

RECOGNIZING OUR VERY BEST..

by John R. Embree, USPTA Chief Executive Officer

One of our least publicized assets, yet one of the most important, is our own USPTA Hall of Fame. We spend so much talking about the matters that are at the forefront of our association today that not enough time is dedicated to celebrating those figures who have contributed so mightily to our organization over the years and to the game in general. I am reminded of this fact as we recognize the 2018 Grand Inductees into the USPTA Hall of Fame during this year's Tennis Teachers Conference in New York City on the eve of the US Open.

2018 is an anniversary of sorts for our Hall of Fame because it began in 1993. Our first inductee was the beloved Arthur Ashe. Is it not ironic that 25 years before that, Arthur was the first African American male to win a Grand Slam and the first to win the title in the era of open tennis at the US Open? Thus, we are not only celebrating the 25-year anniversary of the USPTA Hall of Fame but also 50 years of open tennis. Where does the time go?

Our second inductee in 1994 was the late, great George Bacso. No one embodied the principals and ideals of the USPTA more than George, who not only served as our national head tester for so many years but also as president of the USPTA from 1978-1980. Since those early days, the USPTA has recognized a total of 19 other giants in the tennis teaching profession, including the late Tim



USPTA Hall of Famers Arthur Ashe and George Bacso.

Heckler, whose name will forever be linked with the USPTA Hall of Fame. All inductees will receive the USPTA Tim Heckler Hall of Fame Award as they are inducted.

This is the association's highest honor afforded any person, national or international, living or deceased. Inductees have given exemplary service to the tennis-teaching profession. Inductees must have momentous international and/or national tennis industry or teaching service, be well known by name to teaching professionals in the country in which they reside and fulfill various other requirements.

Against this set of criteria, we honor our two newest inductees in 2018, Kathy Woods and the late Jimmy Evert. Kathy has had a distinguished 30 year career as a tennis teacher and mentor for so many people, it is hard to count. She has held countless

positions as a director at clubs in Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and in St. Petersburg, Florida before being named the director of tennis at the USTA National Campus in Lake Nona prior to its opening in January 2017.

There, she has grown the teaching staff from nothing to over 24 professionals where local programming is busting at the seams. Most notably, she is the only female president of the USPTA (from 1994-1996) and will only be the second female inducted into our Hall of Fame (the first was Doris Hart in 2012). Congratulations Kathy on this well deserved award.

If there ever was an example of how to be an ideal tennis parent, Jimmy Evert was it. I only wish all tennis parents in today's junior competitive world could conduct themselves like

Evert. A gentlemen's gentleman, he embodied class, dignity, respect and modesty. He raised his five kids to be champions, both on and off the court. But, it wasn't just his own children that he impacted. The Holiday Park Tennis Center in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida was the epicenter of junior development in South Florida in the 70's and 80's, where players could go, hang out and play all day. World class touring pros like Brian and Larry Gottfried, Frank Froehling, Harold Solomon, and later, Jennifer Capriati, along with Chrissie and

her siblings were taught sportsmanship, effort, how to deal with adversity and so much more. I doubt Evert ever raised his voice to anyone.

In recognition of his long-standing service to the Ft. Lauderdale community, Holiday Park was renamed the Jimmy Evert Tennis Center when he retired. A 63-year member of the USPTA, Jimmy passed in 2015 leaving a legacy that will long be remembered.

We are proud to have both Kathy Woods and Jimmy Evert joining the esteemed group of previous inductees who all represent the best that our industry has produced. Each, in their own right, were or are regarded as pioneers in our sport. They will forever be etched in the annals of our association. I am grateful to have known many the inductees in my career. ✨

