

Q&A: Local tennis pros share memories of the majors

BY HEATHER RULE

Pioneer Press

This past weekend the singles finals at Wimbledon turned back the clock.

Roger Federer, who will turn 36 in August, defeated Marin Cilic in straight sets to win his 19th grand slam singles title. In the women's final, 37-year-old Venus Williams lost to Garbine Muguruza. Williams was playing for her eighth singles title at a major and first since 2008.

On the heels of the sport's premier event, Pioneer Press freelance reporter Heather Rule caught up with Jerry Morse-Karzen, who owns Northbrook's North Shore Racquet Club and coaches the New Trier girls tennis team, and Mark Bey, the high performance coordinator at the Glenview Tennis Club, to talk about their experiences at the majors and the state of the sport.

Competing in doubles, Morse-Karzen played in the U.S. Open in 1976, 1977 and 1978. He also played at Wimbledon and the French Open in 1977. Bey is assistant coach to the Bryan brothers, the identical twins who have combined to win 16 doubles titles at grand slam tournaments.

Q: When did you first know you loved tennis, or that tennis was something you were going to pursue?

Bey: I didn't really grow up thinking I was going to be a professional tennis player. ... Basically, I wanted to go to law school. ... I was doing a combination of a little bit of tennis then working a little bit at some law firms. Then I realized, 'Oh my gosh, I don't just love tennis, I'm actually really good at coaching as well.'

Morse-Karzen: I spent a summer working at a country club picking up tennis balls. And then as a result of that, I got to just hang around the courts and try to play a little tennis. The pro's son entered a tournament, and they asked me if I wanted to enter it. Why not?

Q: How was the stage of a grand slam different than other tournaments?

Bey: The grand slams are magnified by 15. ... They have much higher exposure, media, the amount of revenue, the amount of anticipation and television coverage. Tennis doesn't always receive the same amount of respect,



MARK BEY/HANDOUT

Mark Bey serves as the the high performance coordinator at the Glenview Tennis Club and is an assistant coach to the Bryan brothers.

if you will, that other sports get week in, week out, but tennis is a big deal to everyone in the world when a grand slam is being played.

Morse-Karzen: I remember the locker room at Wimbledon. Of course, there was the locker room for seasoned players, the locker room for the rest of us. I was in the locker room for the rest of us, but it was kind of fun and neat. I remember the tea and crumpets at 2 o'clock every day. ... There was the Wimbledon box. And the Wimbledon ball, which I remember attending.

Q: What's something or a particular memory that stands out when you think back on those grand slam experiences?

Bey: Honestly, I'd say that when Bob (Bryan) won mixed doubles (at the 2006 U.S. Open) with Martina Navratilova, and Martina Navratilova was (49) years old. I think that was an amazing accomplishment. You couldn't have imagined a more professional and focused person on the court.

Morse-Karzen: I think as I look back on it, it was really just fun to get there, I'll tell you that much. A lot of people don't get there and have the opportunity.

Q: Overall just looking at the game of tennis, what significant changes have you noticed in the game over the past few years?

Bey: Well, in doubles several years ago they switched the scor-

ing format, so they made no-ad scoring in doubles. So, grand slams are the only exception to it, and that has just made the average week that much more stressful and challenging because anybody can win. It's made it a lot more open for opportunities and underdogs and Cinderella stories.

Morse-Karzen: Technology has just changed big time. I mean racquets are made of different materials. The racquets we use these days have so much more power. ... Also, training. Physical training, mental training. Conditioning, whether it's physical or mental, and just the basic strokes of the game have changed.

Q: What do you think about the future of the sport in general?

Bey: I'm hopeful that the new generation of players will be more balanced and diverse in the way that they play. ... But on another note, I am worried. I mean, what happens when Venus (Williams) and Serena (Williams) hang it up? ... We've just been so fortunate here these last couple decades with what we've been treated to. But sports always continue to go on.

Heather Rule is a freelance reporter for Pioneer Press.

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