

# International Tennis Hall of Fame

Saturday, July 17, 2021  
Induction Ceremony



BRETT HABER: Good evening, everyone. Welcome to the International Tennis Hall of Fame induction ceremony. It is a pleasure to be here with you to present tennis' ultimate honor to not just one but two great classes of inductees as we gather here in Newport, Rhode Island, after a one-year hiatus.

I'm Brett Haber from Tennis Channel. I am honored to serve as your host in this beautiful place where tennis history is celebrated.

We have four incredible champions and contributors to our sport to celebrate tonight. Won't you please join me in welcoming them as Hall of Famers for the very first time.

From the class of 2020, now 20 years since his epic Wimbledon victory, from Croatia, Goran Ivanisevic.

Another Wimbledon great, the champion from 1994, also a three-time Olympic medalist, please welcome from Spain, Conchita Martinez.

That was the class of 2020 whose enshrinement was postponed last year.

Today we also welcome the class of 2021 for induction. Two remarkable contributors to our sport, legendary coach and teacher of tennis teachers, Dennis Van der Meer will be inducted posthumously. And is represented here today by family and friends, including Pat, his wife, seated in the front row.

Our other members of the class of 2021 are nine extraordinary women. The women whose brave efforts opened the door to women's pro tennis for generations to follow. Please welcome to the Hall of Fame the Original 9. They are nine extraordinary women, seven of them are here with us today. We will recognize them by name in just a little while.

We would also like to take a moment to mention Australian great and former World No. 1 Lleyton Hewitt was elected to the Hall of Fame this year, although he was unable to travel in 2021 because of the restrictions that still exist in Australia. We look forward to welcoming Lleyton Hewitt to

the Hall of Fame next year.

As tradition dictates, the newest members of the Hall of Fame are welcomed by the existing Hall of Famers. Let's take a moment to recognize the presence of those who returned to their home away from home here in Newport, starting from the class of 2017, noted tennis journalist, expert historian and writer, Steve Flink.

From the class of 2013, dedicated tennis promoter and American tennis great, Charlie Pasarell.

From the class of 2009, an innovator in sports management, a champion Davis Cup player and captain, Donald Dell.

From the class of 1987, Wimbledon champion, US Open champion, seven-time Davis Cup winner, and now the president of the International Tennis Hall of Fame Mr. Stan Smith.

Sadly, since last we gathered here, the tennis world has lost six Hall of Famers. Hall of Famers who leave a lasting impact on our sport and the world at large.

Let's take a moment to remember these Hall of Fame legends.

(Video Shown.)

BRETT HABER: Let's get to the induction honors, shall we? It is only every four years after all that the International Tennis Hall of Fame presents this honor in the hall's contributor category, which recognizes those who have made a transcendent impact in our sport from outside the lines.

First up, not just one person, but nine. The first-ever group to be inducted into the Hall of Fame. The nine women who left a legacy that we still see in action every day in our sport.

Let's take a look.

(Video Shown.)



BRETT HABER: Ladies and gentlemen, the Original 9.

Our math is not off, only seven of the Original 9 are here today. We do want to acknowledge the two that were not able to attend. Would you please offer a round of applause for Nancy Richey and Judy Tegart Dalton.

At this time Hall of Fame President Stan Smith will present our newest Hall of Famers with their induction medals one by one.

We start with Peaches Bartkowicz.

Ladies and gentlemen, Rosie Casals.

Ladies and gentlemen, Julie Heldman.

Ladies and gentlemen, the woman on the end here (laughter), Billie Jean King.

Ladies and gentlemen, Hall of Famer Kristy Pigeon.

Ladies and gentlemen, Kerry Melville Reid.

Ladies and gentlemen, Valerie Ziegenfuss.

Joining us via Zoom from Australia Judy Tegart Dalton.

Congratulations to all the members of the Original 9. We'll hear from them now. Billie, would you start us off.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Wow, I want to thank everyone. I hope you and your families are well and safe, and the frontline workers, as well. It's an honor and privilege to stand with these women and make history once again.

We also want to recognize and congratulate the other inductees, Dennis Van der Meer, Lleyton Hewitt, Conchita Martinez, and Goran Ivanisevic.

We are the Original 9. Valerie Ziegenfuss, Kristy Pigeon, Julie Heldman, Peaches Bartkowicz, Kerry Melville Reid, and a special thanks to Rosie Casals for believing the Original 9 belonged in the International Tennis Hall of Fame.

You see that two members aren't with us, we wish they could be with us tonight.

The nine of us, along with our fearless leader, Gladys Heldman, had one vision for the future of women's tennis: we wanted any girl in the world, if she was good enough, to have a place to compete, to be recognized for her accomplishments, not only her looks. Most importantly, to be able to make a living playing professional tennis.

Today's women's professional tennis players on the WTA Tour are living our dream. Women's tennis is the leader in women's sports.

Thank you.

KERRY MELVILLE REID: I'm Kerry Melville Reid. I just want to say what a wonderful honor it is to be here and to be inducted to the Hall of Fame with these great girls.

It's amazing to think that 50 years ago I was playing here in Newport in definitely the first Virginia Slims tournament here 50 years ago. I was lucky enough to win the tournament on the last point. We went to a tiebreaker in the third set. Jimmy Van Alen was here waving his flag around. Anyhow, it went to four points all, and we played one point for the match and I won (laughter).

I just want to say, looking back from then, looking how far women's tennis has come in that time is really amazing. I'm really proud to have been a part of that.

I also want to say a little shout-out to Judy Dalton. She was the other Aussie on the Original 9. She lived in Melbourne, I used to play with her a lot. She was a little older than me. When we were deciding whether we'd sign up on the Original 9, I was looking to Judy. Oh, it's good enough for Judy, I'm doing it. If Billie Jean is doing this, I think this is a good thing they're putting their tennis careers on the line possibly.

I decided to join the Original 9, and I'm really happy that I did.

Thank you.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Now we're going to hear from our friend in Australia, Judy Dalton.

JUDY TEGART DALTON: Thank you, Billie. Hi, girls, great to see you. So sad I'm not there with you. To Kerry, thank you for those very kind words.

It's an honor to be part of this. I wanted to thank you all for your friendship and support over the years and also what we created, which was really special. I'd also like to thank the board of the Hall of Fame for recognizing us for what we did. I hope you have a lovely evening.

Thank you so much for the honor.

KRISTY PIGEON: My name is Kristy Pigeon. In 1968 I broke into the international tennis scene. At that time women played on the back courts and women's sports

were trivialized. The same year at age 17, I became the top junior in the world by winning Wimbledon and the U.S. title. I set a new goal, which was to go to college and play on a team and receive a scholarship. No such thing. The phone didn't ring.

Then in 1970, Jack Kramer got aced by nine women (laughter). We were misfits, troublemakers, rebels. But we were just crazy enough to change the world of tennis. We tried hard. Sure enough, we changed it.

I'm most proud of our efforts that led not only to a much broader range of opportunities for women players, but also for other sportswomen and collegiate athletes as well.

Today I'm honored to receive the highest accolade that can be bestowed on a tennis player. I'd like to thank the International Tennis Hall of Fame patrons, directors, staff, volunteers for being here now and supporting us today.

We certainly all have come a long way, baby (smiling).

VALERIE ZIEGENFUSS: I'm Valerie.

Thank you to the Hall of Fame committee for selecting us into the hall. This award means the world to me. It is by far the biggest honor I will ever receive. This award means our story is officially part of tennis history forever and ever. It means for generations to come my relatives will be able to trace their bloodline back to me and discover our group's contribution to the world. That's fun.

Just think, we grew up with white tennis balls, wood racquets, one tennis magazine, World Tennis, and no Stan Smith adidas shoes.

What is even more amazing is we're older than the Internet, color TV, personal computers, and cell phones, not to mention our friend Alexa. By the way, she knows who we are and she even pronounced Bartkowicz and Ziegenfuss correctly. Talk about you've come a long ways, baby.

The game of tennis has always given to me more than I could ever give back to it. The game prepared me for adulthood. It gave me skills to earn a living. It gave me friendships that have lasted a lifetime.

Tennis has always been there for me. It is part of my past, present, and hopefully my future. It has given me so much joy, playing it, coaching it, following it, and parenting it.

I am very proud that my daughter Allison Bradshaw played the women's tour for three years. Maybe one day her children, Matthew and Ashleigh, will follow in our footprints.

Having said all that, there is one thing I have loved more than tennis, and that is being a mother to Allison and my son, Michael Bradshaw.

We have all received so much from this game and standing here just proves even more that tennis is a game that never stops giving back. I'm so happy to share this honor with my fellow Original 9 family. I love you guys.

JULIE HELDMAN: I'm Julie Heldman. I'm a proud member of the Original 9. I feel both thrilled and profoundly honored that the Hall of Fame is inducting us as a group and acknowledging our contributions to women's tennis and to women everywhere.

By now most of you have seen the iconic photo of our group taken in Houston in September 1970 just before the start of the groundbreaking tournament that we have come to celebrate. The photo shows eight top women tennis players grinning and raising \$1 bills alongside my mother, the architect and engineer of the early tour.

She is no longer with us, but we remain grateful for all the miracles she pulled off. Yes, there were eight women in the photo, not nine, because I'm not in the photo. I hadn't planned to compete in Houston because at that time I was so deeply wounded physically and mentally that I couldn't compete in a tournament for another five months.

But I, like the other eight women, understood the importance of the moment. When I heard that my pals and rivals were taking a risk for women's tennis, I jumped in to join them.

So I competed in Houston by playing just one point out of solidarity, to stand up against the male-dominated tennis associations that were threatening our right to earn a living.

Billie Jean King and I went out on a side court, after just a few moments of pitty-pat tennis, I intentionally hit the ball into the net, an act that was totally foreign to my nature.

Once we cemented the deal by shaking hands at the net, our group became the Original 9. The nine of us were rebels, but we were not alone. The Houston tournament could only accommodate eight players, but plenty more women would have taken the risk if they'd only had the opportunity.

Sure, it's true that not every woman player chose to join us right away. But let's not forget that soon after the tour got under way, women players arrived in droves from around the world ready to stand together. Without that kind of solidarity, the tour might have fizzled out quickly.

The Original 9 are being honored today for our courageous stand, but also as the symbol of all the early competitors on the women's pro tour who banded together for the present and future of women's tennis. This honor has been 51 years in the making, but it remains exquisitely timely.

Since 1970 vastly increased numbers of girls and women have participated in sports, and many have excelled. Once again, the sound of rebellion is in the air, spearheaded by the women's national soccer team, but repeated throughout women's sports, echoing our long-ago demand to be respected and paid for doing what we did best.

By honoring the Original 9 today, the International Tennis Hall of Fame is sending a message to female athletes in all sports. The message is: keep fighting, your time is coming.

ROSIE CASALS: I am frightened to death of all those speeches. I'm supposed to be the closer.

I'm going to close this wonderful, wonderful evening by congratulating the past honorees, Goran and everybody, Dennis, and Conchita, my dear friend over there. Special thanks to all the board members here at the Hall of Fame. You guys have been absolutely wonderful. Also special thanks to Ilana Kloss, who really was behind the scenes in helping all this happen with me.

Special thanks to all of you for completing our journey and allowing the Original 9 to once again make our history in the game that we've loved and helped shape into the future.

To my warriors who stood tall and invincible so long ago so women's tennis could be what it's become, the showcase for women's sports. One last time, I am proud to stand with them and before all of you as a humble believer that anything is possible if women stand together as we were and still are.

I can't thank you enough. It's a great moment. Twice is really going over the top for Billie Jean, Nancy Richey and I. This is so very special to share it with these wonderful women. Thanks so much, Hall of Fame. Congratulations to everybody. And my dear friends, thanks for making the trip because you make it all happen. Thank you.

And Anne Marie, we cannot do without you. You are a star with your staff and everybody. Thank you.

BRETT HABER: As they leave the stage fittingly together, would you give them a cheer one more time, for the first

time as official Hall of Famers, the Original 9.

The last fact that Rosie gave is one that Alexa is going to have to add to her knowledge, is that Billie Jean, Rosie, and Nancy Richey now become the first three individuals to enter the Hall of Fame twice, as individuals and part of this group.

(Video Shown.)

BRETT HABER: Ladies and gentlemen, accepting on Dennis Van der Meer's behalf, please welcome Dennis' good friend United States Tennis Association past-president Lucy Garvin and Dennis' wife, Pat Van der Meer.

Hall of Fame president Stan Smith will present Pat with Dennis' medal.

LUCY GARVIN: Thank you. Good evening, everyone. Congratulations to Conchita, Goran, and to the Original 9. Surely I would not be standing here as a past president of the USTA were it not for what you all have done over the years.

Dennis would be so proud to be in your company, those who are being inducted this weekend. It's an honor to be here in Newport to present Dennis Van der Meer for induction to the International Tennis Hall of Fame.

I'd like to recognize and welcome Dennis' family and his many friends who have come to share with his wife Pat Van der Meer this prestigious recognition of Dennis' lifetime of contributions.

Dennis dedicated his life to serving tennis. His love of the sport was apparent in everything he did every day. Dennis recognized how important it was to ensure tennis was accessible to all ages, all genders, and all economic backgrounds.

His love for people was very obvious, and people loved Dennis. He was a master at engaging everyone, be it an aspiring young teaching pro or an individual taking a lesson in one of his clinics, as well as coaching a player at the highest level of their game.

Speaking of the highest level of their game, I am certain you remember the tennis boom which occurred in the 1970s. It is universally believed the "Battle of the Sexes" was the impetus for that tennis boom. And Dennis Van der Meer was courtside coaching Margaret Court and then Billie Jean King as they faced Bobby Riggs.

It was phenomenal how those events inspired so many to



want to learn to play tennis. With this boom taking place, Dennis recognized the need to have qualified teaching professionals ready to give proper lessons and clinics. He believed there should be a common approach to teaching tennis. With so many ideas that Dennis had, he also found a solution.

In this case, he developed the standard teaching method and established the internationally acclaimed TennisUniversity course. That course was used to train tennis teachers throughout the world.

In 1979, Dennis purchased land on Hilton Head Island and founded the Van der Meer Tennis Center. The tennis center offered tennis lessons for all ages and abilities as well as tournaments, camps, and numerous events, including wheelchair tournaments and Special Olympics.

Dennis was extremely generous, particularly when it involved teaching juniors. One example. The South Carolina Tennis Association held an All-Star camp for the top 10 boys and girls, 12s, 14s, 16s, and 18-year-olds. They did this every spring on a Friday, Saturday, and Sunday for 80 children.

When the association needed a new home for the All-Star camp, Dennis offered his facility, as well as all of his teaching pros, and he invited the teaching pros from throughout the state. Dennis provided the housing, the meals for all attendees at no cost to any parent, to any child or to the tennis association.

He impacted this every year for 20 years. If you multiply that, that comes to about 1,600 children that were benefiting from Dennis' generosity. Truly amazing.

In 1986, Dennis and Pat founded the Van der Meer Academy where many elite professionals came to train, including individuals like Grant Stafford, Amanda Coetzer and many, many others. Dennis was a businessman, but throughout his career he never failed to understand how important the people he served were.

He returned every single phone call personally and answered every letter written to him. Dennis learned the name of every student and used their name when he addressed them, even in a clinic of 30 or more people. He never forgot a name once he learned it. Just an amazing feat.

He always gave of himself and shared his expertise whenever asked. Dennis was a tremendous supporter of the United States Tennis Association. He endorsed and encouraged participation in USTA programs. He was a keynote speaker at the Tennis Teachers Conference held

in New York every year, and was named faculty emeritus of that event.

In closing, it is very clear the genius of Dennis Van der Meer. He was a brilliant coach, a revolutionary in his thinking, a true visionary, a mentor to thousands, including myself. He was, as Cliff said, the 'teacher of teachers'. I could go on and on.

But his greatest gift was his love of people and the game of tennis. He is what Hall of Famers are all about. Truly an icon. Thank you for your attention. And now it is my pleasure to ask Dennis' wife to come to the podium to accept this honor.

PAT VAN DER MEER: Well, Dennis was the speaker in our family. I'm only going to say thank you to the Hall of Fame and all the people who voted him in because I know he's here watching over us. I know he's so pleased to be in with all the Original 9, who he was good friends with all of you and cared so much what you were doing, believed in what you were doing. He's so happy.

So thank you very much to everybody.

BRETT HABER: Time now to go back a year to the class of 2020 whose induction had to wait just a little bit longer than normal.

We start with this member of the player category. A Spanish tennis great and a Wimbledon champion, Conchita Martinez.

We have some special words from a close friend and former WTA colleague of Conchita's. Take a look.

RAQUEL GISCAFRE: It is my honor to introduce a great champion, someone who is very special to me, my friend Conchita Martinez.

The memories I treasure with her go back to Tampa 1989 when we first met. I was there as a promoter, recruiting players for the Acura Classic in San Diego. I watched Conchi beat Gabby Sabatini in the finals. Miss Topspin, as she was famously known, displayed her grace, tenacity, and strategy on the court.

Conchi went on to be in the top 10 nine years in a row. In 1995 she was ranked No. 2. She was the first Spanish woman to win Wimbledon, beating the great Martina Navratilova in an unforgettable final in 1994. She reached the finals at the French and Australian Open, and was a semifinalist at every Grand Slam. She also won four consecutive Italian Open titles.



Conchi loves her country and was always ready to represent Spain. In doing so, she won three Olympic medals and helped her team bring home five Federation Cups, now the Billie Jean King Cup.

Then it came time to reinvent herself, which she did with a lot of determination. Conchi was the first Spanish woman to captain the team from 2015 to 2017, leading the team back to the World Group. She was also the captain of the Spanish Federation Cup team from 2013 to 2017.

Her love for tennis has motivated her to stay in the game in a variety of ways. As an excellent coach working with top players, in 2017 she helped Garbine Muguruza win the Wimbledon title, as a television broadcaster for Eurosport and DIRECTV, as a great tournament director in Marbella for one of the players' favorite tournaments.

First as a player, in every new role after, Conchi would channel her passion for the game and her great courage to take on new challenges. It's been a joy to see her much-deserved success.

On a personal note, do you know that Conchi plays ping-pong? I have played her and I recommend to all of you that you never play a ping-pong game with Miss Topspin. The spin on that little ball will leave you with no chance to win. I'm almost over it (smiling).

Conchi, you're an amazing champion. Today you're celebrated and enshrined into the International Tennis Hall of Fame, forever one of its prestigious members. Congratulations.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, please welcome my friend, Hall of Famer Conchita Martinez.

BRETT HABER: Ladies and gentlemen, Stan Smith presents the Hall of Fame medal to Wimbledon champion, Olympic medalist, and ping-pong legend, Conchita Martinez.

CONCHITA MARTINEZ: Wow, thank you Raquel.

Good evening, everyone. Thanks, Raquel, you're my best friend and I love you very much. Your kind words make me feel very happy and very proud to be living this moment. This day has finally arrived. I've been waiting for a year and a half, and here we are now.

Raquel, you were so active in lobbying for this to happen. Your enthusiasm and belief that I merited this great honor has been remarkable. For this I thank you, my friend.

I see so many familiar faces. This is one thing tennis has

given me: beautiful friendships, an opportunity to meet amazing people everywhere I go.

Thank you, Linda, Cindy, and Siri for being here and celebrate this moment with me. And Diego who could not be here tonight, but I'm sure he's watching from home.

I would like to thank all the committee members of the Hall of Fame for this induction. It is a great honor for me to be here today and be a part of world tennis history.

It is my first time here. I can say that I've been enjoying every moment. I thank you all for making me feel very welcome.

Seeing the museum and all of the legends and the great players that have been honored made me both proud and humble that my name will be amongst them. It's just amazing feeling and something that I will treasure all my life.

My love for tennis began the moment I saw my brothers play tennis through the window of my family home in Spain. I wanted to play as well. I picked up the racquet at age of nine. I started to play against a wall. It was love at first sight and it became the only thing I wanted to do.

Playing against girls of my age, and even older, it became clear to me that perhaps I could realize my ambition of becoming a good tennis player and perhaps one of the best in the world.

I would dream of playing against my idols, Martina Navratilova and John McEnroe. In my imagination, we would play amazing matches over and over again. I love every minute of it.

Unfortunately I never mastered the art of serve and volley, and they did. But my backhand was okay sometimes (smiling).

This was the start of my love affair with tennis. Soon I started to play and took private lessons with the local coach from my small town of Monzon. Quite soon I was playing junior championships and improving, so I moved to Barcelona where I had the opportunity to practice with and play against the best kids of my age.

At the age of 12 this move was not easy, neither for me nor my parents. But this did not discourage me from pursuing my dream of becoming a professional tennis player.

In 1988, I was 16 and won my first title in Sofia. I went on to win 32 more singles titles, the last one being in 2005. When asked by journalists and fans which title means the



most special for me, I have no doubt in saying Wimbledon.

I have mixed feelings about playing on grass at that time probably because we, as Spanish players, did not have much experience of playing on this surface. It felt pretty uncomfortable. But every year I improved my game on grass, working hard and accepting that I had to change things to get results. And, boy, did I get great results.

I am so proud to have been the first Spanish woman to take the title home. The memory of playing against and defeating Martina Navratilova, who was going after her 10th Championships at Wimbledon will stay with me forever.

Being selected for the Spanish Fed Cup team was unique. In the '90s, we had a great team, including highly professional doctors and physios with whom we had an amazing time and created strong bonds of friendships. All this resulted in five Fed Cup titles and 10 finals. I am very proud to have represented my country for so many years.

Years later I was the first female captain of the Spanish Davis Cup and Fed Cup teams at the same time. It was an amazing experience to also work with the male players. I hope they felt the same way. Hopefully women will follow in my footsteps.

I won three Olympic medals, including one in my home country, in Barcelona, '92. To win the silver medal in doubles was one of the most thrilling moments of my life. But let me tell you, playing for your country in Fed Cup or the Olympics is no walk in the park. The responsibility is huge as you feel you're carrying the hopes of your country on your shoulders.

Sleep did not come easy, as you can imagine, but yet I felt privileged and proud to represent Spain.

So thanks, tennis. This wonderful sport has given me unforgettable moments, moments that require dedication, sacrifice, effort, patience, positivity, optimism, and above all belief in yourself. If you want your dreams to come true, these words must become part of your daily life.

As a professional coach I try to transmit these values to all my past players, and I am currently honored to be working with Garbine Muguruza inspiring her to greater achievements.

I would now like to thank all of the people that have helped me throughout my career, coaches, fitness trainers, doctors, psychologists, agents, sponsors, et cetera. Tennis is an individual sport, but you need to have a very professional support group behind you. Thank you all for

guiding me throughout this journey, and of course thanks so much for the fans all over the world. You have been amazing. Gracias.

Without a doubt, I am convinced that I am here today thanks to the effort of the Original 9. The nine brave women, Peaches, Rosie, Julie, Billie Jean, Kristy, Nancy, Valerie, Judy, and Kerry, you changed the history of women's tennis, and of course we've come a long way. Thanks to you and congrats.

Goran, congratulations. I met you when you won the Olympic bronze in Barcelona '92. I tried to copy your serve, but it was completely out of reach (laughter).

And a special mention for Dennis Van der Meer, teacher of teachers for the fantastic job he did around the world in teaching tennis and for effectively making our sport grow.

Finally, a special thanks to the people who have been beside me in my passion because I feel very honored to be able to share these moments with them. Firstly, my huge gratitude to my parents. They taught me great values, sacrifice, honesty, humility, commitment, and so on. They always stood beside me, never pressuring me, and always supporting me. I am so very proud of them and miss not having them here tonight as this honor is also for them.

Secondly my brother Roberto and his wife Elena who are here tonight. Thanks for making the trip to be here with me. My brother Fernando who is with my parents watching from home. And last but not least, my wonderful partner, Stefania, who I thank her for her continued support in letting me enjoy my passion for coaching. It is not easy with all this trouble, but your love and support gives me the strength to continue. I love all of you very much.

I am so honored that I get to share this moment with them and all of you. This is really special, not just for me but for all of us. Thank you. Thank you.

BRETT HABER: Conchita Martinez, everybody.

Our final inductee, ladies and gentlemen, from Croatia, Goran Ivanisevic.

To welcome Goran to the Hall of Fame, please take a look at the video monitors, some welcome words from a fellow Hall of Famer.

JOHN McENROE: Can I say this at the top? I love Goran Ivanisevic. I am absolutely thrilled to induct someone into the Hall of Fame who is arguably crazier on the court than I was (laughter).



Here is the truth, he's been great for the sport of tennis, certainly has personality. Yes, he's a character. Yes, he had serious game. He's lefty. I like that. He's super talented. He's the first guy I ever remember sliding on a hard court. I thought he was nuts then. Now everyone does it.

Yes, I played Goran a number of times over the years. I've watched and commented his matches many times. I must say he always had me on the edge of my seat because I never knew what was going to happen next. I'm not sure he did either.

But his unpredictability was also partly why we loved him. By the way, why he was so difficult to play against. The bottom line is this: both on and off the court Goran did things his way, and we can certainly use more players like him on the tennis circuit.

Oh, yeah, he had one of the greatest serves in the history of the game, was the only player in history to win Wimbledon after receiving a wild card to get in, was a four-time Wimbledon finalist, and won Wimbledon in 2001, beating Patrick Rafter in one of the great finals in our sport's history in front of one of the rowdiest crowds ever to witness a tennis match.

He was also a proud part of the Davis Cup team when Croatia won its first Cup ever in 2005 and was a bronze medalist for newly formed Croatia in 1992 at the Olympics in both singles and doubles. He also achieved a career high rank of No. 2 in the world in singles in 1994 and had another 21 career singles titles to his name.

By the way, he's also made a seamless transition to the coaching ranks, becoming one of the best in the business. First being instrumental in helping fellow Croatian Marin Cilic win his lone Grand Slam title, and presently helping Novak Djokovic win more majors and cement his status as one of the all-time greats of the game.

So, ladies and gentlemen, I am proud to introduce my friend and the newest member of the International Tennis Hall of Fame, Goran Ivanisevic.

GORAN IVANISEVIC: Is going to be no pressure at all (laughter). Is going to be like last game me and Patrick Rafter (laughter). I hope not.

Where do I start? John McEnroe, my childhood idol. Thank you, John, for such a beautiful words. I don't think I'm crazier than you, but close, very close. But I love you. I love your tennis. You are the reason why I started to play tennis. Yes, I enjoyed to beat you lot of times (smiling).

Original 9, we can say Original Great. Thank you for changing the history of tennis. Thank you for being amazing. Thank you for being brave. And I am honored to stand in front of you here. Thank you so much.

Conchita, there was no better and nicer person to be part of Class 2020. I remember you, I watch you all my career. You are not only great tennis player, great person, I congratulate you for all your career, and to be such a nice and humble person. Thank you and congratulate you.

42 years ago I started this journey from little town Split in Croatia. Today 42 years after is going to end in Newport. On that trip I have to thank some people because we had some good times, some bad times, some ups and downs.

My coaches, I going to name them because those people help me become the player that I am today.

(Indiscernible) Zoran Ilic, Niki Pilic, Mario Tudur, Verdan Martic, and most important for me, Bob Brett, who is not with us any more, but he's proud of me up. Thank you, Bob.

My Davis Cup members, I have privilege to play for two countries. I started with Yugoslavia. After that was Croatia. I going to name two people from my Yugoslavian team, Boro Jovanovic, and captain who helped me a lot Radmilo Armenulic. My Croatian team, captains Zeljko Franulovic, Niki Pilic, Goran Prpic, Bruno Oresar, Ivan Ljubivic, Mario Ancic, Sasa Hirszon, Ivo Karlovic. All of them we played together. We laughed together. We won Davis Cup in 2005.

Every ATP guy, some of them they ruin my life almost. But you all made me better player. Because of you I am here today.

All my friends who believed me when was impossible to believe in me. When I was down, they were my friends. They put me up and they always had nice words to tell me.

My fans. Was not easy to be my fan. Wow (smiling). Was frustrating, was sad, probably a lot of people got divorced because of me. But for sure one thing, it was entertaining to be my fan.

Journalists, we had lot of fun. We had lot of good press conferences. Lot of disagreement, but still we have respect for each other. I have to mention one person who follow me since I was 10 years old, Neven Berticevic. Thank you, Neven, for writing every beautiful word about me.

Now we come to the most important thing. Two most

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®



important person in my career: my mom and dad. Two people who sacrificed their health, career, time, gave me unconditional love for me to succeed.

Mom and dad, there are not enough thank you, not enough words that I can say or do for everything what you done for me. If I have to go again on this trip, I going to choose you again to be my mom and dad, and we go together again. I love you and thank you for everything.

My three kids. Oliver, Emanuel and Amber. Oliver is too small so he doesn't know who is his dad, but he loves his dad. Emanuel, Amber, I think they are big enough and they proud of their father, what he achieved.

My beautiful wife. You know when I started to become good, she was a small girl, didn't have a clue about me, didn't know clue about tennis. Now after 20-and-something years, she's standing here extremely proud and beautiful. Thank you for your support and thank you for your love.

I going to thank Wimbledon committee for giving me wild card. I don't know if they did a good job or not, or they now regretting, but thank you guys. If you didn't give me wild card, I wouldn't stand here now. It was I think a good decision, thank you (laughter).

Now in the end, I going to thank one city and one country. My home city of Split, city that gave so many amazing people, amazing sportsman. City that gave me the nicest and safest childhood, that I became a tennis player that I was now and I was before, and everything from that city I bring after in my career and I became the man that I am now.

To my country, we are small country with a huge heart. We never stop believe. I have lot of ups and downs and I never stopped believing. First time in my life I can say I am proud of myself. To three Gorans, five Gorans, to every Goran in this world, you guys, you made me proud. We did it our different way. We did it our hard way. But we did it our way.

But only me is going in. So, guys, you can come and visit, but I am going in. I deserve it (laughter).

Thank you very much. This is the end. This is dream came true. Thank you so much.

BRETT HABER: What a perfect way to conclude our celebration of tennis excellence for this year, our utmost congratulations to all of our new Hall of Famers. To Conchita, to the family of Dennis Van der Meer, to the Original 9, and to all the many Gorans who will celebrate I suspect tonight here and around the world. Welcome to all

the newest Hall of Famers. Thank you so much for being with us. Good night from Newport.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

