

SPECIAL COVERAGE

SC mom put kids up for adoption, then changed her mind. She hasn't seen them in 5 years.

https://www.postandcourier.com/sports/fleming-state-clay-courts-are-prime-senior-time/article_377f8c40-f2b2-11e9-a8c9-af0a8096aec1.html

Fleming state clay courts are prime senior time

BY JAMES BECK SPECIAL TO THE POST AND COURIER

OCT 19, 2019 UPDATED OCT 19, 2019



Shelby Rogers chases a forehand during her title victory in the Templeton, Calif., \$60K tournament.

LORI SORTINO/PROVIDED

BUY NOW

SUBSCRIBE FOR \$2.98 / WEEK

It's been that long. Yes, the 36th annual Alan Fleming Senior Open Clay Courts were held recently at Seabrook Island.

The tournament actually was established in 1981 with transplanted Wall Street portfolio manager Alan Fleming leading the way. Fleming's son Peter, of course, formed one of the greatest doubles teams ever with John McEnroe.

Those were the heydays for men's pro tennis players to show up at Seabrook and Kiawah Island as well as a couple of other local clubs. Former Australian Open champion Roscoe Tanner served a stint with Roy Barth at Kiawah as the resort's touring professionals. I even got to participate in one of Roscoe's on-court clinics.

Roscoe also participated in an exhibition match with Arthur Ashe at Creekside Tennis and Swim.

And Peter Fleming paid frequent trips to Seabrook, often putting on exhibitions. Don't forget the Grand Masters circuit that brought the likes of Rod Laver, Vic Seixas, Roy Emerson, Lew Hoad, Ken Rosewall and others to Seabrook.

Oh, yes, remember the time Andre Agassi came to town as a teen-ager to play in a \$10,000 satellite tournament at Creekside. He didn't even win, but just a few years later he was winning tournaments at places such as Wimbledon and Paris.

Don't forget the women. I've still got a group photo from a Lincoln-Mercury Classics pro-am at Wild Dunes around 1980 that included the likes of Billie Jean King, Rosie Casals, Virginia Wade and other women's greats bound for the hall of fame.

We don't seem to have those type of events any more. I know, we've got the Volvo Car Open now, and have had it the last 19 years. It's a fantastic event.

The spring and fall women's ITF events at LTP Tennis are terrific, too. They actually probably put on for free to the public the best displays of tennis locally, even better than the ones at VCO. If you've been to one of the LTP tournaments, you're hooked.

Maybe it's because so little in money is on the line at LTP when compared to the VCO, but yet so much otherwise is at stake on the satellite circuit that seems to make the players play with their hearts and passion on their rackets.

Yet, wouldn't local professional tennis be even greater if some type of men's ITF or ATP competition was held locally outside of VCO week, say, like the Andy Roddick 2004 Davis Cup, or the Roddick exhibition on Daniel Island. Of course, I haven't forgotten the U.S. Men's Clay Courts at Wild Dunes in the late 1980s, with Agassi, Pete Sampras, Michael Chang and Jim Courier.

McEnroe and company show up often during the VCO for exhibitions, but it's not quite like the cozy confines of LTP Mount Pleasant, Seabrook Island, Wild Dunes, Creekside or Kiawah which once staged U.S. Men's Clay Courts and the women's Fed Cup with Lindsay Davenport.

EVENT RAISES FUNDS

That's enough for now about local tennis before the Family Circle Cup's arrival on Daniel Island.

Back to the Alan Fleming tournament at Seabrook Island.

The tournament is a big boost for its community by raising funds for local charitable causes. For instance, the latest tournament raised a record \$44,300 to benefit the Sea Islands Blessing Basket.

More than 200 fun-loving senior tennis players competed at Seabrook. The Fleming event is a USTA sanctioned tournament that serves as the state clay court championship for seniors. There were 44 divisions, far too many to list the winners here.

The mixed doubles division represented USTA's highest amateur level competition. It marked the sixth year that the mixed doubles were national gold ball events. Even former tour players and ex-Davis Cuppers play annually at Seabrook in search of the big points available to the winners.

SHELBY ROGERS UPDATE

Shelby Rogers has moved up to No. 219 in the world rankings with her recent play, which included a \$60K ITF title in California and two tournaments in Europe. She lost in the second round of qualifying at a \$250,000 WTA Tour event in Linz, Austria, and then fell in the main draw first round of the \$250,000 tournament in Luxembourg.

The 26-year-old Charleston touring pro is listed on the acceptance lists the next three weeks for ITF tournaments that are part of the Australian Open wild card series. The first two are \$80Ks at Macon, Ga., and Tyler, Texas, followed by a \$60K in Las Vegas.

That's similar to the old days for Rogers when she was climbing up the ladder to the top 100 and eventually to the top 50 in the world before being set back a full year by the 2018 knee injury in the Indian Wells, Calif., tournament.

NAVARRO, HALBAUER SPARKLE

While little sister Meggie Navarro was helping Ashley Hall win a SCISA Class AAA state title, Emma Navarro also had a big week. She made the quarterfinals in both singles and doubles at the ITF \$25K at Florence.

Emma Navarro is headed for another \$25K ITF tournament in a couple of weeks.

As for LTP \$25K singles runner-up Ellie Halbauer, the former local junior followed up LTP with a strong showing at the \$25K ITF at Hilton Head Island by making the singles and doubles finals. Halbauer switched doubles partners for Florence where she helped Navarro make the quarterfinals in doubles.

Local juniors Sophie Williams, Allie Gretkowski and Lara Schneider all won first-round matches in qualifying for the ITF Florence tournament. Abby Cotuna lost in the qualifying opener.

NOTES

-- Charleston Tennis Center's lighting system still hasn't recovered completely from Hurricane Dorian's winds almost a month ago. Even league play is limited at times, due to lights on one bank of the facility's five three-bank courts lighting up everything but the courts.

-- The SCHSL state playoffs are scheduled to start on Wednesday and run through the Nov. 9 state finals. Class AAA Bishop England is a heavy favorite to win a ninth consecutive state title. The Bishops are scheduled to open the playoffs against Cheraw on their home courts on Daniel Island on Wednesday .

-- Pine Forest Country Club's 15th annual Racquets for Recovery men's, women's and mixed doubles tournament is scheduled for Nov. 1-3. The registration deadline is Oct. 27. Registration is available online (tournament No. 700090119).

-- Porter-Gaud may have ended up with only a 12-8 record and lost in the SCISA state semifinals to then unbeaten Trinity-Byrnes, but coach Charlotte Hartsock's team made things a lot tougher for Trinity than the final 6-2 verdict might have indicated. The Cyclones lost a third-set tiebreaker at No. 3 singles, and No. 2 doubles players Piper Brown and Somers Kirk were ahead 6-4, 4-1 when the match was halted.

-- Lowcountry Junior Tennis League founder April Gift has taken on the duties of manager of program development for USTA South Carolina. Gift moved to the state in 2013 and started the local Junior Team Tennis League.

-- Brenda Carter and Diane Barker have been the face of Charleston's international senior tennis in recent years, playing and winning against national and international competition. However, Carter recently moved to Raleigh, N.C.

Reach James Beck at jamesbecktennis@gmail.com.