



Peter Howell:

Playing, teaching or speaking, where he goes, good times follow

By Dunn Neugebauer

It's almost impossible to be on or around a tennis court in Georgia and not either know Peter Howell or at least hear a Peter Howell story. "What can I tell you?" Peter said. "A lot of funny things happen on court or at tournaments. That's one of the things that makes tennis such a great sport. I'm now enjoying sharing my experience with the youth."

Regardless of what you've heard, there's no doubt that Peter has a legendary career in tennis. He was ranked No. 1 in the state in the 14s, 16s and 18s in doubles before moving on to play in the top-three for Vanderbilt for four years. As a high school senior, one of his best wins was over U.S. Open doubles champ Freddie McNair.

After college, however, the plan was to get his masters in business. "That was the idea, but somehow I fell into a job at the Atlanta Athletic Club," he remembered. "This was when ALTA was just starting up; before then there were only two pros in the city over 40-years-old. Suddenly you could actually make a living in tennis."

Peter was at the Athletic Club until 1978 – when he left, there were 12 courts and the membership was booming. In 1977, after many after-hours conversations with tennis pros about teaching, co-op buying and the business in general, he and Pride Evans founded the Georgia Professional Tennis Association. "We would meet at the Athletic Club once a month," Peter said. "To this day, my very best friends are from back in those days...Pride, Woody Hoblitzell, Joe Dennis, George Amaya, Randy Stephens, John Callen and many more."

In 1978, it was off to Ansley Golf Club for Peter, where he was key in turning the Atlanta club from an 'apartment complex to a country club'. "I talked the board into taking those cracked hard courts and making them dirt," he said. Presently, the Ansley facility consists of eight clay courts.

During this, he remained a top player. He partnered with Hoblitzell to earn consistent top-five rankings in the country throughout the 35s and into the 40s. When Hoblitzell was injured, he teamed with former Miami star Steve Siegel and continued his top-five ways. "I was fortunate to be top-five for six or seven years in a row," Peter summarized.

After leaving Ansley, he went to Bitsy Grant Tennis center from 1983 to 1988 where the tennis explosion continued in Atlanta. "We had 64 ALTA teams and it was pure tennis out there," he added. "The only reason people came to Bitsy was to play tennis."

He later had a long stint at The Standard Club, where he was the Head Pro until 2000. In 2002, he became an instructor at Oglethorpe University; a year later he was named the Men's and Women's Tennis Coach – a position he holds to this day. He built the program from below mediocrity to a top-notch Division III program. His Petrels were co-conference champs in 2016 and boasted the school's first ever Division III All-American.

In the meantime, his awards have racked up. Peter has been named to the Oglethorpe Athletic Hall of Fame, and is in the GPTA, Georgia Tennis and USPTA-Southern halls as well. He earned a national title as a player in 2012 on a combined 9.0 USTA team, and has four Pro of the Year honors from both the USPTA and GPTA. He also was selected GTA Senior Player of the Year twice.

Looking back at it all, Peter has left a trail wherever he's gone – a Tasmanian Devil in a positive way, if you will. Whether playing, teaching or speaking, where he goes, good times follow. In fact, next time you hear a Peter Howell story, listen to it. You won't regret it.