



# HIGH FIVE

For the past three decades, *COLORADO TENNIS* (née *High Bounce* in 1977) has been bringing you profiles of local players, coaches, administrators and anyone else in the Colorado tennis community who shares their passion for the sport with others.

In each issue, we are profiling five individuals who deserve recognition for their efforts and accomplishments. As always, some you will know, while others will be fresh names and faces.

As always, we encourage readers to help us recognize others who they think deserve special recognition. Email Kurt Desautels <kurt@coloradotennis.com> with your comments or suggestions.

There are people in life who make it their mission to make a positive difference in the lives of others. One of those impressive individuals is Wayne Emerick, a founder of The Denver Urban Youth Tennis Academy, which provides under-served, inner-city children (7-19) the opportunity to receive high performance training for competitive teams. Up to 56 players are selected to receive high-level training, clothing, equipment, and scholarships to offset tournament entry fees.

Wayne's love of tennis began in upstate New York in the sixth grade, when he decided to trade his baseball bat for a tennis racquet – developing basic



photos courtesy of Wayne Emerick

Story by **KATIE NEWELL**



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tennis skills on a city park with red clay courts. It was quite the contrast from the cold, white playground where Wayne's passion for alpine skiing was also growing and thriving.

It didn't take very long for Wayne to excel at tennis, however, and he became captain of the Shaker High School Tennis Team in Latham, NY. Making the team at Dartmouth (he graduated from there and then went onto Cornell University Johnson School of Management for his MBA), Wayne was still pulled in two directions, and missed much of the tennis season as a member of the ski team. The tennis seed was firmly planted, though, and Wayne has developed a very impressive resumé.

Wayne is a USTA Tennis High Performance Coach, having been Head Coach of the USTA Albany Competition Training Center for 14 years. He was Head Men and Women's Tennis Coach at Union College in Schenectady, NY, from 2003-05 and was Head Men's Coach at Colorado College in 2008. Wayne has also spent a decade off the court, working for ESPN and Sports Software as a statistical match analyst at ATP Tour Events.

So, what drives this former USTA Eastern Coach of the Year and two-time USPTA Eastern High School Coach of the Year to invest his time in a program like The Denver Academy <[DENVERURBANYOUTHTEENNIS.org](http://DENVERURBANYOUTHTEENNIS.org)>?

"I've always felt that all kids who want to play at a competitive level should have access to high level coaching," Wayne explains. "And this program is for those kids, the ones who otherwise wouldn't have the access, the ones who want to excel, play competitively, through high school and hopefully into college."

Wayne adds that the program is a cooperative effort of Denver Parks & Recreation and City Park Racquet Club, with support from local organizations like USTA Colorado. "It's the commitment of local professionals like Tobias Ortegon, Frank Adams and Sue Burke that make this program succeed," he explains.

"The ultimate goal is to make the program self-sustaining," says Wayne who knows from past experience how to get the job done. "I am a strong believer that you have to have good players involved in order to attract strong players and grow the program." By increasing the time they can get on the court, and having access to the type of tennis professionals these young players have, that's just the type of players that will be thriving in the program for many years to come. ☺

**F**or being such a tennis tiger, Madison Gallegos just has to be one of the nicest young ladies around. Not only is she articulate and bright, but she's funny and doesn't take for granted the opportunity she's been given to play the sport she loves. She's pretty much a tennis gem – a young athlete who knows they are going to have to work hard to reach their dreams and one that is going to make friends along the way.



photo by Kurt Desautels

Story by **KATIE NEWELL**



A student at Aurora Quest Academy, Madison is among the top players in the 12s division in the six-state Intermountain Section. Her goal for this year is to be ranked No. 1. Beyond that, she'd love to become a professional and eventually teach – not high-level players, but kids just starting out – kids like she used to be when she hit her first ball at a small drill class at age 5 after trying a variety of sports including gymnastics, soccer, and even flag football.

Madison is coached by her father, Joe, a tennis player himself.

"Madison is so nice and has a great disposition," he acknowledges, "but we talk about how players like Federer can still be like that but can also be fierce competitors."

Once Madison showed signs of loving tennis and wanting to commit to it, Joe explains, "We were all hooked!" Madison's mother, Cassandra, also plays, so it's definitely a family activity that they all enjoy.

Colorado Athletic Club Monaco has also been instrumental in helping Madison develop into the competitive player she is.

"The coaches are so nice to me there," she says, "and the level of play there has helped me improve."

When asked about her favorite match this year, Madison explains that it was against her practice partner, Gloria Son.

"We played for three hours and then we decided to play a match. We played five sets that included two tie-breakers. I lost, but it was a great match!" That type of attitude combined with her work ethic of hitting everyday for 1-2 hours is why dreaming of being a professional isn't unrealistic for Madison.

Her favorite player on the pro tour is Andy Roddick, whom she met at Indian Wells during a tournament.

"I like Andy Roddick, because I just love him, and because he's a classy player," she says. "He's even nicer in person, and just so nice to the kids."

Like many of us, Madison admits that nerves can be a challenge for her but that she works it out. Her advice to young players who may want to follow in her impressive footsteps: "Always believe in your shots and don't hold back!"

That philosophy serves Madison well, as she's had good results lately, capturing both the singles and doubles championship at the Colorado Springs Junior Open. 🎾

**I**t's been a long time since Colorado high school tennis players have had to "break in" a new commissioner. So long, in fact, that many of next year's freshmen class weren't even born when Paul Angelico assumed the helm as the Tennis Commissioner at CHSAA (Colorado High School Activities Association) in 1998. But in July, Paul will step away from tennis to become CHSAA's eighth Commissioner since its inception in 1921.

Paul has presided over tennis during an era of tremendous growth. In the last dozen years, Colorado high school tennis participation has grown by more than 35%, from 5,524 in 1998 to 7,472 this school year. Girls' tennis has seen the majority of growth, from 3,230 in '98 to 4,530 in 2010, a jump of more than 40%! During this same period, only a handful of high school sports (lacrosse, soccer, cross country and spirit) have seen comparable growth.

And as the Tennis Commissioner, he has been continually challenged with a situation that most other sports don't present – by the time most tennis players begin playing with their high school teams, they have been involved in the sport at very competitive levels as individuals for quite some time. Making the transition to a team sport can be quite a challenge, for both parents and players.

"It can be a tough transition for players and parents to realize that when you play for your high school, you are now part of something bigger – a team," says Paul. "Coaches often need support to address this issue as well."

Ultimately, Paul believes that both coaches and parents can benefit from the realization that, "Tennis is not about individuals but rather about kids learning life lessons." Paul says that the reason that tennis is so special is because it is a sport where you don't have an official making the calls for you. "The kids are in charge and trained to deal with calling out-balls or foot

faults. They learn to compete while being honest, truthful, respectful and gracious."

Like golf, says Paul, tennis is about integrity.

"It fits in perfectly with our mission and core values," he says. "It teaches life skills, develops positive character and promotes sportsmanship."

Paul credits the USTA's 'No-Cut' School Tennis Team program with helping to grow tennis in Colorado's high schools. The program is designed to recognize schools who do not cut players from a tennis team, but rather create opportunity for players who have interest in playing. In Colorado, high schools are already adept at accepting any and all players who come out for the tennis team.

"That's what we (CHSAA) are all about," says Paul. "More kids representing their schools by wearing their school's name on their jersey and taking pride in that."

And it's not just that kids are out on the courts, or fields, or diamonds or in the gym representing their schools. The impact that high school sports has on our students is profound, says Paul.

"Other countries don't offer high school sports at the same level as we do in the United States. The kind of programs that are offered across the country, and in Colorado, far surpass those in other countries. Higher level programs which provide opportunity for more kids set us apart."

When Paul takes over as Commissioner on July 1, he has already said that he wants to re-double efforts to support coaches who strive to offer quality programs in their schools, as well as to continue to make strides in improving sportsmanship.

"Sports teach kids how to compete gracefully, be part of something bigger and how to succeed," he says. 🎾



photo courtesy of Paul Angelico

Story by  
**LINDA SARGENT WEGNER**



# HIGH FIVE

continued from P19

**A**n engineering executive by profession, Hai Ho has a definite plan for growing the game through diversification.

As a member of the USTA Colorado Board of Directors, Chair of its Diversity Committee, and Founder of the Colorado Asian Tennis Association, he is dedicated to familiarizing tennis to a more diverse group of players.

His tennis influence begins at home. All three of his children play tennis, including his oldest daughter who was her high school's tennis team captain for three years and has just graduated, a son who had a very satisfying high school freshman tennis experience and a 10 year-old daughter who is getting a positive start with Colorado Junoir Team Tennis leagues this summer. His wife started a couple of years ago, and together they have enjoyed the 7.0 Mixed Doubles League.

"The impact I hope to make is to create stronger participation from minority groups in the USTA Colorado programs such as leagues, tournaments and volunteerism," says Hai. "This links them to the bigger tennis community which is a good thing all by itself, but it also affects the level of play for everyone. By introducing more players to the system, the bar is raised because the quality of skill increases by playing different players."

As Chair of USTA Colorado's Diversity Committee, his main goal is to create a system for tracking and measuring the demographics of the tennis-playing population. Having this information will help USTA Colorado understand where grassroots efforts need to be focused to raise awareness about tennis and hopefully strengthen participation numbers.

In 2006, Hai founded the Colorado Asian Tennis Association to support his diversity mission. The primary activity for this organization is its annual tennis tournament, held over the July 4th weekend at the Arvada Tennis Center. Entering its fourth year, the tournament has seen participation numbers jump 20% each year, and now boasts more than 150 players. Registration is open online at [COLORADOASIAN TENNIS.com](http://COLORADOASIAN TENNIS.com) to people of all ages. The tournament is focused on fun and networking, and welcomes people of all ethnic backgrounds.

"The most inspiring thing about this tournament is the kids," says Hai. "We see new kids every year, and the kids who return to play are excited to be there and show us what they've got. The kids seem to be inspired by the tournament."

The Colorado Asian Tennis Association has done clinics for the kids in the past, but they don't have the resources to host clinics on a continuing basis. The tournament provides a place for the adults to encourage the kids and for the kids to feel good about the game.

It was Hai's suggestion that USTA Colorado become a part of the 2009 Colorado Dragon Boat Festival at Sloans Lake. The event drew more than 80,000 people last year, the biggest Asian event in the Denver area. USTA Colorado hosted clinics and play opportunities for the festival goers, and many of the guests tried tennis for the first time. By all accounts, the festival was a success and began conversations with the Asian population about what is offered in the Denver area for tennis players.

Hai hopes to continue to initiate more occasions for diversity in tennis.

"I want the minority community to feel the inclusiveness and opportunities that tennis presents."



photo courtesy of Hai Ho

**HAIHO**

Story by

**LINDA SARGENT WEGNER**

photo courtesy of Sonia Schwartz



**RALSTON VALLEY TENNIS TEAM**

Story by

**RACHEL MORLEY**

**T**he Ralston Valley High School girls' tennis team has had great success on the court in the last decade, often placing 1st or 2nd in league and regional tournament play as well as high finishes in the state high school tournament.

But, none of those accomplishments mean as much to the team as the sportsmanship awards they have won. "This year, we were voted as one of the top 5A teams for sportsmanship in Jefferson County," says Coach Kim Greason. "That speaks volumes for our program. I'd take this over a league or a state title any day."

Greason has been the head coach since 2004 and stresses more than winning and stroke technique. The team website has an "Expectations" section which reads "The foundation of our program is based on the following cornerstones: fair play, sportsmanship, citizenship, competitiveness, academics, leadership, and participation".

This approach, combined with a no-cut program, allows the girls at the Arvada school to be part of a team, build relationships and gain confidence. As a result of the program's foundations, team members can often be found giving back to the community, whether working as tennis coaches or running summer tennis camps for kids. In 2009, the team helped with the first ever Tennis For Kids day at Gates Tennis Center.

Last month, the team added another impressive award to their list as they were named the inaugural Racquets for All Girls High School Challenge winner, collecting 31 racquets for the cause. All 4A and 5A high school girls tennis teams in Colorado were asked to collect gently used tennis racquets and donate them to Racquets for All. The racquets are then assessed, refurbished as needed and given to those in need. The Ralston Valley High School girls' team was creative in collecting racquets, searching thrift shops and garage sales and asking friends, family and business partners to contribute. They reached out using Facebook and Craigslist, even receiving two brand new racquets from outside of Colorado.

The team was awarded \$200 for winning the Challenge and Coach Greason had promised the players a Starbucks party if

