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Billie Jean King is Newest Inductee Into Tennis Industry Hall of Fame

Tennis icon honored in New York City during the US Open.

NEW YORK, NY (Sept. 10, 2010) — Few players, male or female, have had the large-scale impact on or off the tennis court as Billie Jean King—in fact, last year King was awarded the nation’s highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Her impact and influence on the sport and industry of tennis are so significant that she is the newest member inducted into the Tennis Industry Hall of Fame.

“It’s an honor to be a part of the Tennis Industry Hall of Fame, and to follow in the footsteps of Dennis Van der Meer, Howard Head and Alan Schwartz,” said King in a ceremony at the Tennis Industry Association’s Tennis Forum in New York City, during the 2010 US Open tennis tournament. Van der Meer and Head were inducted in 2008, the inaugural year for the Tennis Industry Hall of Fame. Schwartz was inducted last year.

Jeff Williams, publisher of *Tennis Magazine* and chairman of the TIA’s Hall of Fame Committee, introduced King at the Tennis Forum. “We are honoring you because you were the spark,” Williams told the crowd, “the spark that caused a boom. A boom that gave rise to the tennis industry as we know it today. We are all part of an industry that is bigger, an industry that is better, and an industry that is stronger because of you.”

King started playing tennis only because a childhood friend in fifth grade asked her to play. “If she hadn’t asked me, I wouldn’t have started playing,” says King, who likens her experience in tennis to life itself. “Tennis teaches you to keep playing, keep going and maintain optimism in life.”

King began playing Grand Slam tournaments as a teenager in the 1960s. She won her first doubles title at Wimbledon at age 17, and went on to rack up 39 Grand Slam singles, doubles and mixed-doubles titles, including a record 20 titles at Wimbledon (six singles, 14 doubles and mixed doubles).

It wasn’t enough just to play the game, though; King made it better. She campaigned for equal prize money for men and women; her efforts helped make that goal a reality at the US Open in 1973, and eventually at all four major tournaments. She led efforts among players to support the first women’s professional tour.

A defining moment for King, for tennis, and for women in sports came in 1973, when she beat Bobby Riggs in the nationally televised Battle of the Sexes match. Her 6-4, 6-3, 6-3 win was a pivotal point for tennis, and it cemented her status as an icon in both the sports world and in pop culture in general.

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She founded the Women's Tennis Association in 1973, the Women's Sports Foundation and *Women's Sports Magazine* in 1974, and also in 1974, co-founded World TeamTennis, the groundbreaking co-ed professional tennis league. She also founded the WTT Recreational League, one of the most popular recreational tennis formats in the U.S. Her involvement with the sport continues today; she is a member of the President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition and remains involved with the U.S. Tennis Association.

King continues to push barriers, both inside and outside of tennis. In 2007, she co-founded GreenSlam, an environmental initiative for the sports industry. She was named Global Mentor for Gender Equality by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2008. She continues to be a leader in the fight for equality and recognition in the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community.

In 2009, at the White House, President Obama presented her with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, making her the first female athlete to be so honored. "We honor what she did to broaden the reach of the game, to change how women athletes and women everywhere view themselves, and to give everyone—including my two daughters—a chance to compete both on the court and in life," the President said in presenting the honor.

King's significant contributions on the court, to the sport itself, and to society were noted when in 2006, the National Tennis Center was renamed the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center. The court on which generations of players will set their own milestones and break their own barriers now carries the name of one of the first players to do that.

About the Tennis Industry Hall of Fame

Created in 2008, the Tennis Industry Hall of Fame recognizes those individuals who have made a significant impact on tennis, from the 1960s to the present. Nominations can be made in four categories—inventors, founders, innovators and contributors. The first two inductees were Dennis Van der Meer and the late Howard Head. Last year, Alan Schwartz was the sole inductee. Plaques for all Tennis Industry Hall of Fame inductees are on permanent display at the International Tennis Hall of Fame in Newport, R.I. For more information, visit TennisIndustry.org/HOF.

About the TIA

The Tennis Industry Association, the not-for-profit trade association for tennis, is THE unifying force in the tennis industry whose mission is to promote the growth and economic vitality of tennis by working closely with the U.S. Tennis Association and industry partners to develop and implement initiatives to increase tennis participation and improve the health of industry businesses. Core TIA activities include TIA/USTA Annual Participation Study, Consumer and Trade Research, GrowingTennis System™ including Tennis Welcome Centers, Cardio Tennis, 50-50 Co-op Program, QuickStart Tennis and TennisConnect.org. Visit TennisIndustry.org or call 866-686-3036.

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