

Tennis Center Grows with Brotherly Love



By Jeff Ramage
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Glendale — Tennis has always been a bond for the Paley brothers.

But what started out as a hobby growing up in Bayside soon led to state recognition at Nicolet High School and success at the collegiate level. These days, the three brothers are using their tennis expertise to mold younger players — and word of their abilities has made it past the North Shore, throughout the country and overseas to Europe.

All three brothers were top tennis players in high school and college, but while other siblings fight for attention, the Paleys were quick to point out each other's abilities. For the Paleys, there was never any other option than to teach the game they love in the community they grew up in. Bob, the middle son, manages the books and operations while Jimmy and Andy handle the coaching side of the business.

Working together

“For us, there would be no other way to go about a business,” Andy said. “We all have our strong points, and we put our strong points together to make the club work.”

After launching the Paley Tennis Center in Glendale in 2007, the three brothers decided four years ago to start an overnight youth tennis camp, which is starting to attract top tennis talent from around the world. They recently hired athletic trainer Steve Becker and mental performance coach Rainer Meiterjahn, both of whom have trained professional basketball players and will soon be training high school age tennis prodigies.

The fact that a mental coach is being brought in to talk to high school kids should signal that this is not a run-of-the-mill tennis camp.

“We were hearing from players asking about ways they can keep confident, stay calm and control their emotions in the heat of battle,” Jimmy said.

Reaching the world

This year, the camp will bring in two players from the Netherland and 12 players from Spain — considered by some to be the tennis capital of the world. The camp also attracts three Spanish tennis coaches, allowing an international exchange in tennis teaching techniques.

“They were able to learn about the strategic game that's required on indoor hard courts, and they were able to teach us about the fitness level required for longer points on red clay courts,” said Jimmy Paley, the oldest of the brothers.

Jimmy, who played for the University of Minnesota and played on the Pro Tour, has coached top tennis players such as Billy Bertha, who played number 1 singles at University of Wisconsin-Madison; Caitlyn Burke, who was a four-time Wisconsin girls high school state singles champ; and Rajeev Ram, who currently competes on the Pro tour.

Jimmy molded all of those players at a young age, so it satisfies him to see them shine on the national stage. He is currently coaching Qavia Lopez, who won an age 12-and-under tournament as an eight-year-old, and her sister Adla, who won a 10-and-under tournament at five years old.

“I don't wait until they're number one in the country and then ask to work with them,” he said. “My enjoyment and satisfaction comes from knowing I was involved from the moment they picked up a racquet, knowing I helped that child believe in themselves, motivating them and propelling them to the next level.”

No cookie cutter

Andy, who played on the Pro-Tour after college, led the University School girls tennis team to state championships in 2011 and 2012. He also coaches Mequon's Ali Pollack, who won the Division 2 state championship at the age of 13.

“It's not a cookie cutter type business. It's almost like an art form because you have to customize your teaching skills to each student,” he said. “What will work for one student might not work for another — so you have to find the little details that do work and how to communicate with the person.”

Despite all the success they've had as players and coaches, the Paleys emphasize they never would have gotten to where they are today if it wasn't for their strength as a family. The bond between the three brothers and their interest in tennis was always supported and encouraged by their parents, Phil and Dorene Paley.

“We had parents that believed in us and supported us,” Jimmy said. “Without their support and time, we couldn't have traveled to all of those tennis tournaments, and we never would have gone after our dreams play tennis. Everything starts with them.”

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