

MADGE HARSHAW VOSTERS

A LIFETIME IN TENNIS

Unmatched in her will to win, Madge Vosters (1919-1999) combined grace and athleticism with unparalleled sportsmanship in a tennis career that spanned a lifetime. A nationally ranked junior player from Pennsylvania, Vosters went on to play three sports at Ursinus College — field hockey, basketball and tennis. Possessing great accuracy and “a nearly unretrievable drop shot,” Vosters broke into the USTA Top 10 in 1942, impressing the crowds at Forest Hills with a beautifully fought match against Patricia Todd. In 1949 Vosters was awarded the prestigious USTA Service Bowl.

Vosters shared her love of the game with her family, and teamed with daughters Gretchen and Nina to win a record 26 national mother-daughter titles. A pioneering competitor on the USTA senior circuit, she dominated the national grass court championships throughout the 1980s. Further demonstrating her racket wizardry, she also won 14 national squash titles. Celebrated for her tireless dedication to promoting tennis on all levels, particularly through the Delaware Foundation for Physical Education, Vosters is remembered as one of the game’s most gracious ambassadors.



In action at the 1941 Eastern States clay court tennis championship.



The Vosters family (l-r): Dutch, Bunny, Nina, Gretchen and Neil. In 1964 and 1988 they received the USTA’s Family of the Year Award for their support of the game.



Vosters was affectionately called “Bunny” throughout her life, but her fearlessness on the court belied her nickname.



A 1984 Sports Illustrated article described Vosters’ backhand as “a long elegant stroke that might have been the model for Evonne Goolagong’s.”



Vosters celebrates with her granddaughter Ashlee after winning the 1988 National Senior Grass Court singles title in the women’s 60 age group.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

- Middle States Girls’ Singles Champion 1935
- 3-sport athlete at Ursinus College (basketball, field hockey, tennis) 1936-40; All-American reserve in field hockey
- Eastern States Clay Court Singles Champion 1939, 1940; Finalist 1941
- Ranked in Middle States Top 10 (No. 3) 1940
- Philadelphia and District Women’s Grass Court Champion 1941, 1942
- Ranked No.1 in USTA Middle States 1942
- Ranked in USTA Top 10 1942 (No. 9)
- U.S. National Championship Quarterfinalist 1948
- Chair, Junior Wightman Cup Committee, USTA Middle Atlantic Section 1948
- USTA Service Bowl Award 1949
- Captain, U.S. Federation Cup Team 1964: Billie Jean King, Nancy Richey, Karen Susman and Rosie Casals
- Represented the USTA/Middle States in Sears Cup competition for over 30 years
- U.S. Grass Court Champion Women’s 40 Doubles 1974
- U.S. Grass Court Champion Women’s 50 Doubles 1975
- U.S. Grass Court Champion Women’s 55 Singles 1981; Doubles 1981-2, 1984, 1986
- U.S. Grass Court Champion Women’s 60 Singles 1984-5, 1988; Doubles 1987-8
- U.S. Grass Court Champion Women’s 65 Singles 1985-6, 1988-9; Doubles 1989, 1991-2
- Won a record 26 national mother-daughter titles with daughters Gretchen and Nina
- U.S. Grass Court Mother-Daughter Champion 1967-71; 1973-75, 1977-86
- U.S. Clay Court Mother-Daughter Champion 1976-1980, 1983, 1984
- U.S. Hardcourt Mother-Daughter Champion 1977
- 14 national doubles and senior doubles squash titles
- USTA Family of the Year 1964, 1988; Middle States Family of the Year 1965
- Inducted into the Ursinus College Hall of Fame 1974
- Inducted into the Delaware Sports Hall of Fame 1980
- Inducted into the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame/Delaware County 1989
- Inducted into the USTA/Middle States Hall of Fame 1994 (inaugural year)