



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 the Fall 2009 issue, we debuted **HIGHFIVE (H5.01)**, a set of five profiles on 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, at EDITOR@COLORADOTENNIS.com with your suggestions.

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Story by
DENNIS HUSPENI

Karen Brandner knew the power of tennis from a young age. But she vividly witnessed the power of the sport to create friendships when she attended the memorial for her father Jerry Hughes, a longtime fixture on the Colorado Springs tennis scene.

"It was heart-warming to see at his memorial all the people he touched in 45 years of tennis," said Brandner, director of The Broadmoor's tennis program. "It underscored how tennis has been such a huge part of my life – growing up, (Wasson) high school, (The University of Denver) college – and all the friendships I've developed through the sport."

Brandner took over as the resort's director three years ago after work-

ing 12 years as an assistant to popular former director Dennis Ralston.

Though it can be easy to get caught up in the glitz and glamour of Colorado's top-rated resort, Brandner has continued to stay grounded by bringing tennis to area youth – especially the less fortunate ones.

In 1998, Brandner was instrumental in founding the Pikes Peak Community Tennis Association.

"It's a really rewarding program – we put racquets and balls into the hands of hundreds of kids who could not afford to play tennis," she said. "It's always important to reach out to the community, whether it is to kids or anyone less fortunate."

Though Brandner, a past president of the PPCTA, is no longer directly involved with the association, she always is looking out for its next fundraiser.

"Next year, we're going to bring back the wood racquet tournament in honor of Jack Kramer with the proceeds going to the Pikes Peak Community Tennis Association," Brandner said.

This summer, she helped organize the Broadmoor's first Rally for the Cure tennis event to raise awareness for the Susan G. Komen for the Cure Foundation: "It was fun to see women, and men, come together for a cause they are really passionate about and a sport they're passionate about. The combination was magic!"

It may sound corny to those who don't know the game, but Brandner sees it as more than a diversion.

"Tennis is kind of a microcosm of life," she said. "The structure of the match and moving on, even within the game, set, match and tournament – you work your way through the ranks. It really does develop all the skills for life: character; sportsmanship, tenacity and just that ability to stick to something." 🎾

Story by
LINDA SARGENT WEGNER

A senior at Kent Denver, 18-year-old James Martinez has



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a special appreciation for tennis. Fresh off a 4A high school number 1 doubles championship and team title, he acknowledges, "Tennis has allowed me the opportunity to meet a lot of people who have made a difference in my life. I am a student and tennis player at Kent because of the connections I made through tennis."

When James was 10 years-old, his basketball coach, Tobias Ortegon, encouraged him to play tennis. As it turns out, James' grandfather, Kelly Lovato, had taught Ortegon how to play tennis years ago in the Denver Parks and Recreation system.

James' first reaction was less than enthusiastic at the time, but he soon realized how special tennis was. With Ortegon as his skills coach all these years, and his grandfather taking on the role of mental coach, personal nutritionist and chauffer, James has had a tremendous support system.

"Tobias is like an uncle to me, and my grandfather has done so much to provide a good foundation for me," James says.

From the time he was introduced to tennis, James participated in the Denver Parks and Recreation tennis programs. He now volunteers, under the guidance of Ortegon, at the DPR tennis carnivals to work with the kids who attend and want to learn the game of tennis.

Ortegon shares, "I truly believe it takes a whole community involvement to instill the values for success

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JAMES MARTINEZ

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which (for James) started with his family, being raised by his grandparents, being involved in the tennis programs at La Alma Recreation Center and most importantly being an honor student throughout his education."

With deep understanding of his tennis path, James states, "I realize that I am where I am today because others gave their time. I want to do the same for other kids."

James future is bright. Next year he plans to attend college, although he hasn't decided where. Having made the honor roll at Kent all four years, he is hoping for an academic and athletic opportunity. ♻️



FRANK ADAMS

Story by
TOM FASANO

Frank Adams grew up more than 1,500 miles from Denver, coming into the game through the National Junior Tennis league in Philadelphia. The experience made him the man he is today.



That man is one whose passion is providing an opportunity to people who would have a hard time getting a break otherwise.

"The important thing is that everything matters," said Adams, the head teaching pro at Highlands Ranch Tennis Pavilion.

"Jack Lewis, who was the (Colorado Tennis Association) president back around 1992 or so

when I got involved, knew that I wanted to become involved as a volunteer," Adams said. "The first committee that he placed me on was the diversity committee which was brand new to the USTA and to the Intermountain Tennis Association."

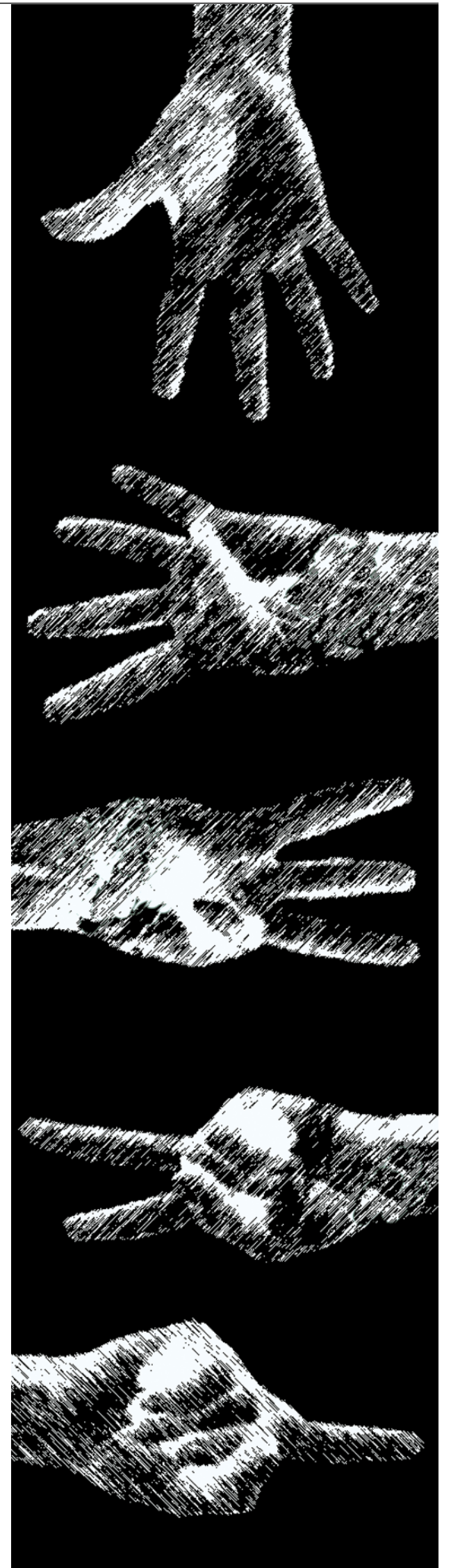
Adams said he cares about trying to include all those people who may have not had an entry into tennis in the past. "So we're talking about African American, Asian American, Hispanics and also the Native American community," Adams said. "I do feel strongly that everyone should have equal opportunities in everything."

Adams is also a wheelchair tennis coach for the Colorado Wheelchair Tennis Foundation, and a trainer for both the USTA Recreational Coaches Workshop and Recreational QuickStart Tennis Training Workshop.

"I think that's part of why I feel strongly about wheelchair tennis and Special Olympics," he said. "These are areas that may go unnoticed because, frankly, they're just not profitable. It's easier to reach out to the masses and other more lucrative events, but there are those whose numbers are really small that if someone doesn't really care about them then no one else might be motivated to make sure that they have the same opportunities I have."

It's all about fairness to Adams, who has been named a USTA Magazine Grass Roots Hero and the CWTF Pro of the Year, also earning the CTA's Arthur Ashe Award and the Intermountain Tennis Association's Volunteer of the Year among other honors.

"I was lucky enough to come into the game through the NJTL where all I did was show up at the tennis court. I never paid for a lesson as a kid," Adams said. "There was always an adult there looking to guide me. I had that easy entry, and as I traveled and I grew older, I realized that it wasn't provided for other people. I think if you're given stuff, you have a greater responsibility to return those things that you're given and try to give back. I'm lucky that USTA Colorado has been a conduit for me to help out with other programs." ♻️



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Paula Wolff knows how to get net results in more ways than one. Youth development is a huge passion for Wolff, a native of Wheaton, Ill., who has lived in Denver for 10 years.

For the last three years – half as the program director and then as executive director – Wolff has been a part of Net Results (NETRESULTSONLINE.org), a Colorado nonprofit organization started in 1993 by Prilla O’Connell that introduces tennis to kids who don’t have access to tennis and empowers those kids through tennis.

“We reach culturally diverse and low-income students, and we run after-school and summer-camp programs that both involve tennis,” Wolff said. “We also have an educational component, a tutoring

Story by
TOM FASANO

component where we do homework help, life skills, some literacy, nutrition education so that we’re helping our kids not only learn the great sport of tennis but also giving them positive role models that they need to be successful.”

Wolff, 35, said Net Results serves nearly 300 kids a year in north-east and northwest Denver.

“It’s really rewarding. Every day I’m reminded by the kids and their stories and how resilient they are in their lives,” Wolff said. “I feel blessed that I have an opportunity to impact these really amazing youth.”



The after-school program serves kids from fourth- to eighth-graders, and the summer-camp program serves kids a little bit younger as well as some kids in high school. There is no cost for the after-school program and just \$10 for the summer-camp program. Net Results survives through grant funding, individual donors, support from USTA Colorado and the Colorado Youth Tennis Foundation, and others such as the Daniels Fund, Anschutz Family Foundation and The Denver Foundation.

The elementary schools involved in Net Results are Ashley, Philips, Valdez and Florida Pitt Waller. The middle schools are Hill, Skinner, Smiley, Wheat Ridge and Cole, which is a K-8 school.

Sellah Kyambalesa, 18, of Denver is one of the success stories from Net Results. Sellah started in the program when she was 8 and is now an assistant coach at Ashley Elementary School. A graduate of East High School in 2009, Sellah plans to start college at the University of New Mexico in January and looks at Net Results as a positive program in her life.

“It inspired me for my major right now. I’m thinking of getting a bachelor’s of arts in social work because I’ve seen a lot of people benefit from programs such as Net Results and other programs like it,” Sellah said.

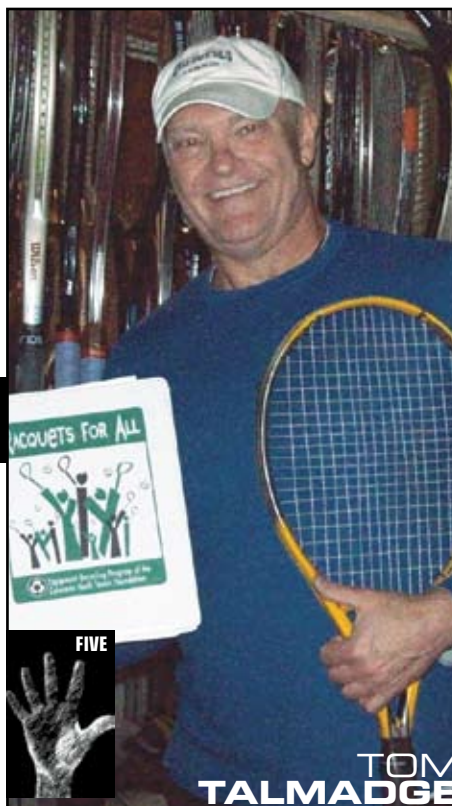
Sellah credits Wolff with keeping the program strong. “Without her, all of this probably wouldn’t be as successful as it is,” Sellah said. “She works really hard to make things possible.”



Tom Talmadge came to tennis a bit later in life than many of us. It wasn’t until his employer, the Colorado Department of Transportation, held a tennis tournament that he was exposed to it. To his surprise, Talmadge realized that not only was he quite good at it (he won the beginners division), but that it was also a great social sport. And like many others netters here in Colorado, he found that he was passionate about spreading his joy of tennis to others – especially kids. He passed down the love of the sport to his wife and their two children, and since then, hundreds of kids throughout Colorado.

Story by
KATIE NEWELL

Since retiring, Talmadge has become more involved in the sport. He currently sits on the Board of Trustees for the Colorado Youth Tennis Foundation (CYTF). In 2008, he and a few others joined David Van Liere to implement the Racquets For All program, an equipment recycling effort that collects, assesses, refurbishes and distributes tennis racquets, tennis balls and other tennis equipment to individuals and organizations lacking access throughout the state of Colorado. Talmadge personally delivers equipment to individuals and organizations in need.



“The reason I got into it was really for the kids,” he explains. “As you get older, you understand things more and you see what a great time these underprivileged kids can have on the court. You know what a great alternative it is for them.”

To date, the RFA has collected 570 racquets, and distributed 303 of them. They have grown from having three participating facilities in 2008 to 26 in 2009. After losing their storage facility, Talmadge turned in his basement into the RFA headquarters, keeping the hundreds of racquets and literally thousands of balls organized and ready for new homes.

“The intent is to focus on anyone who can’t afford tennis equipment,” he explains. And they’ve also been able to get string donations, grips, bags, and even stringers willing to donate their time.

Talmadge encourages players to donate their dusty old racquets and tennis balls to RFA. And for anyone interested in getting involved, he is actively seeking volunteers to help bring the RFA program statewide. Volunteers can help spread the word about the program, interact with tennis clubs and outdoor facilities to help collect the equipment, and help get the information into schools and sporting good companies.

For more information on the Racquets For All program, please visit COLORADOTENNIS.com.