

ADVERTORIAL

Unlimited Partnerships

For the Greater San Diego Tennis Council, growing the sport involves more than building or renovating facilities.

By Kent Oswald

It is a movie myth that you simply have to “build it” and players will come. Results happen for tennis facilities that are maintained well—plus, they require advocacy and leadership in the community.

In fact, what it takes to make all this a reality is exemplified by the Greater San Diego Tennis Council.

Founded in 2001, GSDTC has so far helped renovate approximately 300 courts at nearly 70 local facilities. GSDTC President David Gill explains, “You can’t just go it alone. We have great funders and others who are tennis people who want to contribute to the San Diego community.”

That sounds much easier than it turns out to be. There is more than good people to credit for overcoming bureaucratic challenges, navigating the different agendas of political and community groups, and coordinating the funding and construction efforts to create playing opportunities, particularly for underserved youth.

The GSDTC brings to its work “tenacity” and “passion.” Further explaining the organization’s weekly agenda, Gill admits, “It’s really just the plain hard work of maintaining a network, building connections, coordinating efforts, advocating for resources, etc.”

The GSDTC was co-founded by Ben Press (“Mr. Tennis San Diego”) and Bill Stack, who had earlier helped found the San Diego District Tennis Association. Current members of the board and advisory board in addition to Gill include Geoff Griffin, tennis director at the Balboa Tennis Club; Roz King, the current World No. 1 in the 85s; Aussie Open champ Brian Teacher; former No. 1 USTA junior Steve Avoyer; and basketball Hall-of-Famer Bill Walton.

It adds up to a team well-positioned with “a lot of back-channel abilities to do things through networks and contacts,” says Gill. He adds that they couldn’t accomplish anywhere near what they do without relying on partners like the

Southern California Tennis Association Foundation, San Diego District Tennis Association, Youth Tennis San Diego and the USTA.

Appreciation for and from partners flows both ways. Todd Carlson, the USTA’s Director, Tennis Venue Services, Parks, & CTAs, commenting on three important projects his group has assisted with, cites GSDTC as, “making a significant impact on its community by establishing crucial infrastructure to support both current and upcoming tennis players.”

“They are the only known nonprofit organization in the country that raises money solely to renovate the tennis infrastructure in the community,” he adds. “They leverage our facility grant funding to increase local fundraising efforts.”

Carlson says GSDTC is a model that he encourages groups around the country to emulate regarding facility development, and redevelopment. Gill notes two distinct advantages of their model: “We have in San Diego so many resources and so much tennis history.”

Also, there is the motivating factor for the GSDTC of gratitude combined with activism that began with Press and Stack.

“They felt that tennis had given them a great deal and they wanted to provide a service for San Diego, and it’s the same with our board members now.”

Going on a quarter century of advocating for a game and the community, the work continues. They work with the San Diego Parks Foundation to beautify parks, the San Diego school system to bring the sport of kings and queens to school kids, and have begun partnering with the non-profit “Teens Rise”—which, while not a tennis organization, recognizes how tennis can be used to broaden horizons for young people.

“We get an opportunity and we just kind of share our mission, says Gill. “We have to continue to advocate, continue to stay in touch.”

With that as a guiding principle, when you build it (and rebuild it), they will come.



“
We have in San Diego
so many resources
and so much
tennis history.
”

For more on how the USTA’s Tennis Venue Services can help your facility or project, visit usta.com/facilities or email facilities@usta.com.