



Pride Evans:  
It's all Business for this Georgia Tennis Pro

By Dunn Neugebauer

When you're around Pride Evans, it doesn't take long to know you're around a very astute individual with a mind that never stops. Coming up through the ranks from DeKalb Tennis Center after college, Pride often wandered out by the courts to listen to Crawford Henry teach. It wasn't long before Pride had a racket in his hand; not much longer before he was the assistant pro at Dunwoody Country Club where he continued his education under Joe Dennis. He later moved on to be the Tennis Director at Tam o' Shanter (currently the Country Club of Roswell), then Horseshoe Bend, and to his current rank as the top man at the King & Prince on St. Simon's Island. He is also finishing up a consulting project rebuilding Jekyll Island Tennis Center, which was destroyed by Hurricane Matthew.

It is not Pride's down-to-earth teaching abilities and love of the game, but perhaps his development of the business side of tennis that earn him a place in the Georgia Tennis Hall of Fame. His business acumen drew the AT&T Challenge out of the Omni and into Horseshoe Bend, drawing legendary greats such as John McEnroe, Jimmy Connors and Andre Agassi. His consulting trips have taken him four times to China where he coaches the tennis teachers, and he has consulted with the Royal Family of Saudi Arabia.

When around Pride, it is the short time between his idea and its completion that continues to amaze. "I was on Court 7 at Horseshoe one day watching an ALTA match on Court 5," Pride recalled. "I remember being frustrated, and I told the person I was with, 'tennis must be the only sport in the world where you can see the action but not have a score visible!'" For many, that would be simply a passing observation. For Pride, it was a matter of minutes before he was on the phone with a Georgia Tech acquaintance – Tom Harris - and, not much after that, the Match Mark Tennis Scoreboards were born. They still are out there, for the record, being used across the country.

There's also the time Peter Fleming – former doubles partner of John McEnroe – was supposed to come to Horseshoe for a tennis exhibition. It had been promoted, hyped and advertised, and the crowd wasn't long from showing up. One small problem – Fleming cancelled at the last minute. It would've ended there for most, but Pride immediately got on the phone and rented a helicopter and pilot. He happened to know the U.S. Davis Cup team was practicing nearby, so off he went. Upon landing, he approached Jimmy Arias – at the time ranked #6 in the world – and said, "Jimmy, are you ready to go?" Confused but compliant, Arias got into the helicopter and was dropped down near Court 1 where he proceeded to play an exhibition before the delighted Horseshoe Bend crowd. Pride then put him back in the chopper and got him back to the Davis Cup practice site.

Ironically, Pride didn't grow up with a tennis racket in his hand – he was a football star at nearby Clarkston High School. From there he went on to play cornerback and return punts for Austin Peay University. "Whenever I see a punt returner get whacked, I have flashbacks to this day," Pride said with a laugh. Many tennis players are glad he chose to use his keen insights on tennis rather than eluding tacklers.