



33rd Annual Eastern
Tennis Hall of Fame Celebration

to benefit the

Junior Tennis Foundation
Grant and Scholarship Programs



2019 David N. Dinkins Scholarship Award Winners

Dominique Echevarre



Dominique first picked up a racquet at the YMCA Cross Island tennis courts at the age of seven. She went on to play at both Alley Pond Park and at the National Tennis Center before joining the City Parks Foundation free programs at the age of 13. A year later, she gained acceptance into the Lacoste Junior Tennis Academy and has been playing there ever since. Her favorite tennis player is Roger Federer because she feels he maintains control both on and off the court.

Dominique attended Archbishop Molloy High School in Queens, N.Y. where she played on the tennis team all four years; she was 3rd singles 2016-2018 and 2nd singles in 2019. In 2019, she was also a state finalist.

While attending Archbishop Molloy, Dominique maintained a 3.6 GPA and took several advanced placement classes, including chemistry. Her favorite subject, though, is English. She loves stories, creative writing and the ability to express her opinions through her own words.

Alexander Pierson



Alexander is a junior at the Beacon School, a selective college-preparatory public high school in the Hell's Kitchen area of Manhattan. He began playing tennis at age five at a local parks program in Inwood, Manhattan. He has gone on to participate in multiple programs and academies, including City Parks Lacoste, Cary Leeds Tournament Team and Highland Park Tennis Association, which awarded him a free week of training at the Robbie Wagner Tennis Academy in 2018. He has played for Beacon's title-winning varsity tennis team since his freshman year, and this past fall, he competed at the USTA Junior Team Tennis (JTT) National Championships in San

Antonio, Texas. His team placed sixth.

For the past two years, Alexander has volunteered as a coach in a community tennis program in Brooklyn, New York. He views it as his way of giving back, as free coaching provided him with many opportunities when he was just starting out.

In addition to his accomplishments in the sport, Alexander maintains a 4.3 GPA and scored a 1460 on the PSAT. His favorite subject in school is software engineering.

Sunny Fishkind

If things had gone differently, longtime Long Island tennis instructor and advocate Sunny Fishkind might have been a dancer.

"I used to dance," the Brooklyn native explains. "Then I met my husband, Eddie, and he didn't dance. I used to have to go sit and watch him play softball and baseball all the time. Finally, I thought, 'There's got to be something we could do together that would satisfy both of us.'"

That 'something' turned out to be neither dancing nor softball, but tennis. The young couple purchased a book on how to play and started hitting volleys back and forth across their bed. They read about forehands and backhands, looked at pictures, and then practiced swinging a racquet in front of a mirror to perfect their form. They completely taught themselves.

"I took just one lesson during that time," she recalls now with a laugh. "I must've had the stupidest pro in the world because he said to me, 'You don't need lessons. You know how to do everything right, you just have to practice.'"

It was from these DIY origins that Sunny would go on to build a career in the sport that has spanned 45 years and counting. From 1979 to 2005, Sunny served as the Girls' Varsity Tennis Coach at Bethpage High School. (She also concurrently coached the boys' varsity tennis team for 12 seasons.) In 1993, she was appointed Coordinator of Girls' Tennis for Nassau County High Schools, a position she held for 11 years. In this role, she scheduled all county matches, sat on the state girls' tennis committee, wrote and developed the Nassau County Girls' Tennis Handbook, created and ran the Nassau County tournament for many years and also coached the Nassau County girls' tennis team at the annual state tournament. Even after retiring from Bethpage, she worked as an Assistant Coach at Hofstra University for three years. And every summer since 1986, she has served as the Director of the Hofstra University Summer Tennis Camp. Through this program, Sunny has introduced thousands upon thousands of young kids to the game.

"I just absolutely loved the sport," she says of why she took on so many responsibilities in addition to her day job as a librarian. "It really was my favorite thing to do—it was so much fun."

Keeping the game fun has been Sunny's guiding philosophy as a coach and instructor since the beginning of her tennis career. When she started at Bethpage, "we were the worst," she acknowledges. But she refused to cut a single student, and if a particular player didn't start, she tried to give that player a specific responsibility, like keeping score.



Fishkind and husband Eddie

"I'm not a very competitive person," she says. "The motto I've adopted recently is 'You never lose, you either win or you learn.' But I really always believed in this. I remember we once played against the best team on Long Island. I told the kids before they went out, 'I don't think you're going to win. Don't worry about it. Have fun, but see how many points you can get.' Then the next time we played that team, I said, 'Did you remember how many points you won? See if you can win more this time.' I really felt that it was just fun, that [the score] didn't matter."

The coaching style may not have always resulted in first place trophies, but it did net Sunny a multitude of accolades: She was named Nassau County Tennis Coach of the Year in 1982 and Long Island High School Coach of the Year in 1996. She also received the Coach of the Year distinction from USTA Eastern in 1997.

And even though she has left high school coaching behind, the mentality continues to serve her well in her role leading the tennis summer camp at Hofstra University.

"I tell the parents at the camp—and I really believe this—that you can't turn a

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Fishkind at the Hofstra University Summer Camp.



left: Fishkind with ATP player Noah Rubin, a Long Island native and family friend; above: Fishkind and husband Eddie

John James

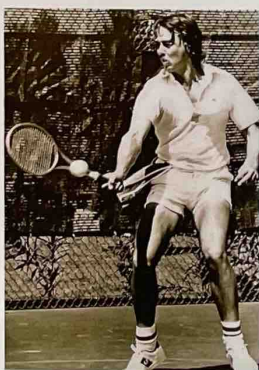
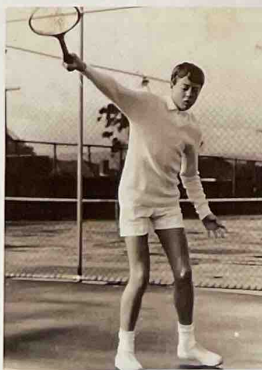
John James is a former professional player ranked as high as No. 85 in the world. After a successful 10-year career as a touring pro in which he scored wins over Top 10 players in singles and doubles, James moved to the tri-state area and began to amass an almost peerless record competing in Eastern tennis tournaments in multiple age divisions. In Men's Singles and then in Men's 35 Singles, he was ranked No. 1 in the East in 1982, 1983, 1986, 1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991. He also procured the same ranking in Men's 45 Singles.



James began playing tennis as a young boy in his native Australia and found success at an early age, despite some geographic limitations.

"I was from Adelaide and in those days it was a little bit out of the way for Australian tennis," he remembers. "Most of it was actually centered in the east in Sydney and Melbourne. So I played predominantly locally, and at the end of the year I would go and play the junior circuit tournaments. When I first [played those tournaments] I had no idea how my game would match up...it was a very new experience. [But] through that I ended up getting my ranking as high as No. 6."

Indeed, James's game matched up well: He captured the Australian Open Junior Boys' Doubles Title in 1969. And as he collected more and more big wins, James began to dream about playing internationally. The Open era of tennis was in its nascent phase, however, and with prize money significantly less than the meal ticket it is today, James opted to delay that dream when he graduated from high school and instead spent two-and-a-half years working in



left: James as a junior in Adelaide; right: James when he played professionally.

the accounting department of the Royal Automobile Association.

"The main tournament that we would hear about in Australia was Wimbledon," he says. "The ambition for me was to make it to Wimbledon. But there was no assistance from the Australian Federation at that time. So I had to go to work to save money to be able to go and travel."

James eventually saved the money and traveled to Wimbledon—many times—as he spent ten years on the ATP circuit. A Top 100 player, he appeared in the draws of Grand Slam events over 25 times and competed at every major. He counts wins over former world No. 1 Ilie Nastase on the grass at Queens Club ("Beating Nastase was very satisfying because he was quite a character and tough to play," he notes) and 11-time Grand Slam champion Bjorn Borg in an Australian Open lead-up tournament—just months after the Swede had won one of his many French Open titles.

"That was a real breakthrough for me," James says.

His greatest results as a pro, however, might have come on the doubles court. In 1979, ten years after he won the tournament as a junior, James and partner Terry Rocavert made it all the way to the semifinals of the Australian Open in Men's Doubles, ultimately falling to eventual champions Peter McNamara and Paul McNamee in three tight sets.

"One of the Australian traditions of tennis back when I was a kid was that you always played singles and doubles," James explains. "If you went to a tournament you always participated in both events. So I had a lot of experience playing doubles from a young age. And I think also growing up in Australia with the grass courts, volleying was a big part of my game."

Unfortunately, the partnership with Rocavert was short-lived, as Rocavert retired from doubles shortly thereafter. James did team up with fellow inductee Ricky Meyer on a couple occasions; the duo once made the semifinals of the Canadian Open in Toronto together. ("John has not missed a return since 1971," quips Meyer.)

James settled with his wife in Mount Kisco, N.Y., in 1979, and he eventually retired from the grind of the tour altogether in 1981. But he was hardly done with the sport. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, he played Eastern and National tournaments regularly and was consistently ranked No. 1 in the East—in Men's Singles, in Men's 35 Singles and Men's 45 Singles. He also served as



James, third from left, captained the USA Eastern team that captured the 65 & Over Atlantic Coast Cup in 2018.

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Richard A. Meyer

Richard (Ricky) Meyer is a former top-ranked Eastern junior and men's tennis player. He also competed on the ATP circuit, attaining a world ranking of No. 83 in singles and No. 52 in doubles, and capturing titles in both. Among his many accomplishments on the tour, Meyer scored victories over a dozen players ranked in the top ten in the world, including Ilie Nastase, Adriano Panatta, Wojtek Fibak, Dick Stockton and Bill Scanlon. He lost to John McEnroe in four sets in the third round of the 1980 US Open and reached the Round of 16 at the Australian Open in 1983.

Meyer first picked up the sport as a child. In 1962, his parents took a trip to Puerto Rico, where his father met a young tennis pro based at the Dorado Beach Hotel named Nick Bollettieri. Meyer's father mentioned to Bollettieri that he wanted to get his sons involved in the sport, and Bollettieri said he would be teaching in the spring and summer months on Long Island at The Nassau Country Club. In June, Meyer and his brother Bob started taking lessons from Bollettieri. When Bollettieri headed back to Puerto Rico at the end of summer, Meyer's father sought out John Nogrady—one of the best pros in the East—to continue teaching his kids.

"After about three years taking lessons, John said to my father, 'Why don't you enter Bobby and Ricky in some Eastern tournaments?'" Meyer explains now. "So we entered some Eastern tournaments, and I ended up having success and enjoying it. I finished fifth in the East in singles and two in doubles in the 12 and Unders that year. And from that point on, until I retired at 30, the game was a big part of my life."

Meyer was consistently a top ranked Eastern junior and achieved the No. 2 ranking in both the 16 and Under and 18 and Under age divisions—a remarkable feat considering the supreme talent coming out of New York-based clubs (like Port Washington and Forest Hills) at the time. Concurrently, Meyer played for the Great Neck North High School tennis team, where his undefeated 56-0 record over four years landed him in the pages of Sports Illustrated.

"Great Neck was a real hotbed for tennis in those days so we always had a great team," Meyer says. "My brother, who was also a ranked junior in the East, was on the team, as well as [former pro player] Michael Fishbach. It was like being on the New York Yankees!"

After high school, Meyer played #1 Singles and Doubles for the University



of Pennsylvania. He captured both the Eastern College Athletic Conference singles and doubles titles. In 1979, he achieved the No. 1 ranking in the East in Men's Singles and No. 2 in Doubles with partner Jayson Schwartz. That year, he won every Eastern Men's tournament he entered.

Given his success, it seemed like a no-brainer that he'd eventually go pro. But Meyer wasn't sure. Even as a top junior, he'd planned on becoming a surgeon like his father. (Interestingly, Kay McEnroe, mother of John and Patrick, worked closely with Meyer's father as an operating assistant.) Then, as he was wrapping up college, he considered heading either to law school or to Wall Street like many of his peers. But Bob Levy—a close friend connected to University of Pennsylvania tennis—convinced him otherwise.

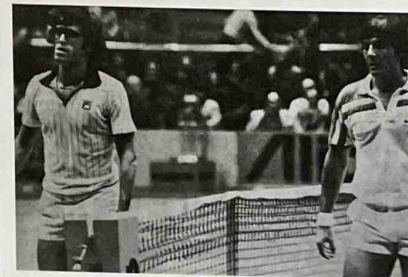
"Bob said, 'You can do law or business later,'" Meyer recalls. "You can't play tennis later. You can either do it now or you're not going to do it. Why don't you go out there and see how good you can become?" So I went out and did it and it turned out pretty good!"

Indeed, it did. Meyer spent ten years competing on the ATP circuit with great success. Early in his professional career, in 1979, as a Lucky Loser, he defeated world No. 6 Bill Scanlon and world No. 1 Ilie Nastase en route to a finals showing at a tournament in Sarasota.

"Ismail El Shafei, a great Egyptian player back then, didn't show up to the tournament, so I got into the main draw even though I lost in the final round of qualifying," Meyer says. "I ended up going through the draw, beating Nastase in the semis in three sets and then getting to the finals. Very few players have ever gone from losing in qualifying to the finals in a tournament. So that was a breakthrough."

Meyer was so happy he promised an ATP official that he'd buy dinner for El Shafei the next time they were in the same city together. Two years later, in 1981, Meyer made good on that promise when he ran into El Shafei in the

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left: Meyer playing high school tennis at 17; above: Meyer (left) after defeating 1976 French Open champion Adriano Panatta.

restaurant at the players' hotel in Sofia, Bulgaria where they were both set to play a tournament.

"I said to him, 'Izzy, I'm buying you dinner, because you didn't show up in Sarasota and I got to the final,'" Meyer remembers. "He laughed and said, 'Rick, you're so lucky we aren't in London, Paris, or Rome, because dinner would cost you five times what it costs here in Sofia!'"

Perhaps Meyer's benevolent gesture resulted in some good karma, because he'd go on to have arguably his best career results that week in Sofia, capturing the singles' title at the tournament there and also making the doubles' final (with El Shafei).

"It was just one of those weeks you dream about, where everything goes right," says Meyer, who defeated the German No. 1 Karl Meiler in the quarterfinals on his way to the victory. "It felt great to be the last one standing. When you think about it, there are thousands upon thousands of tennis players, and most of them have not won an ATP tournament. So that is an incredible honor to be amongst a select group like that."

Meyer eventually retired from professional tennis in 1986 to enter the business world. Still, he continues to give back to the sport that changed his life: He goes to the University of Pennsylvania multiple times a year to mentor players on the women's tennis team, and he also works to assist those players who'd like to apply for business internships. Meyer wants to ensure that athletes—who give up so much of their study time to competing—don't fall through the cracks. He's uniquely suited for that kind of role, considering he knows firsthand how high tennis

achievement can ultimately translate to real world success.

"What I learned on the court has helped me in business," he says. "Because when you play, you never know when an opportunity is going to come or when the results are going to come. You get up every morning to work towards something. In business, it's the same way. I get up every morning and I plant seeds and try to make things happen with what I do, and I understand I'm in it for the long term. You just keep working at it. That's a big lesson, and I learned it from tennis." •

kid into a tennis player in six weeks, but you can make them love it," she says. "I think we get kids to love it, and that's one of the reasons many of them come back year after year."

Indeed, the camp has been a massive success for 35 summers running. So many children—aged 6-15—have learned the fundamentals of the sport through the program over the years that Sunny can't even give a ballpark amount. ("There's no way I could come up with any figure," she says.) Sunny actively continues to tinker and adjust the curriculum; in 2019, for the first time, she offered a full-day tennis experience for interested campers. (Historically, the camp has been divided into morning and afternoon sessions.) And she has no plans of slowing down any time soon.

"I learn something from kids every day," she says. "They're open, they're uninhibited, they're warm. You get ideas from them. They are a lot of fun for me. They keep me young—and immature!"

Ultimately, building these bonds and relationships has been the crowning achievement of her career—and why she'll continue to grow the game as long as she can. She's actively seen passion for the sport transcend generations.

"I was working as a volunteer at the US Open and I ran into a girl I took to the state tournament when she was in high school," Sunny says. "I mean, I knew her mother, who also played. This girl has a son who plays now. Here's a girl who played in high school, bringing her young kid who also plays, to meet me and my husband. That's the pleasure I get from this—the connections." •

Eastern's captain for the Talbert Cup, the intersectional team competition for top male players over the age of 35, and helped capture the Cup for the section on multiple occasions.

But perhaps his biggest accomplishment during this time was his Eastern Masters record. Over a period of five years, he competed in 18 tournaments on the Eastern Masters Circuit—a series of 35 and over singles' events established by fellow Eastern Hall of Famer Lloyd Emanuel. James won all 18 tournaments he entered. His win streak spanned a stunning 85 matches. And notably, he never played a nineteenth Eastern Masters Tournament, so he never lost.

"When you start winning at something, it actually builds more pressure because you're expected to win," he says. "And so being able to go through that many tournaments is something that I'm still proud of."

James continues to enjoy a career in the sport and in the USTA Eastern section. He has served as a teaching pro for over 37 years and currently gives lessons at Chestnut Ridge Racquet Club in Chestnut Ridge, New York.

"I'm pleased that I'm still playing," James says when he reflects on his life in tennis. "I'm pleased that I'm able to keep working at it after all these years." •