



Senior Tennis Times

The 50+ tennis experience

October 2013

Volunteer with InnerCity Tennis

Volunteering at InnerCity Tennis (ICT) is fun and easy! You will join a team of 2-4 volunteers as you guide kids ages 3-11 through fitness stations, offering encouragement, and teaching tennis skills. ICT volunteers range in age from age 12 up to age 90. This is a wonderful intergenerational opportunity to make a difference in the lives of youngsters.

ICT is looking for volunteers right now! Volunteers are needed to work programs during the days on Tuesday - Fridays as well as on Saturday afternoons. The commitment is flexible - volunteer once a year or 30 times a year! Visit innercitytennis.org/volunteer to see a list of all of the opportunities available and to sign up.

For more information, contact Chris Babekuhl, Volunteer Coordinator, at 612-824-6099 or chris.babekuhl@innercitytennis.org.

Lessons cancelled

Due to high school tournaments, the lessons at Baseline for October 9, 23, and 30 are cancelled.

On the inside

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Membership renewal—it's coming in the mail soon! Please be kind to our volunteers and return promptly!

Upcoming events

Open House at White Bear Lake LTF

October 21, 2:00-4:00 PM

This is an opportunity for all STPC members to check out this Life Time Fitness club. Details page 5. Also see membership offer on page 7.

Chance to "try before you buy."

Tennis events

By Bob Busch

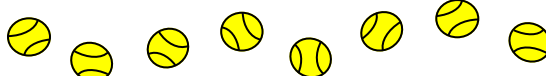


A key to a successful retirement could be having a ***purpose in life***. Studies of 1,500 men and women by the Rush University Medical Center's Alzheimer's Disease Center in Chicago show that having a purpose in life can help stave off cognitive decline and promote a healthier and longer life. **Patricia A. Boyle**, a neuropsychologist and researcher, as reported in the January 14, 2013 Wall Street Journal, indicated that those who reported having a purpose in life showed a 30% slower rate of cognitive decline and reduced the risk of Alzheimer's. Dr. Boyle defines "purpose in life" as "...the sense that your life has meaning. You're engaged in things that energize and motivate you, and that you think are important on a broader level, beyond just yourself." There are many ways to achieve this, such as volunteering at a food bank and finding ways to help others, such as volunteering for one of the great youth tennis programs offered in the Twin Cities. The first step is to think about what is important to you and gives you the sense that life is meaningful. Then develop your personal plan of action.

High School girls

The September State Tennis Coaches Rankings had Edina, Minnetonka and Rochester Mayo ranked in the top three in Class 2A and Breck, Osakis and St. James in Class 1A. Top Individuals in Class 2A were **Hayley Haakenstad**, Chanhassen, **Summer Brills**, Mounds View and **Caitlin Merzbacher**, Edina. In Class 1A the top three were **Sonya Das**, St. Paul Academy, **Patricia Zhao**, Breck and **Sunny Tang**, Breck. Caitlin Merzbacher, a junior from Edina, is the daughter of U of M women's tennis coach and former Gopher **Chuck Merzbacher**. A year ago Caitlin was a sectional doubles champion in Dublin, Ohio. She joined her father in Minnesota after he completed his first years as Gophers coach. Edina is looking for their 17th consecutive Class 2A team championship in October.

(Tennis events—continued on page 6)



Senior Tennis Players Club, Inc.

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www.seniortennismn.com

Senior Tennis Times

The Senior Tennis Times is published ten times annually by and for the members of the Senior Tennis Players Club, Inc.

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Advertising

Send by email or USPS to the newsletter editor by the 15th of the month for publication the following month. **Please send all payments to the newsletter editor.**

Ad rates (first month/additional months):

Full page (7.5x10).....\$165/135

Half page (7.5x4.9).....110/85

Half page on back cover.....125/100

Quarter page (3.7x4.9).....70/50

Eighth page (3.7x2.4).....45/30

Business card special.....30/20

Horizontal strip ads: \$55 first two inches; \$20 each additional inch. Vertical: \$75 first two inches; \$25 each additional inch.

2-line ad (members only), first three months free, then \$5/issue. Additional lines \$5/issue.

Membership information changes, newsletter delivery problems, etc., can be made by writing Senior Tennis Players Club, P.O. Box 5525, Hopkins, MN 55343 or email dsommer7@usiwireless.com.

October 2013, Vol. 26, #8

Membership total: 1264

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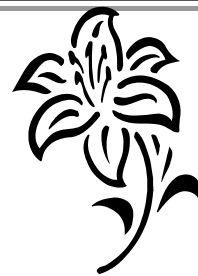


SENIOR TENNIS PLAYERS CLUB
The 50+ tennis experience

In Memory...

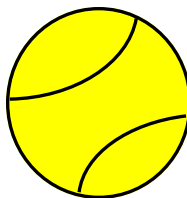
Frank Sorauf

Frank died peacefully on September 6 in his apartment, surrounded by beautiful art that he had collected and treasured.



Frank grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and received his BA and PhD in political science from the University of Wisconsin. He spent almost his entire career at the University of Minnesota. A specialist in political parties and the role of national courts, Frank wrote extensively on the separation of church and state and on campaign finance. His textbook, Political Parties in the American System, in print for fifty years, is still the standard work in the field. In recognition of his contributions, the University named him Regents Professor in 1991. In addition to his research and teaching, Frank was active in the governance of the University, serving as chair of his department from 1966 to 1969, and as Dean of the College of Liberal Arts from 1973 to 1978. Above all, Frank was a citizen of the intellectual world. He had a keen appreciation of music. He was a noted collector of southwest native American art, and several items from his collection are on display at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. His friends will miss his elegant taste, his trenchant wit, and his loyal affection. Frank was a member of Senior Tennis 1998-2010.

As a non-profit organization, the Senior Tennis Players Club gratefully accepts donations, memorials and estate gifts. Please send to Senior Tennis Players Club, P.O. Box 5525, Hopkins, MN 55343.



Mission Statement

The primary purpose of the STPC is to provide tennis playing opportunities to people 50 and older for their mental, physical, and social well-being; and to support the growth of tennis.

Newsletter Submissions

To help make the newsletter as correct as possible, please submit all items in writing only, by mail or email. The deadline is the 15th of the month for publication the following month. All material submitted for publication is subject to editing. Enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope if you want materials returned.

Send your submissions to:

David Sommer, 3657 17th Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55407.

Email: dsommer7@usiwireless.com.

Opinions expressed in articles, letters or advertisements are those of the author, and do not necessarily represent views of the newsletter editor or the Board or officers of STPC.

Mark's corner

By Mark Mudra

Senior Tennis (the 50+ Tennis Experience) now offers over 300 hours of fall indoor drills. See page 4 for a complete schedule. Now included is a map to each location.

These classes are for all levels. Cost only \$7.00 (\$4.50 for the Baseline class). All are drop-in drills—no reservations needed to attend. Each month our coaches will focus on one skill. Other strokes will be included but more time will be spent on the selected stroke/skill.

The Life Time program is looking into team tennis for STPC. They asked us to organize matches between our programs—for instance, Bloomington will play a 7 point match against White Bear Lake (4 singles, 3 doubles matches). More details to follow but if you want high quality play and lessons, the STPC/Life Time Unlimited Program may be for you.

The Life Time Bloomington program last year had 47 STPC members participate. Check it out on page 8 of this newsletter or on our web site. Last year I had several players who were 3.0 at the start of the program and by summer were playing at a 4.0 level. The ability to play/hit with better players, free hitting on the ball machine, and instructors that focus on your tennis and fitness development pays dividends to someone who really wants to improve.

Starting this year, we have a similar offer from Life Time in White Bear Lake. See page 7 for details. Also, see page 5 or the website for details of an open house at Life Time White Bear open to all STPC members Saturday, October 12, 2:00-4:00 PM. Play two hours of tennis plus refreshments for only \$7.00 at a great facility.

This month's fitness tip is eat more egg whites—nutrition facts: this protein has zero grams of fat and 4



full grams of protein, with just 2% of your recommended daily allowance of sodium. Including egg whites in your breakfast is a tremendous way to start your day! As for the yolk, try to limit your intake to no more than 6 yolks per week.

Focused skill of the month: The serve:

- Grip continental.
- Toss 1 foot in front of you, 1 foot in court.
- Toss high so that you extend racquet to meet ball at top of arc.
- Shoulder tilt.
- Point with left (non-dominant) hand to contact point.
- No spin on toss.

Any questions pertaining to any of the above please contact me: Mark Mudra—markmudra@aol.com

New InnerCity Tennis CEO

Janet Hallaway joined InnerCity Tennis Foundation from The Bridge for Youth, where she led Marketing and Community Engagement efforts. Her career includes twenty-five years in sales and marketing leadership roles with consumer products companies including NordicTrack, where Janet launched several new business ventures, delivering \$150 million in new revenue.

Active in the community, Janet served as President of The Lowry Hill Neighborhood Association. She has volunteered for Minneapolis Public Schools, the Guthrie Theater, and the Minneapolis Park Board, where she was recognized as "Volunteer of the Year."

Janet lives in Minneapolis with her husband and two children. All enjoy playing tennis at the Reed Sweatt Family Tennis Center, home to InnerCity Tennis Foundation.

Want ads

These two-liner want ads are available to all STPC members. Your ad is free for three issues. After that, there is a charge of \$5 per publication.



Time for summer/fall project? Bathroom update, kitchen, paint, tile, lighting/electrical, plumbing. High quality attention to detail. Home improvement specialist. Eric Ostergaard, 612-710-7055 ericostergaard@yahoo.com.

2 Greek homes 3BR 2.5BA near Nafplio. €770-€994/wk. MN owner Sally Howard. Details greekhomes.net.

Wanted: Garage stall or shed space for compact car, November-March. Call Jeanne 952 649-0727.

Players wanted

Mondays 10:00-11:30, Fred Wells, 3.5+ women. Need subs. Call Georgia Mroska 612-724-4909.

Tuesdays, 9:00-10:30, Reed-Sweatt, 2.5 MW. Call Donna Borgerding 612-721-7038 or 612-810-4549.

Tuesdays, 10:30-noon, Reed-Sweatt, 3.0 MW, regulars and subs needed; new players welcome. Contact Dennis Moody at 651-488-8124.

Fridays, 9:00-11:00, Fred Wells, 3.0-3.5 MW. Subs wanted for a great mixed doubles group. Contact Caryl Minnetti 952-884-5136.



Senior Tennis Players Club, Indoor Lesson Season

The 50+ Tennis Experience

www.seniortennismn.com. Revised 8/22/2013

Lessons and drills—September through April

Just drop in—all levels welcome.

Questions? Contact Mark Mudra, Director of Training:

Day	Location	Time	Instructor, Phone, Email	Cost
Mon	Reed-Sweatt Family Tennis Center . 4005 Nicollet Ave S, Minneapolis, 612-825-6844	1:30-3:00 PM	HP, 612-590-0181, hunghuyphan@gmail.com Duncan Welty 952-933-8592 ldwelty@q.com	\$7.00
	Life Time Fitness White Bear Lake . 4800 White Bear Pkwy, White Bear Lake, MN 651-426-1308.	2:00-3:30 PM	Denny Wagner, 612-578-8477 dennis8477@gmail.com	\$7.00
Tue	Life Time 98th St – only open to Life Time members. \$7.00. Instructional class (3.0 level and below) 952-830-7900.	8:00-9:00 AM	Mark Mudra 952-833-1469 markmudra@aol.com	\$7.00
	Life Time 98th St – only open to Life Time members. FREE for Unlimited Tennis Pass; \$7.00 for others. 3.5+ level players only. 952-830-7900.	9:00-10:30 AM	Mark Mudra 952-833-1469 markmudra@aol.com	\$7.00
	Public Indoor Tennis . 7833 Highway 65 N.E., Spring Lake Park, MN 55432. 763-231-3109.	1:00-2:30 PM	Mark Mudra 952-833-1469 markmudra@aol.com	\$7.00
Wed	Baseline Tennis Center , 1815 4th St SE, Mpls, 612-625-1433. No lessons Oct. 9, 23, 30. NOTE: starting 11/13/2013 time will be 9:30-11:00 AM.	Noon-1:30 PM	Mark Mudra 952-833-1469 markmudra@aol.com	\$4.50
	Williston Fitness & Sports , 14509 Minnetonka Drive, Minnetonka 952-939-8370.	5:30-7:00 PM	Duane Ryman 612-865-9517 dhrtennis40@hotmail.com	\$7.00
Thu	Reed-Sweatt Family Tennis Center . 4005 Nicollet Ave S, Minneapolis, 612-825-6844	8:30-10:00 AM	Paul Stormo 952-944-6286 pjstormo@aol.com Dilcia Pederson 612-824-6099 dilcia.pederson@innercitytennis.org	\$7.00
Fri	Life Time 98th St – only open to Life Time members. FREE for Unlimited Tennis Pass; \$7.00 for others. 3.5+ level players only.	8:00-9:30 AM	Mike Johnson or his staff	\$7.00
	Public Indoor Tennis . 7833 Highway 65 N.E., Spring Lake Park, MN 55432. 763-231-3109.	1:00-2:30 PM	Mark Mudra 952-833-1469 markmudra@aol.com	\$7.00
Sat	Life Time Fitness, White Bear Lake . Open house October 12 for all STPC members.	2:00-4:00 PM	Mark Mudra 952-833-1469 markmudra@aol.com	\$7.00

Stroke of the Month

Each month our instructors will focus on one stroke. Other strokes will be included as well, but more time will be spent on the selected stroke. See the monthly newsletter to determine what stroke is featured.

Stroke sequence:

1. The volley
2. Forehand ground stroke
3. Backhand ground stroke
4. The serve
5. Return of serve
6. Doubles play
7. Advanced doubles play
8. Singles



Senior Tennis Players Club *The 50+ Tennis Experience*

Presents Saturday afternoon tennis! You do not need to be a member of Life Time to attend.

Two hours of tennis at a great facility. All levels of players welcome. We will have courts for 4.0, 3.5, 3.0 and 2.5 players. No reservations—just show up and play.

When: Saturday October 12, 2013, 2:00-4:00 PM (please be there at 1:45 to pay and sign in).

Where: [White Bear Lake Life Time Fitness](#), 4800 White Bear Parkway, 651-292-2300

Cost: \$7.00

Format:

Hour 1—Drills: 4 Ball, Mudra Drill, Mudra with serve drill
Coach feed—Ground/approach/volley. Gopher drill

Hour 2—Rotational /Second ball doubles

Name tags and court assignments at registration

Questions? Mark Mudra, Director of Training markmudra@aol.com

●● Private Club Drills Open to STPC Members ●●

Location	Day	Cost	Time	Information
Reed-Sweatt Family Tennis Center 4005 Nicollet Ave S, Minneapolis	Tue Thu	\$12.00	9:00-10:00 AM	Call 612-825-6844 for reservation.
Williston Fitness & Sports 14509 Minnetonka Dr. Minnetonka, MN 55345	Mon	Williston member \$10, non-member \$14	Senior 2.0-2.5 Tennis Clinic 3:00-4:00, 2.0-2.5, start 9/9	Call front desk to sign up: 952-939-8370
	Wed		Senior Tennis Clinic 8:00-9:00 am, start 9/4	
	Fri		Senior Focused Play & Critique 8:00-9:00 am, start 9/6	

Annual STPC picnic

We had a couple of dozen players and diners at the free annual STPC picnic this year. Our members played hours of tennis as we celebrated the beauty of a Minnesota summer at Round Lake Park in Eden Prairie. No reservations were needed and the cost for members and spouses was \$0.00. The picnic hours were 8:30-3:30, and the club paid for the park reservation fee

and supplied tennis balls. While we ate, members told about their life away from the courts. Two couples had been married for 67 years. Next year we'll try to get it in before the State Fair.

Special thanks to board members **Dick Brandt** and **Dennis Hykes** who welcomed guests and to **Marv Schneider's** lovely wife who brought lots of food and helped us pack things up at the end of the day.

Grandparent/grandchild tournament

On an excellent day for playing tennis, the Grandparent/grandchild tournament was played at Valley View Park in Bloomington on Saturday, August 3. Although there were only eight pairs in the tourney, a good time was had by all. There were two divisions, with three teams in the top (Pro) division and five teams in the lower (Amateur) division. Each team played a set against all of the other teams in their division, and several close matches added to the fun. In the Pro division, Champions Gene Dickie and Lindsay Paskewitz won a tiebreaker over Second Place Vern Jensen and Dillon Jensen. In the Amateur division, Champions Lee Tourtelotte and grandson Luke Little won all four sets and there was a three-way tie for

second place as three teams finished with two wins and two losses. Unfortunately, we are missing some pictures, but here's what we have:



Second place in Pro division, Vern Jensen and granddaughter Dillon Jensen.



First place winner in lower division, Lee Tourtelotte and grandson Luke Little.

(Tennis events—continued from page 1)

US Open

Rafael Nadal won his 13th Grand Slam title with a 6-2, 3-6, 6-4, 6-1 victory over #1 **Novak Djokovic**. What a recovery after nursing a sore left knee for about seven months, missing the Olympics and the US Open last year and the Australian Open this year! Some of the rallies lasted more than 50 strokes! Both players sprinted from side to side to keep many long rallies alive. The 27-year-old Spaniard's total of 13 major championships ranks third in the history of men's tennis—behind only **Roger Federer's** 17 and **Pete Sampras'** 14. Nadal in 2013 is 60-3 overall with 10 titles including the French Open. This title was his 37th match against Djokovic with 22 wins and his third US Open final against Djokovic in the past four years. The big pay day for Nadal included \$3.6 million including a \$1 million bonus for his results during the North American hard-court circuit. In a rematch of last year's women's final, **Serena Williams** defeated **Victoria Azarenka** of Belarus in a tough match 7-5, 6-7(6), 6-1 for her 5th US Open Championship. She improved her 2013 record to 67-4 with nine championships. She was serving at speeds up to 126 MPH and had nine aces. Her big pay day matched that of Rafael Nadal at \$3.6 million, including \$1 million bonus for her results in the hard court circuit. Serena, who turned 32 on September 26, raised her number of Grand Slam titles to 17, the 6th most in history and only one behind Martina Navratilova and Chris Evert. **Leander Paes** won his 8th Grand Slam doubles title with **Radek Stepanek** in defeating **Alexander Peya** and **Bruno Soares** 6-1, 6-3. **Mike** and **Bob Bryan** of the USA lost in the semifinals to Paes and Stepanek 3-6, 6-3, 6-4. The Bryan brothers

had won four consecutive Grand Slam titles and 28 matches in a row since losing in the 2012 Wimbledon semifinals.

Laver loves current game

Rod Laver, the 75-year-old Australian Champion, had a brilliant career with eleven major tournament singles titles during the evolution of pro tennis from an amateur sport to the Open era. He won all four major singles titles in 1962 and 1969. Laver played other great Australian champions including **Ken Rosewall**, **Roy Emerson**, **Fred Stolle** and **John Newcombe**. He likes the modern game even though the current baseline endurance contests don't resemble the tennis he played, serving and volleying with a wood racquet. He enjoys the athleticism of champions Nadal, Djokovic, Murray and Federer and believes the current pro game is in great shape. [Info provided by Jason Gay in his Wall Street Journal article of September 9, 2013.]

Action time in a match

Tennis fans enjoy the long rallies and extended exchanges of forehands and backhands. But actually how much action is there in a tennis match? Stu Woo reported in the Wall Street Journal of September 4, 2013, that they timed two matches with a stopwatch at the US Open. Only 17.5% of the time was actually spent playing tennis. Most of the inactive time in tennis is between points and during changeovers and between sets. Tennis, however, offers more action than baseball and football. A July Wall Street Journal study found that only 10% of a three-hour baseball game was actual playing time. In 2010, another WSJ study found that NFL football averaged approximately 7% of actual playing time.

No court fees to play 5 days a week, Monday-Friday 2:00-4:00 PM

Life Time/Senior Tennis Unlimited Tennis Pass

- For \$139.95 a month you can play unlimited tennis, 2:00-4:00 PM Monday through Friday at [Life Time White Bear Lake](#). Couples membership just \$229.95.
- Program begins Monday, September 2, 2013.
- This includes a free weekly drill—Monday 2:00-3:30 PM taught by Mark Mudra, Director of Training, or his STPC/Life Time-approved USPTA-certified staff
- Free use of ball machine during the 2:00-4:00 PM time slot

This offer is only available to members of Senior Tennis Players Club.

Life Time White Bear Lake offers 10 inside courts all fall-spring season.

This Unlimited Tennis Pass includes free access to all Onyx level services offered by Life Time White Bear Lake anytime the club is open: weight room, pool, spinning, yoga, etc.

STPC members can go inactive or drop out, with only a 30 day notice.

No initiation fees to join this program.

For questions or additional
information contact:

Mark Mudra

Markmudra@aol.com

952-833-1469

Please sign up for this
program with Life Time:

Evelyn Swope

eswope@lifefitness.com

651-292-2312

Tip from a pro—preparation!

By Callee Conda, Reed-Sweatt pro

Preparation is an important factor in tennis. When we hit ground strokes, we want to make sure we are prepared, so that we can hit the ball as well as possible. One thing to assure that you are prepared is to take a split step, then to turn sideways with your legs shoulder length apart. This will allow you to have balance and produce power. Next, we want to bring our racquet straight back, making sure that the “butt” (bottom cap) of the racquet is facing outward toward your opponent. You would want to be in this position as soon as your opponent strikes the ball to be fully prepared to strike the next ball. When we are prepared for the oncoming

ball, our timing of the ball improves and we hit more balanced ground strokes!

Callee graduated from Hibbing HS and St. Scholastica College. At each, she was team captain and #1 player. At Reed-Sweatt, she teaches juniors, Women's Daytime League, and adult group lessons.





Life Time 50+ \$99 Unlimited Tennis Club

Life Time Fitness – Bloomington South is proud to partner once again with the Senior Tennis Players Club and offer a special membership with the following details:

- Full Membership to Life Time Fitness – Bloomington South (including the fitness floor, pool, spinning, yoga, tennis, etc.)
- Unlimited Tennis 7:00-9:00AM Sunday thru Friday
- Free use of ball machine during the 7-9 AM time slot
- Free Tuesday 3.5 Drill 9:00-10:30AM
- Free Friday 3.5 Drill 8:00-9:30AM

Existing Platinum-level Life Time Fitness Members can upgrade for less than \$40 a month, and receive all of the benefits listed above.

Brian Opatz bopatz@lifetimefitness.com 952 830 7905

Jeff Martin jmartin1@lifetimefitness.com 952 830 7911

2013 Team Tennis

By Marv Schneider

After many beautiful (and warm) summer days (and two rainout days), the STPC Team Tennis League completed another competitive and **fun** season on August 27, two weeks after the normal end of the season because of make-ups for rainouts. The league championship was won by a strong team captained by **Don Harnish**. Other teams in the league were captained by **Clay McCartney**, **Marv Schneider**, **Ken Landro**, and co-captains **Lois Bergerson** and **Nancy Read**.

The league was composed of five teams (four men and four women per team) who played at two court locations in the western suburbs on Tuesday mornings at 9:00 AM. Each match consisted of two sets of men's doubles played at the same time as two sets of women's doubles, all followed by four sets of mixed doubles. All sets are eight game pro sets. Most players in the league

are 3.5 NTRP.

For more information on the league for next year, you can contact any of the captains.



Team Harnish. Front: Pam Gerlach, Jo Rolling, Linda Aasen, Sheila Bjore. Back: Bob Brose, Jerry Kneisl, Steve Bruell, Don Harnish.

Review of Jimmy Connors' *The Outsider: A Memoir*

By Bill Cosgrove

Editor's note: Citations for this essay are available from bill.cosgrove@ndsu.edu, as well as information about his one-man show, "An Evening with Mark Twain: The Trouble Begins at Eight." Not to mention his origami workshops as Professor Origami.

Early on in **Jimmy Connors'** just-published memoir he reveals to us work-a-day and weekend players something that many of us have long suspected and even perhaps feared. In the opening pages he's telling about his practice schedule at age 29 when he is told that his career may have peaked and begun to decline. But since he wants to reclaim his position at the "top of the tennis world," he tells us "I've continued to work my ass off every day." The overcoming-of-adversity idea and the blunt language are indications of what's to come in the book.

At this early point in *The Outsider: A Memoir* (2013) Connors goes on to tell us what it takes to be a pro and why most of us aren't. In describing his drills designed to duplicate the shots he'll see when playing his "toughest opponents," here's what he says: "I've never hit a shot in a match that I haven't practiced over and over."

How many of us weekenders can say that? I hope I'm not being overly presumptuous to guess that many if not most of us are nowhere near that level of tennis practice. Indeed, something like the opposite may be truer for us: "There aren't all that many shots that I've ever practiced over and over," at least in the sense that pros like Connors mean "over and over." His book, in many ways, tries to tell us over and over what living a life like that means.

Connors consistently and insistently represents himself as a bit of a tough guy, a rebel, an outlaw, a kid from the wrong side of the tracks—an outsider. His language throughout the memoir, for example, is rough in places, sometimes vulgar, occasionally ugly, and intended to show the unvarnished side of an unrepentant, wise-guy rebel. So we get a certain amount of in-your-face talk, chip-on-the-shoulder attitude, me-against-the-world bravado, and lone gunslinger posturing. It all seems designed to show that, as Connors says proudly of his brother Johnny, he "can take a punch."

Connors uses a shocking incident from his youth in Chapter 2 to show the toughness of his Irish Catholic upbringing and family. On one of the tennis courts in

East St. Louis where he was brought up, his mother **Gloria** and grandfather "Pop" are attacked and beaten badly by two young thugs who have been harassing them. His grandfather is sucker punched and has his head pounded into the court surface while his mother is punched so hard in the mouth that she loses all her teeth. This incident and its aftermath show that there is little question of the toughness of the entire Connors family here and throughout the book.

That incident also, he says, "will transform me more than any other event in my life." It has "lasting psychological effects" on him and his brother because it "became something to drive me," and provided him with the "those feelings of anger and rage that bubbled up from the past." Of that traumatic beating of his mother and grandfather he says, "I took my anger and used it in my tennis." His mother "taught me how to harness these emotions," which she calls "Tiger Juices," and he refers to them regularly throughout this memoir.

From this early point on, Connor's memoir takes us in the same tough guy, rebellious way through an episodic series of chronological anecdotes, memories, and extended riffs on different people, events, and aspects of his life, ranging from family, friends, life style, and personality to, of course, tennis. His book tells how he made himself into a world champion, with the ardent and irrepressible help of his mother, in a sport for which he may not, as he readily admits, have had as many natural, God-given gifts as others.

Connors works hard to find some narrative device other than tennis itself upon which to display his growing successes in life. So we are given a good many moments of transformation, education, and lessons learned, including his successes and failures. But it always comes back to tennis. Who he plays, tournaments he wins, his rankings, and, to his credit, the big matches he loses and who beats him. And often what he learns from many of them.

Throughout much of this memoir, Connors strives to find in his accomplishments whatever knowledge of himself may be available to him, just as we all do, perhaps. In example after example he attempts to explain himself to us, and to himself, often by direct address to the reader in the manner of an amiable raconteur or familiar storyteller. Chapter 1 ends with, "Are we clear? OK, good. Now turn the page." Often he's successful, convincing, and likable in doing so. Sometimes not.

How he goes about finding and exemplifying for us
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what meaning is available to him in his experiences is often revealing. In his mother's ability to endure and persevere after being beaten in that early transformative experience, he finds his own ability to endure anything in tennis "no matter how bad my body ached." And he draws on an example from a popular movie of the time, "Road House," in which Patrick Swayze after being stabbed says, "Pain don't hurt." "I understand that," Connors says.

Like many self-professed rebels, Connors seems to consider himself a direct product of his society, a kind of inverted avatar. He understands enough about himself as a product of society to tell us that he has always explicitly sought to be what he thinks of as unique and different. When he begins using the revolutionary new steel, open throat, T2000 racket in 1964, few if any others were using it, and he asks the reader, "What is it about me, even back then, that didn't want to be like everyone else?" He asks similar rhetorical questions of us throughout the book. In a way, these sincerely sought-out questions and answers are the beginning of what he calls his "tennis education."

That education began with his mother and grandmother "Two-Mom" teaching him the basic fundamentals of racket preparation and footwork. Eventually he graduated into working with **Pancho Segura** after he won the U. S. national 16's tournament in 1967. Because Pancho admired Connors' "pride" and saw that he was "coachable," he took Connors on as a student and "nothing would ever be the same again." Segura saw his "first-serve return" and two-handed backhand as potentially the best in tennis. It's these kinds of distinctive contributions Connors made to the increasingly popular game of professional tennis in the 1960s and 70s that constitute another of the organizing principles holding the memoir together.

One explanation for the occasional vulgar, profane language here, and perhaps his tough guy posturing as well, is that Connors took his tennis education (unlike his formal school education) deadly seriously and as worth devoting his life to. He takes as his "code to live by" to be a "vicious competitor" in tennis like **Pancho Gonzales**. "No negative thoughts, no excuse...Always give 100% and I'll be happy," coach Segura tells him; and Connors tells us, "Those words stuck with me throughout my career." This book and anyone seeing him play tennis over the years can vouch for the seriousness of and dedication to his tennis career.

There are, however, what you could call competing

interests here, if not contradictions, which may reveal unacknowledged depths about him and his world. Or perhaps he does acknowledge but does not develop them because of the largely literal and factual approach he uses to recreate himself in this memoir approach to his life. But a reader may want to know more about what's inside the head and heart of Jimmy Connors.

In the second half of the book some of these competing interests surface. Connors is discussing what he calls the "tanking" of the young **Ivan Lendl** at the 1981 Masters in Madison Square Garden when Lendl deliberately loses his match against Connors so that Lendl can then play **Gene Mayer** the next day instead of **Bjorn Borg**. "Who would you rather play?" he asks logically. In justifying calling Lendl a "chicken," Connors repeats what he says and implies many times through his book about how seriously he takes tennis: "For me there's only one way to play tennis. You put yourself on the line and fight to win, always. No questions asked. No compromise."

That decisive tone fits in pretty well with the edgy, energetic emphasis on winning at any cost in the book. Earlier, in referring to a Challenge Match against **Manuel Orantes**, he says, "Winning was the only thing that mattered, and I had to do it any way I could." Whatever else one thinks at this point, a reader admires this pure and total commitment to his craft.

The competing interest here, if not flat contradiction, however, is rather stark. Connors readily admits to recognizing and embracing later in his career an obligation entirely different from always fighting to win—namely, to "entertain" the fans in the stands and watching on TV. He specifies two sources for this contradictory attitude toward tennis.

The first of these sources were the old tennis pros, his mentors for whom he had such great respect, who taught him so much about always giving 100% and never compromising. But they were also the ones, Connor claims, who taught him that tennis could also be about "entertainment" and "show." Tennis needed to attract larger crowds in those pre-open era days, and "theatrics" on court was a way of doing that—and the old timers knew and exploited that, according to Connors. The Panchos Segura and Gonzales, especially, knew what people wanted, he claims, and Connors took their attitudes to heart. As a result, he seems to explain his own antics on court by having "absorbed parts of their game and made them my own."

But it's the second attributed cause of this later attitude

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toward tennis that is most revealing, perhaps. At the Connors-Newcombe Challenge II at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas in 1975, he says, "for me, the big thrill was seeing my name in lights on the big neon Caesar's sign that loomed over the strip." Connors took that display as "proof that there was more to playing tennis than just the game itself."

For Connors, tennis "was now as much about entertainment as it was about hitting the ball down the line." His earlier tennis "code to live by" and his full-blown commitment to "always give 100%" have apparently changed. A reader may be forgiven for recalling Connors' earlier words: "For me there's only one way to play tennis. You put yourself on the line and fight to win, always. No questions asked. No compromise."

In a similar instance of these competing interests at work, Connors "tanks" a third set against **Aaron Krickstein** in the fourth round of the 1991 U. S. Open. He calls it "taking a breather," and insists, "I'm not tanking." The object in this case is to save all his waning energy for the fourth and fifth sets so as to have a chance to win the match in five. But he appears to be doing pretty much what he belabors Lendl for doing earlier—that is, to put the best spin on it, acting in his own self-interest to give himself the best chance to win tennis matches.

By the final chapter of the memoir, Connors has combined these two aims of tennis—winning and entertainment—into a new code of sorts. "I was good," he says, "at being a bad boy, a real one." People expected him to entertain them by being a bad boy on court and he obliged them, and doing so also improved his game, he says. Everybody wins.

Along with what he calls his "co-stars" (by whom I would guess he means **Ilie "Nasty" Nastase**, **Vitas Gerulaitis**, and **John McEnroe**, among others), he says, "we recognized the show we had to provide, and we understood why we were doing it." But it was something more—or less—than the pure, unadulterated tennis of his angry young manhood when he helped change the trajectory of the game.

There are some well-known, intriguing, and in some cases, controversial incidents and anecdotes that Connors confirms in his memoir. The most talked about item of scandalous revelation in the book is his very public, two-year love affair in the mid-1970s with **Chris Evert**, and its unfortunate ending. Connors refers to the problem in a single sentence by directly addressing the reader in some slightly circuitous,

euphemistic language: "Listen, an issue had arisen as a result of youthful passion and a decision had to be made as a couple."

That issue was one that Connors was quite willing to accept and live with: "I was perfectly happy to let nature take its course and accept responsibility for what was to come." Chrissie, on the other hand, had already "made up her mind," according to Connors, because "the timing was bad and too much was riding on her future." So, she was coming to LA to "take care of that 'issue,'" and was asking Connors to "handle the details."

That's about as explicit as Connors gets on that issue which prompted so much flak when the book was first published earlier this year. There seemed to be little question of what the "issue" was (generally regarded as an abortion), but Connors' revealing it (abortion or not) is more sensitively handled in the book than early reviewers reported it to be. Nevertheless, the revelation in his book of their decision, which may or may not have been the right decision, was arguably wrong.

Connors' rather public disagreements with **Andre Agassiz** are also detailed here. For Connors, Agassiz just was "never my kind of guy" because of his early "Image is Everything" shtick. Then it turned out that "the image was nothing but an act," according to Connors. Tennis gave Agassiz so much of everything, Connors believed, and he resents him for going on to "knock it in his book."

When Agassiz is given a standing ovation in the players' locker room after his last match at the 2006 Open at the end of his competitive career, Connors' explanation for not applauding him is, "Not me, not my style. I wasn't trying to deliberately disrespect him; I just didn't care about him, and he didn't affect my life in any way." Fair enough, perhaps, but it may seem a little ungracious considering that Connors had admitted two paragraphs earlier that Agassiz had "brought a lot of people to tennis, which was a good thing, since the sport needed him at that stage in its history." Personal pique seldom gets trumped by any larger considerations in Connors' judgment and treatment of people.

Among the many friends Connors includes and extols in his tennis education, Vitas Gerulaitis is perhaps his closest and fondest. And he is the source of one of the best one-liners to come out of the tennis world, or perhaps any sport world. At the 1980 WCT Tennis Invitational round-robin tournament in Salisbury, Maryland, Connors played Vitas Gerulaitis whom he

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had beaten the last 16 times they had played since 1972. When Gerulaitis played “incredible tennis” and surprisingly beat Connors 7-5, 6-2, he “managed to steal the show” at the press conference afterwards with this memorable one-liner: “Let that be a lesson to you all. Nobody beats Vitas Gerulaitis 17 times in a row.”

Jimmy Connors surely shows that he can take a punch in this book, and delivers a few good ones himself. So he has earned the right to urge his readers to heed his advice and to accept the lessons and takeaways in his book and life. Here’s his final wish for his readers:

“I just hope that if you take anything at all away from this book, it’s that it’s possible to keep doing what you love to do far beyond the age when others may be telling you to quit.”

This advice may echo the thoughts of many of us. Indeed, in his final lines he talks of a comeback at age 60 by directly addressing his readers and asking another rhetorical question we all have our own answers to: “Come on. Admit it. You’d love to see me come back ...Wouldn’t you?”

Strangely enough, on the very day of finishing this review of his book, Jimmy Connors announced that he is indeed coming back—as **Maria Sharapova’s** new

coach. Maybe we will see if the tennis world really does love another comeback by Jimmy Connors.

Editor’s Note: *The tennis world notwithstanding, Connors’ stint as Sharapova’s coach ended abruptly the day after she lost her first match at the Cincinnati Open.*

How to be a better returner

“Practice, Practice, Practice” and then “Focus, Focus, Focus”! First, practice your returns against as many different servers as you can, so come to the STPC lessons and drills. Next, learn both the low cross-court return as well as the lob return to give you an ability to “mix it up” and keep your opponents guessing as to what return to expect. The “lob return” over the net player in Senior tennis is undoubtedly one of the most effective returns a player can make, so if you don’t “own” a lob return then make it a goal to learn it. The straight ahead return is a distant third choice of a return—it is used primarily against a net player who is “asleep on the job” or to “keep them honest” in their ability to volley.

Technique: keep your backswing compact, move forward into the return, and follow through to the target. Remember, being ready before the serve will help you to “return the return”!