



36th Annual Eastern
Tennis Hall of Fame Celebration

to benefit the

Junior Tennis Foundation
Grant and Scholarship Programs

Anne Worcester

In 1994, Anne Worcester was named CEO of the Women's Tennis Association (WTA), becoming the first woman—and, at just 34 years old, the youngest person ever—to lead a professional sporting organization. Over the course of four years, Worcester helped bring a modern sheen to the house that Billie Jean King built, expanding the sport's international reach and enacting many of the practices and policies that have shaped the way we view the game today.



For 21 years, Worcester served as the tournament director at the Connecticut Open in New Haven, where she was also heavily involved in developing community tennis opportunities.

A product of two tennis aficionados, Worcester grew up in Syosset, N.Y. with the sport all around her. She played consistently from the time she was just five years old, competing in her club's ladder and serving as the captain of her high school varsity tennis team.

But it was turning her back on the game—literally—that ultimately changed her life and set her on a path to a career in the sport.

"I went to Duke University, and I wasn't good enough to be recruited at a Division I school, so I thought I would try to be a walk-on," she recalls. "But as I was walking over to the tryout, I realized how nervous I was about academics and this whole new college experience. I thought, 'I don't want to spend 80 hours a week practicing and traveling to probably sit on a bench.' So I turned around."

On the way back to her dorm, Worcester spotted a sign recruiting students for the Oktoberfest Committee. She decided to join the group, and through that experience became heavily involved in the student union. Over the next four years, she discovered a talent for event management and organized concerts, plays and festivals for her peers. Her efforts caught the eye of her classmate Todd McCormack, whose father, Mark, had recently founded International Management Group (IMG). As they were graduating, Todd suggested Worcester apply for a position there.

"Todd said, 'You'd be perfect for my father's company, IMG,' and I said 'What's that?'" Worcester recalls with a laugh. "And then he said, 'Sports marketing,' and I said 'What's that?'"

Indeed, at the time, the words 'sports' and 'marketing' weren't typically used in the same sentence. Instead, Worcester went to Spain to work as an au pair to improve her Spanish. A year later, she spent her "last dollars" flying to Lexington, Kentucky to visit a friend from Duke; incredibly, she bumped into Todd, who worked in the same city. He reminded her about IMG, and this time she decided to apply. The only entry level job available at the company was in racquet sports, working for the U.S. Pro Championships in Boston, the Lipton

Championships in Florida and other events.

“Within a week, I knew I’d found my niche,” she says. “I loved tennis, I loved event marketing. It was both passions coming together.”

Over the next 11 years, Worcester rose up the ranks of the tennis industry, first at IMG and then at the Virginia Slims Series (what was then the women’s professional circuit), where, as the Director of Worldwide Operations, she found herself traveling week in, week out to different cities and countries around the globe. In 1991, she began serving as the managing director of the Women’s Tennis Council, which was then the governing body of the women’s game.

Three years later, when Worcester officially accepted the first-ever WTA CEO role, women’s tennis stood at a critical juncture. The player’s association was in debt and had opted to merge with the Council to streamline its operations. Longtime sponsors Virginia Slims and Kraft were headed for the exit. The question Worcester needed to answer: What exactly should the WTA look like in the 1990s and beyond?

“For 23 years, women’s tennis had been called the Virginia Slims Series, and then the Kraft General Food World Tour,” she says. “We had never built the WTA brand.”

Building that brand—and increasing its prominence around the world—is precisely what Worcester set about doing during her tenure. Under her purview, the WTA negotiated international television rights with 55 tournaments in 35 countries so that the organization could offer the broadcasts as one fully integrated package to networks around the globe. The strategy not only helped to resolve the organization’s financial issues, but also greatly stretched the sport’s global footprint.

Of course, financial viability was not the only challenge Worcester faced. The



Worcester grew up playing tennis in Syosset, N.Y. and competed at #1 Singles for her high school team.

tour itself was in a transitional phase, with many of the game’s reliable stars missing in action. Chris Evert and Gabriela Sabatini had retired. Martina Navratilova was about to retire. Monica Seles was also out, recovering after her violent 1993 attack.

Worcester knew she needed current athletes’ help in marketing the tour.

To address the issue, she and her team established the PLAYER ACES program, which mandated seeded players at tournaments participate in

local promotion. That could mean anything from fan-friendly or sponsorship activities to content creation to a local hospital visit. In order for the program to take flight, however, WTA brass knew they needed buy-in from the biggest star on their roster at the time: Steffi Graf.

“Jim Fuhse [our then-head of PR] and I took Steffi to dinner in Houston and talked to her about the why of it,” Worcester says. “Steffi had been the biggest

Betty Newfield Wall

Betty Newfield Wall was one of the most decorated Eastern juniors of the 1970s. Over the course of her playing career, she attained the No. 1 ranking in the section in every age division and was ranked as high as No. 2 nationally. In doubles, Newfield Wall found even more success, achieving the No. 1 ranking nationally (with fellow Eastern Hall of Famer Caroline Stoll) and capturing two National titles. She would eventually go on to compete for the University of Florida, where she was awarded the MVP distinction in 1981.

Both Newfield Wall's parents worked at a tennis club in Flushing, N.Y.—her mother as a manager and her father as a teaching pro—so she jokes that she was born holding a racquet. In actuality, she was just two-and-a-half years old when she stepped onto a court for the first time, and even at that early age she began to develop a fondness for the family pastime.

"There were a lot of people at the club and as a kid I enjoyed playing with them," she remembers. "And obviously my parents were very enthusiastic about me playing, so I responded to both of those things. I also seemed to get good very quickly."

She progressed so quickly, in fact, that she reached the final of the first 12-and-under Eastern tournament she entered, at just age nine.

"I think I came up to my opponent's shoulders," she says with a laugh. "She was probably 11 or 12, and I lost fairly quickly, something like 6-1, 6-1. But I remember getting a trophy, and it was just really fun."

Around age 11, Newfield Wall enrolled in the famed Port Washington Tennis Academy on Long Island. There, she crossed paths with some of the best tennis players of her generation, including Mary Carillo, Peter Fleming, Vitas Gerulaitis and John McEnroe among many others. Dick Zausner—the director of the academy—and his wife Madeline looked after Newfield Wall and invited her to stay at their house on weekends so she wouldn't have to commute back to Queens. Under the tutelage of the highly-regarded coaching staff at Port Washington, Newfield Wall refined the game that would make her a dominant force on the junior circuit.

"I think I had a really great forehand, a good drop shot, and I was really fast,"



Newfield Wall takes a photo with her father after reaching her first junior final.

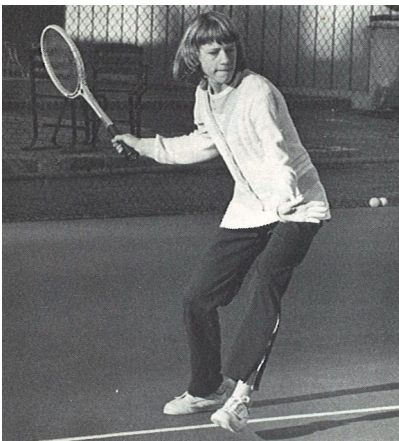
Newfield Wall says of what made her such a formidable opponent. “And I hated to lose, so that was helpful. I think when people played me, they knew that they were going to have a tough match.”

One player who understood that? Future Grand Slam champion Tracy Austin. She and Newfield Wall—who were great friends and sometimes roomed together at the Zausner house whenever the Californian-born Austin was in town—contested the 14-and-under final of the Port Washington Tennis Classic, with the latter emerging victorious.

“It was totally unexpected,” Newfield Wall recalls of her victory. “She was two years younger than me, but she was dominating, even back then, so there was no expectation for me to win. In fact, my parents were so sure I was going to lose that they told me that if I won, they would take me to buy new bedroom furniture. So that became a motivating factor, and to their surprise, we went bedroom shopping right after the match!”



Newfield Wall (right) and fellow Eastern Hall of Famer Stoll (left) were the no. 1 doubles team in the country in several age divisions.



Newfield Wall hits the trademark forehand that made her such a formidable opponent.

During this time, Newfield Wall procured multiple New York state championships. She also made a name for herself at the National level, reaching finals of both the Orange Bowl—where she finished runner-up to future Top 20 WTA player Anne White—and the 12 & Under National Championships—where she lost to another future professional player (and the 1978 US Open girls’ singles champion), Linda Siegel. In doubles, her fruitful partnership with the No. 2 Eastern junior Stoll yielded two National Championship titles, in 1973 and 1975. Stoll famously played with a remarkable amount of topspin on her forehand, a style that could send her shots soaring over other players’ heads.

“I think everybody who played her, even people who did beat her, had difficulty adjusting to her game,” Newfield Wall says. “But that was why she was also such a great partner in doubles!”

On the back of her consistently strong results, Newfield Wall was recruited to play for the University of Florida, where she continued to amass an exemplary record. She remained undefeated for a long stretch of the 1981 season and received the team’s MVP honors that year.

Cindy Shmerler

When Scarsdale, N.Y. native Cindy Shmerler was just a young freshman reporter at the *Daily Pennsylvanian*—the University of Pennsylvania’s award-winning student newspaper—she received the opportunity to interview Billie Jean King while the women’s tour was passing through Philadelphia. Shmerler, who had grown up playing tennis and competed for the UPenn tennis and squash teams, idolized the Grand Slam champion; as a kid, her bedroom was “wallpapered in early Billie Jean,” she says.



Shmerler interviews her longtime idol King at an event in the late 1980s.

“This was in 1978, not long after the WTA had formed, and Billie Jean was still pressing for publicity [for the tour],” Shmerler recalls. “Not only was she one of the top players in the world [at that time], she was an icon because of her match with Bobby Riggs. So I was completely starstruck. But I do remember walking away [from the interview] saying, ‘How do I tell this story?’”

It’s a question she has continued to ask—about a wide range of subjects, from King to Chris Evert to Andre Agassi to Roger Federer to Serena Williams to Iga Świątek—decades later. Since that fateful meeting with the tennis legend, Shmerler has become one of the preeminent journalists in the game, an entrenched member of the indefatigable traveling tennis press corps. She got her start as a summer intern at the vaunted *World Tennis Magazine* and over time ascended to the position of managing editor, a role she held until the publication folded in 1991. Since then, she has seen her writing published in *Tennis Magazine*, *USA Today* and the *New York Times*, among many others. Separately, she has also established herself as a highly-respected broadcaster, debuting as a sideline reporter for the USA Network in 1986 and eventually spending 15 years calling ATP matches for ESPN International. With this role, it is believed that she is the first woman to call play-by-play in men’s professional tennis. Today, you can still hear her voice on American Express radio during the daytime sessions at the US Open.

Shmerler says she realized she would pursue a career in sportswriting even before her interview with King, estimating that just a month after her arrival to the UPenn campus she knew what she wanted to do with her life. An athlete herself, she saw firsthand what precious little coverage women’s athletics received. Still, despite her decisiveness, the road was not easy. Even at the *Daily Pennsylvanian*, she faced resistance from male counterparts who “would throw phone books over my cubicle that would land on my head” because they did not want her on the sports beat.

When she first began covering the US Open (during her internship at *World Tennis*), she counted just four or five female colleagues. There was no

women's bathroom in the press box, and they frequently had to brave the men's stalls. But there was a camaraderie among the group that Shmerler remembers fondly to this day.

"The good thing about [those early years] was that we were all immensely close," she says. "It was Lesley Visser [of the *Boston Globe*], Sally Jenkins [of the *Washington Post*] and Marjorie Lewis [of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*], and we all hung together. And the men were fine too. John Feinstein would shout over me every time I ever tried to ask a question at a press conference. Mike Lupica was about the same, but they also protected us."

Many colleagues became great mentors. She notes that her *World Tennis* coworkers Susie "Baker" Adams, as well as fellow Eastern Hall of Famers Gladys Heldman, Sarah Palfrey Danzig and Steve Flink were incredibly supportive as she was navigating her way and finding her voice. Over the years she developed a particularly strong bond with the legendary sports columnist Bud Collins; the pair worked as a team covering the majors for the *Boston Globe* in the 1990s and 2000s.



Shmerler has been covering tennis for more than 40 years.



Shmerler poses with legendary columnist and longtime colleague Collins.

"With Bud, it was the generosity of spirit, and the willingness to help anybody," Shmerler says. "That's what he taught you. He'd be three minutes from deadline, and some guy would come up and say, 'Hey Bud, can I ask you a quick question?' And Bud would stop what he was doing. His response would be, 'Ask two.'"

Another good friend: Eastern Hall of Famer Arthur Ashe. The pair overlapped at HBO in the 1980s, where Ashe called matches as a commentator and Shmerler did research work in a contract role during Wimbledon.

"Every day at about 4:00 p.m., despite the fact that Arthur was on the air, we would order a Pimm's cup up to the booth," Shmerler says. "At breakfast, we would also bet on the day's matches...mostly me giving him money every day!" In fact, it was Ashe who first introduced Shmerler to two young sisters already garnering massive buzz in the sport at just 11 and 10 years old: Venus and Serena Williams.

"He said, 'I've heard about these two kids, you've got to see them,'" she recalls.

Lou Dimock

Before he embarked on a 52-year career as an instructor and club owner, before he served as an indispensable USTA Eastern volunteer and two-term president, a young Lou Dimock competed in a tennis match as a student athlete at Aurora University that revealed many of the characteristics of the leader he'd eventually become.

"We were at a dual meet, and I'd split sets with my opponent, and we were in the third," Dimock recalls. "This was back when you didn't play a tiebreaker at 6-all, and we were the only match still going. My coach came over to me and said, 'We won the meet, shake hands, let's go home.' But I refused. I had blisters on my feet. I took off my shoes and played an 18-16 set in stockings, and I won. I guess you can say it shows fortitude."

The match also demonstrated how passionate Dimock was about the sport, even back then. Upon graduating, he already knew that teaching younger juniors how to play the game was what he wanted to do with his life.

"For one, I liked working with kids," he says. "But this was also the time of Vietnam, and some of my high school buddies and college buddies went over and didn't come back. They never got to live the life they wanted to live. So when I got into teaching tennis, I said, 'I should do it for them, in a way, because they never got to do what they wanted to do.' So I did what I wanted to do [in their honor]."

Dimock first found work as a teaching pro in Sterling, Ill. at a local facility with eight indoor tennis courts. He ultimately spent the first decade of his career there, honing his instructional methods and developing a strong track record.

"Over a ten-year span we had 50 ranked kids coming out of this little town in Illinois," he says. "They were competing in regional, sectional and state tournaments."

During this time, Dimock also began volunteering for the USTA. He served as the president of the Northern Illinois Tennis Association, a district of the Midwestern Tennis Association (later USTA Midwest). In that role, he helped develop local junior tournament circuits and released rankings reports. He also took on coaching opportunities with the organization, leading Midwestern's National Davis Cup team (which included a young Leif Shiras) to victory at the intersectional competition in 1980.

In 1981, Dimock moved from Sterling to Wappingers Falls, N.Y., where he accepted a position as a teaching pro at Cross Court Tennis Club, a facility he'd go on to purchase three years later so that he could bolster its junior programming. In a brand new state, he continued his volunteer work with the USTA. Then-Eastern Executive Director and fellow Hall of Famer Doris Herrick heard from her counterparts in the Midwest that Dimock was somebody "who could really do a lot of work". She quickly recruited him to lead the organization's Junior Tennis Council,



Dimock (center) poses with Billie Jean King (right) and longtime fellow USTA Volunteer Delaine Mast.

and the first order of business Dimock took on was rewriting the junior competition rules for the organization.

“We were the first section to design the Level 1, Level 2, Level 3 system, where Level 1 would be a sectional tournament, Level 2 would be a district [regional] level tournament and Level 3 would be entry-level,” he says. “It was simple, very concise, and it really worked.”

From there he rose through the volunteer ranks, serving as the Southern Region vice president for eight years, the Eastern treasurer for four years, and then, as the entire section’s president from 1992-1993. Volunteering, he says, really felt like being a part of a community.

“Everyone around that table was someone who worked in the field,” he says. “When they made decisions, they understood the ramifications, so they took it seriously. They were working in the sport, and they were hands on. They were shoveling the snow off the roof or out there in the middle of the night trying to get the generator to run. We all knew each other, and we had a good time. I always say, you’re judged by who you go through life with. It was a good group of people. It really was a tennis family.”

Nationally, Dimock served on several committees including the Player Development Committee, the Junior Team Tennis Committee, the Schools Committee and the National Nominating Committee. In 2002, he was asked to serve as president of USTA Eastern once again, and upon accepting, became the first person in the history of the organization to serve two non-consecutive terms in the role.

Of course, for all the different titles he’s held in the industry, the most joy Dimock finds in the sport is teaching. To this day he is still helping players improve their strokes 40 hours a week at Cross Court.

“For me, my greatest accomplishment is working with a kid, and then one day they’re in the finals of a Big 10 tournament playing a doubles match,” he

says. “And after it’s over, they call you up and say ‘I heard your voice [while I was playing] and we ended up winning the match.’ That’s really as good as it gets.”



Dimock (center) coached young athletes Leif Shiras (right) and Tracy Fenelon (left) to a National Davis Cup title.



Dimock (second from right) meets with legendary instructor Dennis Van der Meer (far right) and his staff.

Michael Fishbach

The 1977 US Open: If you know, you know. And if you do know, you'll remember that one of the most sensational and exhilarating storylines (among many) that fortnight came courtesy of Michael Fishbach, a former No. 1 Eastern junior from Great Neck, N.Y.

Ranked well outside the world's Top 100, the 23-year-old Fishbach showed up to the event with what was dubbed a "spaghetti racquet"—a double-strung contraption that he made himself using nylon strings, adhesive tape and even a cord from a Venetian blind. Its unique design greatly increased the topspin of Fishbach's shots, which mystified his opponents; by the end of his time in Queens, he'd defeated three players in qualifying and upset Top 70 player Billy Martin, as well as two-time Grand Slam champion Stan Smith—by an impressive 6-0, 6-2 scoreline, no less—to improbably reach the third round of the men's singles draw. The Cinderella run captivated the public and even caught the eye of Johnny Carson, who invited Fishbach to appear on *The Tonight Show*.



Michael poses with the famous "spaghetti racquet" from the 1977 US Open.

"It was exciting because it was something new," Fishbach recalls of all the attention. "It was a zoo. As soon as I walked into the venue, I was just surrounded by people. And then when I got home, the phone didn't stop ringing. *Sports Illustrated*, *The New York Times*, *The Times of London*, *The Washington Post*, *Time Magazine*, it just didn't stop. It was short, but when I look back on it, it was a combination of exciting and exhausting."

Of course, it would be a disservice to Fishbach to focus solely on this single result; his legacy and life in the sport extends far beyond one brief moment in the summer of 1977. His father, Joe Fishbach, was an accomplished player in his own right who ranked among the world's Top 10 in the 1930s. Joe would go on to make a little Eastern tennis history of his own when he developed the first-ever facility with indoor courts for public use in the United States, in 1958. The revolutionary Great Neck establishment presaged the New York-area indoor tennis boom of the 1960s and 1970s.

"He built the [first indoor] court simply to give lessons because as a teaching pro he didn't have any place to work in the wintertime," Michael explains. "But then everyone almost broke the walls down to rent it for two hours on a Tuesday night from 7-9 p.m. for their doubles game. So right away my dad had to build another one."

Ten years later, the Fishbach family took out a map and counted 55 indoor tennis courts within a 10 mile radius of the one Joe first opened.

It was part of this Great Neck tennis scene that Michael came of age. He first

took up the sport when he was barely three years old. The racquet was so heavy he learned to play using two hands on both sides, a style he would continue to employ over the course of his entire career. He entered his first 12-and-under Eastern tournament when he was just six and became one of the top juniors in the section shortly thereafter, winning the Eastern Championships multiple times throughout his youth and capturing the No. 1 ranking in every age division. He also frequently partnered with fellow Eastern Hall of Famer Gene Mayer in doubles; the pair won many tournaments together, including the World 10 & Under Doubles Championships.

“I was a little kid who never missed, who had good drop shots, and who was fast as hell,” Michael says of what made him such a tough out on court. “And I was very tennis smart. After playing the game for so many years, I just had this innate concept of how to win a point.”

For college, Michael headed west to play for UC Irvine. He spent two years at the school—losing three matches total during his time there—before opting to transition to the pro circuit. While competing at a couple clay court tournaments in Europe, he crossed paths with another pro, Barry Phillips-Moore. An Australian player nearly double Michael's age, Phillips-Moore was struggling with his movement and compensating by using an oddly-strung racquet that clearly “put more action on the ball” than normal. Michael—who had grown up stringing racquets in his father's pro shop and understood much of the science behind racquet construction—asked Phillips-Moore if he could take a look at how it was strung, but the older pro refused.

“I could see what was happening and the way Barry was hitting the ball, and felt very strongly that the racquet would suit my game,” Michael says. “But he wouldn't let me see it, and I didn't have a pair of binoculars to look at the details, so I just had to let it go.”

Then, fate intervened. A few weeks later, Michael was competing at another tournament in Gstaad, Switzerland. During some downtime, he went to get some film developed and walked into a camera shop. While waiting for an employee, he looked around and noticed that one of Phillips-Moore's racquets just happened to be sitting there in an open glass case.

“I can't even explain why it was there, how it happened,” Michael says now. “But I reached in, picked it up and stared at it from one foot away. And, having strung racquets my whole life, I understood what was going on and why it could do what it did.”

Michael ran back to his hotel and took detailed notes with sketches on what he'd seen. When he returned home to Great Neck, he, his father and his brother Peter—also an accomplished tennis player—spent 30 hours over four



Michael (left) and brother Peter (right) pose with Ken Rosewall and Bobby Riggs at the West Side Tennis Club in Forest Hills, N.Y.

Michael Grant

Former top-ranked Eastern junior Michael Grant had no intentions of becoming a tennis prodigy. In fact, he caught the tennis bug much later than most of his peers, first picking up a racquet at a day camp when he was around ten years old. With limited instruction, he won a tournament at the camp and “got a little bit hooked,” so his mom took him to the Roslyn Racquet Club near their home in Roslyn, N.Y. for a couple lessons.

Even still, Grant was not looking to become the next big star of tennis in the East. Until he was around 14, he focused just as heavily on baseball. His mother and father encouraged him to pursue his interests but were not the prototypical tennis parents, he says, and he did not attend one of the starry local academies where many of his

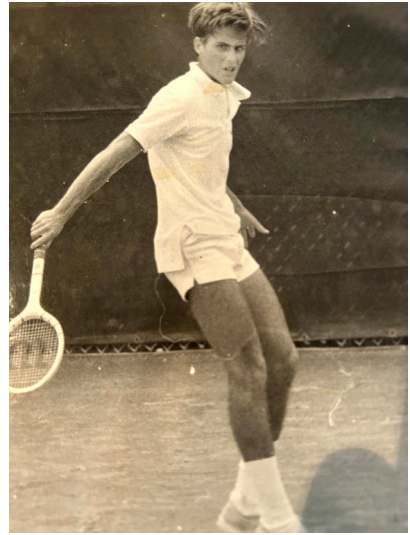
future opponents refined their skills. But Bobby Kaplan, the owner of the Roslyn facility, saw potential in Grant and entered him in Eastern’s 12-and-under Championships. Ultimately Grant reached the quarterfinals, where he faced off against fellow Eastern Hall of Famer Gene Mayer, the best player in the country in the age group at that time.

“I didn’t know who he was [back then], but nobody got games off him, even at National tournaments,” he says. “I’m pretty sure that match was shorter than the warmup!”

Still, Grant kept at it. He continued to refine his game, mostly developing his strokes under the watchful eye of local pro Bill Weissbuch, though he trained all over the greater-NYC area: at Cunningham Park in Queens, at the Armory in Harlem, at the Stadium Tennis Center near the 145th Street Bridge in the Bronx, “wherever I could get a game,” he says.

For several years, he’d also “run down Eighth Avenue in the cold at 5:30 in the morning from Penn Station to 27th Street” to attend the Eastern-run weekend junior program at the Midtown Athletic Club in Manhattan. Here, Grant bumped shoulders with many legends of the sport. Arthur Ashe, Clark Graebner, Ham Richardson, Bobby Riggs and Dick Savitt were among those who lived in the city and found the time to mentor the young athletes as they fine-tuned their playing styles.

“Bobby Riggs owned a tennis bubble in Woodside, Queens that he’d let [juniors in the Eastern program] use at 11 at night. So sometimes we would literally go to Midtown and play from 6 a.m to 9 a.m., go home, sleep, come back to Woodside from 11 p.m. to 1 a.m., go home again, sleep and go



“A friend once told me, ‘You were one of the toughest players east of the midtown tunnel!’” Grant says. “That’s a great compliment considering who grew up in Eastern!”

back to Midtown Tennis on Sunday morning. We weren't really awake, but we were dedicated."

That dedication propelled Grant forward to even greater achievements in the game over the next four years. He attained the No. 1 Eastern ranking in both the 16-and-under and 18-and-under age divisions and won the New York State High School Championships in 1973. He also greatly increased his prominence on the national stage, reaching the Easter Bowl final as well as several National

semifinals, including the Boys' National Hard Court Championships.

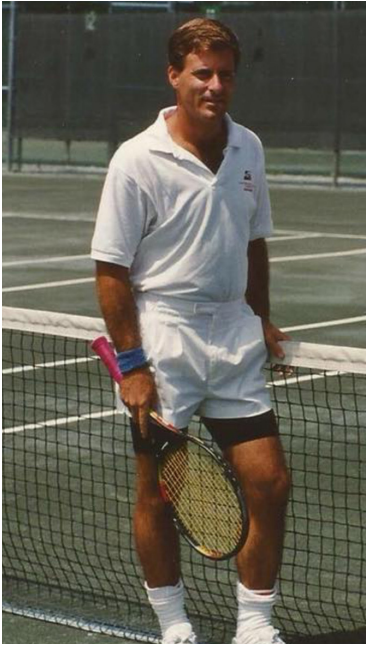
"I was very steady," Grant says of what made him so strong in those years. "I had good groundstrokes on both sides. I wasn't a big hitter. I didn't serve or volley much, but I was pretty fast, and I didn't make many errors."

Naturally, he liked playing on clay. A predilection for the surface ultimately helped him clinch a spot on the 1974 Junior Davis Cup team, alongside Mayer. Tryouts were held on the clay courts at the Port Washington Tennis Academy, and the venue turned Grant into a bit of a legend among the Californians who flew in hoping to earn a spot on the squad.

"All these guys couldn't play on the clay, so I went something like 8-0 against everyone from California," he remembers. "I was playing Matt Mitchell, who later became an NCAA champion. I was kind of torturing him. In the middle of the match we switched sides, and I turned around and he was gone. Then I looked through the fence, and he was standing on one of the nearby hardcourts [at the facility] yelling, 'Play me here!'"

During this time, Grant also began to find success beyond the juniors. Beginning at just 17 and over three consecutive years, he captured the Eastern Indoor Men's Championship, the Eastern Hard Court Men's Championship, and the Eastern Clay Court Men's Championship. Given these solid results, Grant opted to give the pro circuit a try upon graduating from Hofstra University in 1979. During his brief time on tour—just about two years—he cracked the world's Top 100, ascending to a ranking of world No. 88, and reaching the second round of both the French Open and the US Open. He nearly went one better at the latter, coming back from a two-set deficit in his second round match to force a fifth against Frenchman and future Top 10 player Thierry Tulasne.

"I probably could have won that match," Grant says now. "I had all the 'home' fans cheering me on while I was playing on one of the back courts at Flushing Meadows that probably doesn't exist anymore. But the experience



After he retired from the professional circuit, Grant attained the No. 1 ranking in Eastern's Men's 35s age division.

culprit. She would do her post-match press conference and that was it. But she listened, and she said 'I'll do it, and I won't just participate, I'll take the lead.' And she lived up to that promise and then some, and other players stepped up too."

The ACES program was so successful that the ATP developed its own version as well. Both initiatives are still a critical part of tour promotional efforts to this very day.

Worcester opted to step down from the CEO position in 1998 to raise her young family and soon thereafter signed on to serve as the tournament director of the Connecticut Open, a role she would go on to hold for the next 21 years. Even though she "raised a few eyebrows" when she made the transition, Worcester thought her past experiences uniquely prepared her for her new gig.

"Managing the WTA taught me how to work with a unique, diverse group of stakeholders, and how to align those stakeholders around common goals. In New Haven [where the Connecticut Open was held], you had Yale University, the hospital, the state and the city. What they all cared about was the economic impact and the marketing of the location, as well as leveraging pro tennis to build community tennis, teaching inner city youth the importance of schoolwork, fitness and proper nutrition."

To that end, Worcester and her team developed year-round community outreach programs, including free clinics and other local offerings, in addition to their responsibilities running the tournament each August. They also coordinated with Yale, the city of New Haven and the USTA New England section to form the New Haven Youth and Tennis Education, or New HYTEs, which today annually serves hundreds of disadvantaged youth from the greater New Haven area.

Reflecting on all her experiences in the game—from event management to tour governance to community outreach—Worcester can't help but trace a line back to her upbringing in Syosset, her family and their collective love for tennis. It's one of the things that has always driven her—she knows firsthand the joy the sport can bring. As a kid she regularly teamed up with her father to contest the Equitable Family Challenge, an annual national parent-child tournament that culminated at the US Open. One year the pair reached the semifinals of the New York sectional and were just a single match from making the trip to Forest Hills.

"If my father was here, he could tell you every point we played in that [match]," she says. "It didn't go our way, but my father was a very patient, kind man, and I just loved playing with him."

It's bonding experiences like these that stick out in her mind when she thinks about her life in tennis, more so than any one decision or accomplishment.

"I'm most thankful for the relationships I had the privilege of creating," she says. "Traveling on the tour, being involved in this global sport, working so hard in the trenches, you get really close to your colleagues and players. I was lucky to work alongside some amazing people, and I am forever grateful."



Worcester (center) with fellow Eastern Hall of Famer John McEnroe (left) and James Blake.

Betty Newfield Wall, continued from page 11

“There was a lot of publicity around my winning streak, so there was some pressure around not wanting to lose,” she says. “But having the camaraderie with my teammates was just amazing. Traveling together with them, rooting for them, we just had so much fun. My freshman year, we got to the finals of the national championship. We were the number two team in the country, so that was one highlight.”

When Newfield Wall reflects on all of her many highlights in tennis, what she remembers the most—more than the points or the scores or the victories—is the bond she shared with her family through the game: playing at her parents’ club, traveling to National tournaments, even embarking on a last-minute shopping trip after an unexpected win. Over the years her mom, Margaret, also established a remarkable record in the sport in her own way, first as a very active Eastern volunteer, and then later, upon retiring down south, as the president of USTA Florida from 1988-89. She was just the second woman ever to hold that position.

“We really were a tennis family,” Newfield Wall says. “I remember after getting to my first final, I went back to the tennis club where my dad taught. He was on the court and I took a picture with him and my trophy. It just made [these experiences] more special. We could all connect through tennis.”

Cindy Shmerler continued from page 13

Shmerler headed down to the Arthur Ashe Youth Tennis Center in Manayunk, Pennsylvania where the future Grand Slam champion siblings were part of an exhibition and gala fundraiser that day. After getting a sneak preview of what women’s tennis in the 2000s would look like, Ashe and Shmerler shared a car back to New York together. It



Shmerler (right) interviews Grand Slam champion Steffi Graf.

had been less than a week since Ashe had announced to the world in a press conference that he’d contracted AIDS.

“We had one of the more compelling conversations I’d ever had in my life in that limousine,” Shmerler says. “We spoke about the responsibility of journalists. What Arthur wanted to know was where a line is crossed between a very public person’s right to privacy and the public’s right to know. And he was more intrigued by it than he was angry about it. Or at least he never showed that to me. But it was eye opening for both of us, and it was the last great conversation we ever had with each other, because he was gone within a year.”

Beyond the people, the job has given Shmerler a front row seat (sometimes literally) to the most incredible and incredibly unbelievable moments in the sport. She leaned over the railing as Pete Sampras threw up on-court during the fifth-set tiebreaker of his 1996 US Open quarterfinal comeback win over Alex Corretja. She asked Hana Mandlíková for a quote from just outside a bathroom stall after the Czech player tried to hide from reporters in a port-o-potty trailer following a bad loss on the outer courts at the US Open. And just last year, she was on hand in London to see Roger Federer’s

last match ever at the Laver Cup. (She wrote one of the first cover stories on Federer in 2003.)

Of all the many moments she's witnessed, however, she selects Martina Navratilova's 1986 return to Czechoslovakia as her favorite story to cover. In 1975, during the height of the Cold War, Navratilova defected from her home country to the United States just hours after losing her semifinal match against Chris Evert at the US Open. Now, 11 years later and one of the biggest tennis stars on the planet, she was heading back to her birthplace as part of the team representing America in a Fed Cup final taking place in Prague.

"Being behind the Iron Curtain, understanding what the emotion was like for Martina...you can't compare it," Shmerler says. "It was completely captivating and terrifying at the same time because you didn't know whether suddenly someone was going to appear and not care that Martina was a U.S. citizen. And when she went out onto that stadium the first time and was cheered instead of booed, I don't think there was a dry eye in the place. I know I was crying!"

After Navratilova defected, Czech officials effectively erased her name from the country. She was taken out of history books and off plaques. In covering the story for World Tennis, Shmerler wanted to interview a Czech child who had not been born prior to Navratilova renouncing her citizenship.

"Before Martina came on court, I went up to this little girl and said, 'Do you know who Martina is?' And she looked at me with these wide eyes and said, 'Oh, Martina, she the hero.' It just spoke to the depth of feeling for Martina...that you can erase her from the record books, but you can't erase [her] from people's hearts."

For Shmerler, moments like these are what makes tennis so great, and consequently her own life and career

so rewarding. For 44 years, in print, on television and on the radio, her job has been to tell stories—and in her estimation, there's no sport more tailor-made for that line of work.

"It's the emotion," she says. "There are no masks. There are no helmets. There's no headgear. You see every single thing that a player is feeling, saying, doing. I like the exhilaration. I like the one-on-one nature of the competition. Honestly, I love that it's international. I know places, and people from places that I would never know otherwise. To have the opportunity to travel to countries, some far-flung countries in times of peril, you don't get that with other sports. There's a lot to love about covering tennis."

Michael Fishbach continued from page 17

sessions in the family pro shop trying to create their own version, through lots of experimentation. What emerged would be the prototype for the racquet that took the 1977 US Open by storm a mere six weeks later.

Michael would actually record his best professional results after the event that changed his life, ultimately attaining a career-high ranking of world No. 47 in 1978. The instrument with which he was predominantly associated factored very little into that achievement, as the spaghetti racquet was banned from competition by the International Tennis Federation in the fall of 1977. At the time, Michael was in the middle of competing in a tournament in Iran; he simply packed up the racquet he designed and headed into his next match, soundly defeating John Feaver—the same man who had ended his dream US Open run—with a regular racquet. He'd eventually reach the quarterfinals of that particular event, a best-ever showing in singles competition.

Michael continued to compete on the circuit for another five years. Since

retiring, he has gone on to have a long and rewarding career as a whale conservationist. But whenever he reflects on his time in the sport, he takes much pride in the fact that he got the chance to contribute to the game's legend.

"What I'm most proud of is being a little part of the continuum of the history of an incredible game that's been going on for hundreds of years," he says. "That connects me to Bill Tilden and Pancho Gonzalez and Björn Borg and Roger Federer. We've all continued this game through the ages into the present. We did it with grace and dignity, sometimes with a little too much temper, but with grace and dignity. And we entertained people and we helped to further the continuum of that game and be part of that story, even if we're largely forgotten. Look, if I hadn't used the spaghetti racquet for about seven weeks of my career, I would have largely been forgotten, like so many others. But our role in the continuum, in this story, is important. And I don't think there's anything really to be more proud of than to say that we did that."

Michael Grant continued from page 19

was still great. I stayed home, I slept in my childhood bed. My mom made me breakfast, and then I'd drive to Queens."

Ultimately, Grant made the decision to not continue beyond the 1980 season.

"I mostly stopped because I felt the guys in the Top 20 were just better than me," he says. "I played a tournament in New Hampshire, and I beat John Feaver, one of the best British players at the time. Then I beat Andrew Pattison, who had been a Top 25 player. But in the next round I played Ivan Lendl and he crushed me, and I said 'I'm just not as good as this guy'. I did beat [Top 20 player] Jose Luis Clerc at the Japan Open, and I also beat Brian Teacher in San Juan...and he went on that

same year to win the Australian Open. So I had a few wins, but I always felt like I beat guys when they didn't have their best day just because I was pretty steady."

While he effectively retired from professional competition, Grant never stopped playing. He contested Men's 35 tournaments in Eastern, once again capturing a No. 1 ranking in yet another age division. He also captained the section's Talbert Cup squad, and under his leadership, Eastern won the



Grant competes at the 1980 French Open.

intersectional competition for three consecutive years in the 1990s. Today, he hits at the Shelter Rock Tennis Club in Manhasset, N.Y. every morning before heading to work in the city. He's very thankful for everything the sport has given him over the course of his entire life—from keeping him fit to providing him with so many friendships.

"I can't think of any specific match or tournament," he says. "The highlight for me is that I still stay friendly with a lot of the players I grew up with and met along the way, whether locally, nationally or internationally. I played with Gene [Mayer] last Friday. But yeah, you grow up with your friends at school and your neighborhood. And I did that too, but I also had all these tennis friends from another life. And that to me has been the best part."