



Danbury Grassroots Tennis

Changing the lives of our city's youth through tennis

BREAK • POINT

May 2008

Danbury Grassroots Tennis is a tax exempt Inner City Junior Tennis Program supported by the USA and citizens concerned with the challenges faced by disadvantaged children in the Danbury area.

SPRING IS HERE AND SO IS OUR THIRD YEAR!

Monday, May 19 marked the beginning of DGT's third year and we are all extremely excited about the season! For the third year in a row, Sport & Wellness (formerly Beaver Brook) has kindly opened up their courts for DGT. We currently have 30 kids from the Housing Authority, two from a group home, and one from the Good Friend's Mentoring Program. We will be at Sport & Wellness Mondays to Thursdays from 4-6:30 through June 20. On June 23 we will move outdoors to the Rogers Park Courts where we will have approximately 100 kids!! This is quite an accomplishment for us as we have worked very hard to expand the program this winter and will exceed our goal of 60 kids. The Danbury Parks & Recreation Department has given us four courts from Monday- Friday from 11-5. Our Director of Tennis, Jason DiStasio and his assistant, Emily Vulcano, will be at Rogers Park everyday and would love some extra hands and help. Even if you have just a free hour please let us know or just stop by, volunteers are always welcome!

Alan Webb, a junior at Danbury High School tried out for the Varsity Tennis Team and made it! He played # 2 doubles and we were all very proud of him, he worked very hard to reach his goal to play high school tennis. Alan has been a part of DGT for three years and has grown into a quite a strong player. As many of us know, high school is demanding and Alan did have some difficulty with his classes. We are extremely fortunate to have Chelsea Higgins, Ridgefield resident and graduate student at WESTCONN, volunteer her time to help Alan with Math. He is very bright and hopefully the extra hours he puts in with Chelsea will keep him on track.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

From January to May, Alex Aitchison and Lauren Dalton visited the gym classes in 12 elementary schools throughout Danbury. Our first goal was to introduce tennis to every child in the 12 elementary schools and the second goal was to work with the physical education teachers to find kids who would qualify and benefit from the DGT program. We are exceptionally proud to say we worked with over 3,500 kids and over 400 kids handed in applications to join DGT!! Each and every physical education teacher went out of their way to coordinate and even rearrange their schedules to accommodate us. We would like to personally thank Joe Killian, Mary Nimer, Matt Craig,

Mark Outtusch, Aileen Sullivan, Mark Ruggiero, Will Hauser, Ian Wilson, and Fran Evans for their incredible support, time, patience, enthusiasm, generosity, their students, and assistance in promoting the game of tennis and the DGT program. As previously mentioned, we have had a remarkable response and have been inundated with calls and forms from kids throughout Danbury who are interested in DGT! Thank you again to the Danbury School System and all the Physical Education Teachers and coordinators who made this possible!



Eager players on the first day of the season!

'FOR THE LOVE OF TENNIS'

DGT had two exceptionally successful fundraisers so far this year. Alex Aitchison and Jerry Sulli organized a doubles round robin/mixed scramble tournament at Sport & Wellness (Beaver Brook) on January 12. People from Danbury, Brookfield, Newtown, Ridgefield, and Brewster participated and we would like to congratulate the winner, with the highest amount of points, Pam Higgins! We would also like to thank Sport & Wellness and Carl Bailey for providing the courts and everyone who participated and supported DGT.

We had our first annual, "For the Love of Tennis" fundraiser. It was a two part event, a cocktail party at Andy Bodner's beautiful home on February 9, followed by a Pro-Am tournament on March 15 at the Ridgefield Athletic Club. During the cocktail party we held a silent auction and would like to thank Sharon Bloom, Valerie D'Alexander, Cathy Perry, Bill Nelson, Deb Bush, Chez Delila's, Every Woman's Spirit, and Charlotte Griffin for generously donating their services and

and fantastic prizes. We would also like to thank everyone who bid on and won the silent auction prizes.

In addition, we had a live auction, which included six tennis pros and six Grassroots players that guests could bid on to play with in the Pro-Am. We were lucky to have some extraordinary pros donate their time and expertise: Kristian Larson, Angelica Mattschei, and Marc Castellana from RAC and Danbury Grassroots Director of Tennis, Jason DiStasio. As well as former ATP tour players Jeff Landau, Rory Capener, and Akash Lamba. Alan Webb and Alberto Marine represented DGT and Fred Mezdor, Dimitri Mezdor, Antonio Passerelle, and Jonathan Young came up from Norwalk Grassroots Tennis to participate.

The tournament was a round robin format with two flights and there was some impressive tennis. Before the finals, Marc Castellana played an exhibition match against former top 30 junior in the world Aman Singh, which was as close as most of us will get to seeing some of the best tennis in the world and certainly inspired our grassroots kids and participants! Both events were thoroughly enjoyable and remarkably successful and we could not have done it without RAC and its staff, Andy Bodner, Pam Higgins, Georgia Carrington, Cathy Perry, Lynn Radford, Liz Preville, Glen McMurdo, Soichi Hirokawa, Sasha Nicollela, Kelsey Brazill, Rachel Janasek, Nicky Dalton, Gethin Dalton, all the pros and grassroots players, and of course all the donors, participants, and attendees. DGT appreciates your kindness and support immensely. We would like to congratulate Rachel Janasek and Akash Lamba for winning the Pro- Am in a close match against Soichi Hirokawa and Jason DiStasio. Rachel Janasek generously donated her winnings back to DGT which was rather thoughtful gesture!

DONATIONS AND DONATION BINS

Ridgefield High School Junior, Jennifer Geltzeiler, placed donation bins for DGT at RAC and the Four Seasons Racquet Club. We were overwhelmed with racquets, lightly worn clothing, and balls and are fully prepared for the upcoming season. Thank you Jennifer and Rosann and to all of you who contributed!

DGT was very lucky to receive a \$1,000 grant from the USTA. We thank the USTA for their support and generosity as well as a special thank you to all those individuals who help support our kids!

DGT wishes to express its sincerest appreciation to Glen McMurdo. Glen has strung countless racquets, free of charge, for DGT, we certainly don't know what we'd do without him!

UPCOMING EVENTS/ SAVE THE DATE

- Stay tuned for the Second Annual 'Grow With Tennis' Women's Doubles Tournament. Dates and times TBA.
- On Saturday, June 7, from 10-1:00, DGT will compete in the Jamboree Team Tennis Junior Tournament hosted by Norwalk Grassroots Tennis. DGT will bring six kids, under the age of 11, down to Brien McMahon High School to compete in the quick start tournament. Come and cheer them on!!
- DGT will be taking a field trip to New Haven in August to watch some of the world's finest players at the Pilot Pen Tournament. We would like to thank the Pilot Pen for generously donating 20 tickets for opening day!



DGT players warming up

VOLUNTEERS

DGT is always looking for extra people to help out whenever possible. You don't have to be an experienced player to help, just come out and join us outside in the summer sun! If you or somebody you know is interested please call Lauren at 438-0375.

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- Carl Bailey, President
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- Art Goldblatt, Treasurer/Secretary
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- Alex Aitchison, Kevin Barry, Georgia Carrington, Jackie Elam, Pam Higgins, Dr. David Pazer, Cathy Perry, Liz Preville, Mark Rader, Lynn Radford, Dr. Ray Schwartz, Carolyn Sistrunk, Becky Strominger

Thanks again to everyone who has been involved with DGT; we look forward to seeing you soon!

Carl Bailey
President

Lauren Dalton
Director