

Sebastopol Tennis Pro Marks 46 Years of Teaching

August 12, 2005

In a show of longevity and patience likely unmatched in North Bay tennis, Sebastopol USPTA pro Richard Cardiff last week finished conducting his 34th annual junior summer camps.

Cardiff began teaching tennis in 1958 at age 12 in Golden Gate Park, as an assistant to former world No. 1 Jack Kramer, the first player to popularize the signature series of wooden racquets. He remains an avid student of the game and at 58 continues to adjust his teaching style as the sport evolves.

"Back then, we taught everything serve-and-volley," he said. "It was transitional tennis -- the eastern grip, the weight going forward,

the mid- court volley and the second volley finisher.

"Then everything started shifting when Bjorn Borg and the Europeans began dominating world tennis," he said. "Borg used semi-to-full western grips and executed power pin-point passing shots from the baseline. The guys coming forward in the old style were getting ripped."

Cardiff analyzed Borg's game, re-thought his approach, and became one of the first area pros to teach the now-standard open-stance forehand, which facilitates racquet head speed. Meanwhile, the backhand evolved from a one- hander to a two-hander where the non-dominant hand assisted, in the Chris Evert/Jimmy Connors style, to today's two-hander where the non-dominant hand has taken over.

"Today, you're looking at a kind of ambidextrous tennis player," he said. "It's all based on physics. Kids have a natural way they want to hold a racquet, so the challenge

is getting a balance between what they are comfortable with and what is ideal."

What he enjoys most about teaching, he said, are the relationships, which are "generational." He has reached the point where he is teaching not only kids of former students, but their grandkids.

Cardiff's camp enrollment this summer was at an all-time high. After 46 years as a teaching pro, he said, the enthusiasm is still there.

"It's been my passion for a long time," he said. "I'll try to take it as far as I can."

Pro baseball: After several seasons of being bounced back and forth between the majors and Triple-A, Sonoma County League products Jonny Gomes and Jason Lane are both enjoying productive summers on big-league rosters.

Last Sunday, Lane, from El Molino High, homered and drove in four runs in the Houston Astros' win over the Giants at SBC Park. Lane

has been starting in right field and is batting .255 with 17 HRs and 50 RBIs.

Gomes, who was coached by the late Bob Leslie at Casa Grande, on July 30 put on the greatest single-game power display in Devil Rays' history, when he connected for three home runs in a victory over the Royals. Gomes is hitting .284 and has been starting in left field and batting cleanup for Tampa Bay.

Radio voice: KSRO radio program director and play-by-play man Brian Hudson reports the station is close to finalizing a deal to sustain the popular high school football and basketball "Game of the Week" broadcasts for a fifth consecutive season. Hudson and enthusiastic color man partner Joe Pasquini try to determine each week's best Redwood Empire regular-season match-up. Then, come playoff time, the KSRO broadcast team follows area football teams throughout the NCS playoffs and basketball teams all the way to the state tournament.

Hudson said if he had to pick one player he most enjoyed covering it would be Marcus Ezeff, the former Montgomery High receiver/defensive back now redshirting at UC Berkeley.

"Even as a sophomore," Hudson said, "you could clearly see the football mind and patience and maturity."

Rugby: Two months have passed since three players on Elsie Allen's state championship rugby team were shot by unidentified gunmen at a June 19 graduation party in Santa Rosa.

"I don't know what you can say about the impact of an event like that," said assistant coach Terry Brennan. "We've done what we could in terms of trauma counseling and fund-raising, but the savageness and senselessness of it -- it's hard to get your mind around."

The injured players are Custudio Lopez Jr., an inside center, who was shot in the ankle; Catarino Estrada, a flanker, who was grazed in the head; and team captain Josh Inong. Inong

took six shots from an AK-47, according to Brennan, who said the fact that no one was killed is a miracle.

Lopez and Estrada are expected to make full recoveries. It's too early to determine whether Inong will recover to play rugby again, said Brennan, who calls him "as good a schoolboy player as I've ever seen, in 34 years around the sport."

Inong had been invited to this summer's elite national team developmental camp in Indiana.

"I would never bet against the kid," Brennan said.

As yet, no arrests have been made in the shootings.

Hardcourts: Two Tiburon tennis players were the lone North Bay semi-finalists in last week's eight-division West Coast Junior Championships in Sacramento. Alexander Rosinski (boys 18s) was third while Natalie Varnay (girls 16s) finished fourth.

Finally: Those attending the 10th race at the Sonoma County Fair on July 31 were stunned as a 4-year-old gelding named Callfire shattered his right hind leg while thundering down the homestretch in the lead.

In an eerie scene, against the chatter of the track announcer reading the race results, jockey Dennis Carr dismounted and removed his saddle, an equine ambulance rushed to the still-standing horse and a black screen was held up while Callfire was euthanized on the fair's brand new turf track.

"I'd be surprised if he stepped wrong," said Barbara Walter, whose Sebastopol stables bred Cavonnier, the 1996 Kentucky Derby runner-up. "Every report is this turf course is the best in the country.

"It's hard to say what might have happened," she said. "The horse might have had a hairline fracture that went undetected, or might have kicked himself in the stall the night before."

All eight geldings in the race were on Lasix, a drug that is supposed to retard internal bleeding during excessive exercise.

-by Ted Gross

[Articles](#)