

Junior Players

New Junior Recognition Program Stresses Sportsmanship

Promoting sportsmanship in tennis has been a priority for USTA President and CEO Katrina Adams (far right).

“Our sportsmanship initiative remains a high priority,” she recently told 800 people gathered near San Diego for the USTA Annual Meeting. “We must make our players aware of what our sport teaches us. We’ve made it clear we will not tolerate inappropriate behavior, and we are doing our utmost to inspire fair play and sportsmanship at every level of play.”

“Sportsmanship is so critical,” says former pro and current TV analyst Mary Joe Fernandez. “It’s so important to set a good example for the next generation and play fairly. It makes the game so much more enjoyable.”

“From the juniors all the way to the pros, you have to be able to handle the ups and the downs with the same amount of grace,” adds Lindsay Davenport.

While the push for sportsmanship in tennis involves players at every age, clearly making sure juniors pay proper respect to the game and their opponents is a huge deal in sports today. To that end, the USTA recently initiated a Junior Sportsmanship Recognition Program, in an effort to recognize and reward junior players who have best exemplified the positive qualities and behaviors not just on the court, but off-court, too.

The recognition program includes junior players in each section, designed not only to honor young players and generate local media coverage for them and their sections, but also to increase publicity for junior competition and the importance of sportsmanship in tennis in general.

Juniors were picked by each section’s Player Development staff, with help from others involved in that section’s



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junior player landscape. The young players selected make up the “USTA Junior Leadership Team.” Among the criteria, candidates within the last year had to have:

- Successful USTA junior tournament results;
- Exhibited positive on-court behavior and exemplary sportsmanship;
- Shown off-the-court benevolence (i.e., volunteering, community service, etc.).

“These are players whose achievements speak volumes about their character, both as tennis players and as members of the community,” says Bill Mountford, the USTA’s Director of Junior Tournaments. “With the USTA Leadership Team, we’re glad to have a way to recognize the tremendous examples they’ve set on and off the court.”

The inaugural USTA Junior Leadership Team, named in late March, includes:

Boys

- Alejandro Rodriguez-Vidal, Guaynabo, P.R.
- Bradley Frye, Overland Park, Kan.
- Brandon Holt, Rolling Hills, Calif.

- Jon Dollahite, Orem, Utah
- Josh Xu, Chandler, Ariz.
- Luke Phillips, Pittsburgh
- Mark Johnson, Hudson, Wis.
- Matthew Gonzalgo, Plantation, Fla.
- Nick Stachowiak, Cary, N.C.
- Peter Conklin, Fairfield, Conn.
- Phuc Hyunh, Honolulu, Hawaii
- Ryan Fishback, Geneva, N.Y.
- Spencer Whitaker, Richmond, Va.
- Stefan Leustian, Mather, Calif.
- Trey Hilderbrand, San Antonio, Texas

Girls

- Allison McCann, Amherst, Mass.
- Anna Alons, Salix, Iowa
- Cyd Melendez, Cayey, P.R.
- Emily Soares, Hilo, Hawaii
- Ena Shibahara, Rancho Palos Verdes, Calif.
- Gibson Thomas, Mount Vernon, N.Y.
- Izabella Edin, Staples, Minn.
- Laurel Wanger, Belleair, Fla.
- Marlee Zein, Sugarland, Texas
- Meredith Lee, Pottstown, Pa.
- Michaela Gordon, Los Altos Hills, Calif.
- Reilly Tran, Dunn Loring, Va.
- Samantha Martinelli, Denver
- Somer Henry, Franklin, Tenn. ■