

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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OPAF First Volley Instructor Featured at San Diego Tennis Fest

Langhorne, Pa – May 18, 2007 – OPAF First Volley Tennis Instructor, Stan Backovsky was a featured player recently at the San Diego District Tennis Association (SDDTA) annual Tennis Fest at the Balboa Tennis Club. The Tennis Fest is an open house event that invites the public and tennis players of all skill levels to come and enjoy an afternoon of tennis clinics, district awards, and to watch exhibition matches. The main exhibition match this year was to show the broad range of people who can compete in tennis. The San Diego tennis district selected a nationally ranked wheelchair player and Stan Backovsky, a BK amputee who plays tennis standing up, to team up with professional tennis players for a match on center court. The match used standard tennis rules, plus the wheelchair player being allowed two bounces on his side of the net, if needed.

Stan has been a recreational tennis player since his teens. Then in May of 2003, he was hit by a pickup truck that ran a red light, severing his right leg below the knee. After three weeks in the trauma center, he was allowed to go home to complete his rehabilitation. All through the process, Stan watched tennis tournaments on TV, wondering whether he could ever play some sort of tennis again. When he met his prosthetist Kevin Calvo, CPO, FAAOP to be cast for his first prosthesis, Stan asked what kind of mobility he could expect. He was told he should be able to do 90% of what he did before. By mid-August, he was walking on his prosthesis reasonably well so it was time to test this new mobility on the tennis court. Finding success, he used tennis as his physical therapy and in a couple of months was playing tennis with the same people he played with before the accident. All leading up to the exhibition match with tennis pros who have played at Wimbledon. Kevin's 90% estimate wasn't too far off after all.

For the San Diego Tennis Match, Stan was teamed up with Gretchen Magers, who played on the professional tour through the 1980s and 1990s. Gretchen was a member of the US Olympic team, and still competes internationally in the Young Cup team competition. Across the net were Todd Nelson, a 13 year veteran of the men's tour, and Anthony Lara, who competes nationally and internationally in wheelchair tennis. As the only amateur on the court, Stan felt like he had a bulls-eye on his shirt. Given the level of competition, Stan had two modest goals for the match. The first was to show the people watching that an amputee can play a decent game of tennis. The second was to sneak a couple of shots past Todd and Anthony.

The match itself was a wonderful experience with heated competition, lots of chasing down balls, and great volley exchanges at the net. Stan was able to show a level of tennis and mobility that the people watching did not expect from an amputee. Hopefully some of them got motivated to try tennis for themselves. The feedback from the organizers was that that was one of the best exhibition matches they have ever had - a great compliment from people of their experience. Gretchen and Stan won the match, and he did sneak a couple of good shots past Todd so goal number two was also accomplished.

In June, Stan will be leading First Volley clinics for OPAF in Salt Lake City, Los Angeles and San Francisco. First Volley clinics are intended to let amputees and others with physical challenges try tennis as an ambulatory sport and form of recreation.

For more information on how to host a First Volley clinic for your community, contact OPAF Executive Director, Robin Burton at 215-752-5756 for more details. OPAF continues our mission of bringing recreational sports programs that promote health and fitness to those served by the O & P community and ***“Giving Wings to Dreams®”!***

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