

ADDvantage[®]

the magazine for men and women tennis-teaching professionals



June 2005

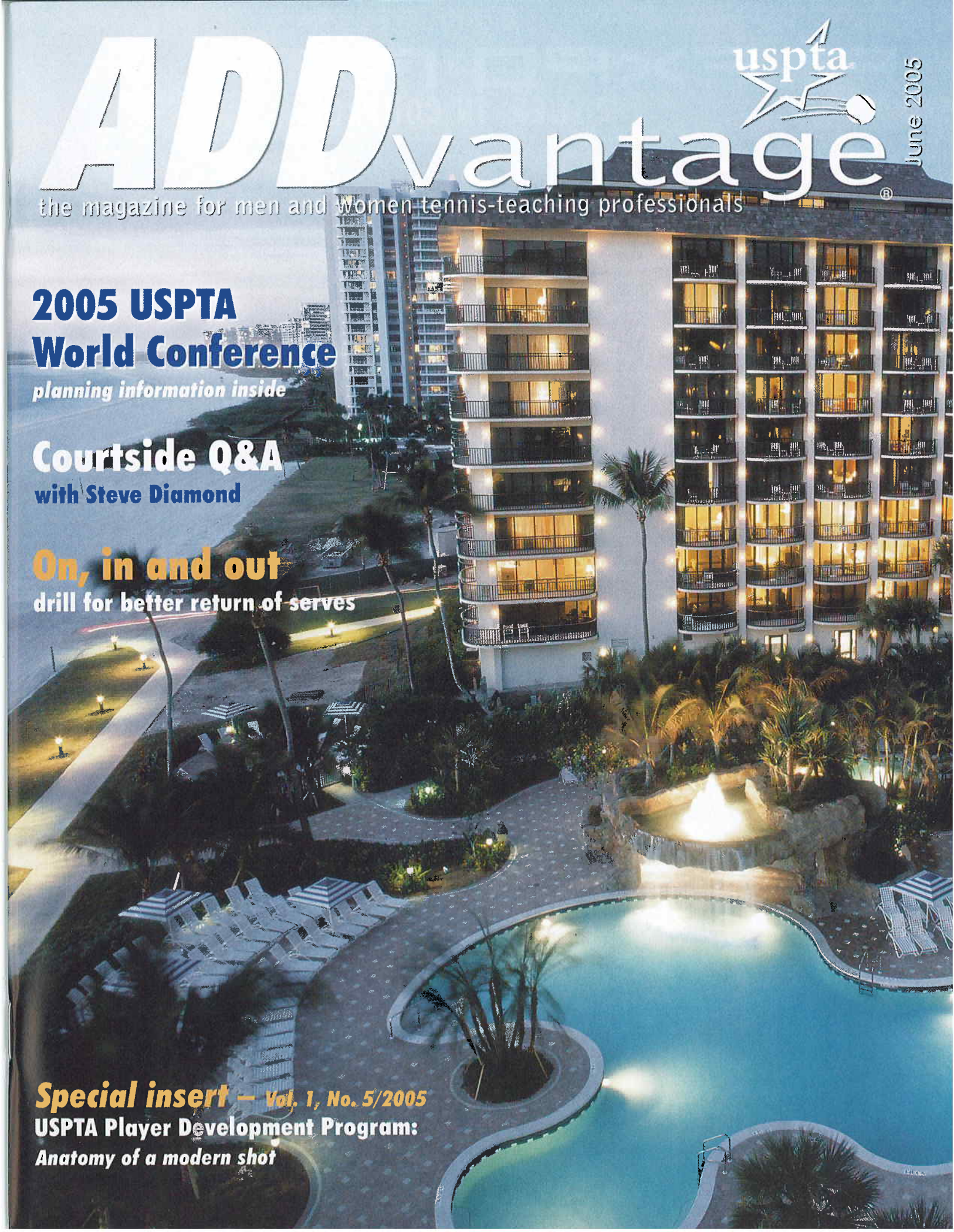
2005 USPTA World Conference

planning information inside

Courtside Q&A with Steve Diamond

On, in and out drill for better return of serves

Special insert — Vol. 1, No. 5/2005
**USPTA Player Development Program:
Anatomy of a modern shot**



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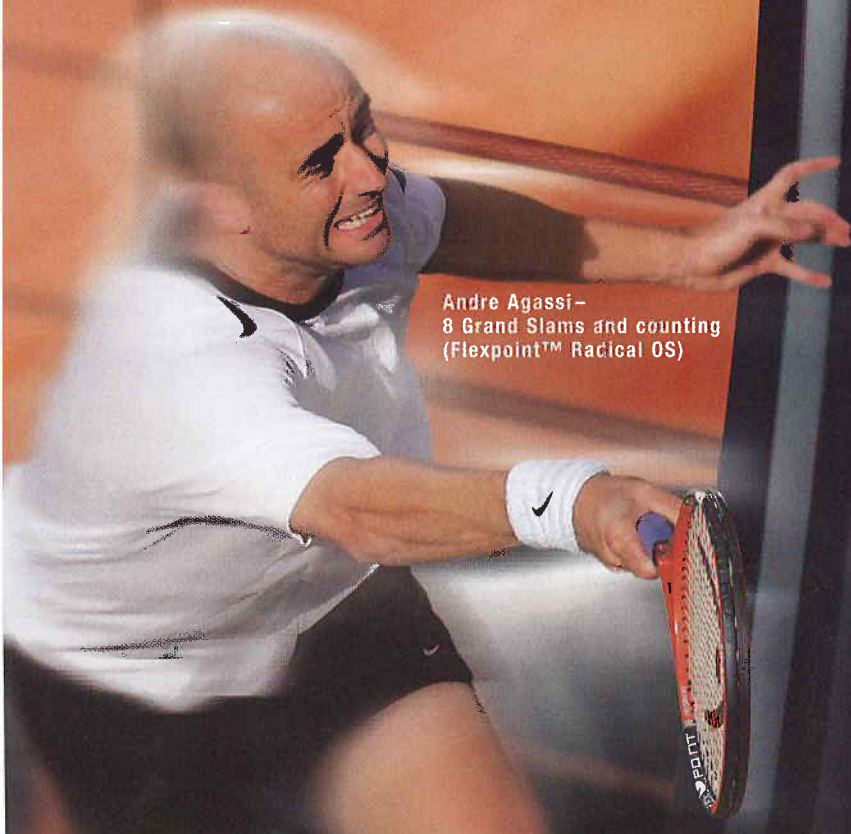
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special insert - Vol. 1, No. 5 / 2005

USPTA Player Development Program - *This insert analyzes the anatomy of a modern shot and breaks down the first of three phases of a shot - the preparation phase.*

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On the cover ... Marco Island Marriott Resort, Golf Club and Spa, Marco Island, Fla.

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USPTA mailbox



The following article is a follow-up to the CEO's message in the March issue of *ADDvantage* that discussed on-court emotions.

Dear USPTA,

I think most of us in Tim's age group and a good number overall agree that many of the changes in tennis are of questionable merit. Rules of appropriate dress or behavior should never have to change. Good behavior applies to the spectators as well. It's quite obvious that many parents, coaches and sport psychologists have their own agendas, which are not always in the best interest of the players, the game or society.

Parents are the first and most important role models for an athlete, followed by coaches and other sports professionals. In turn, the professional athlete becomes a role model for promising juniors. We need to put the athlete's entire well-being first. We need to teach lessons that will help the athlete be a better human being both on and off the court. A trend isn't starting, Tim, it has been around for quite a while, and it is getting worse.

We are going to have to tackle this problem from both ends to help preserve the integrity of our sport. This should be our highest concern and take precedence over the self-satisfaction of individual players, as well as that portion of the viewing public that displays and encourages negative behavior. As Tim suggests, the NFL rule against excessive demonstrating or showboating could be applied to tennis.

It makes me wonder how the great players of yesteryear achieved so much without being told to grunt when they breathe out, pump their fist and yell (or worse) when they are successful and argue or insult an official over a disputed call. The players should work at being positive role models and encourage support by showcasing their talent, displaying their fitness, preparation and all-out effort and leave it primarily to the appreciative fans to do the cheerleading.

Not to offend anyone, but with the exception of the physical response, all the examples of recommended on-court rituals were already being practiced by most players in the game. Sports psychologists should eliminate the redundancy, offer their tips to the players and then allow them and their coaches to incorporate the more meaningful ones into their programs. This approach would allow players to act independently, handle pressure and learn new skills. They also would be able to stay focused, maintain concentration, gain confidence and look forward to the next point. This approach would help players become better athletes and better human beings. To my mind, sports psychologists and others have taken away an important responsibility from the players and weakened their ability to think for themselves.

It was not too many years ago that a large number of the best players were without traveling coaches and support staff, and were in large part responsible for their own conditioning, use of down time, strategy,

tactics and overall mental and emotional adjustments. These players achieved greatness, for the most part, without psychologists and others telling them how to think, occupy their time, cheer for themselves, exercise various gyrations and, in doubles, carry on conversations after each point. Primarily, the opportunity to collect yourself or to discuss strategy with your partner was done in private on the changeovers or through visual communication on the court.

It's generally true that the most demonstrative players on the court are usually not your biggest winners. A few of the more quiet winners that come to mind, in no particular order, are Roy Emerson, Rod Laver, Ivan Lendl, Bjorn Borg, Mats Wilander, Stefan Edberg, Margaret Court, Maureen Connolly, Chris Evert, Stan Smith, Arthur Ashe, Tracy Austin, Evonne Goolagong, Ken Rosewall, Althea Gibson, John Newcombe, Steffi Graf, Monica Seles and Pete Sampras. For example, if you asked Rosewall to pump his fist, he might have thought you wanted to see the "muscle" in his arms. There are still some of us who enjoy the pureness of the sport and would prefer to see the chest bumps left to the clowns in the circus.

As far as positive thinking and building confidence is concerned, there is no better way than winning. All the rituals, mental imagery and breathing in the world do not make you a winner. You can have positive thinking till the cows come

home, but if you don't have the skills, you are not going to win. So, if possible, develop the prime ingredients and positive thinking will come or can be added.

So let's hope more players start thinking on their own, adjusting to mistakes and applying new skills and knowledge for future play. More and more athletes are getting attention for their behavior on the court and away from the point. Let's discourage athletes from looking for someone in the stands or elsewhere to identify, explain and solve problems for them, even offering excuses for them when they lose.

Finally, it is paramount that all involved in player development work to place the largest part of the mental and emotional aspects of the game back in the hands of the player. We must continue to build well-rounded skills and self-discipline so players can succeed both on and off the court. A tennis player's behavior in his quest for success will do much to preserve the dignity of tennis, as well as the overall dignity of the player as a human being.

Sincerely,
Dan Kennedy, USPTA
Bonita Springs, Fla.

Note: Dan Kennedy is a 30-year USPTA member and tennis director at West Bay Golf and Tennis Club in Estero, Fla. He has a master's degree in psychology and has worked in the private and institutional sectors.

President's message

Teach behavior early ... and by example!

Someone once said, "The proper time to influence the life of a child is about 100 years before he is born." Each of us is a product of those who came before us, who made sacrifices for us, whose education and work ethic and moral integrity became foundation stones in our early lives. Our parents and grandparents and great-grandparents are a significant part of who we are.

Similarly, there are others who have changed, for better or worse, the course of our lives. There have been friends, neighbors, teachers, and yes ... coaches (teaching professionals). They were our models, our heroes, our reference points for important decisions.

As USPTA Professionals we have a responsibility to teach correct behavior as well as correct technique. We must be examples of what we teach and remember that we are always under the scrutiny of our students, whether we are aware of it or not.

I remember an ITA Coaches Convention I attended at Saddlebrook in December of 1992. Arthur Ashe Jr. was one of the speakers. He had already been diagnosed with the HIV virus and it was the last time I was to see or hear him speak in public before his death on February 6, 1993. Following his presentation he asked the coaches assembled if anyone had any questions for him.

One of the coaches asked Arthur about on-court behavior and particularly cheating on line calls. I think Arthur surprised us all that day when he told us that every one of us had made bad line calls. He said, in effect, if you have played the game you have made bad calls. He went on to say, hopefully, none of them was intentional.

He led us to believe that trying to teach integrity in competition, in college, was a little late in the game. His suggestion was to teach it from the outset; from the first tournament, competitive experience, or practice session.

Arthur suggested that prior to the beginning of a tournament or competition the young players be given the following instructions. Since we have all made a bad call (hopefully unintentionally as indicated above) that we let go or ignore the first call we disagree with that our opponent makes. Give the opponent the benefit of the doubt, a good-faith error, and hold them harmless.

Second, Arthur recommended that if we feel our opponent has made a second questionable call that we, and this is the important part, in a nonthreatening way, ask them if they are sure of their call. Maybe something like, "Excuse me please, but was my shot out?" That is quite the opposite of saying, "What! You cannot be serious."

If the opponent is confident of this second call, then again, let it go.

If the opponent makes a third call that you believe to be wrong (a hook) then Arthur suggested that you calmly go to the net and let your opponent know that you are having trouble with the lines and you are going to get an umpire. (Your opponent is having no trouble with the lines. They are seeing everything outside of them.)

Learning how to make honest calls, controlling one's temper in frustrating situations, and dealing with poor behavior from an opponent should all be taught from an early age. We should teach students to be tolerant of others, to give each other the benefit of the doubt, and to be polite even in a potentially confrontational situation. These lessons are best taught by example – our example.

The USPTA Player Development Program includes behavior as part of the mental/emotional component. It can be taught right from the beginning. For the past several summers I have been the director of tennis at a summer camp (Camp Walt Whitman) in the White Mountains of New



David T. Porter, Ed.D.



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