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Summer 2012

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OFFUTT FIELD HOUSE

TENNIS IN THE MILITARY: Serving Our Country, Serving Our Sport

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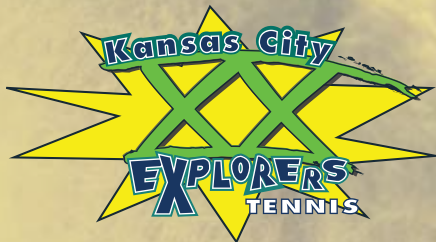
- The Serve
- Net Notes
- On the Court with Mark Platt



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July 21 vs. Orange County Breakers
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*July 27 vs. Washington Kastles
July 28 vs. New York Sportimes



2012 Home Schedule
*July 9 vs. Kansas City Explorers
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Check out events happening this summer in the USTA Missouri Valley. Use this handy pull-out calendar to stay up to date on upcoming tournaments and events.

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Gerda Pelletier has served our country and the sport of tennis for many years. Read about her story and others as we profile tennis in the military around the section.



ON THE COVER

Offutt Air Force Base, located in Bellevue, Nebraska, features several tennis programs and leagues. Tennis in the Military, the cover story, can be found on page seven.



theSERVE

with Micah
Klousia

Micah Klousia is finding success in more ways than one on the court recently. The 15-year-old from Springfield, Missouri, has been rising in the junior circuit ranks in the Missouri Valley and has performed well at several USTA National Junior Opens. In addition to that, Klousia won the Sportsmanship Award at the Winter National Open in Tucson, Arizona, last December. He took a few moments to talk with CrossCourt about displaying good sportsmanship and what motivates him as a player.

Q. How and when did you get started playing tennis?

A. My dad is a tennis teacher and was a college coach, so I have been around tennis since I was very young. I know I started hitting tennis balls before I turned three years old. My dad would roll me the balls on the ground and I would try to hit them. Really though, it was when I was old enough to go to my dad's college tennis matches, and I got to be around his team that I really became interested in competitive tennis.

Q. What's your favorite thing about playing tennis?

A. I enjoy the competition. I think tennis is great because you are on your own on the court, and so you must figure out how to solve problems on your own. That also makes tennis hard sometimes but I am very competitive and always try to find a way to win.

Q. Do you play any other sports?

A. I love to play pick-up football and basketball games with my friends. I am a die-hard Chiefs and Thunder fan.

Q. You won the Sportsmanship Award at the Winter Nationals in Tucson, in the Boys 14s division. Why do you think it's important to show good sportsmanship on the court?

A. My parents have always stressed the importance of playing tennis with good sportsmanship. They have taught me that it is important to be a good person on and off the tennis court. Sometimes, I do get frustrated on the court, but I try to keep a good attitude and just focus on the next point.

Q. What are your future goals for tennis?

A. I would love to play Division I college tennis and see where that leads me.

Q. Who is your favorite tennis player?

A. I like Juan Martin Del Potro because he has such a big game and so in some ways, I try to model my game after him.

Q. What's your favorite subject in school?

A. To be honest, it really depends on the teacher. One year I liked History best because of the teacher, this year it seems to be English, mainly because of the teacher.

Q. Tell us about a favorite tennis memory.

A. I have had a lot of good tennis memories, but one of my favorites was playing in the 14s Zonal team event last summer. It was fun being on a team and cheering for my friends in the Missouri Valley who I am usually competing against. I played some great competition and was lucky enough to win all my matches at the No. 1 position.

Q. On a normal Saturday afternoon, what are you typically doing?

A. If I am not at a tennis tournament, I would be practicing tennis and just hanging out with my friends, possibly playing football or basketball or watching a game on TV.

Net Notes

HAVE NEWS?

If you have a news items that may be worthy of inclusion in "Net Notes", e-mail crosscourt@movalley.usta.com.

News and upcoming events from around the Missouri Valley



Kara Heim, **Nebraska** tennis service representative, brought a new twist to the sport for the American Cancer Society office in Omaha. Heim gave an overview of the 10 and Under Tennis program with changes for the "younger set" getting involved with a sport that can carry-over throughout our lives. American Cancer Society staff learned about the game first hand with this lunch break demonstration.

Nick Taylor (Wichita, **Kansas**) was chosen this year to represent the United States at the 2012 BNP Paribas World Team Cup. The nation's top wheelchair tennis players will compete against participants from around the globe, May 21-27, on hard courts, hosted by Seoul, South Korea. Taylor will compete on the U.S. Quad Team during the competition.

Taylor and the Quad Team will look to bring home the quad title for the sixth time in the last nine years. The two-time Paralympic Doubles Gold Medalists' team of David Wagner and Taylor are looking to defend the U.S. quad title with singles player Bryan Barten for the third consecutive year.

Over 160 players and 52 teams from more than 25 nations are expected to participate in the 2012 event in Seoul.



Two Super Senior teams from the Missouri Valley section came away with hardware after competing at the USTA National League championships earlier this spring.

A squad from **St. Louis** (above left) finished second at the 7.0 Super Senior National Championships, held at the Surprise Tennis and Racquet Complex in Surprise, Arizona.

The 7.0 team is captained by Robert Lietz and Robert Kohlenhoefer and features Steve Faust, Kenneth Joseph Lowes, Steve Schroeder, Tom Rhoads, Michael Travers, Jerry Paul Weil, John Scowcroft and Robert Schaefer.



The 8.0 Super Senior men (above right) from Overland Park, Kansas, (**Heart of America**) also took second at their respective championship, held in Surprise, Arizona.

The team is captained by Dennis Allerheiligen and features William Cook, Jim Branine, Steven Hannett, Glen Spielbusch, Stephen Snodgrass, Larry Leonard, J Michael Maloy and George Morton.



At the Houston Clay Court Nationals, Club at Chesterfield Pro Pat Purcell (far right) captured her second national title taking the Gold ball in the Women's 55 doubles with partner Susan Wright. In singles, Pat took third place and the bronze ball with wins over the third and fourth seeds.

L-R: Houston 55 Doubles Finalists Diane Barker, Rita Rector, Susan Wright and Pat Purcell.

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2012 Summer Events in the USTA MISSOURI VALLEY

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to find the latest events in your area!

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		MAY 29 USTA National Women's 65,75,85 Indoor Championships Midtown Athletic Club Overland Park, KS	MAY 30	MAY 31	JUNE 1 Recreational Coach Workshop Plaza Tennis Center (KC, MO) BG 12-18 USTA MV Super 1 Oklahoma City Tennis Center Oklahoma City, OK	JUNE 2
JUNE 3 BG 12-18 USTA MV Super 1 (cont'd)	JUNE 4	JUNE 5	JUNE 6	JUNE 7	JUNE 8 BG12-18 USTA MV Super 2 Koch Tennis Center Omaha, NE	JUNE 9
JUNE 10 BG12-18 USTA MV Super 2 (cont'd)	JUNE 11	JUNE 12	JUNE 13	JUNE 14	JUNE 15 BG12-18 USTA MV Futures Dwight Davis Tennis Center St. Louis, MO Boys 10 and Under Spring North Individual Event Midtown Athletic Club Overland Park, KS	JUNE 16 Girls 10 and Under Spring North Individual Event Midtown Athletic Club Overland Park, KS All Stars Day Waveland Tennis Center Des Moines, IA
Jim Thorpe Games Oklahoma City, OK						
JUNE 17 BG12-18 USTA MV Futures (cont'd) All Stars Day (cont'd)	JUNE 18	JUNE 19 BG12-18 USTA MV Sweet 16 Plaza Tennis Center Kansas City, MO	JUNE 20	JUNE 21	JUNE 22	JUNE 23
JUNE 24 BG12-18 USTA MV Sweet 16 (cont'd)	JUNE 25	JUNE 26	JUNE 27	JUNE 28 US Open National Playoffs Missouri Valley Qualifying Tournament Homestead Country Club Prairie Village, KS	JUNE 29	JUNE 30 10 and Under Spring South Individual Event Westwood Tennis Center Norman, OK
SUNDAY JULY 1 US Open National Playoffs Missouri Valley Qualifying Tournament (cont'd) BG12-18 USTA MV Futures (cont'd)	MONDAY JULY 2	TUESDAY JULY 3	WEDNESDAY JULY 4	THURSDAY JULY 5	FRIDAY JULY 6 Husband and Wife National Hard Court Championships Plaza Tennis Center Kansas City, MO BG12-18 USTA MV Futures Country Club of Missouri Columbia, MO BG12-18 USTA MV Futures LaFortune Tennis Center Tulsa, OK	SATURDAY JULY 7
JULY 8 Husband and Wife National Hard Court Championships (cont'd)	JULY 9	JULY 10	JULY 11	JULY 12	JULY 13 BG12-18 USTA MV Futures Koch Family Tennis Center Omaha, NE	JULY 14

TENNIS IN THE MILITARY★

by Emily Steinwart

SERVING OUR COUNTRY, SERVING OUR SPORT



they like tennis, I like them,” said Gerda Pelletier, organizer of the ladies doubles tennis league at Offutt Air Force Base in Bellevue, Nebraska. At age 81, and despite two knee replacements, Pelletier has been running the league for the past 15 years.

A native of Frankfurt, Germany, Gerda and her husband, Willie, have called Offutt home for more than 30 years. Willie was first stationed there in 1961 before moving all over the world for the next seven years. Even though they traveled from France to the Congo to North Africa, the Pelletiers kept their house in Nebraska and moved back for good in 1968.

While teaching piano lessons in the late 1980s, Gerda saw the mothers of her students wearing cute tennis outfits when they came to pick up their children. She decided she wanted to play tennis and wear those outfits too, so she asked her daughter, Linda, an instructor on-base at the time, to start giving her lessons.

“She was always telling me that I wasn’t doing it right,” said Gerda. “But I’d say it doesn’t matter — the ball goes over the net.”

The ball continued to go over the net, and Gerda continued to play tennis. She eventually took over the league from its creator, Carol Roger, in 1998. The league had been around for about eight years before Gerda took the helm, and she has been critical to keeping it active ever since.

“I just take anybody, as long as we have eight,” Gerda said. “You name it, we’ve got it!”

All types of women play in the league, whether active service members themselves or spouses of military personnel. Gerda has even crossed gender lines, if the situation calls for it, allowing GIs to play in her ladies league when she is short on players. That’s just one example of her commitment to the game. As Gerda prepared for her second knee replacement she told her doctors that she wanted to be back on the court in five weeks. They told her she’d need 12 weeks for recovery.

“I just told the doctors, ‘Watch me,’” said Gerda. “I was back on the court in five weeks, like I said.”

The women play on Wednesday mornings — outside at a public park in Bellevue if the weather is nice, or indoors on the base in Offutt Field House if it is not.

Offutt Field House is the largest, and, according to Bill Batchelor, one of two tennis instructors on-base, the best physical fitness facility in all of the Department of Defense. The field house was originally an aircraft maintenance hanger that was converted through donations from the Omaha business community. In addition to its three tennis courts, it boasts a half-mile track, swimming pool, indoor soccer field, basketball courts, exercise equipment and aerobics rooms. The base also offers the Command Tennis Club, which runs leagues for all age and skill levels.

“The Offutt Field House is a rare jewel and something the community can be very proud of,” said Batchelor. “The military/civilian population, as well as their families and guests, can use this facility to promote physical fitness. Personally, the ability to play tennis indoors year-round and the good schools in this area influenced our decision to retire here.”

Batchelor conducts tennis lessons with all age and skill levels as well. With the exception of the summer, he is in the field house seven hours a day, four days a week, including two lessons a month with Gerda. After serving 22 years in the Air Force, Batchelor turned down an opportunity to move to the Pentagon to stay at Offutt AFB and teach tennis. Since 1993,



he has worked with all types of players — active duty, reserve, and retired, as well as those ranking from private to four-star general. Service members' families are welcome to use the facility, too, meaning Batchelor teaches everyone from age five to 80-plus, and everything in between. As for his most faithful student, Batchelor has nothing but glowing praise.

"She is a very special and active tennis advocate," said Batchelor. "The tennis leagues she has run and played in weekly for many years have blessed many people and help explain why she remains so active. I would be grateful to be half as active as she is when I reach her seniority."

Fort Riley, located near Junction City, Kansas, is home to a growing 10 and Under program that provides lessons and play opportunities for dozens of children on-base. Danny Durkee and three other Youth Services staff members began implementing the new 10 and Under rules with children from first grade to fifth grade this past fall. They also run spring and summer instructional programs for kids aged third grade to sixth grade.

Now in their fifth year of existence, these programs aim to teach the basic skills of tennis before advancing into modified games. With about one-fourth of the Junction High School team coming from Fort Riley, those high school student-athletes often help with the lessons on base and provide a positive example for the younger players. Durkee hopes that getting kids involved early will encourage a progression into high school tennis and beyond, making Fort Riley a great example of the youth pathway for tennis.

ADOPT A UNIT

The "Adopt a Unit" initiative delivers needed personal supplies to military personnel, as well as portable tennis equipment they can use for recreation and stress relief while they are deployed. The effort can help introduce service members to a recreational means for reintegrating with family, friends and community upon their return. For more information on how to get involved, visit usta.com/military.

Major Aaron J. Braxton II, an active duty Army Officer and student assigned to the Command and General Staff College in Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, became involved through the Missouri Valley Adopt-a-Unit website. MAJ Braxton has worked to create the "Action" Braxton's Tennis Camp, which will center on promoting and developing the growth of tennis, target new players and link the program with local Community Tennis Associations to include group lessons and organized play programs.

The program, set to run from June 2nd to the end of September, will allow children, youths, and adults an opportunity to solidify the proper fundamentals of tennis for future success. MAJ Braxton has centered the program on a positive atmosphere for kids and adults in the Leavenworth area.

"My program is centered on a love for the game that runs deep in my instructional foresight and curriculum as a previous NCAA Division I player," said Braxton. "I believe innovative thinking continues to springboard our youth players forward with fun and effective individual and group instruction through playing tennis."





MISSOURI VALLEY

HEARD ON COURT: JR. TEAM TENNIS

"Jr. Team Tennis is a great concept. Boys, girls and tennis are winners. The games are competitive, yet social, at the local level. It has created some lasting friendships and memories."

-Craig Sandvig, JTT Coach

"I have run Jr. Team Tennis for the past four summers. I enjoy and look forward to the Jr. Team Tennis season every year. It is rewarding to bring new people to the sport, and to see the kids mature on and off the court. It has also been a great way to meet new people locally and around the state."

-Angie Koumaris, Oklahoma City Area JTT League Coordinator/Oklahoma District Coordinator

"I got involved in Jr. Team Tennis last year because it sounded like a great opportunity for my two children. I don't coach tennis, but I play, and enjoy working with kids. It seemed like a win-win situation: The kids would have fun with tennis, experience team play and team spirit, get to play matches with a variety of players and have an overall great experience to learn and grow."

-Anne Muren, Team Coordinator/Parent

"Jr. Team Tennis is a great way for kids to play tennis in a team format. Jr. Team Tennis is co-ed, fun and emphasizes team work! Each player has the ability to advance to the section and national championships with their teammates every year!"

-Nick Hays, Youth Pathway Manager,
USTA Missouri Valley

[Q + A]

ON THE COURT WITH...

MARK PLATT



DIRECTOR, BEGINNERS WORLD TENNIS

How did you get your start in tennis?

I began my tennis career in the 1960s when I enrolled in a free tennis program in University City, Missouri. I was fortunate enough to take private lessons from Earl Buchholz, Sr., who was the premier grass roots tennis coach at that time. His son, Butch, became one of the top eight players in the world.

What made you want to teach tennis?

My love of tennis continued and in 1976 I started teaching tennis and directing the free University City tennis program. Teaching tennis is very rewarding because it gives me the ability to mentor junior players to help them further their education and realize their life's passion. To help accomplish this personal goal, I developed the Rockwood School District Tennis Program which is a middle school tennis league between all six Rockwood middle schools. This inspired me to create a Mobile Tennis Academy, which helped expand tennis to include children and young adults from the Clayton, Ladue, Parkway, Hazelwood, Mehlville and Lindbergh School Districts.



Do you have any memories as a coach that stand out for you?

One of my most memorable players that I coached was Yelena Podorozhansky. She became a nationally-ranked USTA player and because of her hard work, she received a full tennis scholarship to the University of Missouri-Kansas City's six year medical program. Sharre Smith is another young woman I currently coach and mentor. She attends Whitfield High School and is a number one seed and district champion. One of my current tennis instructors, Kelsey Brendell, started out playing pee-wee tennis with me when she was in kindergarten. She continued playing in my tennis program, Beginners

World Tennis, through high school, became a three-time state medalist and received a full tennis scholarship to college. She has been working for me for the last seven years.

You've done some work with the St. Louis University freshman orientation program, introducing tennis to young people there. Tell us a little bit about that.

For the past 10 years, as part of the freshman orientation at St. Louis University, I've operated a very successful tennis rally. The F.U.N. event (Freshman University Network) called "You've Got the Hookup" which has over 500 participants. During one freshman orientation, I noticed a small group of Chinese international students looking lost so I invited them to participate in the event and they loved it. In 2011, Sam Kelner, Intramurals and Sports Clubs Program Coordinator at St. Louis University, invited all 600 Chinese students to come to our event. In the end, 300 Chinese students attended last year and thoroughly enjoyed the tournament. Sunrise Chinese Restaurant even provided food for the event.

Why do you think it's important to use tennis to reach out to different populations?

In addition to providing tennis instruction to all age groups, I've always enjoyed being able to facilitate social networking for the greater St. Louis area with diverse groups. I have created large outreach tennis programs in over 50 gyms and tennis facilities that have created exposure and inclusion to our tennis community for all ethnic backgrounds. These programs include beginners to potential US Open champions. Currently, Alan Okanovic, who is seven years old and of Serbian heritage, is a fine example of how strong grass-roots tennis programs are to help identify and foster future champs.

What is your favorite thing about tennis?

To anyone, young or old I wholeheartedly endorse tennis! This is a sport that lasts a lifetime. It allows you to set individual goals, develop a plan to meet those goals, and give back to your community. It's also a great way to meet people and develop friendships that can last a lifetime. Many of my students have volunteered at USTA Block parties, St. Louis University F.U.N. Tennis Rallies, Rally Tennis for Cancer Care and at the Central Institute for the Deaf. So I encourage everyone to get involved.

What do you like to do when you're not on the tennis court?

When I'm not teaching tennis I love yoga, playing the drums, playing golf with my wife, Jeannie, and gourmet cooking. One of my favorite things to cook is a rack of lamb with Dijon mustard. My friends tell me I make the best Italian meatballs with stuffed mozzarella. They're delish!



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