

President's Letter

- By Jeremy Wintersteen

Remember May 30, 2014! On this date, the USCTA and US Court Tennis Preservation Foundation Boards both approved a comprehensive Player Development Program. Why and what is it?

American amateur international competitiveness is somewhere deep under a mineshaft in Death Valley. Whether it's juniors, women, top amateurs, or seniors, we are consistently in the back of the pack. Name the international tournament and we're in the caboose. Handicaps needed to qualify for our Top 25 list have risen in recent years, as have those of the top players on the list. Our top 25 players are also predominantly in their late 30's and 40's – too old! Other countries such as England and Australia have robust junior programs and are introducing young players to the game while we have fallen behind. Our women's game needs help and is a long way from England, which now has a woman able to qualify for the British and U.S. Opens.

The canary is still alive though! The USCTA and USCTPF Boards have launched an ambitious, long-term, and four pronged player development effort. Juniors, elite juniors, top amateurs, women are the program's focus areas. Many thanks go out to Eleuthera and Temple Grassi who have generously supported this initiative through the Thornedged Foundation.

You will be hearing more about different aspects of this Player Development Program. This issue of Chase the First highlights a promising junior who has been identified and sponsored for a number of lessons. He's played in a tournament, is hooked, and now wants to continue what he's started! The Bathurst Academy, which focuses on top amateurs, has recently announced our Bathurst Cup team and we wish them well as they prepare for their trip to Australia. The Elite Junior Committee has assembled a master list of juniors and will soon be picking players to represent the U.S. in a combined Van Alen & Clothier Cup competition (also in Australia).

The Player Development Program is one of the USCTA's top priorities. It is collaboration between the USCTA and the USCTPF and we could not do this without the generous partnership with the Preservation Foundation. If you would like to learn more about the program or how you can help, please contact me or your USCTA Club Representative or Alternate. This program is an investment and requires significant resources so please contact Jane Lippincott, Treasurer of the Preservation Foundation, if you would like to make a tax-deductible contribution.

Thank you to everyone who attended and supported the Annual Dinner and Auction. This year's proceeds were designated for efforts to build a new court in Charleston and the auction broke all records. Charleston Court Tennis momentum is building and the auction helped them surpass the million-dollar mark. Charleston is our best chance at a new court in the U.S. so I hope you'll do all you can to support their efforts. Please visit their website (charlestoncourttennis.com) for more information.

As you read this, the Patriots and Seahawks are squaring off, as are tennis players in five different Level Championships in Philadelphia, Newport, Tuxedo, Washington, and Chicago. The Tuxedo Gold Racquet is taking place in mid February and the U.S. Open will be held in Boston from February 18-27. Good luck everyone and play well!