



Randy Stephens
How the Battle of the Sexes brought Tennis and Randy Stephens together

By Dunn Neugebauer

Truth be told, Randy Stephens didn't start out as a tennis player. He attended Campbellsville University in Kentucky on a golf and basketball scholarship. "I got to college, and I began to realize that I wasn't really good enough at golf or basketball at that level," Randy recalls. "Then one night, I turned on the TV and watched the Billie Jean King vs. Bobby Riggs tennis match." That was in the early 70s, and it inspired him to put away the golf clubs and the basketball and pick up a tennis racket – a decision that lives with him to this very day.

Randy soon transferred to Georgia State University and finished out his college days as a tennis player, where he was a top-six performer for the Atlanta institution both years. An education major, his original plan was to go into teaching. "That was the agenda, but I knew I enjoyed tennis," he said. "I liked it so much that I taught independently for six months after college. After that I took a job as the Tennis Director at Tam-O-Shanter (now the Country Club of Roswell)." After eight successful years, Randy moved to Macon, where he was the Tennis Director for the city for the next 13 years.

Although Randy eventually stepped off the courts to be a financial adviser for Merrill Lynch, he has been—and remains—an active part of the tennis community. He has volunteered as an assistant coach at Stratford Academy for the past 15 years, and is involved as a player, too. He and partner John Callen have been ranked No. 1 in Georgia and/or the South in every age division from the 35s to their present spot in the 60s slate. He also remains active with the USTA as a member of the Davis Cup, Federation Cup and the Olympic Committees.

Randy's life on the courts, as expected, hasn't been without awards and accolades. He was named Georgia Pro of the Year, Southern Pro of the Year and was the President of the GPTA and USPTA Southern for two terms each. He was President of USTA-Georgia (twice) and USTA-Southern, and is a Hall of Fame member of all four. He served as Chairman of the Tennis Innovative Committee for two terms and chaired the USTA Wheelchair Tennis Committee, also for two terms. The USTA-Southern honored him with the Jacobs Bowl, a lifetime tennis achievement award; the Georgia Tennis Association lauded him with the coveted Ruth Lay Award, also for his lifetime achievements in tennis.

As a speaker, Randy has been everywhere, giving talks at the USPTA National convention several times, the USTA Tennis Conference in New York, the Professional Tennis Registry International Symposium and the Club Managers Association U.S.A., to name a few.

Looking back at it all, he cites two major people as his influences. "John Callen and Peter Howell have both continued to help me throughout the years," Randy said. "They were big influences back when I was a young pro in Atlanta, and they still are to this day. We are still all best of friends." Randy, too, remains a tremendous influence in the tennis world. He has no regrets about converting from basketball or golf into the tennis world. Those he influenced are also glad he chose tennis, and are more than happy that he chose to watch a Battle of the Sexes match back in 1973.