



EASTERN



SECTION NEWS



Serving Aces 2011

Volunteers, Teaching Pros and Coaches Attend USTA Eastern's Annual Meeting and Volunteer Development Workshop

MORE THAN 200 TENNIS VOLUNTEERS, community leaders, teaching pros and high school coaches packed the Renaissance Westchester Hotel in White Plains Jan. 28-29 to attend "Serving Aces 2011," USTA Eastern's Annual Meeting and Volunteer Development Workshop.

The meeting focused on the skills needed to excel, both on and off the courts. There were classes on how to write grants and run USTA tournaments; on-court workshops for coaching doubles players and developing their mental games; and informative sessions on USTA's new 10-and-Under Tennis initiative.

D.A. Abrams, Executive Director of USTA Eastern, said the meeting's rich and varied schedule provided a great educational experience to those in attendance. "Whether you were attending a workshop in the hotel, practicing a drill in the tennis bubble, or sharing an idea with a new friend, you had a chance to learn new skills that will help fulfill USTA Eastern's mission: to promote and develop the growth of tennis," Abrams said.

Presentations & Workshops

On Friday, more than 50 high school tennis coaches attended a day-long workshop in the tennis bubble, where they learned how to develop new drills, improve their teams' doubles play and increase their players' mental strength.

Rob Polishook, a mental training coach, taught a class called "Secrets to the Mental Game: What High School Coaches and Players Must Know to Win." The workshop included exercises, demonstrations and on-court drills focused on key mental skills that a competitive tennis player must be able to manage. "The coaches learned practical skills in the area of concentration, team building, problem solving and shot tolerance, which they can take back to

Scott Schultz (above right), the USTA's Managing Director of Recreational Tennis, led the opening session on the importance of 10-and-Under Tennis. The USTA's Kirk Anderson led a 10-and-Under class for tennis teaching pros (above left).



Top left (left to right): D.A. Abrams, Kelly Williford, winner of the Lawrence A Miller Girls 16 Sportsmanship Award, Steve Diamond and Tim Heath.

Top right (left to right): Jeff Williams, USTA Eastern's new president, Arvelia Myers, USTA Eastern's Lifetime Achievement Award and D.A. Abrams, USTA Eastern's Executive Director.

Bottom (left to right): D.A. Abrams, Fran Osei, and Tim Heath (back row) with winners of the Arthur Ashe Art and Essay Contest.

their team and practice," said Polishook.

On Saturday, Maiysha Warren, a member of the Community Tennis Development team at the USTA, presented a workshop on public facility funding. At the same time, Kirk Anderson, Director of Recreational Coaches and Programs for the USTA, led a 10-and-Under Tennis class in the tennis bubble, teaching the pros how to teach the best game in town.

The day also featured an opening session on 10-and-Under Tennis by Scott Schultz, Managing Director of Recreational



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Tennis for the USTA. Schultz discussed the importance of reaching players when they are young, and providing them with the properly sized courts and equipment that will allow them to learn and enjoy the sport. He also spoke about the ways the USTA is investing in 10-and-Under Tennis, and shared ways that the Eastern community could promote the initiative.

"Every facet of our business, of the tennis industry, will come out ahead, if we do a great job with this," Schultz said.

The volunteer development workshop and regional and committee meetings were also held on Saturday, along with a workshop for tournament directors led by Julie Bliss. Using the online TennisLink system, Bliss taught the attendees step by step, how to get their tournaments sanctioned and listed on the USTA Eastern website.

USTA Eastern Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting was held Saturday evening in accordance with the section's bylaws. At the Annual Meeting, the State of the Section was delivered by Abrams, Tim Heath finished his term as president, and Jeff Williams was confirmed as his successor. Three new members were also welcomed to the board of directors: Andrea Jayson, Daniel Burgess and Carl Summerlin. (See box above for the new board members.)

Saturday also featured a Junior Awards Luncheon and the section's Adult Awards Dinner (see box on page 6). The juniors were recognized for sportsmanship and their appreciation of Arthur Ashe's legacy, while the adults and organizations received awards for their help in promoting and developing the growth of tennis. ●

Jim Neal

USTA Eastern Leslie J. FitzGibbon Tennis Man of the Year

AS A CHILD GROWING UP IN THE 1950s, Jim Neal of Schenectady learned a simple, but important, life lesson: Take care of what you have.

And it's that principle that has guided him as a tennis teaching professional and dedicated volunteer for more than 30 years. Whether it's maintaining the courts at Central Park in Schenectady, organizing league teams for adults or providing free clinics to local kids, Neal has worked tirelessly to preserve and grow tennis in the Northern Region of USTA Eastern.

"Anytime I need somebody to host a clinic or try to get new people into tennis, Jim is there for me," said Sue Wold, president of the Northern Region. "He never will accept payment for any of it. He really is that grassroots person who brings people into the game."



Neal's love for tennis began more than 35 years ago, when he thought the sport would be an easy alternative to resting on his day off from rugby. He soon realized that tennis was a challenge to learn, and a lifelong sport where you can always improve.

After teaching himself to play in Schenectady, he ended up taking classes and eventually becoming a high school tennis coach. In his spare time, he helped obtain athletic wheelchairs to teach tennis to people with spina bifida. He also taught kids, taking the time not just to teach them tennis, but to know their families as well. And it's his students, both in the present and the past, that remain his greatest source of pride.

"They're doctors and lawyers and they still play tennis," said Neal. "And I still see them and I still call them my kids." ●

Katrina Adams

USTA Eastern Tennis Woman of the Year

KATRINA ADAMS PLAYED PROFESSIONAL TENNIS for 12 years, winning 20 career doubles titles. She has worked as a television analyst for the Tennis Channel and executive director of the Harlem Junior Tennis and Education Program (HJTEP). And this year, she became the first African-American vice president of the USTA Board of Directors.

But ask what her greatest achievement is, and she speaks of others.

"My parents raised me to always give back, because someone before me gave something to help me get where I am today," said Adams. "Being able to put a smile on someone's face because of something that I did to help is my biggest achievement. That's making a difference in someone's life."

Adams's life in tennis began at the age of 6, when her parents taught summer school and she had to tag along with her brothers, who were attending a tennis program in a park in Chicago. The minimum age for the program was 9, so Katrina had to beg her way into the program.

In the end, she prevailed, and the rest



was history. In addition to her 20 doubles titles, she was ranked as high as No. 67 in singles and No. 8 in doubles.

"My career was satisfactory to most," said Adams. "But the fact that I was there for 12 years is an accomplishment in itself."

After leaving the pro tour, Adams decided to share her love and knowledge of the game, serving as a national coach for the USTA Tennis High Performance program, and as an analyst for Tennis Channel.

As a TV analyst, she has been able to see how the game is being played today and share what she learns with the youngsters and coaches of HJTEP. And at HJTEP, the kids not only learn to play tennis, but also develop skills to help them succeed in life.

"HJTEP gives me the satisfaction of helping youth learn a non-traditional sport, and gain the skills, both academically and athletically, to earn a college scholarship," said Adams. "I get great satisfaction when I walk in and see the kids on the court learning the sport of a lifetime." ●

A Complete Game

Gene Hill Uses Heart, Mind and Body To Excel on Court

GENE HILL OF MONTVILLE, N.J., was born without a right arm. But that has not kept the 18-year-old player from excelling on his high school tennis team.

He hits a strong one-handed backhand and tosses the ball high while serving, giving him time to finish the stroke. Most importantly, he competes with the determination of someone who has not let his disability prevent him from playing the sport he loves.

"I might do things a different way," said Hill. "But I have yet to find something I can't do."

Tennis Beginnings

Hill began his life in tennis as a child, when he would visit his grandparents in Kentucky and play on their court. He also played soccer and basketball, but tennis provided a special challenge.

"It's a very physical game and it's a very mental game as well," said Hill. "It's like playing chess with your body."

It was as a child that he developed his serve. Holding the racquet in his right armpit, he tosses the ball high with his left hand and then quickly grabs the racquet to complete the serve. "The only thing that I really had to adapt was the serve and that just came naturally," said Hill. "I can't really explain how it developed."

When he entered Eastern Christian High School four years ago, he immediately began playing on the tennis team. Then, after his freshman year, Eric Shmerlis, a tennis pro at Mountain Lakes Racquet Club, noticed Gene practicing.

"I was three courts away and I came over there," said Shmerlis. "I couldn't believe he was hitting the ball that hard."

Developing His Game

Hill stands 6 foot 3 inches tall, and has a serve that travels more than 110 miles per hour. Add to that a powerful backhand and the advantage of playing lefty, and Hill has huge potential.

During the past three years, Shmerlis has worked with Hill on his technique, making his serve more efficient and durable. At the same time, he has helped him with tactics, focusing on his

offensive positions and playing the lefty game.

The work has paid off. Last year, Hill competed for the first time at the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association's high school championships. He also played some USTA Eastern tournaments and is looking to play more in the next



'I might do things a different way,' said Hill. 'But I have yet to find something I can't do.'

few months, as he prepares for college.

"I don't see anything as a liability or deficiency," Shmerlis said. "He could become a Division I tennis player."

Hill doesn't know what others think of him. But to people with disabilities who think they can't play tennis, his message is simple.

"Something my parents told me from a very early age is that 'wholeness is not focusing on what you don't have, but putting together what you do have,'" said Hill. "That's what wholeness is." ●

SURVEY:

How Did You Learn to Play Tennis?

Robert Gamble, an education professor at D'Youville College in Buffalo, NY, is researching what factors contribute to the skill level and level of interest of tennis players in the U.S. Please take a few moments to fill out the survey on the USTA Eastern website, <http://eastern.usta.com>. The results of his research will be posted on the Eastern website later this year.

USTA Eastern Presents Annual Awards

Awards Recognize Outstanding, Juniors, Adults and Organizations

ON JANUARY 29, USTA EASTERN RECOGNIZED 23 outstanding students for their sportsmanship and their appreciation of Arthur Ashe's legacy at the section's 2011 Junior Awards Luncheon. At the Annual Awards Dinner, the section honored 26 outstanding volunteers, tennis pros, players and organizations for the range of ways they helped grow tennis in the section—from providing free tennis lessons to kids to organizing programs for players with special needs.

2010 JUNIOR AWARDS

Richard D. Lynch II Boys' and Girls' 12 Sportsmanship Award:

Sean Patrick, Sabrina Barisano

E. Hawley Van Wyck, Jr. Boys' 14 Sportsmanship Award:

Cameron Daniels

Edith Martin Girls' 14 Sportsmanship Award: **Victoria Zoha**

Lawrence A. Miller Boys' 16 Sportsmanship Award:

Jonathan Carcione

Lawrence A. Miller Girls' 16 Sportsmanship Award: **Kelly Williford**

Lt. Frederick M. Scribner, Jr. Boys' 18 Sportsmanship Award:

Winston Lin

Edith Martin Girls' 18 Sportsmanship Award: **Leighann Sahagun**

Henry Benisch Scholarship Award: **Analee Delgado**

Ron Smyth Parent Sportsmanship Award: **Stacey Mullins**

Tournament Director of the Year: **Scott Axler**

USTA Arthur Ashe Essay Contest Winner:

Girls 11-12: **Isis Gill-Reid**

USTA Eastern Arthur Ashe Essay Contest Winners:

Boys 10 and Under: **Calvin Semczuk**

Girls 10 and Under: **Jayla Speller**

Boys 11-12: **Jonathan Pesantéz**

Girls 11-12: **Isis Gill-Reid**

Boys 13-14: **Kevin Huynh**

Girls 13-14: **Lydia Nieto**

Boys 15-16: **Brian Orellana**

Girls 15-16: **Ashley Masanto**

Boys 17-18: **Alfredo Colon**

USTA Arthur Ashe Art Contest Winners:

Girls 10 & Under: **Clara Kim**

Boys 10 & Under: **Kyah Khant**

Girls 11-12: **Joshua Hidalgo**

Boys 11-12: **Joshua Ocasio**

USTA EASTERN AWARD RECIPIENTS

Lifetime Achievement Award: **Arvelia Myers**, New York, NY

Tennis Woman of the Year: **Katrina Adams**, White Plains, NY

Leslie J. FitzGibbon Tennis Man of the Year:

Jim Neal, Schenectady, NY

Tennis Family of the Year: **Thyroff Family**, Rochester, NY

Corporate Service Award: **Longines**, Weehawken, NJ

Clinician of the Year: **Billy Nealon**, Rochester, NY

Club Service Award: **Sportime-Randall's Island**, New York, NY

Collegiate Award: **Syracuse University**, Syracuse, NY

George Seewagen Award: **Mark Savage**, Wallkill, NY

Jr. Team Tennis Area League Coordinator of the Year:

Steve Abbondondelo, Hicksville, NY

League Award: **Fran Hart**, Albany, NY

Louise Cilla Award: **Diane Kohout**, Wykoff, NJ

Member Organization of the Year:

Ramapo Parks and Recreation, Ramapo, NY

Multicultural Participation Leadership Award: **Lou Reid**, New York, NY

Press Service Award: **Tennis Channel**, New York, NY

Regional Volunteer of the Year (Long Island):

Marian Morris, Atlantic Beach, NY

Regional Volunteer of the Year (Metro): **Pablo Sierra**, Brooklyn, NY

Regional Volunteer of the Year (New Jersey)

Steve Diamond, Montville, NJ

Regional Volunteer of the Year (Northern): **Tom Chin**, Latham, NY

Regional Volunteer of the Year (Southern):

Sharon Weiner, Pound Ridge, NY

Regional Volunteer of the Year (Western):

Shawna Mcfarlane, Lewiston, NY

Service to People with Disabilities Award:

Melanie Fauchet, Pittsford, NY

Special Service Award: **Martin McMahon**, Clifton Park, NY

Umpire Service Award: **Bill George**, Webster, NY

USTA Community Service Award: **Charles DeNicola**, Cranford, NJ

Virginia and Chuck Landis High School Coach of the Year:

Rich Johns, Saratoga Springs, NY ●

Two NJ Junior Programs Become USTA Certified Regional Training Centers

Two junior development programs in the Eastern section - the Centercourt Athletic Club in Chatham, NJ, and CourtSense in Bogota, NJ - have been named USTA Certified Regional Training Centers (RTCs). The two RTCs will host USTA Player Development camps for players, ages 8-12. They will also help identify talent in players as young as 6-years-old, run programs using the USTA QuickStart Tennis play format and host QuickStart tournaments for players 8 and under and 10 and under. To learn more, visit <http://eastern.usta.com>

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USTA Eastern Forms New Partnership with Copeland Coating

AS THE USTA LAUNCHES ITS NATIONWIDE 10-and-Under initiative, many tennis facilities are searching for affordable ways to create smaller courts for children. USTA Eastern has partnered with a company that has the experience and talent to help: Copeland Coating Company Inc.

For over 40 years, Copeland Coating, of Nassau, NY, has been converting tennis courts to alternate sizes for summer camps and recreation sites. Now as the new sponsor of USTA Eastern, the company is looking to help tennis facilities across the section adapt to USTA's new rules for 10-and-Under Tennis tournaments. The rules, which take effect next year, require that all USTA sanctioned tournaments for children 10 and under be played on smaller courts, geared specifically to the children's size and age.

John Copeland, president of Copeland Coating, said he is excited about the new partnership, and the opportunity to help tennis facilities meet their resurfacing, and resizing, needs. "The new rules present a challenge that we can help address, from start to finish," Copeland said. "We provide accurate budget pricing and top-notch contracting services. We can help tennis facilities creatively and economically adjust to changes in the sport."

Michelle Blake Wilson, Managing Director of Marketing and Communications for USTA Eastern, said the new partnership with Copeland will help tennis facilities across the section. "Copeland is a leading company that has worked with a wide range of tennis facilities, from high schools and universities, to tennis clubs and parks," said Blake Wilson. "We are

proud to have them as a partner and confident that they can help our facilities meet their resurfacing needs."

Copeland Coating is unique in the industry. The company, whose roots date back to 1945, both manufactures and installs court surfaces. As a one-stop shop, they are uniquely positioned to help tennis facilities looking for affordable ways to renovate their courts.

On average, a properly surfaced tennis court needs to be resurfaced every five to seven years. At Copeland, they advise you to start the process by listing your reasons for considering resurfacing. Then, find a reputable, experienced tennis-court-surfacing contractor to discuss these reasons with. The American Sports Builders Association is a good place to start, Copeland said. "Your contractor should listen to your reasons and then advise you," he said.

Copeland Coating Co. Inc. has been a member of the ASBA for over 35 years and has on its staff two "Certified Tennis Court Builders," who have passed rigorous testing by the ASBA. There are only 45 certified court building professionals across the country.

And Copeland also has something that few others can claim—a wealth of experience.

"In this economic climate, there are more and more smaller, inexperienced businesses starting to pop up—people who are trying their hand at this type of work and who haven't had to face case-by-case challenges to test their ingenuity," said Copeland. "With over 60 years of experience, Copeland will make your investment last." ●

It's Your Game! It's Your Eastern!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- April 2-4** USTA Annual Meeting
- April 30-May 1** USTA Eastern Adult Tri Level (4.0-3.5-3.0) League Championship
- June 3-5** USTA Eastern Adult Mixed Doubles League Championship
- June 17-19** USTA Eastern Jr. Team Tennis Winter Championship
- July 23 - 30** Camp A.C.E
- August 12-14** USTA Eastern Adult (2.5-3.5-4.5) League Championship
- August 19-21** USTA Eastern Adult (3.0-4.0-5.0) League Championship
- August 20-21** USTA Eastern Jr. Team Tennis Summer Championship
- September 23-25** USTA Eastern Super Senior and Senior Mixed League Championship

For more information and to register for events, visit www.eastern.usta.com.