

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH CHRIS EVERT

SUBJECT: TENNIS AND ITS POSITIVE IMPACT

MODERATOR: ANGELA GREILING KEANE, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

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ANGELA GREILING KEANE: (Sounds gavel.) Good afternoon, and welcome to the National Press Club. My name is Angela Greiling Keane. I am a reporter for Bloomberg News and I'm the 106th President of the National Press Club. We are the world's leading professional organization for journalists committed to our profession's future through events such as this while fostering a free press worldwide. For more information about the National Press Club, please visit our website at www.press.org. To donate to programs offered to the public through our National Press Club Journalism Institute, please visit www.press.org/institute.

On behalf of our members worldwide, I'd like to welcome our speaker today and those of you in our audience today. Our head table includes guests of our speaker as well as working journalists who are Club members. If you hear applause from our audience, I'd note that members of the general public are also attending so it's not necessarily evidence of a lack of journalistic objectivity.

I'd also like to welcome our C-SPAN and Public Radio audiences. Our luncheons are featured on our weekly member-produced weekly Podcast from the National Press Club available on iTunes. You can follow the action today on Twitter using the hashtag NPCLunch. After our guest's speech concludes, we'll have a question and answer period. I'll ask as many questions as time permits. Now it's time to introduce our head table guests. I'd ask each of you to stand briefly as your name is announced.

From your right, Joe Motheral, columnist for the *Loudoun Times Mirror* and Chairman of the Press Club's Book and Author Committee; Wes Pippert, a professor

emeritus from the University of Missouri; Rod Kuckro, a freelance editor; Katrina Adams, First Vice President of the USTA and a former professional tennis player; Michelle Salcedo, a desk editor for the Associated Press and the immediate past President of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists; Dave Haggerty, Chairman, CEO and President of the USTA.

Skipping over the podium, Donna Leinwand Leger, a reporter for *USA Today*, the 2009 National Press Club President and the Speakers Committee member who organized today's lunch. Thank you, Donna, for that. Skipping over our speaker for a moment, Captain Kevin Wensing, ret., U.S. Navy and a National Press Club member and a member of the USTA Advocacy Committee; Katherine Skiba, a Washington correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune*; Robert Yin, Director of Political Research for CNN; Alan Schlaifer, President of the Wharton Club and contributing editor of *Resort Trades*; and Alison Fitzgerald, project manager for financial and state news for the Center for Public Integrity and the Chairwoman of the National Press Club's Speakers Committee. (Applause)

Long before Venus and Serena, there was Chrissie. No need for a surname, everyone knew who you meant. Our guest today is Chris Evert, who dominated women's tennis, indeed all tennis, for more than a decade. She held the title as the world's number one singles player from 1974 through 1978, again in 1980 and '81, and finally in 1985 when at the ripe old age of 30 and 11 months, she became the oldest woman to be ranked number one.

Along the way, she won 18 Grand Slams, 157 singles championships and 29 doubles titles. She reached the finals 34 times in Grand Slam events, more than any player, man or woman, in the history of professional tennis. And trust me, you don't want to go up against this Florida girl on a clay court.

At the age of 15 on a clay court in Charlotte, North Carolina, Miss Evert defeated Margaret Court, then the world's number one player, in a semifinal match. Thirty years later, Miss Evert's winning percentage on clay courts remains a Women's Tennis Association world record. Miss Evert, at 16, played her first Grand Slam tournament in 1971, losing ultimately in a semifinal to our USTA guest last year, tennis legend Billie Jean King. By 1974, she had won both the French Open and Wimbledon.

Miss Evert's one true rival was Martina Navratilova, who emerged on the tennis scene in the late 1970s. September 8th, 1984, is remembered as one of the great days in tennis history when Navratilova took on Evert in one of the most thrilling and hard fought matches of all time. While Serena Williams is the wrong generation to be considered a rival, Miss Evert sparked controversy in 2006 when she penned a public "Dear Serena" letter urging the young star to buckle down and fulfill her potential. (Laughter) One might argue that it worked.

Today, Miss Evert will talk about how tennis can have a positive impact on a community, a topic that ties back to her childhood. Miss Evert learned tennis from her

father, Jimmy Evert, a professional player who was once ranked number eight in the world. She learned on municipal courts in downtown Fort Lauderdale's Holiday Park. Upon his retirement in 1997, the City of Fort Lauderdale honored its patriarch of tennis by renaming the former Holiday Park Center the Jimmy Evert Tennis Center.

Chris Evert, twice President of the Women's Tennis Association, is carrying on that tradition of community service. She founded the Pro Celebrity Tennis Classic in Boca Raton, Florida, that since 1989 has raised more than \$20 million for at risk children in Florida. She also helps coach the tennis team at a local high school where she holds the humble title of assistant tennis coach. (Laughter)

Since 2001, she has been the Publisher of *Tennis Magazine* and she is active in the U.S. Tennis Association's foundation, USTA Serves. Please join me in giving a warm National Press Club welcome to Chris Evert. (Applause)

MS. EVERT: Thank you. Can I do this?

MS. GREILING KEANE: Sure.

MS. EVERT: Thank you. It's my pleasure to be here. It's really an honor. I listened to Billie Jean King's speech. Any of you here last year? Listening to Billie Jean, the greatest pioneer of women's sports, and I was just so impressed when you guys asked me to also be a speaker for this year, so thank you. I'd like to get a couple of other thank yous, the National Press Club and its President, Angela, thank you so very, very much for the kind introduction.

The officers and also the Board of Governors, the NPC Speakers Committee, Kevin Winseng, a special thank you to you. Dave Haggerty, the USTA President, thank you. One of the nicest presidents that we've ever had. And one of the nicest vice presidents in Katrina Adams, thank you. Katrina was also a tennis professional playing, she's a little younger than me, but a very good player in her own right. And the rest of the USTA board. I think a lot of you are scattered around the room. Gordon Smith, also, Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer of the USTA. And Kurt Kamperman, the Chief Executive of Community Tennis. I wanted to get all of that. Barry Ford, Director of Public Affairs and Advocacy, thank you very much also.

I'm really happy to be here to support the United States Tennis Association in its effort to grow the sport of tennis throughout all the communities throughout the country. And also to make it a vital part of more communities and more lives. Obviously, I've had a lifelong love affair with tennis and I know firsthand about the sport's many, many benefits. I know how tennis can enhance lives and really have a positive impact on communities.

I've seen the way in which it can connect families and open doors of opportunity for a lot of people. I've seen how tennis can give kids direction, self confidence, give them goals, get them feeling good about themselves. I've seen that firsthand. I've seen

how it can connect a group of middle aged adults playing in leagues all over the country, and also how it can keep a 75 year old very active and very engaged and living a healthier lifestyle. So as you see, the wonderful, wonderful thing about tennis is you can be five years old or you can be 85 years old and you can still enjoy the benefits.

Tennis was a big part of my life, and tennis still is very much a big part of my life; and also my whole family, the Evert family. Growing up, as Angela was saying, my whole family played. And pretty much from the time I was able to lift a racquet, I was hitting with my dad and loving every minute of it. My dad was the teaching pro at Holiday Park and which Angela said now is the Jimmy Evert Tennis Center which is really wonderful.

But these courts at Holiday Park really in the '70s, public courts, were the place to be. I mean, it was the Mecca of tennis. We've heard since about Bolletteiri's and other academies, but this public facility was the Mecca in the '70s. At one point, I think it was in 1974, there were seven juniors that played in Wimbledon. And that's just the beginning of it.

More than that, though, Holiday Park was the happiest place that I could ever be because I was with my friends, I was with my family. We'd play tennis all day, but in between court time, we'd also, with all my friends, we'd play cards, we'd play backgammon, we'd throw a football, we'd chat. I mean, it was really-- my life was there all day.

My dad was a tennis pro, as I said before, he played on the tour also. And he made a point of introducing the sport to all five of his kids. Every one of my siblings was a national champion, won national titles. And my sister, Jeannie, and I were both tennis professionals and Jeannie played on the tour. And my sister, Claire and brothers John and Drew, all used the sport to earn college scholarships and future-- their education and playing number one for their college teams. And my dad didn't have to pay a cent for college. He was very happy about that. (Laughter)

And every one of us is still involved in some way in the sport. That's how much it meant to us as a family. I was good enough, and fortunate enough, to make a great career from tennis. But there are tens of thousands of other people across the country who've never played in the U.S. Open, who've never played in Wimbledon, never played in the French Open, but I'm sure would tell you the same thing. They would say how many great virtues there are in tennis.

Tennis can be a passport to a better, happier and healthier life. It can be played and enjoyed by people of every age and ability. It is a powerful tool for connecting people of different backgrounds, for fostering friendships and for building more vibrant and vital communities. And that's why it is the greatest sport out there.

I can still recall after I became number one in the world, I had a talk with my dad and I asked him, I said, "Dad, why did you start all of us kids playing tennis?" And I was

thinking he would have this sort of romantic or exciting answer like, “Well, I wanted you kids to travel the world, and I wanted you to meet people. Or, I wanted you to be successful and earn a good living and win some titles.” But instead he said, “I wanted to keep you kids off the streets.” Nice, Dad. I wasn’t happy. That was unacceptable to me at that time. It was almost rude. It was almost borderline rude. Because I was thinking, “Okay, I’m not in a gang. I’m just--“ I don't know, it just was kind of a rude-- I’m not a hoodlum.

But he saw tennis as a vehicle that would provide us with a place to go after school, a sort of safe haven, somewhere where he could look after us. And he also saw tennis as something that we could have some goals and really strive and try to achieve those goals. That may not have been the answer I was expecting, but my reply is, as I get older, my father gets smarter because I’m a parent now with three kids and I understand 100 percent what he means. Idle time is not productive for kids.

That’s especially important to remember these days-- this is important. Every day more than 15 million school aged children in this country, so that’s a full 26 percent, don’t have access to quality after school or summertime programming opportunities. They don’t have anything to do. They don’t have access to that.

And this is where the USTA comes in. The USTA, through its network of more than 600 national junior tennis and learning chapters is working hard to reach these kids, large majority of them in underserved communities to offer them a place to go and to get them the opportunity to have a better life for themselves. NJTL chapters offer tennis instruction, educational guidance and outstanding mentors, often people who have been through the programs before.

They’re taking kids who may have been on the fast track to nowhere and putting them on a highway towards success. Importantly, the number of kids playing tennis in the U.S. is on the rise thanks, in large part, to the USTA’s 10 and Under tennis initiative which scales the sport to the size of the child. I don't know how many of you are familiar with this, but this to me is very, very exciting because for so many years, tennis was losing a large number of kids to team sports. And do you know why? Because tennis, when you began tennis, basically you had a racquet and a ball and you had to get the ball over the net. Many times, a beginner is hitting the ball in the net, is hitting the ball out.

And I remember for myself, I was picking up balls most of the time. I mean, that was really no fun until I got to be a little bit better. In other team sports like soccer, you can kick the ball around. You can be successful right at a young age and you’re happy with what you’re doing. So with this tennis initiative, it’s great because it means that more likely kids are going to enjoy it right from the start and also more likely to stick with it.

Thanks to smaller racquets, you’ve probably seen these little, small racquets, right? These little small racquets, okay? These are the small racquets with this 10 and Under initiative. Thanks to the smaller racquets, the shorter courts and lower bouncing balls, kids are able to experience success now at a much younger age.

Now, I read that and I 100 percent agree with that. But then I thought, “Well, yeah but when I was playing with my dad’s big racquet like this, that’s how I developed a two-handed backhand,” because the racquet kept falling out of my hands. I couldn’t hold it with one hand, and so I grabbed it with two hands and so did Bjorn Borg and everybody else in that era that had two-handed backhands. And now, it’s become probably the most famous shot. So that’s just one small exception to the rule.

Anyway, the largest increase in player participation last year was among kids 6 to 11 and I think this is one of the reasons why. Including 100 percent increase in kids 10 and under competition. Significantly, there has been a healthy increase also in participation among African American and Hispanic kids as well. In fact, tennis participation among African American kids reached a ten year high in 2012, and obviously that's because they have some good mentors.

That's not only creating a stronger player base, but it’s also creating stronger and obviously healthier kids. An individual sport like tennis teaches self reliance and self motivation, which can only be a positive for these kids, for their families and the communities in which they live.

The impact that tennis can have on kids is obviously significant. According to a study released earlier this year by the USTA Serves, the National Charitable Foundation of the USTA, kids who play tennis are more likely to get better grades, spend more time studying, and attend college than kids who participate in other sports or are non-athletes. And I can kind of attest to that in the sense that I wasn't a genius in school, but I would go to school and I would go right to the tennis courts and hit for, like, two hours. Then I would go right home and do my homework. And I just whizzed through that homework. Sorry, but you know, it’s not only tennis but exercise in general. With kids, your minds are clear, they're sharper, you're much more alert and I felt that way in school when I had phys ed. The next class after phys ed, that class, I was the sharpest I was all day. I mean, there's kind of a lesson there to be learned about tennis and sports in general.

By the way, a full 81 percent of these tennis playing kids plan to attend college, which is great. And as my dad would be quick to point out, kids who play tennis also are much less likely to get in trouble or engage in unhealthy behavior such as drugs, drinking and smoking. And in this age of rampant childhood obesity, young tennis players are much less likely to be, or to become, overweight. And that’s why the USTA is so committed to reaching these kids. They're reaching into the schools and in the public parks where 70 percent of tennis played in this country. Remember that, the schools and the public parks.

In 2012, the USTA invested \$4.8 million in youth tennis initiatives. They're providing programs and facility assistance, building and refurbishing courts so that kids in every community will have a safe and fun gathering sport. Earlier this year, as part of the commitment to the First Lady, Michelle Obama's terrific Let’s Move Initiative, which is designed to get kids active and engaged, the USTA celebrated the creation of its

10,000th youth sized court in the U.S. at Tamiami Park in Miami. That's 10,000 places for kids to come together in their own community to play a great sport and have a great time. Ten thousand places to be safe and be with friends, to be a kid and build a dream of being a Venus or a Serena. That's a milestone that's worth celebrating and there are more to come.

The USTA is working hard to make tennis easier to play for young people and more accessible and more enjoyable for people of every age and ability. Just last year, they invested more than \$50 million in community tennis programming. In fact, now more than 28 million play in the U.S.

I think a lot of tennis growth has to do with the fact that it's such a great social sport. The friendships that you can make through tennis are the sort of friendships that last a lifetime. And I know the people I've met are still my best friends. I mean, I competed with Martina Navratilova and we had some brutal, brutal exchanges and matches. And maybe seemingly to the press and the public, we weren't best friends and didn't get along. But we always respected each other and were always there for each other.

Very often, and this is something that people don't know, very often we were left alone in that locker room on finals day. The locker room would clear out because there are no longer 128 women. Everyone had lost, it was just Martina and I in the finals. One of us, honestly, would always be crying. Honestly, after the match. And the other one would be comforting her. And that is the truth. It was one of those things that you just - you just get to know each other so well and you see through their soul. So Martina and I were very, very close even though we were competitive, and we still are. I mean, we see each other a lot. She lives in Miami, I live in Boca. She has a place in Colorado and we still spend a lot of time together, which is great.

Billie Jean is another great friend of mine. She continues to be my mentor. And if I ever have any problems, she's the first one I go to. She has one of the wisest minds I've ever known. And even Pam Shriver, she's my ESPN colleague. We both have three kids, so we both have a lot in common and we have a lot of laughs. Her three kids are really small and she has no idea of the problems that will arise. She has no idea. She's, you know-- her stories, she gets no sympathy from me, that's for sure. And I know that I will always be friends with these women because-- and that's through tennis. That's the only-- just through tennis.

So that's great combination of competition and camaraderie has helped to fuel the success of USTA league play for adults. Now, that's the largest recreational tennis league in the country and one of the greatest success stories in the sport. Listen to this number. More than 800,000 adult participants play league tennis, and that number is growing every year because the USTA league combines the thrill of competing with a great social atmosphere and does a great job in keeping its participants active, involved and healthy.

They also do a great job for people with disabilities offering wheelchair and adaptive tennis programming and hosting dozens of wheelchair tennis events so that players have a place to play and compete. And I see the U.S. Open and even this year, I watched at the Australia Open, the wheelchair tennis. And it's just awesome to see how they're getting around and how strong they are and how good they are and what great timing they have and how enthusiastic they are. And I love it that there are events at Grand Slams so everybody can see how wonderful these players are and these people are.

Maybe one of the most significant and important things that the USTA has undertaken in an effort to strengthen communities and keep them whole is its military outreach program which features great initiatives like adopt a unit that provides tennis equipment to deployed forces so that they can enjoy the sport in the precious downtime that they have. The USTA is also reaching out to military families to try to make their lives a bit lighter through the sport and they're using tennis as part rehabilitation and reintegration programs for our wounded warriors.

They've done so much, so many different programs. You know, it's been more than a few years since I learned the game on those courts with my dad at Holiday Park. But, that experience and those memories are never far removed from me, I think about them a lot. Wherever I go, and whatever I do, they're on my mind and I remember being an 11 year old kid at Holiday Park like it was yesterday hitting with my mom, trying to show her how I was improving. And even trying to beat her. And my mom is now 85 years old and I still hit with her three times a week. (Applause) I'm amazed at how-- I tell you what, everybody thinks I got my mental toughness from my dad. No way, I got it from my mom. She is unbelievable. I'm still hitting with her and she's still enjoying it and I'm still in awe of her. She moves around the court and how competitive she is. It's just come full circle and things have come in full circle. But that circle still revolves around a little yellow tennis ball.

And for me and for my family, it always will. I consider us extremely fortunate in that regard and I wish the same for families and for communities everywhere because there's nothing quite like the sport of tennis.

You know, I sincerely hope that all of you will continue to support the USTA's efforts. And I personally applaud them for not only putting on the greatest tennis show in the world during the U.S. Open, but also for their continuous contributions to the game of tennis on every level. And again, it's my pleasure and privilege to be here today. Thank you so much. (Applause)

MS. GREILING KEANE: Thank you, we have a lot of questions.

MS. EVERT: Oh, I'm sure you do. I'm sure you do.

MS. GREILING KEANE: Starting off on your topic, kids, questioner asks are today's kids too much into Twitter and technology and not enough into tennis or other physical activity? What's the best way for kids to start without a special program?

MS. EVERT: Do they think I'm a psychologist or something, a therapist? Gees. I mean, yeah, I think that there is definitely too much-- I think there's too much of that stuff going on and there's less activity and that's why there's a problem with childhood obesity and that's why there are so many programs out there. I think that a lot of kids, it's just easier to just lay around and watch TV and do their video games and get on their computer. I mean, I see it with my kids. I have to tell them to get out. Sometimes, I have to say-- I have to play tennis with them just to get them out, which is kind of a pain for me to keep doing that. You know, okay, "third one, out. Out of your room. Let's go, let's go hit some balls."

So definitely, I think there's a real problem there. And that's why physical activity is really better. It's interesting that you ask that because I had a child in middle school and we had a meeting-- the teachers wanted to call the middle school parents in because there was a problem with the girls. There were like five or six girls that were just at each other and they were like middle school girls can be. Toughest time in their life is middle school. And I was sitting and listening to the moms and the mom's going, "Well this one said this, and your daughter said this, and she said this and she said this on Twitter. She said this on Facebook." And none of the boys' mothers were talking.

So finally I said, "Hello, I'm a boy's mother, so excuse me. But are any of your girls in after school activities or in sports?" And they look at me, "Like, no." And I said, "Well, are they in drama, are they in music or art or something?" And they said, "No." And I said, "Okay, that's your problem. You have too much time after school. Your kids aren't doing anything after school. What else are they going to do?" So you got to keep your kids active after school. Or, your grandkids. (Laughter)

MS. GREILING KEANE: D.C. is home to the record-setting Washington Kastles, 32 straight wins, this questioner says. Are they and other pro teams doing enough to support your programs?

MS. EVERT: What? Wait, the Kastles? You're talking about World Team Tennis?

MS. GREILING KEANE: Yes.

MS. EVERT: World Team Tennis? Okay.

MS. GREILING KEANE: Right. Are you getting support for your efforts from Kastles and other teams like them?

MS. EVERT: Well, first of all, World Team Tennis is Billie Jean's, that's her baby and she really believes in that team aspect which I love. I love the team aspect. But World Team Tennis is in kind of a league of its own. Basically, is it helping tennis? Yes. Is it helping participation? Yes. Is it helping spectators come and watch tennis in the cities that can't have tournaments because there's a limited schedule for professional

tournaments, they can't be in every city in the country. So that's where World Team Tennis comes in.

It's a great addition to tennis around the country, no doubt about it. And I know that wasn't the answer you were looking for, but I just thought I'd-- we're all in this together. We're all in this together, tennis.

MS. GREILING KEANE: There you go.

MS. EVERT: Okay?

MS. GREILING KEANE: This questioner asks, "Is tennis boring? Could it use a few hotheaded players to liven it up?" (Laughter)

MS. EVERT: Well, that's a loaded question there, boy. All right, bring John McEnroe back. See, I don't care. Is tennis boring? You know, I tell you what. It's a difficult TV sport because you turn on golf and you see everybody, you see the field, right? You see everybody. "Oh my gosh, you know, there's Sergio. Oh my gosh, there's Tiger." You see everybody. In tennis, it better be a good match or you're going to turn it off, right? Or unless the commentators are great, you know, then you're going to listen to the commentating, which I hope you do, on ESPN.

So, I think that makes a lot of sense. If you've got a poor match, it can be boring, definitely. But if you have an exciting match, there's nothing better. We've seen Federer and Nadal play some five set matches that are incredible. So, you know, you have to take that chance, I guess. I don't think that tennis playing is boring, but the match can be boring.

MS. GREILING KEANE: All right, you mentioned you're commentating on ESPN. Obviously, tennis is a sport where there's more gender equity in commentating on ESPN than any other sports. Is there a need for more women commentators in other sports?

MS. EVERT: Yeah. I see women commentators in other sports, definitely. I mean, obviously women's sports, I think it's-- you know what? I don't know. Really, I say I think, I think, I think. I have to confess, I don't sit there and watch-- I don't turn on sports every single day and weekend because having been an athlete, when I want to-- when I have free time, I really don't want to watch sports, sorry. But I'd rather be with my kids or watch a movie or listen to music or read a book, that's more relaxing. But as far as I can see, I think the commentating, and I say this watching women's sports, yes, there are women commentators and analysts. Watching football, baseball, probably not. (Laughter) Now that I think of it, probably not. I mean, the women are on the field doing the on the field interviews. But I don't see enough of them broadcasting or in the studio. That could improve.

MS. GREILING KEANE: You just told us to take our kids out rather than sitting in front of the screen watching.

MS. EVERT: Smarty Pants.

MS. GREILING KEANE: You've been active for many years on the issue of equity and prize money for women's tennis, even threatening at one point not to play Wimbledon unless the purse was split evenly among men and women. Today, what advances have been made on that issue since you were playing?

MS. EVERT: Well, I think one comparison was made that Billie Jean King-- okay, Serena Williams earned more money last year's-- by winning Wimbledon than Billie Jean did in her whole career. And I think somebody brought that up. So, I think that's your answer. There's tremendous money now, thanks to her. You know, she was the one that went knocking on doors and got Phillip Morris, along with Gladys Heldman, and formed the Women's Tennis Association, the WTA. Billie Jean, we're very lucky to have had her in our sport.

And by the way, was part of that that I threatened to boycott? Did you read that? Okay, let me just tell you one thing. Billie Jean King was the President of the WTA and she basically scared me into being Vice President underneath her. She threatened me, harassed me, everything. "You're going to be the future, you're going to be the future number one. They're going to listen to you. You better speak up. You better learn about the game, and you better lead." And I was like, "Okay, Billie Jean, whatever you say." So she really mentored both Martina, because Martina also was president for a few years, Martina and I, on being leaders when she was finished with her tennis because somebody had to carry the torch.

So thank heaven she did because I wouldn't have probably-- I never spoke up about anything so I probably never would have volunteered. But she was a great mentor and really helped both Martina and I along as far as the politics of the game.

MS. GREILING KEANE: Along the same lines, the questioner asks, "Do women today have true parity on the tour in terms of money and endorsements?"

MS. EVERT: Well, I think as far as prize money, prize money's great. In all the Grand Slams, the prize money is equal now right down to the first round, which I think is great. I think also the first round prize money has gone up, which I think is wonderful, too. I think it's gone up to a point where-- David, maybe correct me if I'm wrong, is it up around 25, 30 thousand?

MR. HAGGERTY: Twenty-five thousand to thirty thousand.

MS. EVERT: Twenty-five thousand to thirty thousand if you lose the first round. Which means that if you play all four Grand Slams, you've earned enough to hire a coach for the year. Because a lot of these players don't have coaches. It's very

expensive. We pay for all our travel. We're not on a team where they pay for everything. We have to pay for everything; our coaches, our hotels, our travel, da, da, da. So I think the prize money's-- players have nothing to complain about. As far as endorsements, I don't know because I think only they know what they make. I think a lot of the numbers are fabricated.

MS. GREILING KEANE: We have a lot of questions about regaining dominance in U.S. tennis. Take this one. It's been ten years since an American man has won a Grand Slam and though the Williams Sisters have dominated the women's circuit since the late 1990s, they're both closer to the end of their careers than beginning. What does the future hold for American tennis and how does the sport work to develop the next generation of greats?

MS. EVERT: Well, that's a question that we've had to face for like the last five years, really. I mean, when Venus and Serena came on the scene, American tennis was looking great. We had Andy Roddick as the top American male and then all of a sudden, players from other countries started to dominate and all of a sudden everyone was shooting arrows at the USTA saying, "What's wrong with our player development? How come there are no American champions?" And I'm thinking to myself, "Okay, when I played the game and there were some top American players, there were maybe players from ten countries playing." And now, I think there are players from-- I might have read it wrong-- but from over 200 countries that are playing professional tennis.

So the world has caught up with America, is what's happened, and it's become a much more international sport where tennis is number one or number two in those smaller countries. So they've got all the money, they put all their finances into tennis because it is number one and number two. And they get some players who are really hungry, hungry, hungry, hungry to get out of their country. I mean, you look at Russia. I mean, Russia for a while was huge in women's tennis. There are like 15 Russian players in the top 100 in the world. Think they wanted to get out of their country and come to America, the land of freedom, the land of glamour, the land of everything that you could wish for. And they were hungry.

And that's one thing that I think our players might lack a little bit, is that hunger that these other European countries have, these other countries that don't live as nicely as we do. But the world has caught up. And I have to say my tennis academy the Evert Tennis Academy, is right on the same grounds with the USTA player development down in Boca. So I go over there and I see what's going on. I can kind of see, you know, the coaches over there and the players that come in.

And there's been a real turnover. There's been a real change in the last couple years as far as the focus that the USTA has put on the players and trying to develop champions. And I think we've seen some results with Sloane Stephens and Madison Keys and Bethanie Mattek-Sands right now is a hot player. I think we skipped a generation after Serena and Venus. Okay, that's lost, we're not going to get that back. But I see a lot of players from 18 to 21 that are starting to make their move, American players. And I

think we're going to see some good results really soon.

MS. GREILING KEANE: NBA player Jason Collins made headlines recently by announcing that he's gay. That's more than 30 years after your friend Martina came out in 1981. Why do you think achieving this milestone in a men's pro sport took so much longer than in tennis?

MS. EVERT: God. I mean, really. Okay, that's really deep. That's a deep psychological question. Well, I guess I can say that when Martina and Billie Jean came out earlier, it still was taboo, basically, to be gay. And it was not talked about. And I think the world is just so much different now. In the last 30 years, I think we are so much more open-minded, and maybe it's because of the wars and the catastrophes that have happened. Maybe we are more compassionate and we have more kindness and we're more patient with differences in people because of everything that's gone on in the last 30 years. But the attitude of the people in the world, and especially in this country, is so much different.

And it was like Martina was the first, you know? And women were-- you know, women tennis players already up until that point were a little masculine and they were strong and muscles and that wasn't attractive. Nowadays, it is. I mean, to have muscles is like, you know, you're a Hollywood star if you have muscles and you're an athlete. And every girl wants to become an athlete and it's appealing. And being strong is very attractive now. Being strong 30 years ago was looked down upon and it was taboo and it was very masculine.

I think it's great. I think the reaction has been great, but I would expect it to be great with Jason and it's time. It's time. You know, people are ready to accept differences and alternate lifestyles. People are just, I think-- we're just open-minded and more free in our thinking, thank heavens.

MS. GREILING KEANE: Do you care to offer any reaction to Jimmy Connors' recently published memoir in which, of course, he writes about you?

MS. EVERT: No. (Laughter and Applause)

MS. GREILING KEANE: On to grunting where we have several questions. Let's take this one. Talk about grunting. You were quoted about a year ago saying players should call a hindrance. Could you further explain your point of view?

MS. EVERT: I said that? (Laughter) I said that. I think that was one of the things that was talked about, was what happens if a player is grunting so loud that it's bothering your tennis. I think my point was nobody's ever challenged it. No one's gone up to the umpire and said, "I'm not going to play. It's bothering me, it's a hindrance, I'm not going to play." So that theory hasn't been tested. But, I think the thinking now is that there's nothing we can do about the Maria Sharapovas or the Azarenkas when they're grunting because if you play them now, the umpire or the referee will look at you and

say, "Well, it didn't bother you two months ago when you played her." So, there's really-- I think it's a lost-- it's not a good reason.

I think all we can do right now is let these players grunt, but try to bring up the young players-- I know the WTA is doing that, and the USTA and all the coaches are kind of in this together, as to not bring up young players to make these noises that are not attractive and that turn off the viewers. So we can just start with the younger generation right now to try to prevent it.

MS. GREILING KEANE: In addition to that, what are the key points you stress with up and coming young players at your academy? And what's the difference between a prodigy who achieves greatness and one who goes off the rails, so to speak?

MS. EVERT: Yeah, we have a lot of kids coming through the Evert Academy and also the USTA has a lot of kids coming through their system, too. And I think the number one thing is are they hungry? You know, are they going to fight? The number one thing to me is the mental part. Are they good competitors? Are they going to fight? Even when they're losing, are they going to fight?

On a physical note, the second thing that I would look for is are they good athletes physically, you know? Do they move around the court? How well do they move? How well is their hand-eye coordination? How good is their court sense? There are a lot of kids that come through that start with tennis that I feel would be better put into team sports because not every kid can handle being an individual tennis player. It's a different pressure. It's much more intense at a young age, especially if you have a coach or a parent who's on you, because you do feel the pressure. You don't have any camaraderie as far as if you're in a team sport. Some kids can't handle that. They want to have that cushion, they want to have-- you know, they want to have that protectiveness with having other kids on a team.

So, tennis is not for every young kid as far as if they're going to have a goal, if they're going to have a dream of being an athlete. And the beauty is, not that I'm trying to take kids away from tennis, but the beauty is that there are many, many choices out there to be in a sport that you're comfortable in. Because it kind of takes a special kind of a kid to deal with the pressure and to be in a situation where they're all alone out on the court win or lose. For a young person that's not always an ideal position to be in. So that's why I love the option of tennis and team sports also.

MS. GREILING KEANE: You named a few up and coming stars in the 18 to 21 ages. This person asks for some rising stars in the girls or boys programs? I guess the younger ages?

MS. EVERT: Younger ages? I don't know who the top six year old is in the country. Really, I can't answer that. But I think, again, there's such a resurgence with young tennis players in this country with this sports initiative, with this ten and under. We've got national tournaments all across the country at different times of the year. I

mean, there's just a lot of activity going on. And there's a lot of competition. And the cream will rise to the top.

But in the meantime, the important thing with these kids is if they dream of becoming a pro, if they don't make it, they still can have great success whether they go to college or they play for their high school team or they play for a league. There's different levels of success. And I remember my dad saying to me, he said, "I'm just as proud as your siblings who went to college and played on their college team as I am of you." I mean, it didn't make any difference to him. Everybody just strives to reach their own level of success, whatever it may be.

MS. GREILING KEANE: We have a couple of questions about your longevity in the career as well as general fitness today. You've already told us about your being graced with good genes from your parents and your athletic 85 year old mother. But what are your other secrets?

MS. EVERT: You know, you got to keep moving. You got to keep moving. That's the beauty of tennis. It's interesting because sometimes I see these women in the gym and they're going to like an aerobics class or a yoga class or da, da, da. Or they have a private trainer and you're still paying money for this. And I'm like, "Why don't you go get a lesson just for like half an hour. And why don't you have the pro just run you around the court for half an hour instead of getting on a treadmill or a Stairmaster?" It would be more interesting, you'd get better cardio and the time would go by so fast and it would be more fun, especially if the coach was cute. (Laughter)

But I always love the idea of the cardio aspect of tennis. Because you know what? Golf is a sport of a lifetime, but I don't think you get that same cardio intensity that you get in tennis. So, what was the question? How do I stay in shape?

MS. GREILING KEANE: Your fitness?

MS. EVERT: Well, I'm at my tennis academy like three times a week so I still hit with the kids. Fifteen years ago when we started this tennis academy, I was like warming up and practicing and playing sets with the 18 year olds. And now I'm down to probably the 12 year olds. I'm at their level because there are some darn good 12 year olds out there. So they keep me going. So I hit with the kids about three or four times a week. And then you got to do some weights. Even if they're light weights, women, you got to do some for this, this, this, here, here. You know, you got to do it. You got to do the weights for upper body because that's the first thing that goes on a woman like over 40. So I try to do some weights.

And then yoga is good for the stretching, for the flexibility. So I think you just got to mix it up. You can't do one thing. You're not going to benefit. You got to shock your system and your muscles a little bit if you want to change the way you look and change the way you feel. Okay? Did you like that?

MS. GREILING KEANE: Good, I like it.

MS. EVERT: You going to do it?

MS. GREILING KEANE: I'm taking notes.

MS. EVERT: Okay, good.

MS. GREILING KEANE: Several questions about who you would play in your dream matches? What current or former players do you wish you could have played in your prime? And who would you like to play on the current tour?

MS. EVERT: Well, first of all, I would never want to play Serena Williams. Let's just make that perfectly clear. Let me make myself perfectly clear. You know, after I commentated a match at Wimbledon where she had 25 aces in a match I was like, "Yeah, right. What man aces 25 times in a match?" So I don't-- with her serve and her power and her court coverage, I'll pass on that.

You know, I would have probably liked to maybe have played somebody a little less strong, maybe like Martina Hingis because I think we had similar games. And it would have been interesting, because I had a good drop shot, she had a good drop shot. I was crafty, she was crafty. We both didn't have very strong serves at all, we both didn't have great volleys. So I think probably Hingis. And actually I hit against Maureen Connolly when I was young, when I was 11 years old. I got to hit against her and she hit a nice ball. Maybe play her, too. Bring 'em on. Doris Hart, Pauline Betts, bring 'em on.

MS. GREILING KEANE: While we're creating these fantasy matches, how would today's top players fare against tennis greats of the past if they were using the equipment available at that time, not today's equipment. Take Serena and put her with a 1970s racquet.

MS. EVERT: That definitely makes a difference, the equipment definitely makes a difference. No doubt about it. We could not have the spin or the racquet head speed that these players have, or the strings. The strings are really-- everybody talks about the racquets, but the strings are vital, too. You get so much more power, spin, velocity, racquet head speed. So that is one thing that is very different.

I think fitness level is different, too. The players are more fit than in my era. I mean, there's no doubt about that. We never used to train like Olympic athletes 20, 30 years ago. Tennis players did not train like Olympic athletes at all. And now, they do. And now they do. You know, it's very scientific now, it's very scientific. And hopefully, there are no, you know, drugs in the game which we'd like to get that drug testing-- strengthen that and make sure that holds for tennis. Don't want tennis to have any sort of connection with that.

But that brings us talking about the testing, which needs to be-- the players need to, and the tournaments, need to put a little more money into that.

MS. GREILING KEANE: Your proudest achievement? Another common question, I want to be sure we get that one in.

MS. EVERT: Being here today with you and answering all those wonderful questions and wondering who the heck asked that one question. Because I'd like to meet them outside after this. (Applause) Gees. You know, it's tough. I had an 18 year career, but I think the French, '85 French, was one of my favorite matches because everybody counted me out. I was no longer number one in the world, Martina was dominating. I was "over the hill" by a lot of the journalists and commentators. And I think that I'd been through-- again, when you get older, victory is sweeter because you're a deeper person. You have more depth, you can feel more. I think when you're younger, like the first time I won Wimbledon or the U.S. Open I was like, "Oh." Threw my racquet up in the air, "Whoop-de-doo," you know? "I won the U.S. Open." I was like, "Okay." I was so young, I didn't really have that depth of feeling. And so I think '85 French because I'd been through a lot of adversity; injuries, losing to Martina. I had a 13 match streak against Martina where I lost 13 times in a row. It was exhausting for me, you know? And finally after I broke that, I broke that and after that one match I beat her in the '85 French and it was a three set match and it was very exciting.

MS. GREILING KEANE: Well, we are almost out of time. But before asking the last question, I've got just a couple of housekeeping matters to take care of. First of all, I'd like to remind you of our upcoming luncheon speakers. On June 5th, we will have the Gerald Ford Journalism Awards presentation with guest speaker David Gergen of CNN. And on July 1st, we will have Carly Fiorina, the former CEO of Hewlett-Packard who currently serves as Chairman of Good 360.

Second, I would like to present our guest with the traditional National Press Club coffee mug.

MS. EVERT: Thank you. (Applause) Thank you. Okay, can I just-- Susan's back there, the chef. Thank you, Susan. Let's give her a hand, too. Susan, the lunch was great, and Susan is a member of the USTA she told me, so I had to give her a plug. And also Donna here, this one here, I'd like to thank you. She has her little racquet.

Funny story about Donna. She played at Holiday Park also when my dad was there and she lived in Fort Lauderdale and she played there. I asked her how it went and she said, "Well," she said, "I played on the backboard for two years, the first two years I was there," she said, "because during the clinics, you had to hit like two balls over the net before you could be on a court." And so it took her two years and I really felt sorry for her. And I said, "Well, what happened once you got on the court?" I said, "Did you hit with my dad?" And she said, "No, he was like three courts down. I got to hit with, like, one of the junior coaches, like the high school coaches." So I'm sorry. But you look like-- and then she said she had no ability. She wanted to learn a two-handed backhand and she

kept running around her two-handed backhand because she wanted to learn one and she kept running around it because she had no clue how to hit it.

And then I said, “Well, how was your serve?” And she says, “Well, when I threw the ball up-- you have to throw the ball up and look at it, too?” So, you know, we got to get her back on the courts, okay? Oh, was there one other--?

MS. GREILING KEANE: One other thing.

MS. EVERT: Oh gosh, I can't wait for the last question. Okay?

MS. GREILING KEANE: It's easy. We'd like to thank you as well for the signed racquet for the donation to the National Press Club Journalism Institute, so this will be auctioned off this fall to a lucky winner and will help support our program. So thank you for that.

MS. EVERT: Okay, thank you. (Applause) You know this is a child's racquet, right?

MS. GREILING KEANE: It's signed by you.

MS. EVERT: Okay, whatever. Okay, just wanted you to know.

MS. GREILING KEANE: And the last question is an easy one. We're here in Washington, President Obama spends a lot of time on the basketball court. Questioner wants to know who is the best tennis playing U.S. president?

MS. EVERT: Wow, that's a real easy one, for me. Forty-one, President Bush 41. The thing is that he actually played in my charity event for about eight years and we'd all be miced because it was for TV and he chose not to be miced. But I heard all the cuss words, I heard them all. But he was, he was definitely the-- he was good. And all his sons, his sons were great. But he was the best. And he played right up until hip surgery, which was like three or four years ago, so definitely. Great athlete, great athletic family.

MS. GREILING KEANE: Great, thank you. And thank you for coming today. (Applause) I'd like to remind you, you can find more information about the National Press Club on our website at www.press.org. We are adjourned. Would you like to do the honors?

MS. EVERT: Yeah. (Sounds gavel.) (Applause)

END

