



## GRASSROOTS GROWTH

## If I Were Tennis Commissioner...

A longtime industry insider shares her views on what this industry needs to do to grow the sport.

BY MICHELE KRAUSE

**I** love tennis! We've long known tennis is a healthy way to stay in shape and be active. And it can be as competitive as you want it to be. But it's no secret that this industry faces challenges: participation is stagnant, play occasions are down and equipment sales continue to slide.

I headed up Cardio Tennis when the program was created in 2005. I left that position at the end of 2018, after helping to make Cardio Tennis the only program in this industry to consistently add players year after year. My job took me to hundreds of facilities, and I found that on many levels tennis still lives in the 1960s. This includes the condition of many venues, how they operate, and how tennis is taught and coached. Plus,

we have a culture that overall is *not* inclusive. What we need is a paradigm shift—let's replace the usual ways we do things with new and different ways.

In my new endeavors, I continue with a focus on the recreational/community side of tennis. So, if I were the "commissioner" of recreational tennis in the U.S., what would be on my agenda?

**1)** Emphasize tennis' health and fitness benefits. We need a better marketing campaign! *We all* know the health benefits of this sport, so why can't we better communicate this to those who aren't playing tennis currently, and to those teetering with leaving this sport? What parent wouldn't want their child, or themselves, more healthy and fit?

**2)** Market, promote and implement the green ball. It's slightly lower in pressure and can be a game-changer for getting new players into tennis and keeping players involved, while adding revenue for providers. Players below 4.0 should play with the green ball, both recreationally and in leagues. We should promote a National Green Ball Day; clubs should hold a monthly Green Ball Day. #greenisthenewyellow!

**3)** It's time we had only one professional tennis teaching organization, so we can finally all be on the same page, at the same time, when it comes to growing this sport. Having two organizations has not helped tennis grow.

**4)** Enough with the mega-tennis facilities. They suck tournaments and events away from local facilities. Let's promote one- to four-court local projects. We need *more* facilities and courts around the country, where every person can easily access tennis.

**5)** Tennis teaching pros should be focused on growing this sport. As my friend Doug Cash advocates, teaching pro and coach job descriptions and compensation should be tied in with the growth of tennis and participation.

**6)** Every beginning player, regardless of age, should start with a red ball. The goal is for quick and easy success, while creating a solid tennis foundation.

These are just a few of the ideas that I, and others who have been in this industry for a while, have put forward to help grow this sport. We all need to work together, and have open minds, to move this industry forward. ■

*We welcome your opinions and comments. Please email them to [info@tennisindustrymag.com](mailto:info@tennisindustrymag.com).*



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