

ADDvantage

the magazine for men and women tennis-teaching professionals



September 2005



Courtside Q&A

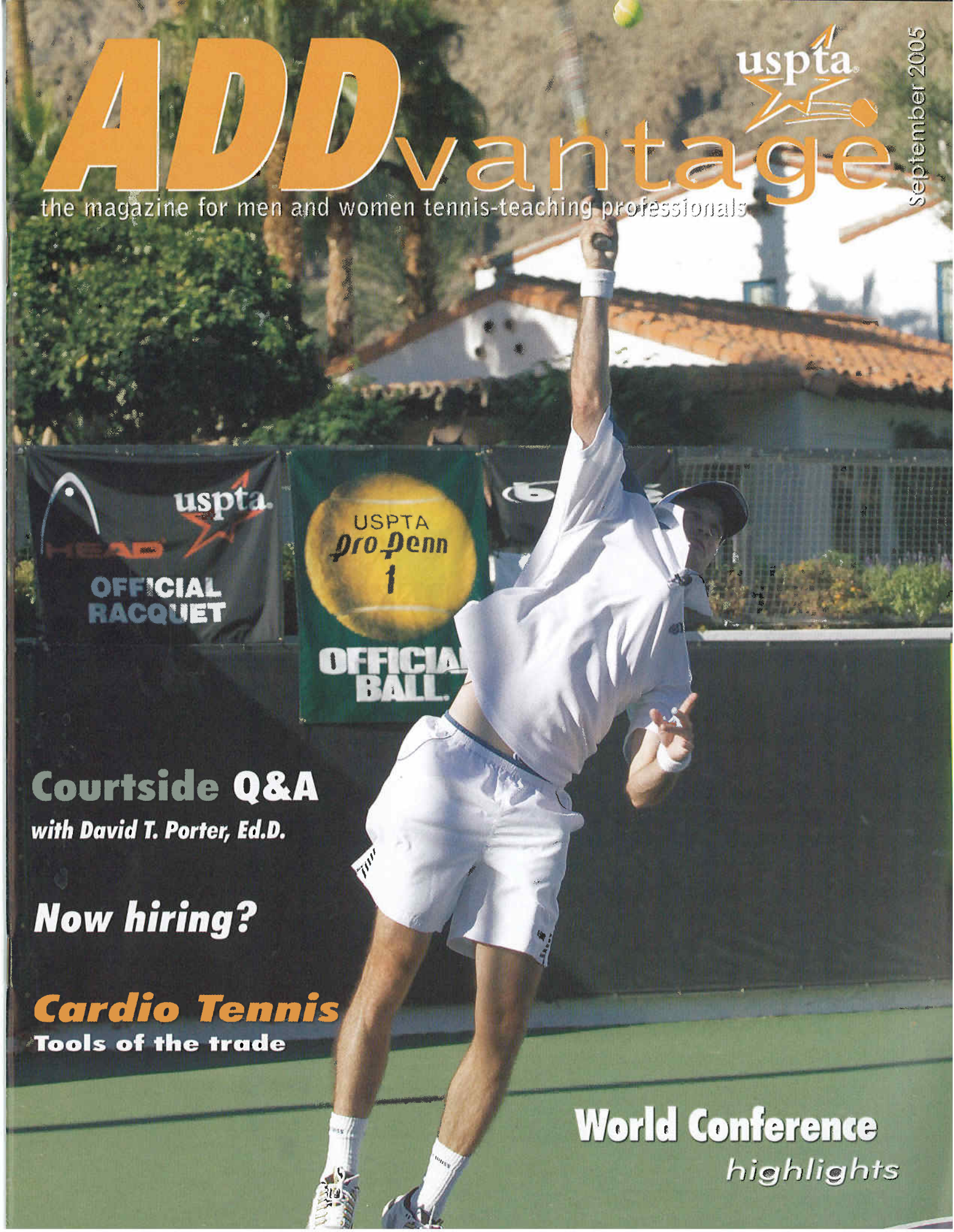
with David T. Porter, Ed.D.

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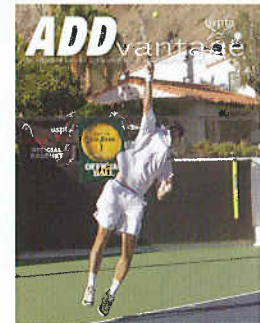
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USPTA mailbox



Player Development

Dear Tim,

It is exciting to see the new direction the USPTA is taking regarding player development. My hat's off to you, Dave Porter, and all those involved in the project. The USPTA's commitment to creating resources for learning more about modern tennis will help all of us become better coaches. Over the years, I have been a strong advocate for improving our coaching education program so I am thrilled about the materials that have been developed recently.

While it is important for coaches to stay abreast of all the latest information about modern tennis, I believe it is critical that we stay abreast of the latest coaching methodologies as well. It is as important (or perhaps even

more so) to know *how* to teach effectively as it is to know *what* to teach. Tim Gallwey made this point strongly in *The Inner Game of Tennis*.

These "new" coaching methods help players "start thinking on their own, adjusting to mistakes and applying new skills and knowledge" as Dan Kennedy so eloquently put it in last issue's USPTA Mailbox. They not only expand our capacities as teachers, but, in my experience, help make coaching come alive and become even more meaningful. They are the antidote for those coaches who, after many years on the court, find themselves bored or uncreative.

I have had the good fortune to work with the coaches and players in the New York Yankee player development program, as

well as the USC football team over the past four years and a few world-class golfers. Yet, nearly everything I taught them I learned on the tennis court!

I look forward to reading the next chapters in the never-ending story of player development and hope to be a part of the process in the near future.

Sportively Yours,
Sean Brawley, USPTA
Marina Del Ray, Calif.

Find-a-Pro

Dear USPTA,

Thank you for your help in finding a professional. Your service was a huge help. I had over 60 resumes from your site. I did hire a USPTA-certified Professional. I don't think there is anything you can do to improve and

I would absolutely use this service again.

Thanks again.
Scott F. Stuart
Country Club of Petersburg
General Manager
Petersburg, Va.

Dear USPTA,

We received not only a wonderful number of resumes from applicants, but we were able to fill our positions. Your service is thus invaluable, and also effective.

We thank you.
Michael Beckman
Beckman, Lieberman &
Barandes, LLP
New York, N.Y.

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Change is inevitable

I can clearly remember when optic yellow tennis balls started to make inroads into the tennis community where I was growing up. The attitude among the better tennis players was negative. The white ball was the only ball *real* tennis players used. Gradually, the tennis world shifted its position and now we only use white balls during club events that often include wood racquets as well.

Some of you may remember when the tiebreak was introduced. Again, there was major resistance among *real* players. For some time the 9-point tiebreak was the most frequently used, now it is the 12-point tiebreak. The tiebreak is now an accepted part of the game.

The ball color change and introduction of the tiebreak are just two examples of changes resisted by the tennis community

but eventually adopted. Resistance continued when oversized racquets were introduced (Prince Classic being the first), and there was resistance among some tennis players and tennis teachers when the two-handed backhand started gaining popularity.

It seems that, often, we are down on what we are not up on.

Tennis has changed. Most of us were taught *and* most of us played a different type and style of game than is being played by today's competitive athletes. We were taught by standing in lines and swinging our racquets simultaneously. We were taught by hitting the ball once and going to the back of the line. We were given little constructive feedback and we focused on results more than performance.

It is not unusual for parents to raise children the way they were raised; for teachers to teach the way they were taught; for coaches to develop players' skills the way they developed theirs. Surely, we've raised the standards of tennis teaching over time. But how many of us still only teach a game that we learned and have taught successfully for years, but that is no longer played in the competitive ranks?

Change is inevitable. It occurs with or without our permission or participation.

USPTA has stayed at the forefront of the tennis industry and of trade associations due, in large part, to the foresight of former president Mike Eikenberry, who helped lead the Association into the computer age when many around him resisted.

Since those days in the early 1980s, USPTA has stayed ahead of the competition, provided significant learning opportunities and incentive for the membership to embrace new technology: Web sites, on-line distance learning, membership services and instructional DVDs (via "On Court with USPTA™").

Among those of us who worked successfully as managers and tennis teachers without the benefit of computers, the adoption of these new technologies was sometimes slow. Now, we

can learn from that experience and understand how rewarding and profitable it can be to accept change.

In the modern game, forehands and even backhands are rarely hit by standing sideways to the net and swinging our arms forward. There are no more continental grip forehands (and very few true eastern forehands). A simple review of the recently completed 2005 U.S. Open demonstrates the athleticism and changes in today's tennis.

Turn, step and hit has evolved into *load, explode and land*. There is very little step-slide, step-slide, step-slide hit, step-slide, step-slide, step-slide, split step. Instead, players run, load, explode and recover.

Although some of the traditional tennis we teach still has a place in today's game, we as tennis professionals can all move in the direction of a more modern game and feel confident that what we are teaching our students is sound, proven technique. Tennis will not return to the game many of us learned, so it's up to us to make today's game *our* game.



David T. Porter, Ed.D.

