# Letters *to the Editor*

## 'If I Were Tennis Commissioner...'

As someone who switched from the tennis industry to the fitness industry several years ago, I read with interest Michele Krause's article "If I Were Tennis Commissioner..." in the September/October issue. I believe her No. 1 item, "Emphasize tennis' health and fitness benefits," is right on the money.

As a health and fitness activity, tennis is different, which gives it an advantage. It's fully interactive, blending physical fitness with cognitive challenges that engage and connect neural pathways in the brain in ways that most fitness activities do not.

University studies have demonstrated that if your brain is challenged while exercising, the cognitive benefits will be greater, for example, than running on a treadmill. Well before high-tech workout experiences were available at your local fitness club, tennis and other sports were the "original interactive fitness solutions." Other studies have shown behavioral and academic benefits for kids who play tennis.

To communicate the differentiating value of tennis as a fitness activity for all ages and abilities, focus on the all-around health benefits—physical, cognitive, social and emotional.

**Tom West**, *USPTA*
*Director, North American Dealer and Retail Partnerships, Interactive Fitness Holdings LLC.*

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If we don't engage in the kind of out-of-the-box thinking that is represented in the article by Michele Krause, the grassroots of tennis will dry up. I thank Michele for taking a bold, creative position, and I hope to see more big ideas like this in *Racquet Sports Industry*.

**Greg Childers**
*USPTA, IPTA, ACSM-CPT*
*Sarasota, Fla.*

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I strongly agree with Michele Krause that tennis is "still living in the 1960s." This industry, while making positive strides, can still benefit from more women, people of color and different sexual orientation participating as stakeholders and decision-makers in shaping the future of our sport. Inclusion and representation invite fresh perspectives and help welcome more people into game.

This industry also has antiquated views of maternity and paternity leave. If you want to have children, but can't afford to because your livelihood is based solely on teaching, why would you stay in tennis?

In terms of compensation, we need to move away from the "eat what you kill" approach. As Michele notes, teaching pros need to focus on growing this sport. There are talented and eager individuals who are passionate about tennis and ready to grow our sport. Let's make sure we are open to receive them.

**John Borden**
*General Manager, JTCC, College Park, Md.*

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## Pros Need Ball Machines

In regards to Stan Oley's article in the July issue on the importance of having a ball machine, I keep two machines going at my club. I refer players to them for post-lesson and between-lesson repetition. Just as important is that ever-growing group of players, from beginner to advanced, who simply want private time to hit on their own and work on shots they encounter when playing matches. In fact, many of my ball machine users come from local clubs that do not own a machine.

My lessons have increased because I use ball machines. Whatever fear or paranoia you may have about ball machines replacing the pros at your facility, it's time to change it. Increase your value as a professional and your club's value as a full-service facility and get a ball machine—or two.

**Gerry Berkheimer**
*Tennis Director, Vero Fitness*
*Vero Beach, Fla.*

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*We welcome your letters, opinions and comments. Please email them to info@tennisindustrymag.com*

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