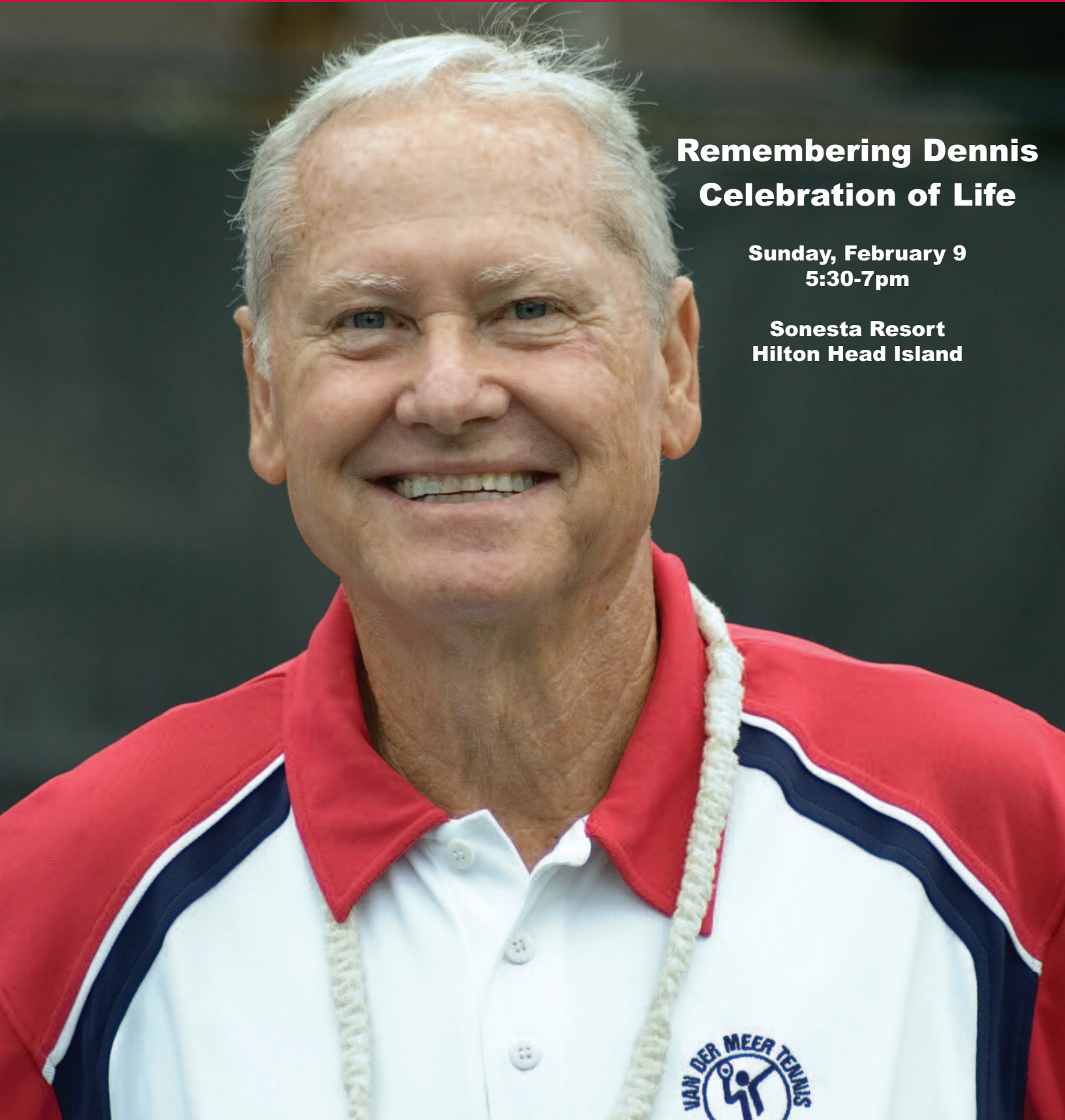


# TennisPro®

The International Magazine for PTR Tennis Teachers and Coaches



September 2019



## Remembering Dennis Celebration of Life

Sunday, February 9  
5:30-7pm

Sonesta Resort  
Hilton Head Island



For those of you who knew Dennis, we hope this will take you on a journey of remembrance, especially of all the good times you had with him. For those of you who did not have the good fortune to have met him, we hope these pages will give you a glimpse into the genius that was Dennis Van der Meer.

You'll read several articles reprinted from TennisPro, as well as some of the thousands of letters and social media posts we received after the announcement of his passing on July 27. With the Internet teeming with trolls, it is a testament to Dennis that every single post we read is kind, gracious and highly positive!

Dennis was a maverick who created a better way to teach tennis - his Standard Method - and bucked the system and politics of the time by founding PTR. When he couldn't find educational materials for tennis coaches, he wrote - or filmed - them. Dennis attracted the best sports scientists, including Dr. Ben Kibler, Dr. Jim Loehr and Dr. Howard Brody, to study the game and impart their findings.

Above all Dennis was the greatest coach who believed in sharing knowledge and spreading his love for the game. He could diagnose and correct technical aspects of strokes to help players reach their full potential. Ahead of his time, Dennis created GLM, the graduated length method, using smaller racquets and foam balls to teach children. Long before anyone else, he designed Mini Tennis and Munchkin Tennis. His 10 Minute Warm Up is still used today, and he was an early advocate for wheelchair tennis and Special Olympics tennis.

From his humble beginnings to his vision for PTR, the largest international organization of tennis teachers and coaches, Dennis will live on through all of us.



# PTR Hall of Fame



Dennis Van der Meer is the inaugural inductee into the PTR Hall of Fame. Fittingly, the induction ceremony took place on Stadium Court of the Van der Meer Shipyard Resort during the Parade of National Flag Ceremony of the PTR International Tennis Symposium. With his beloved wife, Pat, by his side, Dennis was also surrounded with dear friends and his PTR Family. Lifelong friend, Dr. Jim Loehr, served as Master of Ceremony, and the commemorative marble plaque was presented by Luciano Botti.

Dennis touched countless lives through his Standard Method of Teaching, World Class Academy, TennisUniversity and as founder of PTR. The boy who grew up traveling through African villages with missionary parents became a coach so renowned that Billie Jean King, Margaret Court, Amanda Coetzer sought his expertise. As an innovator in the field of tennis education, Dennis believed in sharing knowledge.

During the early stages of PTR, known then as USPTR, Dennis found that only limited educational materials existed for tennis teaching professionals. So, he set about to provide a series of handbooks and manuals by assembling the finest educators to write on the areas of expertise. To compliment the vast collection of written materials, Dennis produced a large number of videos. Since the mid-1970s, hundreds of thousands have learned to teach tennis in ways developed by Dennis Van der Meer.

Known for his uncanny ability to remember the name of everyone he met, his name will live on in our hearts and the PTR Hall of Fame.



How do you describe the greatest tennis teacher ever to walk the earth?

First and foremost, Dennis was an educator. Dennis not only knew what to teach, but how to teach it. He wrote for many worldwide publications, including Tennis Magazine, and spoke at every tennis conference that existed, always staying to network and learn from other coaches. I never met a person more dedicated and passionate about the sport than Dennis Van der Meer. Passionate teachers inspire their students, and nobody had more passion for teaching tennis than Dennis.

He was a leader, who fought for what he believed was right. He wasn't much for tennis politics or the people who tried to control the sport.

Like Billie Jean King and Arthur Ashe, Dennis was ahead of his time.

Dennis believed in diversity and enthusiastically embraced the PTR ACE program, when I proposed it to him. We formed a partnership with the ATA that would lead to thousands of coaches of color becoming educated and certified to teach tennis.

A champion for the less fortunate, Dennis worked with Brad Parks to publish one of the first instructional manuals on teaching wheelchair tennis. Dennis and Pat also held a very special place in their hearts for Special Olympics.


Dennis was a pioneer. He had the courage to create what is now the largest global organization of tennis coaches. PTR is not just an organization. It is a FAMILY whose founder set the stage for PTR members around the world to . . . Make a World of Difference.

Dan Santorum  
CEO

If ever there were a life to be CELEBRATED and not mourned, it would be that of

# DENNIS VAN DER MEER

whose impact on tennis was more far reaching than anyone in the history of the game.



*From the United States to around the globe, almost anyone playing or coaching tennis can trace their roots to Dennis.*

ATED





## The USPTR - Van der Meer's

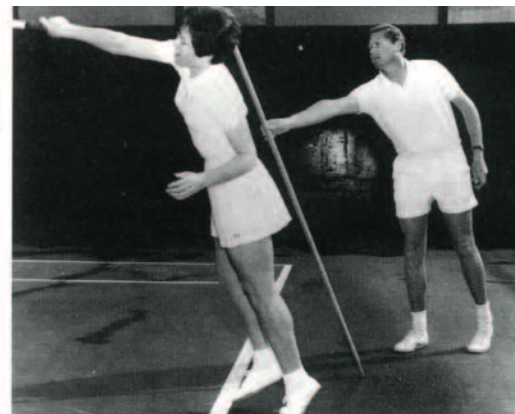
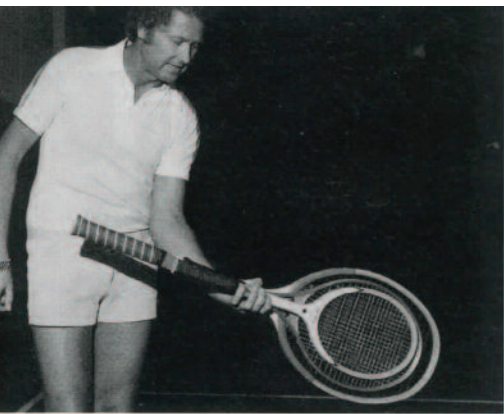
Long before the USPTR was even a consideration, Dennis Van der Meer was a little boy growing up in the remote African villages of what is now Namibia. His missionary father moved the family along dusty roads from little town to little town following his calling to preach. It was during this time that a calling of a different kind was beginning to develop in the younger Van der Meer. To keep her son occupied in the isolated villages, Dennis' mother developed a game that they could play together no matter where his father took them. She would string up a rope between two sticks and draw lines in the dirt, simulating a tennis court. For entertainment, they would hit a ball back and forth over the string. Dennis learned quickly to control the ball in order to avoid the long runs to retrieve it. Those mock tennis courts, primitive in every way, laid the initial groundwork for what was to become an unparalleled career in tennis.

The Van der Meer family moved to South Africa, where Dennis went on to play competitive tennis and swiftly moved up the ranks to become one of the country's premier young players. But, at age 19, Dennis' budding career stalled. He hit an emotional wall and lost all confidence in his match play ability. In an attempt to help Dennis progress past this difficult period, his mentor and coach, Jaroslav Houba, who had emigrated to South Africa from Czechoslovakia, encouraged Dennis to coach with him. Jaroslav felt that if he could temporarily redirect Dennis' focus away from himself, it would help Dennis find a way to regain the confidence to compete. After six months, Dennis was cured, but his focus had changed permanently. Little did Jaroslav realize at the time, he was redirecting Dennis' entire future and ours.

Dennis relished teaching tennis. He became well known in Johannesburg, not only for his teaching talents, but also for his ability to recall every participant's name regardless of class size. Even in clinics with over 100 students, Dennis knew each and every player by name. *The San Francisco Examiner* took notice, finding this unusual young teacher with the steel trap mind interesting enough to publish an article about him. They even invited him to participate in a large clinic there. In 1960, he was invited back to California to continue working as a teaching pro. His infectious enthusiasm for teaching tennis incited a large Van der Meer following. Dennis developed many national talents and had the good fortune to coach Margaret Court and Billie Jean King during her celebrated Battle of the Sexes with Bobby Riggs. The popularity of these media-hyped matches further contributed to Dennis' popularity and renown.

By the early '70s, Dennis and Billie Jean had developed a great friendship. The duo teamed together and launched a series of tennis camps. They advertised for teaching professionals to work for them in their Lake Tahoe, Nevada, facility. It didn't take long before they discovered that every one of the pros they hired had his or her own individual way of teaching. To eradicate the confusion for students attending the camps, Dennis and Billie Jean provided their pros with a method of teaching that would standardize their teaching techniques. Greatly influenced by the biomechanist Stanley Plagenhoef, Dennis studied his work diligently. He and Billie Jean incorporated some of Plagenhoef's methods, took bits and pieces of the best of what others, including Coach Jim Verdieck, taught them along the way, included ideas that were instilled in them from their own teachers and coaches, added a lot of innovation and much refining to create their own approach to teaching tennis. Their novel teaching procedure was very successful, perhaps too successful. Word got out and club owners began to pilfer the reeducated teaching pros away from Lake Tahoe.

# Vision



To remedy the problem of losing their instructors to other clubs, Dennis and Billie Jean devised a plan. Since it seemed they would lose the pros anyway after giving them the knowledge of the standardized method of teaching; rather than train the pros for free only to watch them flee, why not profit from teaching them? TennisUniversity was born; started as a training ground to develop top notch tennis teaching professionals. As a USPTA member, Dennis and his TennisUniversity educated the tennis teachers and prepared them for USPTA certification. A large number of USPTA members were certified in this fashion. Then the USPTA decided to increase its own revenues and it developed a teaching academy. Dennis was certain that as a private entity, he could do a much better job of teaching and did not concern himself much with his new found bureaucratic competition. But when the USPTA later stipulated that to gain their certification, a pro had to go through their school, this had a direct impact on TennisUniversity.

Upset, but undaunted, Dennis set out in search of another certifying agency for those trained at TennisUniversity. When he discovered that none existed, he founded the United States Professional Tennis Registry. Many nations around the world had heard of Van der Meer and his standard method and wanted to have their tennis teaching professionals trained in this exciting, new way. That spurred his decision to make USPTR certification inclusive to members in countries outside the United States, making it the first international tennis teaching organization.

The USPTR was founded and grew through TennisUniversity. Its humble beginnings were a shoebox that held the names of the USPTR certified pros. It evolved to its 1999 standing of more than 10,300 members in 123 countries. When he developed the USPTR as a certifying agency, Dennis did not intend that it too compete with his TennisUniversity, but it happened. With worldwide demand, Dennis could not be everywhere and everyone could not feasibly attend TennisUniversity. USPTR members can prepare for USPTR certification by attending a weekend workshop conducted by USPTR clinicians. USPTR workshops are held worldwide, affording more teaching pros the opportunity for certification.

During USPTR's development stages, Dennis found that only limited educational materials existed for tennis teaching professionals. So, he set about to provide a series of handbooks and manuals by assembling the finest educators to write on their areas of expertise. He called on Dr. Jim Loehr for materials on the mental side of the game, on Coach Jim Verdick to create a tennis team coaching book, on Dr. Howard Brody to write about the physics of tennis, on Dr. Ben Kibler to author books about sports medicine, on Brad Parks to inform students about wheelchair tennis teaching techniques, and on many others to contribute. In doing so, the USPTR compiled the finest collection of tennis teaching manuals and handbooks available anywhere in the world. To compliment the vast collection of written materials, he produced a large number of teaching videos. That library, available to members through the USPTR Pro Shop, continues to grow, adding new titles regularly.

Over the years, the USPTR has blossomed, always open to new ideas and extending member benefits. The staff genuinely wants to be of service to all of its members and assists in any way possible. With the advent of the International Tennis Symposium, the USPTR established the leading tennis symposium in the industry. Professional development courses, offered worldwide, help members to go beyond the essentials of teaching tennis. Through corporate sponsors like, HEAD racquets, Reebok shoes, Kaelin apparel, Gamma strings, Playmate ball machines and Dunlop balls, members are able to buy the best equipment in the world at a fraction of the cost. Liability insurance and group medical coverage are important available options. The USPTR web site, [www.usptr.org](http://www.usptr.org), keeps members abreast of what is going on with the organization. *TennisPro/Pro-Tennis* magazine makes every effort to be informative and provide articles that will enlighten tennis teaching professionals. And, with USPTR membership, the founder, Dennis Van der Meer is only a phone call away. (Van der Meer Tennis Center 843-785-8388.)

Since the mid-seventies, literally hundreds of thousands have learned the standard method developed by Dennis Van der Meer. There are very few tennis teaching professionals today, regardless of certification, who do not use some aspect of Dennis' teaching technique. His career in tennis started with his mother drawing lines in the dirt. The opportunities and challenges that presented themselves throughout his life gave him direction. Circumstances spurred a vision. We have reaped the rewards of Van der Meer's vision.

# DENNIS VAN DER MEER

Emmigrated to the United States

Head Pro at Berkeley Tennis Club

1961



US State Department Citation for Furthering International Relations in the Middle East

1965



International Tennis Hall of Fame Education Merit Award

USLTA Outstanding Educator Award

1969



USPTR Changed to PTR

2002



University of Greenwich, England bestowed Honorary Doctorate for his contributions to sports science and tennis education

2004

Celebrated PTR's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

2001

ITF Service to the Game Award

1999



Named Faculty Emeritus for USTA Tennis Teachers Conference

2005

Inducted into the Southern Tennis Hall of Fame

1998



Inaugural Inductee into the TIA Hall of Fame

2008

US Olympic Committee Developmental Coach of the Year

1997



# MEER



Founder & President of  
Van der Meer TennisUniversity

Coached Margaret Court &  
Billie Jean King in the  
Battle of the Sexes against  
Bobby Riggs

Founder &  
President of  
USPTR

Founder & Board  
Chair of PTR  
Foundation

Moved his tennis  
operation to  
Hilton Head Island, SC

1973

1976

1978

1979



Inducted into the  
USTA NorCal  
Hall of Fame

Inducted into USTA  
South Carolina  
Hall of Fame



Named #1 Tennis Teacher  
in the World by  
*Diversion Magazine*

Started PTR International  
Master Professionals with 6 Key  
International Tennis Directors

1993

1987

1980



Inaugural Inductee into  
the PTR Hall of Fame



Inducted into the  
USPTA Hall of Fame

PTR Hall of Fame  
Named in  
Dennis' Honor

2013

2015

2020

# The Standard Method

by Dennis Van der Meer

Reprinted from *TennisPro* January/February 2001



In the new millennium, it is appropriate to reevaluate the Standard Method to keep it current with the newest innovations in the development of the game over the past 25 years.

What has not changed? **Instant Tennis, an addendum to the Standard Method, has withstood the test of time. There is still no other way to learn the basic strokes more quickly!** In five-minute sections, almost any raw beginner can learn to rally simple forehands, rally a one-handed or two-handed backhand, play a forehand and a backhand volley, play an easy overhead smash, serve half court with the correct grip and receive a serve. By using a graduated length grip on the racquet, an abbreviated swing and a broken-rhythm serve, those teachers who use Instant Tennis have almost 100% success in getting their students playing on the court in record time - albeit only short court initially. With these fundamentals in place, every player can develop sound, elongated strokes as they move farther away from the net.

In the past, new players would see the most accomplished players make a shoulder and hip turn on the forehand, take the racquet back in a loop, transfer the weight onto the front foot and the swing toward the intended direction of the ball, extending the racquet toward the target. However, the way today's game is played has added a new dilemma.

Here is the problem. Racquets have become much lighter, making it easier to use the wrist and swing the racquet faster. The grip is shifting toward a semi-western grip which makes the contact point farther in front than a regular stroke with a "shake hands" grip. Because the contact point is so far in the front of the body, there is no longer an incentive to pivot with the shoulders and hips. The result is that players start to face the net and swat at the ball with a wristy downward punch of the racquet, trying to look just like a Spaniard topspin artist. Unfortunately, the results are very unpredictable. **The Standard Method solution is to continue emphasizing a hip and pronounced shoulder turn to avoid hitting the ball while facing the net.**

The next forehand problem is the incredible racquet head speed generated by the professional players. They readily leave the ground during the hit and roll the wrist over so that the thumb is pointing toward the ground. Few players can use this technique successfully. **The Standard Method solution is to encourage a reliable topspin shot by having the last part of the backswing lower, and then on the forward swing, finish much faster upward and have the follow through finish with the knuckles of the hand near the left ear.** The player is encouraged to pivot, then either to stay put on the right foot, or to step in onto the left foot and then allow the right foot to step through during the follow through. Because players are using a greater forward extension, those players who step in on the left foot may find that they will have to take an extra step onto the right foot to accommodate the greater extension forward as the hip and shoulder come around and the right shoulder faces

the net. To facilitate this greater extension, it is not unusual for the right leg to come through as well at the end of the hit.

The professional two-handed backhand drive is becoming more stabilized as more players are using an eastern grip on the left hand. **The Standard Method approach to teach the two-handed backhand by having the player first hitting left-handed with a choked up grip and a follow through with the knuckles touching the right ear. Once the player has control over the left hand, the right hand is placed below the left hand and the stroke finishes the same way.**

Swing volleys are becoming very common among pro players. **The Standard Method approach is that the stroke is quite easily teachable off a slow ball, but that the basic volley is essential for most volleys.**

Half volleys are being played much more aggressively than before. **The Standard Method approach is that the half volley can be played with topspin with the racquet touching the ear on the follow through.** The pro's racquet technique of rolling the wrist over toward the ground is considered too unreliable for regular people.

Pete Sampras' dunk jump shot smash is a fine flashy shot. **The Standard Method approach is that there should be a sideways turn of the body for an overhead.** One reason is that when you don't turn sideways, it is easy to lose your balance and fall backwards, hitting your head on the court!

All the footwork innovations of side stepping or running around the backhand, crossover recovery steps, approach shot techniques off the left or right foot are complementary to the already accepted Standard Method. The Standard Method Carioca Step is one easy way to teach the backhand approach footwork, but other footwork patterns are quite acceptable.

**The Standard Method serve progressions is still the way to learn a sound serve on which the player can build speed and spin.**

**The Standard Method in the new millennium will continue to be the most successful teaching method in the world and will stay in the forefront of innovations in stroke production technique development, reacting appropriately to stay current with the growth of the game.**

For 20 years, Dennis and Pat have been true friends of Special Olympics Tennis and words cannot express our deepest gratitude.

Dennis was the true visionary of tennis training and knew the life-impact tennis would make on anyone who picked up a racquet. Tennis is a sport for all, but he knew the greatest impact would be on the athlete with special needs. As we celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the Special Olympics National Championships presented by PTR, we fondly remember how closely Dennis watched as the athletes' self-esteem grew as a new skill was mastered or the athletes' smiles as they won their first medal. Dennis always made the athletes' day when he stepped on the court with his boundless enthusiasm and energy. He drilled them as hard as any drill class, and always remembered each by name.

You will ever be in all our hearts with love and thankfulness.

**Nancy Hoekstra**

*Special Olympics International  
Sports Resource Team Chair*

That was a deep stab in my heart that bleeds without a break. Dennis was so much in this world. For me, above all, he was a great friend and a wonderful person who can not be replaced. He remains forever in my memories.

**Richard Schönborn**

Langenhagen, Germany



Arvind Aravindhan  
@arv212

Follow

RIP Dennis Van Der Meer.

You have inspired me since I first met you in 1984 in HH as a young player on the circuit. Thanks for all that you have done for our sport. #respectforever

I am blessed because these past years I have been able to hear and glimpse Dennis' teachings on a regular basis. My videos of his presentations have provided me with a constant source of guidance, mentorship and critical thinking necessary to project love and enjoyment to my students. Dennis lives forever in our hearts, minds, bodies and souls.

**Ernie Quarles & Family**

Mitchellville, MD





On behalf of PTR members and devotees, thank you for your stirring tribute to our PTR founder and tennis teaching pioneer. He indeed made a world of difference.

Dennis was revolutionary, as tennis was absent a universal foundational teaching language until he recognized and remedied its absence by creating our organization, its principles, and programs. We are all the beneficiaries of his foresight and inspiration.

**Everett Sherman**

Bronx, NY

He loved people and used tennis as vehicle to bring people together and lift the human spirit.

I was fortunate to know him and be taught by him.

**Doug Goulding**

Paterson, NJ

I have studied Dennis' coaching methods since the late 90s in Australia, and it has helped me to be a better coach. I have always thought very highly of him, and so have so many pros I have worked with. I have great respect for Dennis and PTR.

**Miles Bentley**

Palo Alto, CA



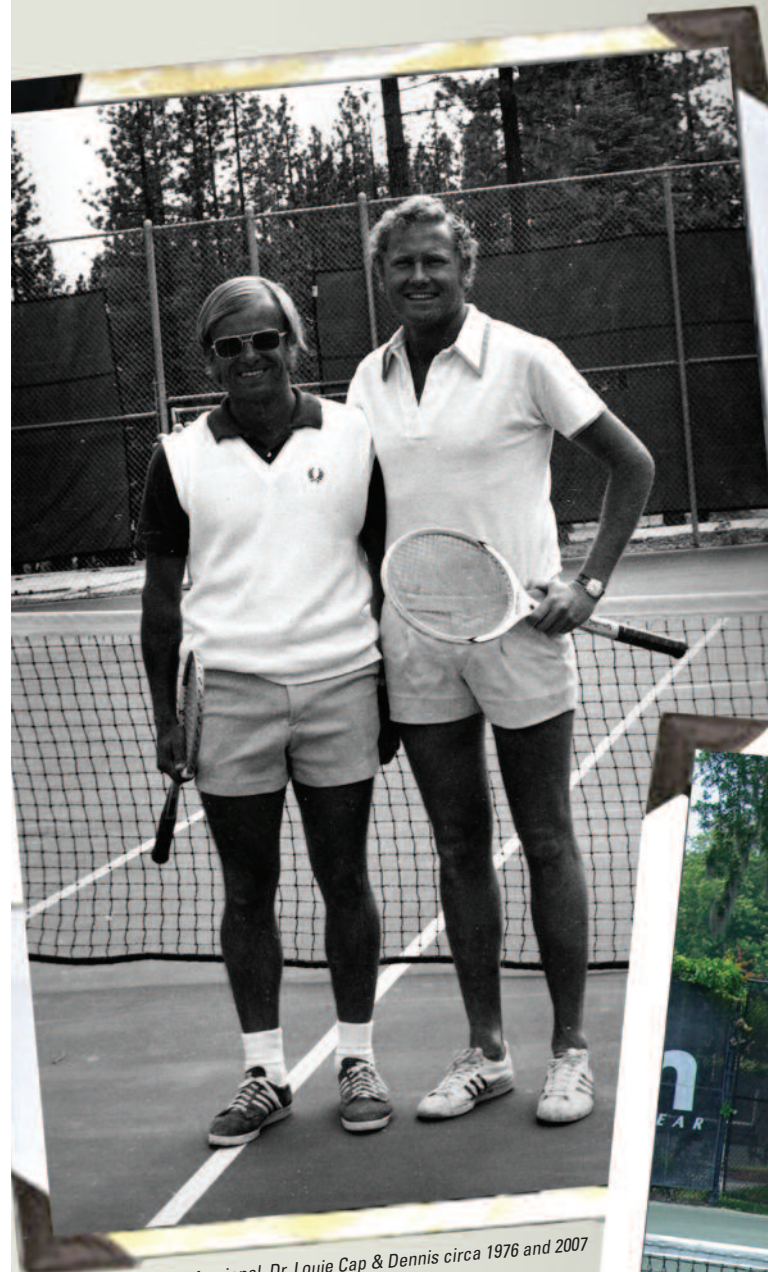
**Todd Miller**

July 28 · 🌐

My deepest heartfelt condolences to Pat Van der Meer. Simply put, Dennis Van der Meer was the greatest ever! There's no one I respected more than Dennis! I owe my career to him! Inspirational innovator, Dennis was an absolute genius! His impact on hundreds of thousands of teaching pros from around the world and indirectly millions of players, will never be equalled! The tennis world owes Dennis Van der Meer a huge debt of gratitude! One of the nicest, most generous human beings ever! This is a huge loss for the entire tennis world, particularly for everyone who was fortunate enough to personally know Dennis! My thoughts are also with everyone (staff & family) at the PTR! The enormous legacy of Dennis Van der Meer will live on forever!

An Interview with  
PTR Founder & President,  
**Dennis  
Van der Meer**

Recently Myles Williams, PTR Director of Education, interviewed Dennis Van der Meer to discover how changes in the game have influenced teaching and coaching over the years. Myles wanted to know how PTR's method of instruction weathered changes and what the future might hold for the career tennis professional.



*PTR Master Professional, Dr. Louie Cap & Dennis circa 1976 and 2007*



**MW:** Have you seen an improvement in teaching and coaching over the years? What do you consider to be the most important qualities needed to be a successful tennis teaching professional or tennis director?

**DVdM:** There's been an incredible improvement in the overall level of teaching pros over the past 30 years. Players push the pros to develop their skills, because they want to receive up-to-the-minute relevant information from knowledgeable coaches. Prior to the 70's, it was difficult for fledgling tennis teachers to find a source of practical information to help them day to day. In 1971, Skip Hartman, with Eve Kraft and John Conroy from the USTA, inaugurated the Tennis Teachers' Conference during the US Open. I was a member of the staff, along with top college coaches like Clarence Mabry. This was the start of sharing information from experts on a large scale. We took it a step further through the TennisUniversity course manual, which became the first of PTR's instructional series of books and supplements. The USTA has really helped present additional sport science components very well, both on line and through coaching education courses.

I look for a good personality, organizational skills, and the ability to communicate knowledge enthusiastically when I hire tennis pros. A solid level of play is important, as well as demonstration ability. To be a tennis director you also need excellent leadership skills, maturity and responsibility. Fiscal understanding and accountability are other keys to being successful at the director level. You need to be able to put yourself in the owners' shoes. The transition from mainly teaching on court to a responsible management position is easier when you try to gain as much knowledge as possible beforehand. Hopefully you'll find a mentor in this transition.

**MW:** Were there any individuals in your early teaching days who inspired you or provided a motivation to make tennis instruction and coaching your lifelong pursuit?

**DVdM:** Like so many others, my mother was my first coach. My parents were missionaries in Namibia, and my mother first strung up a rope between two sticks in the Kalahari Desert so we could play tennis. No backstops meant I had to learn consistency quickly or I would be chasing balls. I fell in love with this sport, and when my family moved to South Africa, I became a tournament player. In a Davis Cup trial I ran into a problem - I choked on a critical point and lost my opportunity. My coach at the time suggested I help him teach for a while, which ended up changing my life. I have never looked back. My friend, Russell Seymour, and I traveled all over Southern Africa teaching at various schools. When I was invited to do a clinic in America, I jumped at the chance. Tom Stow at the Berkeley Tennis Club became a mentor to me. Much of what I've accomplished is a result of the sound base I received as a young pro working under Tom Stow in California. He taught me how to simplify my lessons.

**MW:** What were your primary thoughts when you first envisioned the formation of a "standard" method of instruction? And why did you see a necessity to provide professionals with some teaching guidelines?

**DVdM:** Shortly after the Battle of the Sexes match, Billie Jean King and I were launching Tennis America, a huge project that mass-marketed tennis camps all over the country. We wanted to make tennis affordable and easy to learn in a fun and fast way. However, when the coaches we hired started to work for us, we ran into troubles. Our students got confused from court to court, because of the tremendous variation in teaching philosophies. They literally would have to start all over again, because the instructors disagreed about technique and teaching method. We decided we needed commonalities in our teaching to make it simpler for our students. There are literally hundreds of ways to teach tennis, many of which work well, but we saw that our pupils became overwhelmed and discouraged by too many choices in a myriad of instructions. At that time, there was very little help in terms of organized education for fledgling teachers and there was a tennis boom. A systematic approach was needed to make learning tennis simple, especially for the novice, and teachers needed guidelines to ensure professionalism in delivering quality lessons in a friendly environment.

**MW:** What are some of the major changes you have noticed over the years in how tennis is played? How have these changes impacted tennis teachers and coaches?

*(continued next page)*

## An Interview with PTR Founder and President, Dennis Van der Meer

**DVdM:** A combination of space-age equipment and vastly improved fitness levels has produced an enormous amount of power available to many more players. Shots that used to be winners are now part of routine rallies. Speed and movement training have allowed players to get in position to put balls back in play that they couldn't get to before. The general level of junior and circuit tournament play is truly amazing.

Tennis coaches sometimes are so enamored with various touring pros' techniques that they try to apply their model to novice or young players who lack the fitness and strength levels needed. Touring pros excite and motivate our students, and it's important that we study them carefully. It takes a lot of experience, however, to know when and how to employ their stroke production. Orthopedic doctors have many patients due to inappropriate technique encouraged by overzealous, short-sighted pros or parents. Digital video analysis has helped us examine and understand the pros' good and problematic techniques. Thank goodness for Roger Federer! Having a role model like him really helps our job. He's obviously extremely successful, and should have a long and relatively injury free career.

**MW:** Some early critics of PTR suggested that the teaching method you developed was too rigid and that players would end up "playing and looking the same". How do you respond today to that criticism?

**DVdM:** It's always strange for me to hear that comment, since the Standard Method™ is based on commonalities (basic fundamentals) instead of individual styles, PTR students end up much more individualized in their strokes. Many famed coaches produce students who look the same, because the coaches have fallen in love with a distinct style. Our philosophy is: make sure you get a solid base, then develop your own style according to your temperament, physical attributes, etc.

We wanted the Standard Method to be one for the ages, forming the base for creative, educated coaches to add to and adjust as needed with students. Judging by the number of federations that have integrated the basic TennisUniversity I curriculum into their programs and materials, we have been extremely successful.

**MW:** Another criticism is that the method primarily targets beginning tennis players. Is there applicability of the technique to intermediate and advanced players?

**DVdM:** I like this "criticism". It is a method meant to allow beginners to learn the basic strokes quickly in a group setting. This allows a critical mass of competent players to form around the world.

We have been applying the lesson format of progressions and lots of student interaction to advanced students for many years in Van der Meer Academy and camps. For instance, Coach Jim Verdieck's simple progressions on return of serve give tour level players the ability to return well.

I have always looked at what players are doing at the Orange Bowl and various Grand Slam events to see what needs to be added or adapted for our progressions. When I was working with several top touring pros, I simplified the swing volley into progressions, and to this day use these progressions in my teaching. Similarly, the Swedish put-away shot has become a staple of our advanced coaching progressions. Over the years, I've traveled the world giving Advanced TennisUniversities, seminars and courses showing simple ways to teach advanced strokes and tactics. Many of our Master Pros have worked closely with me in these courses. They have the knowledge and understanding of how to teach advanced strokes in an organized sequence of progressions, with lots of action in group situations.

**MW:** You coached through the period of time that the two-handed backhand became a major part of today's game. What was this "evolution" in the game like for the teaching professional and coach?

**DVdM:** My motto is that you try every innovation that players come up with, and see whether it works or not. If it's something that can be helpful, without injury potential, I look at how to adapt it for my students when appropriate. When popular touring pros like Bjorn Borg, Jimmy Connors, Chris Evert and Andre Agassi had tremendous success with this stroke, many students wished to learn it.

We all realized that the two-handed backhand could be a powerful weapon. As a coach, I integrated it into my lessons after analyzing its strengths and drawbacks, as well as the various adaptations of the stroke. We added it to our TennisUniversity curriculum, and began exploring how to test it through PTR progressions. This was a relatively simple additional choice to the one-hander, which still remained valuable and necessary for most slice shots.

Another example of studying player trends and adapting it is the serve; Pat Rafter and Andy Roddick's short motion caused a lot of interest. We asked our sports medicine experts to look at the backswing for commonalities and possible problems. Dr. Ben Kibler and others agreed that the short swing is fine, as long as you turn enough to avoid injury. (Rafter didn't, Roddick does.)

**MW:** Do you think that a lot of teaching professionals become specialists? In other words, some are good at coaching professional players, others more skilled at working with juniors, and some are more skilled at teaching beginning players, etc.?

**DVdM:** Certainly many teaching pros have a passion for one area of their work that can evolve into a specialty. Our profession has many avenues which afford satisfying jobs in various arenas. It's important for new pros to get experience in many areas, so they can make a good decision about which parts of the profession suit their skills, and where they can realistically advance. Personally, I love every aspect of teaching on court, and derive as much satisfaction and happiness from teaching beginners as I do watching our top players win Grand Slam titles. Maybe even more, because I know a beginner taught well will become a lifelong tennis lover; the Wimbledon champ is already hooked!

My advice is to enjoy and be competent in as many areas as possible, which will make you more versatile and thus, more valuable to your club owner. As you move up the ladder, you will understand the challenges of each department, and eventually will be able to manage a team of teaching pros.

**MW:** Over the years, various countries have taken the lead in having players at the top of the professional game, only to lose their grip at the top a few years later. What do you think has been the reason for this? How do you feel the U.S. is currently fairing in the development of top competitors?

**DVdM:** The United States will always be a major tennis country. We have great facilities, athletes and coaches. Sometimes we think that life is too easy for our players and they get distracted from striving for excellence. Less abundantly comfortable countries, like Russia and China, are where many top performers are coming from these days; the players see tennis as a way to wealth and a different way of life. They are willing to



work really, really hard in order to achieve this. More of our players have to be equally willing to put in the effort required to reach the top of the game, and stay there awhile. If we give them a good solid base, and help them develop strong character, hopefully they'll have a love of competing that will bring more U.S. players through the critical teenage years to the top of the game. Having successful role models is very important for any country. Look at the effect in their countries of players like Laver, Vilas, Borg, Noah, Santana, etc. Sania Mizra has had a big effect in India lately. And the Williams sisters certainly have brought tennis to the attention of multicultural America. The whole world loves Roger Federer; what better role model is there?

Europe, particularly Spain and France, has been providing lots of opportunities for young competitors in the way of circuit and prize money tournaments. I feel we could do more in this

department; if each of our USTA districts would run a challenger, we'd have 50 challengers right off the bat, to be supplemented by other localized events. I remember doing a TennisUniversity in Spain, where a participant told me he was playing in two tournaments simultaneously. I realized then why the Spanish had so many good competitors. Competitive opportunities are abundant, close in proximity, and not costly. We should provide as many similar opportunities as possible for Americans, and let the cream rise to the top. Tough competitors develop through lots of competition.

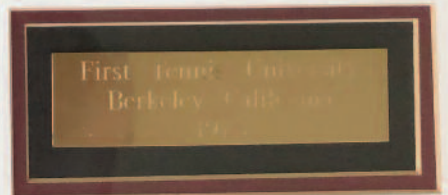
**MW:** There has been talk about allowing coaches to coach players during matches. Do you think this would be good for the game? What other innovations do you like?

**DvM:** We are always looking for ways to improve the excitement of the game for spectators. In my opinion, on court coaching of a player has added great interest. The WTA rules for on court coaching are quite strict, and this innovation has been well received by fans. The jury's still out, but so far so good.

The instant replay/challenge innovation is terrific - for fans, players and officials. Since I first watched it in Miami last year, it has gained momentum so much that I wish it could be used in all events.

The super-tiebreaker instead of a third set brings added excitement to doubles, while helping with time restrictions for tournaments. I think it has helped us get more doubles on television too. I've supported the Tennis Channel since its inception, which is another great addition for us tennis fanatics!

## Inaugural TennisUniversity 1973



I learned a lot from Dennis about how to teach, but also how to deal with people in general. I'll never forget his accent, it still rings in my ears, or watching him hold 20 balls in one hand, or going down a line of 20 students asking their name and then remembering each one from that moment on. Without Dennis and the building blocks I received through PTR, I would not have achieved the goals that I have.

**Kenneth Goodall**  
Carl Junction, MO



What an amazing life, he truly was an icon and affected so many lives and tennis for the better.

**Pam Austin**  
Pacific Palisades, CA



**Scott Mitchell**  
@scottmitch10s

Follow

An amazing person, Dennis Van der Meer has left us today. He changed the world of tennis and impacted and changed the lives of so many. He will be deeply missed as so many, including myself would not be where they are if it wasn't for him. Brilliant man!

Dennis gave me my start in 1971, when he hired me as a counselor at his Tennis America camp in Lake Tahoe. Tennis has been my life and I owe much of the success I've had to Dennis and his teaching methods.

**Gordon Kent**  
New York, NY



As a teacher and mentor, I am what I am because of Dennis and PTR.

**John Antonas**  
Nassau, Bahamas

Dennis was a true pioneer of our sport and a dedicated teacher who cared, he will be missed yet always remembered.

**Raj Bonifacius**  
Reykjavik, Iceland



So uplifting to know that with passion, hard work, and a generous heart, one can change the world through the many who come after. Let us all celebrate Dennis for his life.

**Larry Hubbard**  
Forest, VA

We will all remember his legacy with joy.

**Judy Levering**  
Hilton Head Island, SC

**Timothy Russell**  
@ITACEO

Follow

Dennis was a great friend of @ITA\_Tennis and #collegetennis. A life well lived.

I have great respect for what Dennis has done. He had a great impact on the teaching side of the game and of course with the founding of PTR.

**Stan Smith**  
Hilton Head Island, SC



Carol Shaw MacLennan is with Pat Van der Meer.  
July 30 · 🧑🏻‍🤝‍🧑🏻

The tennis world lost a true legend on Saturday. Dennis Van der Meer was a mentor to so many, many coaches worldwide. I was privileged to learn and grow as a coach through Dennis and the PTR. May your legend continue to foster and grow tennis and develop the best coaches.



# A Psychologist's View of the Dennis Van der Meer Teaching System

by Jim Loehr

*Dr. Jim Loehr is the President and CEO of LGE Sport Science, Inc., in Orlando, Florida. He is a member of the American Psychological Association, the PTR, the USPTA and the USTA Sport Science Committee. Dr. Loehr was the first person ever to be awarded the highest designation of Master Professional by both the PTR and the USPTA. He also serves as the Sports Psychology Advisor to the PTR. Dr. Loehr is a member of the National Advisory Boards for Prince Sports Group and HEAD/Penn.*



*The following article is a reprint of one that was published in the Fall 1979 issue of this magazine, then titled The Tennis Professional. As one small way to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the PTR, rereading this piece makes one pause to realize that even after all these years, the teaching method Dr. Loehr wrote about in 1979 is still very much alive and, more importantly, very valid today.*

As a practicing sports psychologist and tennis professional, I've been aware of many tennis clinics and teaching programs that have come along, only to fall by the wayside in a short time. Surely they all had something worthwhile, something beneficial to offer. Obviously, it wasn't enough, or wasn't offered in the right way, or their success would have been of longer duration. One program, however, seems to have withstood the test of time. It continues to grow and its worldwide popularity is undeniable.

Why has the Dennis Van der Meer Standard Method Teaching System been so successful over the years? Why has this particular approach continued to prosper when scores of others have come and gone? With enthusiastic supporters such as Billie Jean King and Margaret Court, as well as literally thousands of teaching pros from around the world, the Van der Meer system must obviously get results.

My question, from a psychologist's point of view, was why? Why does this system get results - and how does it accomplish this? Could it be linked solely to the charisma of its leader? Or is it the result of a highly effective learning and teaching model?

It seemed to me that the only satisfactory way to answer that question was to take a week of my time and experience the program from the inside. I selected the TennisUniversity program which is

designed for teaching pros and extends over a seven day period. After just a few days, the answer to my question became obvious. Dennis Van der Meer has developed a systematic teaching and learning system that only a learning psychologist could fully appreciate. To clearly express my observations, I would like to discuss the Van der Meer system as it relates to a number of widely accepted psychological learning principles and practices.

#### **Establishing the Proper Learning Climate - Firm yet Friendly**

From the beginning, Dennis and his staff established an atmosphere that I would describe as serious, yet, at the same time, very friendly and personal. Within the first 30 minutes, all of the staff knew every one of the 42 students by name. I traced two individuals through their activities during the morning of the first day and, during a one hour period, their names were spoken an average of 32 times each. All of the staff was obviously trying to help every participant feel relaxed, comfortable and involved. Dennis' frequent interjection of humor served to further enhance this atmosphere.

Although each participant was quickly made aware of where and how his or her strokes differed from that which was considered optimal, the corrective action was taken in a climate that was unmistakably positive and supportive. Clearly, Dennis has made a genuine effort to carefully select staff members who are positive people and who possess a sort of contagious enthusiasm

#### **Consistent Use of a Clearly Defined Learning Model**

The Van der Meer system rests firmly on the premise that learning proceeds from the simple to the complex. Every stroke has been broken down into its most fundamental building blocks. All participants, regardless of their skill level, are carefully guided through each phase of the learning progression. Mastery of each level is required before the learner is allowed to move to the next, more complex level.

#### **Learning by Doing**

Dennis Van der Meer most clearly understands the importance of this principle. After a brief discussion of the concept

and a demonstration, the participants immediately begin doing the routine. Every concept, demonstration and progression is quickly followed by the student physically performing the sequence.

#### **Consistent and Immediate Feedback**

Students are not given the chance to practice on their own until they have mastered the progression. There is little chance for error, as all participants are given immediate feedback as they practice. Every instructor has been trained to detect even the slightest deviation from the model. One point that was very surprising and significant to me was that the feedback given to the students was identical throughout the staff. This virtually eliminated the confusion that commonly arises out of inconsistent and conflicting staff directions and suggestions.

#### **Effective Use of Positive Reinforcement**

Corrective measures are taken within a predominantly positive framework. All instructors have been trained to accentuate the positive while, at the same time, requiring strict student adherence to the desired model. The staff, and particularly Dennis, represents very potent reinforcers. All staff members are constantly reinforcing with comments like, "That's it, Sandy - looks good," "Now you're getting it, Bill - let's keep repeating it," or "All right, Mary - now move on to the next progression".

#### **Steady Diet of Success**

Student failures are minimized by working from the simple to complex. Everyone, regardless of skill level, experiences consistent success. Divergence of skills presents no particular problem within the system. The learning system is actually structured to protect the less skillful from embarrassment and failure.

#### **Staff Members Model What They Teach**

The participants are not asked to learn something that the staff hasn't already clearly modeled. The old adage, "Do as I say, not as I do", is definitely not applicable here. Obviously, much time and effort has been set aside to achieve this kind of internal consistency, and the overall effect is very powerful.

#### **Effective Use of Visual Feedback**

Video replay is provided immediately to

each participant before any corrective procedures begin, and immediately following. The student can clearly see any positive change and where additional work may need to be done. Also, prior to any corrective procedures, Dennis models the particular stroke being reviewed to give each student a mental image of what the stroke should look like. "This is what it should look like - and this is what you look like." This kind of modeling process can further help the student to get a clearer mental picture of how the individual parts relate to the whole of the stroke.

#### **Highly Organized yet Flexible Routine**

Although a definite schedule of events was presented, whenever Dennis sensed the group was tiring, their concentration lagging, or the routine began to suffer in the intense sun and heat, a sudden change would be introduced. He was acutely sensitive to the tempo and mood of the group and, as a result, students remained tuned in to the learning process.

A good example of the flexibility of the program and staff occurred on the third day of the clinic when all awoke to find a drenching rain that was to last most of the day. All 42 pros and 10 staff members simply moved to a relatively small gymnasium where the entire routine previously scheduled for that day was completed with only minor alterations. This was a rather impressive demonstration to the teaching pros of what could be done if things don't work out exactly as you planned them.

#### **Perfect Practice Makes Perfect**

Structured practice within a well defined framework is encouraged. Every effort is made to get participants to practice correctly. Practice for the sake of practice is discouraged. Practicing incorrect habits serves only to undermine the student's progress. Perfect practice is the goal.

#### **Unique Corrective Procedure**

Participants are not allowed to hit balls full speed during the learning routines. This restriction forces a sort of slow motion learning system which I found most intriguing. Some of the advantages to this approach are as follows:

*Continued*



a. The customary patterns of incorrect responses by the participants were temporarily suspended during the slow motion routines. Everyone was capable of executing a perfect stroke at reduced speeds. Put in learning theory terms, the stimulus was introduced at a low enough level as to not evoke prior learning responses.

b. Those participants who had trouble muscling or forcing the stroke began to experience new learning that related to "feeling" the ball and "feeling" the stroke. This procedure increased the student's sensitivity to his own proprioceptive feedback.

c. This slow motion technique provides a framework whereby the purely automatic responses of the learner can be subjected to careful analysis and changed where necessary.

#### **The Process of Reconstruction - Only One Mistake at a Time**

Nothing can be more discouraging to a learner than to have four or five problem areas identi-

fied simultaneously. All video tape analysis, stroke production reviews and corrective actions are limited to only one specific area at a time. A deliberate attempt is made by the staff not to overwhelm the participant with a barrage of problem areas. In the words of one staff member, "Keep it simple, keep it specific and keep it singular."

#### **Relevance and Practicability**

A genuine attempt was made to relate each phase of the clinic experience to the real life practical problems of the tennis teaching professional. Anchoring the experiences and learnings to real life problems and situations made the entire experience more meaningful.

The TennisUniversity program takes the teaching pros and makes them students again, gets them to reexperience the feelings of being a learner again, of being taught rather than being a teacher.

From this vantage point, a host of new insights can be realized. Pros have flaws in their games - just like their students. According to

Dennis, the best way to understand the system and to believe in it is to apply it to yourself. To further intensify the feelings of being a learner, the pros are required at times to learn strokes, progressions, etc., with their non-dominant hand, i.e., if they are right-handed, they have to use their left hand.

It might be of interest to note that a Van der Meer tennis clinic for juniors happened to overlap part of the University program affording me the opportunity to compare the two programs. I was pleasantly surprised to find the two nearly identical except for the emphasis on teaching in the University program. The overall design, corrective routines and basic learning model were identical.

In summary, Van der Meer's TennisUniversity represents a teaching and learning system that rests firmly on a number of well established psychological learning principles. Unfortunately, a number of other tennis clinics which I have had the opportunity to review, have not fared so well. Those systems that are consistent with sound principles of learning are those that get results and results determine longevity. Thinking about starting a tennis clinic? There's at least one model out there that's worth some intensive study and review. A degreed psychologist Van der Meer is not, a practical one he most certainly is!



To all our friends and family all over the world;  
I can't thank you enough for the outpouring support,  
gifts of flowers, food, letters of sympathy,  
notes of support and appreciation.  
I know Dennis feels your love as I do,  
and we send it right back to you.

*Pat Van der Meer*

# The **SLICE SERVE**

## Makes a COMEBACK

by Dennis Van der Meer



Photo: Ken Mak

Arthur Ashe and Yannick Noah had great slice serves. John McEnroe had an even greater advantage, because he could slice the ball wide to the receiver's backhand side, then rush to the net, daring the opponent to pass him.

It was almost an insurmountable challenge for the returner because McEnroe's serve pulled the opponent so wide off the court that any passing shot hit down the line would come directly to McEnroe's racquet. If the opponent tried to return Mac's serve cross court, he would simply move forward and cut off the angle. As a left-hander, McEnroe had an even simpler task because he was serving to the opponent's weaker side.

Then, gradually, the wide slice serve just faded off the scene as players started to use more service bombs for outright winners. Now, strangely enough, it is the violence of this big serve and its rotator cuff injuries that resurrected the slice serve. If a player can use 10% efficient slice serves, it could extend the player's service life significantly.

Another factor that contributed to the return of the slice serve is the proliferation of cheap, light weight video recorders with good slow motion resolution, so that anyone with one can clearly see the mechanics of the slice serve - as well as that of other strokes. The slice serve has virtually the same mechanics as the traditional serve, except that the racquet face supinates by the ball and then rapidly pronates inward to accelerate the racquet head through the ball.

Once a player understands pronation, there are a plethora of strokes that can be exploited. A few examples are a pronated sharply angled cross court winning stroke; a delicately executed winning cross court drop shot; a recovery of a ball that has gotten behind the player and has to be "snagged" from behind the ideal point of impact.

With all these options, it really behooves players to reconsider the use of the slice serve.



**Jorge Capestany**  
July 27 · 🌐

...

Dennis Van der Meer left us today. He was massively influential and my early teaching as he certified me as a tennis coach when I was just 19 years old. Dennis gave me and thousands of other coaches a framework to actually teach others this great game of tennis. I'm especially sad for a Pat Van der Meer his loving wife who has been at his side for many years as he struggled with his health. Pat demonstrated true loyalty and love for all of us to see. I feel numb and sad at this news, but grateful to have had Dennis be a part of my life. The world has lost perhaps the most influential tennis teacher of all time.



I met Dennis in 1989, when together with Luciano we organized his first stage in Italy. I still remember his great professional attitude, but above all his immense capacity for communication and his extraordinary "contagious" energy.

**Marco Vecchi**  
Italy



**Gretchy**  
@GretchyHHI

Follow

Those of us who had the privilege of working for Dennis Van Der Meer were so lucky to have been trained by the teacher of tennis teachers! We ALL have great Dennis stories to share! 🍷 The sport lost a great coach today!

@JackGroppel @BillieJeanKing @hiltonheads c @LowcoSports



**ITPA Tennis**  
@itpatennis

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The iTPA family sends our condolences to the Van Der Meer family and the entire @ptrennis membership. Dennis was a true pioneer and has truly changed the game of tennis for future generations and prioritized education, coaching and teaching. His teachings live on in all of us.



**Angel Lopez**  
@angelprotennis

Follow

RIP Dennis Van der Meer. Glad to have known him. A pioneer of our profession, I learned so much from him. He will be missed.

@ptrennis #ptrennis #usta #uspta #babolat #NBTEENNIS







**judy murray** @JudyMurray · Jul 28

The godfather of the tennis coaching industry. Visionary. Pioneer. Genius. And a gentleman. Dennis van der Meer. ❤️



I saw the sad news of the passing of the great Dennis Van der Meer. My thoughts are with his wife Pat and his many close friends in Hilton Head and around the world. He made such an impact in the sport he loved. But more importantly he made an impact on and touched people's lives. He was a great people person and I always enjoyed being around him and feeling the positive energy that he produced.

He will be missed by the tennis world, but the legacy he left behind will continue through all the people he touched during his life.

**Dave Miley**  
London, England



**Billie Jean King** @BillieJeanKing · Jul 28

Dennis Van Der Meer was a big part of my career & my life, as a coach, business partner & most importantly as a friend. A world-class teacher who touched the lives of many, Dennis was a hall of fame human being & a champion. My prayers are with his family.



**Hilton Head and world tennis icon Dennis Van Der Meer dies Saturday**  
Dennis Van Der Meer world tennis teaching icon dies on Hilton Head Island SC where he founded Professional Tennis Registry PTR and TennisUnivers...  
[islandpacket.com](http://islandpacket.com)



**Liezel Huber**

July 27 · 🧑🏻‍🤝‍🧑🏻

I owe so much to Dennis and Pat Van der Meer.

They believed in me at age 15 and offered me a scholarship to train with them at Van der Meer's. I got to practice, live with and learn from the best. Never did I think at age 15 that I would one day represent the USA in Fed Cup or Olympics. Never did I think I would win WTA titles, Grand Slams or reach number 1. Dennis and Pat gave me that opportunity!

Dennis passed away today. One of the most brilliant minds ever. He could memorize 100+ students/teachers names just like that. He was well respected to be as THE best in the field. Dennis should not be recognized now, but forever for teaching teachers, creating pro's and the lasting impact he has had on hundreds of thousands of people who crossed paths with him.

I thank God for Dennis and Pat. I pray for Pat as she is such a fighter too. The Hubers and Horns love you.

Dennis will always be in my ear and my heart.

# THE NAME GAME

**DON'T FORGET TO  
REMEMBER  
YOUR STUDENTS'  
NAMES**



*by Peggy Edwards*

Dennis Van der Meer is known for it. The world famous tennis coach has had an uncanny ability to remember the names of hundreds of his students without anyone ever wearing a name tag. Imagine being in a clinic with five, or 50, others and the instructor calls you by name? It would make you feel very special and you would probably want to take lessons from that teacher again. It is good for the student and good for the teaching pro. A win-win situation!

# Not good at remembering names?

## Try these simple tricks that are sure to boost your memory banks.

### 1. Try

The very first thing you have to do is change your attitude toward this. Stop telling yourself that you won't be able to remember names because you've never been able to. Stop telling yourself you can't. Stop telling yourself that you're not good at it and that you can't, and start telling yourself that you will try. Better yet, *convince* yourself that you *will* remember names. Think positively. Make a commitment to yourself to make a concerted effort to remember. Do it not only for yourself, but for your students. Want to remember. Try to remember. Focus on remembering.

### 2. Pay attention

Simple as it may sound, the most important step is to pay attention. Really *listen* when someone tells you his or her name. Although you have a lot going on getting ready for the lesson, stop for a second and look the student in the eye during the introduction. Don't be distracted from this simple courtesy. Taking just one extra moment to look at the student during the introduction lets them know you are interested. It also helps you focus on the individual as they tell you their name.

### 3. Verify

Say the name back to your student to make sure you heard it right. This will not only verify it, but it will also help you commit it to memory. If a student said, "Kathy", you can ask, "Is that Kathy with a K or Cathy with a C?" If a student said, "Stanley", you can ask, "Do you go by Stanley, or may I call you Stan?" Some students will have unusual names. If you are not sure what they said, or it is a difficult name that is foreign to you, ask them to spell it. You can always say something like, "That is a beautiful name. I've never heard it before. Would you spell that for me to make sure I get it right?" Break a long or difficult name into syllables if you have to, but verify it.

### 4. Repeat

Right after you verify it, repeat the name silently to yourself a couple of times and then out loud a couple of times in the natural course of the conversation. "Nice to meet you, Sam. Thanks for coming to the lesson. Today, Sam, we're going to work on the serve. Does that sound good to you, Sam?" If you can say a person's name three times in the first 10 seconds of conversation, you will have a much better chance of remembering it. Repeat it, but don't overdo it. As you meet each member of a group, silently say their names in the order you meet them, adding each new one to the list. "Susan. Susan, Jon. Susan, Jon, Nathan. Susan, Jon, Nathan, Tia. Susan, Jon, Nathan, Tia, Jack." Of course, you'll remember best the names you repeat most, even if you are doing so silently in your head, so the names of the first you meet in a group should definitely stay with you. Another trick to slyly repeat names is - once you have the name of the second student, introduce him or her to the first. "Jamie meet Craig." Get another name? "Craig meet Randy." On the next name, "Randy meet Gail." And so on down the line. Repeat. Repeat. Repeat.

### 5. Write it

We are visual learners. We all learn faster when we see something as well as hear it, so by all means, write down their name, *especially* if it is one that is difficult for you. You have your PTR clipboard on the court with you, so writing their name(s) won't take but a moment. Writing a name will reinforce it and help you commit it to memory.

### 6. Visualize

*Look carefully* at the person. Do they have a physical characteristic that can help you remember their name? Silently, in your mind, link the first letter of a person's name to a descriptive word about them like Tom is tall or Laura is lean. A rhyme can work well like Patty's a fatty. Is Harry hairy? These may sound silly, but they will help you remember. Of course, you would *never say* anything hurtful aloud. A student may share the name of a celebrity and have a physical characteristic that will help you. Frank has blue eyes, so you can visualize Frank Sinatra. Amanda is short like Amanda Coetzer. Try to focus on a characteristic or association that won't change like glasses or a hair style. To remember Bonnie because she is blonde may help today, but what if next week she's a redhead?

### 7. Ask again

So, Bonnie was blonde and now she's a redhead back for another lesson and you have forgotten her name. Ask her name again and go through the steps again. You can be honest and say, "I apologize, but your name escapes me at the moment. Did you do something different?" Bonnie will be flattered that you noticed, when in reality you just need her name again. This time connect Bonnie with a visualization you will remember - one that won't change.

### 8. Make a game of it

We're a competitive bunch. Whether you are one of several pros conducting a clinic, or you are teaching a group solo, play the Name Game. Have a contest with your fellow pros, perhaps with a *gentlemen's bet*, that you will remember every student's name faster than they will. Teaching alone? Play the game anyway by giving yourself a time limit. "I'll remember every student's name in 10 minutes." Just like tennis, make it fun!

### 9. Record it

After the lesson, write each name again in your students/contacts file, which will help to reinforce it and command the name to memory. As you go through your files to send thank you notes or to remind students of upcoming lessons, visualize the student whenever you look at or write their name.

Following these steps may not work instantly, and you may never be as good as Dennis Van der Meer, but keep trying and over time you will get better and better at remembering all of your students' names!

*Dale Carnegie said that the sound of a person's name is the most important, sweetest sound.*



# Dennis Van der Meer

*1933-2019*

An Icon, Mentor, Friend, Educator and Pioneer  
...Who Truly Made a World of Difference

