



Center Court

DECEMBER 2024

Faith Replaces Fate - Catching up with Ivan Smith

On April 5, 2022, an accomplished collegiate tennis player possessing a national title and professional playing points, having a lifetime of aspirations ahead of him, suffered an unimaginable twist of fate. Young 20-year-old Ivan Smith, son of BTC President Gary Smith, was hit while driving to tennis practice by an unlicensed and uninsured Uber Eats employee. The driver failed to yield the right away at an intersection, while delivering food, recklessly making a left turn and consequently striking Ivan's car on the driver side. The car that slammed into Ivan's vehicle was filled with Meth, Xanax, a glass pipe and other drug paraphernalia. Instead of arriving to tennis practice to get ready for an upcoming match, the 5-Star athlete was rushed to the hospital to fight for his life.

The accident nearly led to death. As his father Gary reiterates, "The guy is a miracle." Ivan suffered severe injuries including paralysis to his spine as well as a bone infection that kept him flat on his back for six months. He needed 16 screws and titanium rods to rebuild his spine, which was ruptured at an angle leaving him with no feeling from the chest down. Broken ribs punctured his lungs and both clavicle bones were broken. Ivan endured over 10 painful surgeries, with transfers to different medical facilities in Texas and Chicago to receive the best care possible. He endured a full year in different hospitals before arriving home. Over the past two and a half years, Ivan, along with his mom Anita, Gary, brothers Kevin and Xavier, have helped to build a new life from ground zero. *(Continued on page 3)*

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Message from Balboa Tennis Club President, Dr. Gary L. Smith



As we approach the end of another memorable year at Balboa Tennis Club, I want to take a moment to reflect on the tremendous progress we've made together and to express my sincere gratitude to all of you for your ongoing support and participation. This year has been one of growth, improvement, and continued love for the game of tennis!

One of our major accomplishments has been the continued enhancement of our club's facilities. Thanks to your dedication, we've maintained our courts in excellent condition, ensuring they remain in top shape for all players.

We've also made strides in increasing shade around the courts, providing a more comfortable and enjoyable playing experience under the San Diego sun.

At the heart of what makes Balboa Tennis Club so special is our vibrant and diverse community. We are fortunate to have members from various backgrounds and cultures, all coming together through our shared passion for tennis and a commitment to maintaining a healthy lifestyle. It is this sense of unity that makes our club a truly exceptional place to play.

None of our successes would be possible without the hard work and dedication of those who help lead and support the club. I want to offer my deepest thanks to Colleen Ferrell, whose tireless efforts have been invaluable to the club's success this year. Additionally, I would like to recognize our six elected Board Members – Vice President Andrew Macfarlane, Secretary Maegen Demko, Treasurer Mario Suarez, Dr. Charles Hamori, Angie Crawford and Todd Linke - who have worked closely as a team to ensure the continued growth and prosperity of Balboa Tennis Club. Their leadership is essential to everything we do, and we are incredibly fortunate to have such a dedicated group of individuals guiding our club.

Entering my fourth year as your President, I would like to recognize former President Janene Christopher who continues to help out the Club when called upon. I also want to recognize Michelle Ford, Ruben Carriedo and M.A. Hillier, who recently completed their terms on the Board of Directors and set high standards for the current board to follow and those of the future as well.

I would also like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the Route 6 Cafe team for their excellent service, providing great food and a welcoming atmosphere that keeps us nourished and refreshed during our time at the club. The positive energy makes it a perfect spot to relax and connect with fellow members.

The tennis programs have thrived this year under the leadership of our Tennis Pro Team, including Tennis Director Hiromi Sasano and General Manager Matt Previdi, who stepped up to continue the legacy of the legendary coach, Geoff Griffin. Their dedication and skill have kept our programs strong and thriving, and we are grateful for their hard work in helping our players develop their game. Hiromi and Matt have brought new energy to the club while honoring the traditions and excellence that Geoff established.

As we look forward to the new year, I encourage everyone to continue embracing the values that make our club such a special place: community, health, and, of course, the joy of tennis. Together, we look forward to even more opportunities for growth, fun, and friendship in the months ahead.

Thank you once again for your continued support and involvement. Together, we make Balboa Tennis Club a true gem in San Diego. Here's to another great year ahead!

Warm Regards,
Dr. Gary L. Smith



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Club hours of operation:

Monday - Friday 8am – 9pm

Saturday & Sunday 8am – 8pm

Club Director's Report

by Colleen Ferrell



In the midst of my 19th year as Director of Balboa Tennis Club, I am feeling reflective and appreciative. How lucky I was to be recommended to apply for this position by one of my former students and the President of Balboa Tennis Club in 2005 – Robin Rodger. She told me the position “fit my skill set very well.” Little did I know at the time that this job would become a treasured career and cornerstone of my tennis life in San Diego.

What you see is what you get. I take pride in “going the extra mile” whenever necessary. I try very hard to be consistent at work like I attempt to be on the tennis court as a player. I lead by example – hard working and also respectful to the members, my employees and the Board of Directors. An important part of this position is to enforce Club policy, and to follow the rules designated and approved by the BTC Board of Directors. I expect the same from the membership, BTC staff, team captains, vendors, and contractors who all

work together to make Balboa Tennis Club a great facility.

Pleasing and appeasing 1700+ members is no easy task, but absolutely critical to running an efficient and well managed public facility. Moving forward, I ask for patience, trust and the same values from the members in regards to following the rules on a daily basis. We are in this together and overall, extremely fortunate to have club members that truly care about maintaining this venerable club with high standards for years to come. Cheers to our mutual love for the great game of tennis and Balboa Tennis Club.

(Ivan Smith continued from page 1)

The family home has been modified with ramps and wheelchair accessible amenities. His bedroom features pulleys and weights for workouts, as well as other training tools. Ivan's wheelchair is high tech and suspends him up to a standing position, which he holds for 1-2 hours daily, even though it is uncomfortable and difficult to breathe. With the help of many BTC members, along with fundraisers spearheaded by Michelle Ford and M.A. Hillier, his family purchased a van to get him around town. He rolls inside and is “locked” in for the ride.

Ivan recently graduated from the University of the Incarnate Word with straight A's and an impressive degree in Business Marketing, which he started prior to the accident. His next educational pursuit may be Theology to become a pastor. “I want to help people,” he says. “When I tell other people this, it changes their way of thinking. If they get depressed, they see what I am going through and think to themselves, how can I complain?”

According to Anita, who has been by Ivan's side every day since the accident and is now his full time caregiver, he has never cried or complained. “I am the most positive person in this house,” he says. Ivan believes his Christian faith has helped guide him through the past couple of years. After the accident when his weight went down to 140 pounds, he asked God to “show me what my future will be like.” He said he continues to receive signs from God.

Ivan participates in a bible study for two hours daily. He watches testimonials and listens to sermons, soaking up inspiration along the way. Both Ivan and Anita have experienced dreams and premonitions of Ivan walking again. Every doctor he has encountered said there is zero chance Ivan will ever walk. Yet to see him in the standing position in his wheelchair and to listen to the faith embraced by the family members, one might think those well trained tennis legs may find a mind of their own someday.

In the meantime, Ivan takes 40 pills a day – 20 for pain and 20 vitamins to build up his immune system. Despite a constant pain level of 3-4 and sometimes up to 8, Ivan moves forward with confidence. He's convinced there is a higher power plan for him, and he focuses on the positive things in his life.

Does he miss tennis? Of course he does. “Yes especially doubles. I felt like I could beat anybody at the time.” Prior to the accident, Ivan was ranked #1558 in the world ATP ranking system at 18 years old. He was playing at a very high level of collegiate tennis as well. Ivan says wheelchair tennis would be physically challenging because of a shoulder issue he has dealt with since the accident. Anita commented with a grin, “his reflexes are still there – he caught a cup last week as it was about to fall off a table.”

For now, life goes on at the Smith house with Ivan living as comfortable as possible, along with a tremendously supportive family. He is currently in litigation with Uber, awaiting a trial November 2025. Hopefully, the outcome will serve justice for this now 23 year old who struggles each day, yet never complains and remains faithful about a future of possibilities.

Khloe Bell - Gymnast Turned Tennis Player



Khloe Bell

BTC member and rising junior tennis player Khloe Bell made a transformation in her young life at age 11. She traded in seven years of gymnastic training for a whole new athletic career on the tennis court, and she's not looking back.

Khloe discovered tennis one day while walking through the park with her parents Keri and Beau. They encountered Bobby Travasso – a friendly club member – who asked if Khloe wanted to hit a few tennis balls with his partner. He put a racquet in her hand and the rest is history. Khloe asked if she could take lessons and she's been hooked ever since.

Khloe has been playing two years, five times a week. She participates in clinics three days a week and hits with her dad twice a week. After clinics, she runs the Upas Street hill for endurance. She's been playing tournaments and Junior Team Tennis. When asked what she likes about competition, Khloe replied, "I love tennis even when I lose. I think to myself about what I did wrong and how I can improve. I study other players. I play to win, yet am still proud of myself regardless of the outcome."

The skill set Khloe brings from gymnastics is a "blessing and a curse," says her mom Keri. "Khloe is super-fast and flexible in her arms and legs – so flexible that she often gets really low to the ground and then takes huge strides like vaulting in gymnastics." Of course "baby steps" are preferred in tennis footwork while "creating space" for optimal hitting. In the big picture, those beautiful strides will be useful when catching up with her opponents drop shots!

One of Khloe's greatest transfers from gymnastics is her discipline, according to her Mom. All the hard work and training that went into her success as a gymnast will eventually transfer to tennis. Junior Coach Carla Zarbo spoke about Khloe's first summer camp experience. "She listened, did what was expected of her, and was a great teammate – a model student. Her greatest strength – deep seeded passion," according to Carla. Her parents tell Khloe, "If you love it – stick with it."

Khloe is looking ahead to high school next year as she plans to attend Our Lady of Peace, where her mom also attended while growing up in North Park. College tennis is on her radar and yet, she is taking one step at a time. Khloe prefers singles but plays doubles as well and enjoys the camaraderie. "I love them both, but I feel like I have more control in singles. I enjoy coming to the net and putting the ball away for an easy point. In doubles, I like having someone to talk to," she says.

This 13 year old tennis enthusiast exudes maturity and confidence beyond her years. With great family support from her parents, there's a bright tennis future on the horizon. Continued training, more tournament play and perseverance will help Khloe develop her game to whatever level she desires in the big tennis world.

Charles Hamori - MD - BTC Board Member Q&A



Dr. Charles Hamori

1. Where do you practice medicine? I practice General Internal Medicine at Kaiser Permanente.
2. How long have you been a member of BTC? About 5 years; but I played there intermittently as a guest/walk up since 1990.
3. What do you like about this Club? The high level of tennis; great, welcoming people.
4. Why did you decide to put yourself on the ballot to become a board member in 2023? I love the club and the people, and I have a lot of Board of Directors experience from my day jobs, so I wanted to give back to the club by volunteering my time and expertise.
5. What do you consider your role is as a board member? The Board provides governance. We are fiduciaries, meaning we have a duty of care, a duty of loyalty, and a duty of obedience to the club and its members. The needs of the club as a whole come before my needs, or those of any individual member. We need to make sure the club remains financially viable, that the facilities are well cared for, and that we follow our club norms and rules. By doing so, we make BTC the best place to play tennis in San Diego.
6. Anything you want to add after one year on the board? The Board is a great group of people who only want the best for the club and our members.

Spotlight on a Board Member - Angie Crawford



Angie Crawford

It has now been almost a year since becoming a member of the Balboa Tennis Board. I can say, it has been a joyful and enlightening experience. I have learned so much and have met many club members since joining the board. I'm very grateful for this opportunity. I know the Balboa community has put trust in me to represent them with grace and humility, ensuring we continue to grow to be the best tennis club in San Diego. I have learned that there is a lot going on behind the scenes that keep our club running smoothly, and the engine is "Colleen". God Bless her!

The Board plays a big part, and ensuring Colleen (the engine) has all the tools she need to give everyone the Club experience they deserve. I feel we also make sure all voices are heard, and what I love about our current board is we are so diverse in many areas. To me, this is key to be able hear different points of views on issues, policies and new ideas. I love to hear from our club members, it makes me feel good to know how much they care. I love tennis, I love this club and what better way to give back then being a board member! I am here and always welcome hearing from our members. So, if you see me don't hesitate to say "hi" or just want to give me feedback on things here at the club. Because that is how we get better!

The Faulk Family



Dylan, Carrie, Gavin and Eric Faulk

In 2021, Carrie Faulk was walking her sons to soccer practice through Morley Field. As they passed the tennis courts, there was a junior tennis clinic going on that caught the boys' attention. Both asked their mom if they could sign up for tennis lessons. Carrie responded, "You will have to ask your dad." Of course Eric happily agreed to the new endeavor his boys would embark upon. He and Carrie both have tennis backgrounds, but wanted the boys to find their own calling.

Eric started playing tennis with his dad as a junior. He played high school tennis at Madison, collegiate tennis for SDSU and then played some pro events, earning a few treasured ATP points. Carrie participated in basketball and tennis at San Pasquel, then continued to play both collegiate basketball and tennis at Hope International in Fullerton. According to Eric, "we wanted the boys to choose their own journey so they didn't feel pressure to play tennis." Thus, their initial sport was soccer until 2021, when at ages 7&9, they decided to try tennis.

"Coaches Geoff, Jared, Carla and Chris were instrumental in making tennis a fun environment," said Eric. Currently, Dylan is in the 6th grade and Gavin is in 5th. The boys are playing some junior tournaments. The highlight of this year for Dylan was participating in JTT – Junior Team Tennis – when the team went undefeated. "Unfortunately they didn't win sectionals, but had a blast representing BTC" said Eric. The boys currently attend La Mesa Arts Academy where Carrie works.

Eric stated that Dylan has been a driving force in requesting two workouts a day on the weekends. "He wakes me up in the morning and has all his tennis gear ready to go. Gavin is good for one session a day. We don't want to push him – it needs to come from him."

The proximity of living two blocks away makes BTC an optimal choice. "What we really enjoy are the people. From you, running this club, to Hiromi, the staff behind the desk checking us in, to the members and the workers in the Pro Shop. It feels like a big support group when we walk by. The courts are always in great condition, the facilities and food are also a plus."

Like many of junior players who start their tennis careers at BTC, the Faulk brothers have a good base of family, coaching, supportive members and optimal opportunity to succeed. For now, they are having fun and enjoying the game they discovered on the way to soccer practice.

Eric Mann - SDCTUA Official



Eric Mann

Most tournament players are familiar with Eric Mann as he usually works most of the tournaments at Balboa Tennis Club. What most of you probably don't know, is what an accomplished background Eric has in the tennis world. Here's a synopsis.

Eric Mann was born in Bloomington, Indiana 1949. He played national junior tournaments 1964-65 and played on USLTA Junior Davis Cup team in 1965. Played pro tournaments in India 1965-66, won the Indiana State High School tournament in 1967, played freshman tennis and squash at Yale 1967-68. He served on staff of the U.S. Kerner Commission in 1968. Coached USTA Junior Davis Cup teams 1968-70, played pro challenger tournaments in Florida, Pacific Northwest, San Francisco, and Los Angeles and qualifying at US Championships Forest Hills 1968-1970. He took lessons from Tom Stow (Don Budge's coach), Jack Kramer, and Pancho Gonzales and played on Foothill College tennis team 1969-1970. Drafted in U.S. Army December 1970, he attended U.S. Army Basic Training and Infantry Advanced Individual Training at Fort Ord, Monterey starting March 1971. Won 6th Army tournament 1971. He married Patana Kuanpoonpol and was sent to Vietnam July 1971. He served in the infantry in Vietnam July 1971 to March 1972. After being injured in Vietnam March 1972, Eric was reassigned and retrained in Personnel Management and reassigned to USAREUR Headquarters in Heidelberg, Germany May, 1972. He won the USAREUR and TASCUM tournaments in summer 1972 and was assigned to play eight exhibitions with Stan Smith in Germany and one exhibition with Arthur Ashe in fall 1972. He played weekend pro tournaments in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland in the winter of 1972.

Released from U.S. Army active-duty March 1973, he played a series of pro tournaments (including Nice and Monte Carlo) in Southern France, French Open, Wimbledon, Stuttgart, Homburg, Kitzbühel, Basel, and Gstaad and played on a German Bundesliga team in the spring and summer 1973. Played the U.S. Open in New York, Pacific Southwest in Los Angeles, and Pacific Coast International in San Francisco in the fall 1973. Was ranked #49 singles and #19 doubles by World Tennis Magazine in 1973. An auto accident in December 1973 ended his playing career. He coached on the pro tour from 1974 to 1992 (including Roscoe Tanner and Gabriela Sabatini) while earning a B.A. in Economics from UC Irvine in 1977, M.B.A. in Business Data Processing from CSU Northridge in 1980, and working at Burroughs Corporation, Forro Precision, Merit College, Coca Cola, and Pierce College in the computer science field in Los Angeles. As a full-time tennis professional starting in 1992 to present, he worked at Warner Center Club, Burbank Tennis Center, and Braemar Country Club in the Los Angeles area. He also worked at the Stoneridge Country Club, Barnes Tennis Center, San Diego City College (assistant coach of men's tennis team), and Peninsula Tennis Club in San Diego. He's been a tennis umpire from 2008 to present.

Annual Treasurer's Report

By Mario Suarez - BTC Treasurer

BTC has been able to maintain a solid financial and fiscal standing. Revenue continues to increase primarily due to increased membership rates and record membership levels. A source of additional income from the purchase of additional CD's paying higher interest rates than passive savings accounts has helped the cash flow. Income outside court rental, tournaments, HJK rent and daily permits have all risen, which has helped offset BTC's Operating and Administrative expenses.

On the expenditure side, BTC general liability insurance increased 104%. Other major costs include: payroll, maintenance/plumbing issues, and improvements to the courts (resurfacing of four courts and the hitting wall surface). The Club also upgraded the security system this year by adding additional cameras. Unfortunately, there has been an influx of graffiti, which has added additional costs to repaint surfaces and repair courts damaged.

Balboa Tennis Club's overall financial situation has been able to keep pace and slightly improve. Many thanks to Club CPA Jere Batten for her fiscal guidance over the past 10 years.

HJKventures Non Profit - “Dream Team HJK Tennis”

By Tennis Director Hiromi Sasano



Our organization is driven by a clear purpose: we’re here to open doors for children in low-income families, who often face obstacles to the resources that could change their lives. California alone is home to around 45,000 foster children, and countless families live at or below the poverty line. Many of these children have never had the chance to experience activities like tennis, which builds critical skills like discipline, problem-solving, and resilience. Through our programs, we provide free or discounted tennis lessons, among other things. To these children, equipping them not only with sports skills but also with confidence and life tools that will serve them well into adulthood.

Please consider joining us in this mission. Our team and board are passionate about growing this program to help even more young people realize their dreams. Your contribution can make a real difference, opening doors to new possibilities for children who might otherwise be left behind. I'd be happy to discuss further; feel free to reach me at 619-318-6002 or hjktennis@gmail.com. Thank you for considering this opportunity to have a long-lasting impact.

HJKventures Instruction Continues to Expand and Grow the Game

By Matt Previdi - General Manager



HJKventures continues to excel at Balboa Tennis Club with the extraordinary success of its adult programs. Over the past two years, the number of weekly adult participants has more than tripled, a testament to the quality and appeal of the programs offered. From what we can tell, this makes the adult programs at Balboa the largest in Southern California of any club.

This rapid growth has not gone unnoticed. Inside Tennis Magazine, a leading publication in the tennis world, featured HJKventures in its US Open edition, highlighting the programs excellence and the impact they’ve had on the tennis community. The feature article marks a significant milestone for HJKventures, reflecting the national interest in their innovative approach to adult tennis training and competition.

As HJKventures continues to expand, it remains dedicated to providing top tier tennis experiences for players of all levels, solidifying its reputation as a leader in the tennis community. For lesson or clinic information, check out their new website at www.balboatennis.com under the instruction tab.

Meet Maribeth Rivera - Junior Tennis Director for HJKventures



As a tennis professional of more than 20 years, my goal is to teach, encourage and motivate my students in a positive way and make an impact on their lives through this amazing sport. My approach is one of versatility, adapting to the needs of individual students. This allows me to provide a lesson that results in the growth of each person.

- PTR Certified Tennis Professional
- ITF Certified
- PTR Triple Threat Certifications.
- Over 20 years of teaching and coaching experience in Puerto Rico, Chicago, Wisconsin.
- Former NCAA Division 1 Tennis Player.
- Owned/Operated a Tennis Academy in Puerto Rico for over 7 years.
- Taught and Coached Adults and Juniors of All Levels.
- Director of Torrimar Tennis Club in Puerto Rico.
- Director and CEO of MRG Tennis Academy in Puerto Rico.
- Racquets Assistant at Saddle and Cycle Club in Chicago.
- Tennis Professional at Glenbrook Racquet Club
- Junior Coordinator and Tennis Professional at Lake Geneva Tennis Club.
- Fluent in Spanish, English and French.

Calendar of Events 2025

January	21	BTC Board Meeting
February	18	BTC Board Meeting
	22-23	K&W Junior Tournament
March	7-9	SCTA Sectionals
	18	BTC Board Meeting
	22-23	Harper Ink Tournament
April		
May	15	BTC Board Meeting
	4	Tennis Fest
	20	BTC Board Meeting
June	9-15	USTA National Hard Courts
	17	BTC Board Meeting
July	19-20, 25-27	Maureen Connolly Brinker Balboa Open
	22	BTC Board Meeting

BTC Men's 4.0 USTA League National Team!



L to R: George Byrd, Thomas Seo, John Carter, Peter Yuen, Paul Meniffee, Benson Wong, Casey Moore, Kevin Mallery (Captain), Jamie Armstrong, Raymond Ypon, Greg Lindsey, Erwin Guzman, Wender Hwang, Charles Hamori, Jeffrey Lin. Not pictured Jeff Harris

BTC Brings Home Gold and Silver



Left to right with two Silver medals in tennis are Angie Crawford and Becky Yzaguirre. With one Gold medal and one Silver in tennis are Mer Chido and Ruby Gardner.

Congratulations to four members of Balboa Tennis Club who recently attended the 37th Annual Huntsman World Senior Games in beautiful St. George, Utah. The annual event attracts over 11,000 athletes from around the world in over 35 sporting events.

Men's Thursday Ladder



Holiday celebration for the men's group that plays doubles every Thursday from 10:30am - 12:30pm.

Friday Social Group



Friday social group holiday celebration raffle winners.