

# TENNIS

*Tennis Magazine Presents...*

*The*



“The definition of the hero in American culture is the one who by accident or destiny gets knocked down, and gets up again.” —**JEAN-PIERRE LIMBORG**, Page 18

# HEROES

“Our goals were to use tennis as a hook to open doors for underserved children and to help them understand the value of education.” —**CHRISTINE BECK**, Page 66

# ISSUE

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**he•ro** noun

A PERSON WHO IS ADMIRER FOR  
COURAGE, OUTSTANDING  
ACHIEVEMENTS OR NOBLE QUALITIES



# BIG IMPACT *in the* BIG EASY

A's & Aces gives children in New Orleans a chance to be stars on the court and in school  
*by Lindsay Gibbs*

## Rebuilding a Community

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans native David Schumacher started A's & Aces to give underserved children in the city a safe place to get away from the destruction.



● Back in 2005, David Schumacher was in his seventh year as the coach for the Tulane women's tennis team. A lawyer turned coach, Schumacher had led the formerly unranked squad into the NCAA's Top 10. He was named the Louisiana Sports Writers Association Coach of the Year five times and was Conference USA's Coach of the Year four times.

Then Hurricane Katrina hit. In the aftermath of the storm, the Tulane tennis program was shut down.

A New Orleans native, Schumacher was devastated by the destruction to his community and the prevalence of problems such as poverty, violence, obesity and illiteracy. He was especially concerned about the public school children since most of the safe after-school programs had been eliminated. With time on his hands, he dedicated himself to rebuilding his city.

Schumacher joined forces with Anna Monhartova, a former standout player on the Tulane tennis team and his

assistant coach when Katrina hit. Together, they founded the nonprofit A's & Aces, an organization that aims to improve the lives of public school children in New Orleans through academic assistance and tennis.

"After Katrina, we thought about it more and decided that we would start a program for children in need in the community in New Orleans who previously had no or very limited access to tennis. A love for tennis will keep students motivated to stay in school,

## Making a Difference

A's & Aces helps more than 1,000 kids annually through its tennis and academic programs. In 2013, the USTA named the organization the 2013 National Junior Tennis & Learning Chapter of the Year.



help them meet friends and help them develop basic life skills,” Monhartova says. “David and I saw that tennis helped us to be better people, and that’s something we wanted to give back to kids.”

Schumacher and Monhartova launched the program in 2008 with about 30 children, all in kindergarten through third grade. Since facilities were scarce so soon after Katrina, A’s & Aces brought USTA’s QuickStart tennis program to school playgrounds, gyms, and, in one case, the cafeteria.

The portable nets, smaller courts and easier-to-handle equipment were perfect for their mission. “Kids loved it,” Schumacher says. “It was aptly named, because kids were quickly starting to play and like tennis.”

While tennis is the hook, what sets A’s & Aces apart is its joint focus on academics. The program partners with public schools in New Orleans, and volunteers make sure that the children get as much time in the classroom as they do on the tennis court.

“For the most part, the curriculum starts with literacy and life skills. The kids may be reading or writing about things such as conflict resolution or nutrition,” Schumacher says, adding that those who can’t read yet get special attention. “As we grow and develop with the kids, we’re starting to do more individual kinds of tutoring. When we get our full high school program going, there will be SAT and ACT prep and college admission help.”

Every year, A’s & Aces grows with its



incumbent students and adds a grade onto the program—currently it includes kindergarten through ninth graders. Schumacher estimates that the program serves more than 1,000 underprivileged children each year. The program has had a far-reaching effect in the community—and beyond. In 2013, A's & Aces was named the 2013 National Junior Tennis & Learning Chapter of the Year and was even featured on an episode of ABC's *Secret Millionaire*.

Now, the founders are focusing on

making sure that the organization is here to stay. "I want it to be sustainable before I'm not," Schumacher says.

Unlike Schumacher, Monhartova didn't grow up in New Orleans. She came to the city from the Czech Republic on a tennis scholarship in 1998, and eventually earned her Ph.D at Tulane. "I have been very appreciative of everything the community has done for me," she says. "It's a nice way to give back."

Monhartova says that it's the

inspiration she gets from the growing list of participants, volunteers and partners at A's & Aces that keeps her committed.

"What I like to see is that more people want to do this," she says. "It gives you belief that it's possible to make a change. One individual making a change is not really realistic. But if you get more people who believe in this mission and see the ultimate goal, then I think you can really make an impact at a community level."

# Annual Tribute to Arthur Ashe

## Essay Contest Winners Enjoy Trip to Winston-Salem Open

BY ALEX WELCH/USTA NORTH CAROLINA

Arthur Ashe was known for so much more than his accomplishments on the tennis court, even though he was a Grand Slam champion. His endeavors off the court spoke volumes to the person he was, and his efforts still resonate with people all over the world today, especially some of our youth in the tennis world.

Each year the USTA holds the Arthur Ashe Essay Contest for National Junior Tennis & Learning (NJTL) participants. NJTL is a nationwide group of community tennis organizations seeking to develop the character of young people through tennis and education.

After the essays are submitted, one child from each state in USTA Southern is selected as a winner and earns an all-expenses-paid trip to the Winston-Salem Open. During their time at the tournament, they're treated to an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of every aspect of the ATP World Tour event.

During late August, the group of winners, accompanied by their parents, were taken around the facilities and introduced to several high-profile persons such as Tournament Director Bill Oakes and ATP player Federico Delbonis. The group was then taken on a tour of Wake Forest University's campus where USTA Southern Managing Director of Diversity, Grants, NJTL and Community Tennis Yasmine Osborn showed the children what educational opportunities they can have after high school and the importance of education.

"The whole reason we take them on the tours is to expose them to different opportunities that they have in their future. We want to show them a college campus and show them what that life is like," Osborn said. "I like to have former student athletes give the tour, because I want them to get an idea what that life is like, to encourage them to go to college."

According to USTA Serves, 81 percent of youth who play tennis say they will attend college. NJTL programs and the Arthur Ashe Essay Contest will continue to be resources utilized to help increase those numbers each year.

Every essay contest winner's story is different. Some of them came to tennis out of a desire to play a new sport. Some of them found NJTL while looking for a program that includes academics and physical activity.

For one winner, tennis has provided a new opportunity to connect with peers during a difficult point in his life.

Ja-Briel Weston, 11, the Louisiana essay contest winner, was forced to evacuate New Orleans with his family

Ja-Briel Weston, the Louisiana essay contest winner, hangs out with ATP World Tour player Federico Delbonis.

Susan Mullane/  
Cameraworks USA



in 2005 prior to Hurricane Katrina making landfall. At the age of 2, Ja-Briel relocated to Atlanta to live with some of his family. His father, Sebastian Weston, said making the move back to Louisiana was not easy for his son.

"It took a while for him to get used to it. We lived in a trailer for the first year or two," Weston said. "I think it's affected (Ja-Briel) the most because he was only 2 years of age when we left. He got used to the environment in Georgia. It was tough for him moving back to New Orleans."

Ja-Briel became involved with the A's and Aces NJTL program in New Orleans just over a year ago. His newfound love for tennis continues to assist with his growth in a new home.

"It's helped him develop. He's met new people and taken on new challenges. It's helped him with that transition," Weston said.

Kimberly Salama, whose daughter, Yohari, was the Kentucky essay contest winner, said NJTL and education about Arthur Ashe has helped her two children become better people at a young age.

"The good thing about the NJTL is they teach them how to write and they learn about events and players who help the community like Arthur Ashe. It helps them see themselves in that role," Salama said. "Tennis helps (Yohari) with discipline. It helps her to be responsible and grow as an individual."

Along with Ja-Briel and Yohari, this year's list of winners included Daryl Perkins, Thandiwe Brown, Nyasha Nealon, Ashytn McFadden and Carmen Galabiz. This was the 16th year the USTA held the Arthur Ashe Essay Contest.

At the end of the day, the contest winners and their families were introduced on center court prior to the night match. The moment in the spotlight was one they'll surely remember for years to come.