



School Spirit

A player, coach and advocate, Schwartz's dedication to college tennis was unmatched.

A Legacy Lives On

Remembering Sol Schwartz, a pied piper of the tennis community



On March 16, 2016, the tennis world lost one of its greatest advocates when Sol Schwartz died at his home in Reisterstown, MD. He was 46.

Schwartz's sudden passing, widely believed to be from a heart attack, was a shock to all that knew him, given his health and conditioning regimen. What's without question is the impact Schwartz had on his wife, Ilene, his two children, Dori and Evan, his community and the sport of tennis.

Schwartz didn't pick up a racquet until he was 9, but he was a natural. He earned a tennis scholarship to the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and went on to have one of the best seasons in school history in 1991–92, when he went 19–2 in singles and 10–4 in doubles, and reached the final of the East Coast Conference Championship.

Schwartz could have attempted to play professionally, but opted to take a more traditional route after school and looked for a steady job. Not yet ready to leave tennis behind, Schwartz was hired by Holabird Sports, where he went on to serve as a retail manager and buyer. He didn't take a single sick day in his 23 years with the company.

"He loved going there because it was his passion," says his wife, Ilene. "It wasn't just a job for him."



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Anyone who wanted to learn tennis, Sol would teach them. He would just do anything for anybody.”

In his spare time, Schwartz served as a local tennis coach—he worked with one adult player continuously for 18 years—and volunteered as an assistant coach with UMBC's men's and women's teams. He also eagerly volunteered his teaching services to a young man, Justin Carter, who would go on to receive a full tennis scholarship from UMBC.

"People just loved being with him,"

says Ilene. "He was such an outstanding tennis coach."

Earlier this year, the UMBC tennis program folded, which devastated Schwartz. Among his many goals and dreams, preserving and promoting college tennis was at the top of the list. Schwartz created special bonds with the collegiate players he mentored over the years, something that became evident after his death.

"I got private messages from many kids on the team," said Ilene. "That's just how much Sol impacted their lives."

Schwartz always made it a point to help those in need. When Hurricane Sandy wreaked havoc on the East coast in 2012—hitting New York and New Jersey especially hard—Schwartz initiated a fundraising campaign through Holabird and provided assistance to tennis facilities and teaching pros in the area. With the money he was able to secure through donations, local coaches were able to get back on their feet. The money also paid for balls, hoppers and other vital pieces of tennis equipment. In recognition for his work, Schwartz was presented with the USTA Long Island's Good Samaritan Award in 2014.

After his death, Ilene learned that Schwartz had been working with the USTA to help those with disabilities become more involved in tennis. She also received countless messages from people all over the world, telling her how much of a difference her husband made in their lives. Because Schwartz was so humble and so unassuming by nature, it wasn't until after his death that Ilene truly understood the magnitude of his positive effect on others.

He could have, and likely would have, accomplished and taught so much more. But in his short time, Schwartz was an undisputed champion—of kindness, of humanitarianism and of tennis.

—B.K.