



# HIGH FIVE

**F**or 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](mailto:kurt@coloradotennis.com)> with your comments or suggestions.

**M**ost tennis players have heard the phrase “Tennis – The Sport for a Lifetime”, but it takes a person like Brad Brehmer to make that phrase a reality.

For the past 12 years, Brad has been one of the key figures in keeping Colorado seniors involved with tennis in his role as the USTA Colorado Senior Breakfast League Coordinator. A tennis player himself, Brad not only coordinated the league, but also played in it. He and a handful of other players were part of a group that started playing in the league in 1989. Since then, the league has grown substantially, with 361 players participating in 2010.

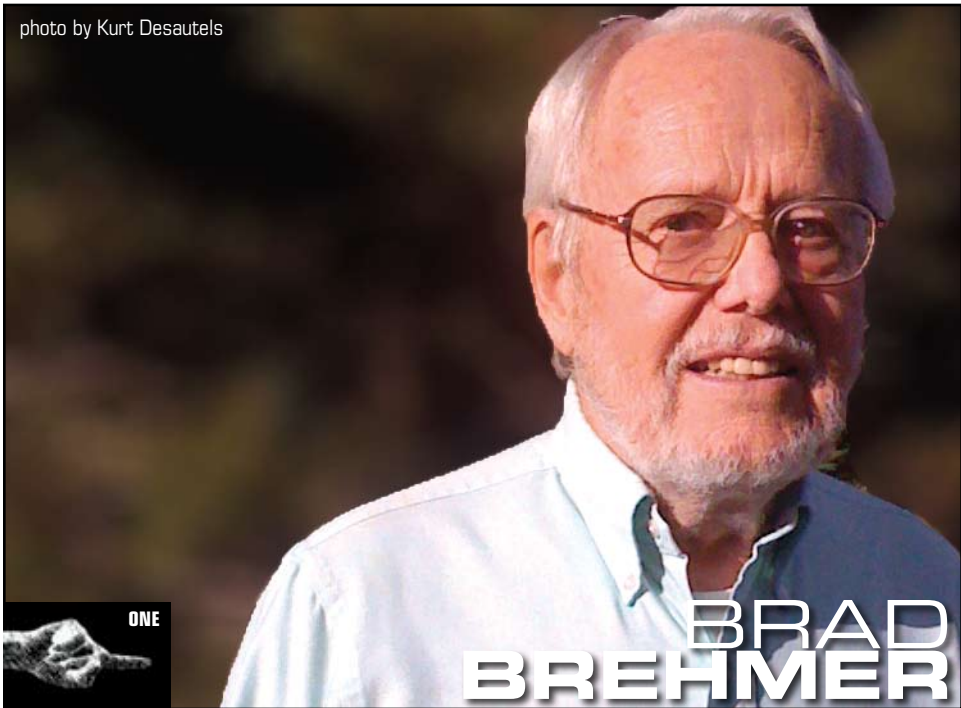


photo by Kurt Desautels

**BRAD BREHMER**

Story by **RACHEL MORLEY**

To keep the league’s turnover ratio low, new players were constantly recruited through brochures placed at tennis facilities, announcements in *COLORADO TENNIS* newspaper and letters sent to prior participants and those who expressed interest in the league. Juggling the constant recruitment, registration and scheduling – the league consists of (3) 16-week sessions each year, and hosted by Arvada Tennis Center, Gates Tennis Center, Meadow Creek and The Ranch Country Club – required a lot of attention to detail and keen planning on Brad’s part.

“Brad is as organized as they come and has ensured that those involved with the Senior Breakfast League have been part of a smooth program from start to finish,” said Fritz Garger, Executive Director of USTA Colorado.

The key to the league’s success has been the emphasis that Brad placed on the social aspect.

“Brad genuinely cares for the players and ensures that everyone has a pleasant and enjoyable experience,” said Garger.

After each match, players take part in a social time which strengthens the relationship and camaraderie among the players. Brad says “The emphasis is on fun and I believe that appeals to many seniors who may be beyond the super-competitive level of tennis.”

Unfortunately, Brad had to limit his tennis playing a few years ago and had to leave the sport as a player this year. And, like his tennis, Brad is leaving his position as the Senior Breakfast League Coordinator. While Brad’s commitment to the league and it’s players will be missed, he knows that it’s not the end of his connection with the league.

“The greatest reward from this was in establishing long term close relationships with some of the participants,” Brad said. “My wife and I cherish those friends we have discovered through tennis.”

While Brad is leaving the tennis courts behind, he will be spending more time at the bridge table. Chances are, some of those friendships formed through tennis will continue there. Further proof that tennis truly is the sport for a lifetime.

**COLORADO'S BEST-KEPT TENNIS SECRET**

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If you grow up in the Ross household, you play tennis like you breathe air. You don't know any other way of life. You talk tennis and live tennis. A multitude of trophies surround you and you are on the courts about the same time you learn to walk, with a cut-off squash racquet in your tiny hand swinging at balloons.

So began the life of Casey Ross, the youngest member of the 1999 CTA Tennis Family of the year. At only 4 days old, he was brought to the Jon Cox Tournament where his big brother

Cory was playing. Big Sister, Becky, was also a big influence to her little brother. From his family, Casey not only developed a love for tennis, but a strong respect for the game that means so much to everyone around him. At twelve, you'll find kids like Casey turning in strong tournament results, but you won't find many kids his age universally recognized as one of the great sportsman around.

Coached by his father, Randy Ross, who is the Director of Tennis at Inverness and coach of the boy's team at Kent Denver, Casey's humble attitude is matched only by his deep respect for his opponents.

"Casey is one of those kids that doesn't have to make a lot of noise to get attention," Randy explains of Casey's reputation, and his recent awards including the Boys 12s Memorial Circuit Sportsmanship Award, the ITA Summer Sectional Sportsmanship Award, the Zonal and the Boys 12s National Sportsmanship Award at the Little Rock, AR tournament. "He's always been aware of what the expectations were for getting to participate in tennis and he loves it."

When asked about his strong sportsmanship Casey humbly gives credit to his older brother who is also known for his positive court demeanor. "He's my favorite player," Casey explains. "I saw what he did on the courts and how he was to other players."

It's a remarkable feat, having two brothers recognized for their sportsmanship. Cory received the National 16s award (back in 1999), while Casey received the National 12s award this year in Little Rock (see photo with Tournament Director Jeff Brack).

Nancy Ross, Casey's mom, says both boys always approached tennis as something fun, not a duty filled with pressure and expectations. "When you are around tennis as much as we are, you know that there are going to be a lot of matches. You look at the big picture, that they can become a great competitor. You can't forget...it's their sport!"

An outstanding young man off the courts as well, sixth-grader Casey maintains excellent grades at Jeffco Montessori Peaks Academy, where he helps mentor the younger students in his mixed-aged class. He's a well rounded young man who balances tennis, guitar lessons and school with strong self-planning skills and a sense of personal responsibility.

Part of Casey's pre-match routine is to "say positive things to myself" during the warm up, which will serve him well in his quest to "win Wimbledon someday".

For a youngster who is known for being the player who always stays around and cheers on everyone else – "I just feel that it's the right thing to do" – his humility and respect for his peers may just be the thing that sets him apart from the thousands of other players pursuing that same dream. 🎾



Story by **KATIE NEWELL**



As Kent Waryan was moving onward and upward in his 35-year career in education as a biology teacher, tennis coach, school counselor, administrator, and eventually Jefferson County School District's Athletic Director, he became more and more aware that each position pulled him farther away from the interaction with kids than he was comfortable with – interaction for which he has a deep appreciation.

As the Jeffco AD, he oversaw 22 high school activities, but even that responsibility didn't come close to satisfying Kent's respective approach to kids.

"I enjoy working with kids daily and watching them develop," he says. "They are mistake-making beings but you want them to have passions. I want to be there for them – accept them when they do well and when they don't."

To balance out a career that was pulling him away from kids, Kent found an opportunity to engage with kids and more fully participate in tennis, a game he loves but didn't even begin playing until his college years. For 20 years, Kent ran the tennis program at Lakewood Country Club. He was also the Tournament Director for the 5A State Boys and Girls Tennis Tournaments for five years, recently retiring his post.

"Seeing the kids year to year was what I enjoyed the most," he said about his stint running the desk at the Colorado High School Athletics Association State Championships. "I was impressed with how they handled themselves, how they dealt with the pressure."

Further supporting his tennis habit, Kent has served as Chairman of the Tennis Committee for CHSAA and this past spring, he began teaching tennis at Gates Tennis Center. He is excited to be back and have the challenge of something new and different.

"I love playing tennis," says Kent. "This gives me occasion to play tennis and encourage kids to be active and do something positive."

His daughter even taught with him at Gates this summer and is a sophomore at University of Colorado. His son is a junior at Kansas University.

Kent is a unique man whose involvement in tennis has elevated the tennis experience for many people – kids and adults. He continues to give back to the tennis community and genuinely influences those with whom he comes in contact. 🎾

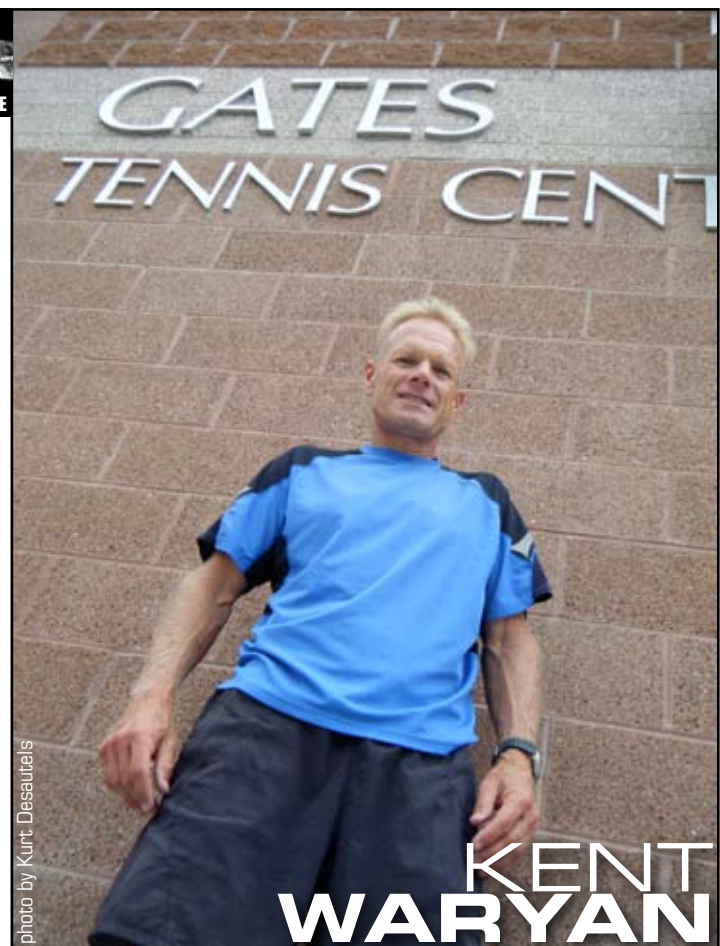


photo by Kurt Desautels

Story by  
**LINDA SARGENT WEGNER**





# HIGH FIVE

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**P**otential and children.... Children and tennis...Tennis and Miikka Keronen. Combine 'potential, children, tennis, and Miikka Keronen' and you get a tennis professional and coach who can influence a child's life. "I enjoy people, but I like all the potential that children have. Potential in whatever they choose to do," says Miikka, "On the court, I try to help them see their potential if they have skill there."

Miikka considers competing as a good tool for measuring success. "If a kid has a desire to play and a love of the game of tennis, they should start playing in tournaments to help feed that potential."

Growing up in Finland, Miikka's life involved an all-tennis focus. He didn't get to participate in many activities outside of tennis. He sees, now, kids have so many opportunities to find something they love. "I do believe that kids should find a balance with the three E's: Education, Entertainment and Exercise. That is my general philosophy."

In 1985, Miikka came over to the United States as an exchange student for a year. He returned to play college tennis at Azusa Pacific University where he met his wife. They have a 7-year-old son and 5-year-old daughter. From 1996-2007, he was a tennis pro at Boulder Country Club. Now at the Ranch Country Club as the Director of Tennis, he continues to have opportunity to give back to the sport which shaped him.

He is a Team Colorado coach and describes his experience with the program as 'it was awesome'. Joining all aspects of the game that he relishes – tennis, competing, kids and the realizing of their potential.

As the boys' and girls' tennis coach at Niwot High School for the past three years, he appreciates seeing the players find their level of commitment for tennis and how the players, who have all come from individual tennis experiences, seek to see the importance of each other as team members.

Miikka, himself, is an Open level tennis player, playing in many of the local major tournaments and enjoying the level of competition and commitment that tennis can still require from him. 🎾

Story by  
**LINDA SARGENT WEGNER**



photo courtesy of The Ranch Country Club

**MIIKKA KERONEN**



**I**f you like to meet people who love the sport of tennis, you will want to get to know Christine Casey. Once a collegiate player at Cal Poly, Christine picked up tennis as a young child and "absolutely loves the sport."

Now, a chemist for the FDA, and mother to teens Arianna and Austin, Christine is driven to give something back to the tennis.

Christine's passion for the sport inspired her to establish a QuickStart Tennis Program with the Duncan YMCA in Northwest Metro Denver. QuickStart Tennis is geared towards youth (10 and under and 8 and under) and is a fast and fun way to learn tennis- with specialized equipment, shorter court dimensions and modified scoring.

"I wanted to find a way to get the kids involved, help them succeed," Christine explains, about her desire to get the program going.

Starting with just a black top and spray painted lines – courtesy of her tennis-playing son, Austin – they hoped that

just a few kids would be attracted to the QuickStart format. But so many kids showed up, they had to split it into two teams.

Kristy Harris, Community Development Director at USTA Colorado credits Christine's analytical side for the success of the program. "Christine took the task of getting this started very seriously," she explains. "She took the classes, making sure she learned the QuickStart technique correctly. She came to us...she saw the need and filled it."

Brandon Dyatt, Sports Coordinator for Duncan YMCA, says that he is also deeply grateful for Christine's efforts. She's "wonderful, a real jokester, always laughing, messing around and having fun," he says.

That unique combination of serious and fun – plus her time and dedication – earned her the YMCA 2009 Volunteer of the Year Award (Sports Branch). It's an award she's proud of – "I actually keep it at work!" she explains.

What's next for Christine? "I just want to keep it going, get it out there!"

She's hoping to take her tennis show on the road, and would love to work with others interested in getting the program started. She says that it's possible for students to obtain community services hours for helping. 🎾



photo courtesy of Christine Casey

**CHRISTINE CASEY**

Story by  
**KATIE NEWELL**



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