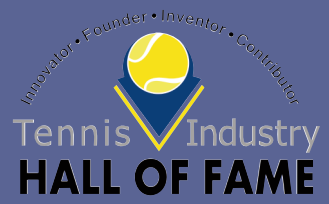


The inaugural class of the Tennis Industry Hall of Fame pays tribute to two pioneers who literally changed this sport for millions of players. While both Howard Head and Dennis Van der Meer will be honored for their contributions to tennis at the TIA Forum on Aug. 25 in New York City, you can see what they have meant to tennis at any time, on any court in the world, wherever recreational and pro players gather to play this wonderful game.



Dennis Van der Meer

The “greatest teacher ever” has transformed how tennis is taught.

When you look at all the people in this business who have had an impact on the recreational game of tennis, one name keeps coming up: Dennis Van der Meer. No one in this sport has had such a direct influence on more recreational players throughout the world.

Let’s start with the obvious: For more than 55 years, Van der Meer has personally taught tens of thousands of people to play this game. But beyond that, he is the consummate “teacher of teachers,” and his influence in tennis extends to *millions* of recreational players around the world.

squarely—and permanently—aimed at teaching tennis.

In Johannesburg, he quickly made a name for himself as an engaging and talented teacher. It was there that one of his legendary traits became well-known: Even in clinics with more than 100 people, Van der Meer knew everybody’s name. The *San Francisco Examiner* picked up on this and wrote a story, then invited the young teaching pro to participate in a large clinic in Northern California. Van der Meer quickly developed a large following in the U.S., and eventually started coaching pro players, including Margaret Court and Billie Jean King. In fact, Van der Meer was King’s coach during the “Battle of the Sexes” match with Bobby Riggs in 1973.

Soon, Van der Meer and King launched a series of tennis camps in Lake Tahoe, Nev., and advertised for teaching pros. When it became apparent that the different teaching methods each pro brought were confusing to students, they set out to standardize a teaching method.

“Our pupils became overwhelmed and discouraged by too many choices,” Van der Meer says. “A systematic approach was needed to make learning tennis simple, especially for the novice, and teachers needed guidelines to ensure professionalism.” This led to the birth of TennisUniversity, aimed at developing top teaching pros.

In 1976, Van der Meer founded the U.S. Professional Tennis Registry to certify teaching pros and teach the Standard Method. Now, the PTR, based in Hilton Head, S.C., has nearly 13,000 members in 126 countries and is a driving force behind growing the game.

“Dennis Van der Meer ... has influenced the entire tennis teaching world with his innovative techniques,” says King.

All along his path, Van der Meer has won praise and honors. In 1972, the U.S. State Department cited him for exceptional coaching performance in the Middle East. He was presented with the Healthy American Fitness Award in 1989, was named Developmental Coach of the Year by the U.S. Olympic Committee in 1997, and in 2004, received an honorary doctorate from the University of Greenwich, England, for his contributions to Sport Sciences in tennis education.

He’s received the Tennis Educational Merit Award from the International Tennis Hall of Fame and is in the Tennis Halls of Fame for USTA South Carolina, the USTA Southern Section, and USTA Northern California. And while he has yet to be inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame, he was a nominee for induction in 2007.

“Dennis has so enhanced our profession,” says Santorum. “He’s raised the level of tennis teachers, and in doing so, he’s brought the game to millions around the world.”

“There’s no question that Dennis is the greatest tennis teacher ever,” says Dan Santorum, the CEO of the PTR. “I don’t think anybody even comes close to what Dennis has done. I think the thing that always impressed me is how he did it day after day.”

“After 27 years of marriage, I’m still in awe of how much energy and enthusiasm he generates for the game of tennis,” says Pat Van der Meer. “And he gives

this energy across the board—he cares equally about the improvement of a beginning player as he does for a world champion.”

Born in 1933, Van der Meer spent his early years living in small villages in what is now Namibia in southern Africa. His father was a missionary, and to keep young Dennis occupied in those remote locations, his mother developed a game that involved a rope strung between two sticks, with lines drawn in the dirt. “I fell in love with this sport,” Van der Meer says. “And when my family moved to South Africa, I became a tournament player.”

At age 19, in a Davis Cup trial, Van der Meer choked on a critical point, and his playing career suddenly stalled. His coach at the time suggested Van der Meer teach tennis, to help him regain his confidence. Six months later, Van der Meer had a renewed confidence, but now his focus was

