe that being a good sport not only shows my love for tennis, but shows my respect of my opponent, and the people watching. I always strive to have good sportsmanship no matter the situation, and I think that this has helped me win matches, and become friends with other people in the tournaments.

RATZLAFF READY FOR WORLD STAGE

By Andrew Robinson

Casey Ratzlaff, the top men's wheelchair tennis player in the United States, has had quite the start to 2018.

In January, he led the US team in qualifying for the World Team Cup Finals May 28-June 3 in Apeldoorn, Netherlands, and in April he was a part of the United States Tennis Association's contingent to share tennis at the White House's annual Easter Egg Roll.

But Ratzlaff feels he's just really getting started on both his year and his career. The Wichita-native completed his freshman year at Wichita State where he's planning to major in sports management. And with finals behind him, he's preparing to become a globetrotter of sorts this summer.

Before joining his teammates, Conner Stroud and Chris Herman in the Netherlands, he'll also make stops in Italy and France for tune-up events. Nick Taylor, also of Wichita, will be on the quad team while Kevin Heim of Lincoln, Nebraska will be a coach.

"It's incredible to have the opportunity to do what I get to do," Ratzlaff said. "I definitely don't take seeing the world for granted. I'm grateful to have the opportunities to do this and represent my country."

The 19 year-old Ratzlaff is currently ranked No. 37 and even though he's ahead of his expectations in his career, he recognizes he still has a gap to close between himself and the elite players in the world.

"I definitely achieved more quickly than I expected," he said. "It also brings a lot of responsibility and it's eye opening as to how much work I have to do to make it to the highest level."

For more information on wheelchair tennis, visit usta.com and choose Play - Lots of Ways to Play.

Ratzlaff trains in Wichita alongside his coach Justin DeSanto and also receives plenty of support from Nick Taylor, who is among the most decorated US wheelchair tennis players.

"Nick has a great tennis mind," Ratzlaff said. "I don't take his coaching for granted. I look up to him as a player and a coach."

Ratzlaff is the next generation of American wheelchair tennis, following the footsteps of Taylor and his partner David Wagner. Taylor has won three Paralympics gold medals, and 11 grand slams.

"We're excited to be the face of American tennis, I guess you could say. "We're really focused on creating that good image for American tennis and hold ourselves to a high standard."

Beyond the immediate events in Amsterdam, Ratzlaff is also holding out hope for a wildcard into the US Open since his ranking will likely not earn him direct entry. But perhaps, Ratzlaff's biggest goal that keeps him motivated on a daily basis is being a part of the US team at the 2020 Paralympics in Tokyo.

"It's just a matter of maintaining my level until that day comes and seeing what I can make of it," he said.



NET NOTES

Lasers Announce Roster and Schedule

The Springfield Lasers are pleased to introduce their 2018 team, drafted earlier this year at the World Team Tennis (WTT) pro league draft in Indian Wells, Calif.

The Lasers have named Jack Sock as the team's 2018 marquee player for the second straight season. Sock has been the top American male tennis player since January 2017, when he ousted John Isner from a spot he'd held for five years. Sock, 25, is currently ranked the No. 10 male singles player in the world (No. 32 in doubles) and just became the first American male to end the year in the Top 10 since 2011.

As a returning player, the Springfield Lasers were able to protect Sock in the draft.

"We're so happy to bring him back as a Top Ten player," Lasers General Manager Paul Nahon said after the draft. "He has an explosive forehand. And in my opinion, he's also one of the best doubles players in the world."

The Lasers also protected American Abi Spears in the draft, returning after a brief but memorable appearance as a

substitute with the Lasers in the 2017 season. Spears, 36, also subbed in 2014.

"We're excited to have her play the whole season," said Nahon. "We felt her tour experience and her knowledge of WTT gave her the edge. And she really likes Springfield."

Rounding out the team are 1st round pick American Vania King, 29, who helped bring the Lasers to the WTT Championship Final in 2013; 2nd round pick Canadian doubles specialist Daniel Nestor, 45, who has earned 12 Grand Slam titles; and 3rd round pick Serbian Miomir Kecmanovic, an up-and-coming 18-year-old who just turned pro last year.



Springfield Lasers Home Season Dates

Wednesday, July 18, Springfield vs San Diego
Thursday, July 19, Springfield vs. New York
Friday, July 20, Springfield vs. Orange County
Sunday, July 22, Springfield vs. Philadelphia
Saturday, July 28, Springfield vs. New York
Monday, July 30, Springfield vs. Washington DC
Tuesday, July 31, Springfield vs. Philadelphia

Tickets available at SpringfieldLasers.com

Mark Your Calendar for USTA Pro Circuit Events

The USTA Missouri Valley is excited to host eight USTA Pro Circuit events around the five-state area in 2018. The USTA Pro Circuit was formed in 1979 to provide players with an opportunity to gain the professional ranking points they need to compete on the major pro tours.

It has since grown into the largest developmental tennis circuit in the world, consisting of approximately 90 tournaments and offering nearly \$3 million in prize money.

The tournaments also typically host a myriad of events through the course of the week including Net Generation youth events this year. Keep an eye out for information as to how you can get involved at your local tournament.

Men's Events:

Week of June 25: Tulsa
Week of July 2: Wichita
Week of July 16: Iowa City
Week of Aug. 6: Edwardsville
Week of Nov. 12: Norman

Women's Events:

Week of Sept. 24: Stillwater
Week of Nov. 5: Lawrence
Week of Nov. 12: Norman

Visit USTA.com for more Pro Tennis and Pro Circuit.





Andrew and Brandon Cusick

Donna Wyse

Laura Grooms and Stacy Williams-Lilly

USTA Missouri Valley Finds Success at Inaugural NTRP National Championships

The NTRP National Championships is a new national adult tournament that leverages the NTRP rating system as a means to create level-based individual competition at the 18 & Over and 50 & Over age groups.

In the 18 & Over event, Andrew Cusick and Brandon Cusick of Kansas City, Missouri, finished second in 4.5 men's doubles, while Aaron Ogden of Lincoln, Nebraska earned a spot in the semifinals in 4.0 men's singles, and 4.0 men's doubles with partner Chris Freeman.

In the 50 & Over event, Donna Wyse of Omaha, Nebraska, won the 4.5 singles division while Laura Grooms of Arcadia, Oklahoma and Stacy Williams-Lilly of Edmond, Oklahoma won the 4.5 doubles division.

Players were nominated from each of the 17 USTA sections, all meeting the qualifications of being a current USTA member and having participated in at least one NTRP tournament within the last 12 months. Besides the two age groups, play was divided by gender and NTRP ratings in the 3.5, 4.0 and 4.5 divisions. Winners were crowned for the first time based on short sets, which is a no advantage set to four games, instead of the usual six game set with advantage scoring.

You can qualify for the next NTRP championships by competing at the USTA Missouri Valley NTRP Outdoor Championship, October 6-8, in Kansas City, Missouri (*TennisLink ID # 400030517*).

Washington University Wins Tennis on Campus Section Championship

Washington University-St. Louis won its third consecutive Tennis on Campus Section Championship in March at Lifetime Fitness in Des Moines. The Bears swept their pool play before defeating Iowa in the semifinals and claiming a 27-17 victory over Iowa State. A total of 16 teams participated in the two-day event. In addition to Wash U., Iowa, Iowa State and Nebraska qualified for the USTA Tennis on Campus National Championships which were held April 12-14 in Orlando.

The Bears were led in large part during Sunday's finals by its women. Christina Zhou and Kelly Reger beat the Cyclones 6-1 in doubles, and Mackenzie Phillips also won 6-1 in singles providing a gap Iowa State couldn't overcome.

Jacob Buys, former president of the Iowa State Tennis on Campus team, was awarded the USTA Missouri Valley's Leader of the Year award at the event, as well.

As part of this year's event, the USTA Missouri Valley partnered with the American Cancer Society for the Serving Hope fundraiser. Serving Hope, a pledge-based fundraiser empowering teams and individual athletes to make their mark against cancer. Each team selected one male and one female to compete in the contest. Each participant had 60 seconds to attempt as many serves as they could. Wash U. landed the most serves with 58. In total, over 450 serves landed in and went toward raising money to fight cancer.



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at NetGeneration.com



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