

Sportsmanship and skill

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make a tennis champ

Peel Bldg. Mueller, Karl

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ME: You recently won the Men's Singles Championship of the 13th Mississauga Gulf Tournament. When did your interest in tennis first manifest itself?

MR. MUELLER: I was actually born into a tennis family in Germany. My father was a lawyer and a good tennis player. The whole family — my mother and two brothers — enjoyed the game. My father, as a hobby, built a 14 court tennis club. I guess I was about ten years old when I had my first lesson. I played until I was 15, this was now during the war and I had to become a soldier. When the war was over, I had just turned 18, but those were now the post war years when you thought more of survival than of playing tennis. So it was 1948 when I again picked up a tennis racket. I had a lot of enthusiasm for the game; my family was my inspiration; I practised faithfully and advanced very quickly. I won tennis tournaments in Northern Germany. Between '48 and '52, I developed my game to the standard that I played then in Interprovincial tennis for two provinces — when I say two provinces, I moved from one province to another. In '52, when I was playing about my best tennis and played in major tournaments, I decided to go to South Africa where I spent the next 14 years. Whilst being in South Africa, I became the Orange Free State Champion, and I won the South West Africa Championship twice. Then in 1966, I came to Canada.

ME: There are approximately 14 tennis clubs in Mississauga. When did you join Credit Valley Tennis Club?

MR. MUELLER: In 1964, I had given up my tennis completely. In Cape Town South Africa, I had an operation on both eyes, which had the effect afterwards of my missing the proper reaction. It's not that I couldn't see properly, but that I always realized a travelling ball too slowly, things were over before I realized what was going on. It didn't take me long to realize that I would never be able to play my hard, fast, attacking game, which means rushing the net, and volleying, taking the ball out of the air, where you are at a much shorter distance away from your opponent than if you are standing at the base line. So I thought I had better give up the sport, because I felt I would only be part of the player that I was previously. Then shortly after we came to Canada, my wife wanted to play tennis again and she found a little tennis club north of the railway tracks, west of Highway 10. She didn't want to go alone, so she asked me to accompany her, which I did. It was, and mind you not having played in five years, absolutely shocking for me. I was missing the ball completely, but after some perseverance things turned quickly to the better for me, and other members asked us to join them for a game. Before I knew what was happening, I was playing regular tennis. I was then asked to play on teams, and then tournaments were later started; I was

right back in the game. My thinking now had changed completely. I didn't mind anymore how badly I was now playing compared to what I used to play. I did enjoy playing tennis and I must say I haven't stopped enjoying it since. The Credit Valley Tennis Club changed its premises and has become the prominent tennis club here in town at Huron Recreation Centre.

ME: What other tournaments have you won while being at C.V.T.C.?

MR. MUELLER: The Credit Valley Singles I have won three times. In 1972, I was working as a tennis professional and I didn't compete. I won the Mississauga Gulf Championship twice. I have won the Intercounty Association's Men's and Mixed doubles. The second time I won the Men's doubles was on Aug. 18 in North York. Being a veteran at this stage, I am, outside of Mississauga, only playing veteran tournaments. I have got to the semi and quarter finals, the semi finals on the Canadian Veteran Championships three years ago, and the quarter finals last year. I have competed in the Ontario Veteran's Championship without having won yet! I still have the incentive to keep trying, there is no reason why I should give up.

ME: How much time do you devote a week to the sport?

MR. BUELLER: For me, tennis or sport has only been a hobby, with one exception when I served as tennis professional and manager of the Credit Valley Tennis Club in 1972, this came out of a desire to get this newly transferred club to the Huron Centre with excellent facilities. That was full time for a period of seven months. I hope that I have during those seven months contributed something to tennis in Mississauga. Otherwise, tennis has only been a sport, a hobby, which I felt was giving me a lot of pleasure, and doing me physically a lot of good and keeping me fit during my spare hours.

ME: Have you ever psyched out an opponent with a dramatic performance?

MR. MUELLER: No, I have never attempted to psyche out an opponent; when you talk about psyching out an opponent, you are using methods I call unsportsmanlike. Winning or losing, it's a straight forward game; there's no distraction of the opponent, no hanky-panky. But, instead of using the term trying to psyche out an opponent, when we use the words trying to force an opponent into errors, yes! This has become now my main object — this is my key point as far as my change in tennis is concerned. Since I am not anymore the attacking, volleying player as I was prior to my eye operation then I had to withdraw behind the base line to get as much distance in between the opponent and myself. I now have lost major weapons. So today, I have got to rely on my ground strokes from the base line, well, there it comes

in, I have to force my opponent into errors.

ME: What is the most difficult part of a game to maintain?

MR. MUELLER: Here we could talk about technique, concentration, stamina, and many other aspects. When you force yourself to concentrate in doing either

a v.i.p. and me

(very interesting person)

By KATHLEEN A. HICKS

"Tennis has gained so much in popularity that the number of tennis clubs is ever increasing from year to year. Today many thanks to the Municipality who have put in a number of municipal clubs throughout our community. The community is very well served through the Recreation and Parks Department. They help advise even in the coaching direction. I am also truly impressed by the local municipal efforts and the Lawn Tennis Association and the PRESSES' interest in furthering juniors."

a job or being on the tennis court, as far as I am concerned, you should be concentrating. If you are not, then please do. Stamina, when you want to be a good sportsman, runs into physical fitness and you should have that as well. When you go into a tournament and you have a hope of winning you have got to have technique; you have got to be able to master this. Again this is not difficult to maintain. You either have concentration, stamina, technique and understanding of tactics or you don't have it. But what I would call really difficult to maintain during a game is to play your game. Usually you do win your game and you can force your game onto the opponent. Too often, like in any other sport, when the crucial moment starts or the opponent puts on the pressure — because it is a question of who is dominating whom, you are battling for supremacy. This is then when the opponent tends to choke up, when he feels the pressure. You have got to be able to continually be yourself and play your game and counter the moves of the opponent, outwit him, outplay him, but do not tighten up, don't let the nerves come in that is the first sign you are going down on the way to losing the match. That's what I find the most difficult thing in tennis, and I think it is for any player.

ME: Are strong wrists important in executing a satisfactory game of tennis?

MR. MUELLER: Here is a slight misunderstanding as

to what is the secret of a good stroke and a fast moving ball; it is not the strong wrists, because I believe here you are thinking in terms of your racket in your hand and your arm doing the work. No, it is not the arm that is doing the work, it is the swing of the body, it is the natural swing which makes the ball travel in addition to stepping into the ball and putting your weight into the shot, along with the player's timing. So you could have an arm like spaghetti as a junior girl and you can hit the most powerful forehand. Now, of course, if you want to play at the top and join the professionals of the tennis circuit, you better have developed and have strong wrists, because this can be important in volleying, and especially in the top spin backhand — a strong wrist is of utmost importance.

ME: Do you ever consider the racket as an extension of your arm?

MR. MUELLER: I never thought about it that way, an excellent question! Yes, very much so. Suppose you just used the palm of your hand to shove an object across the table, or by using the extension, the racket hitting the ball with the racket head, is the same, so one could really say the racket is the extension of your arm with the racket giving you the facility to meet the ball and hit it with a certain surface which you do not have in the palm of your hand. That is an excellent point — it is an extension of your arm.

ME: Love is the counting procedure for tennis. Could you explain this a little for me?

MR. MUELLER: "Tennis Love" in Germany translated into English was 15-nil, 30-nil, and that word nil of course makes sense. Now when I went to South

Africa with the little English schooling I had, I couldn't express myself properly, so I used to say, "One for you and one for me." It was very quickly corrected then and became 15-love and so on. I am ashamed to admit that I do not know where this word love came from. What is interesting is that the unorthodox counting procedure in tennis has been maintained until today. So we are talking 15-love, 15-all, 30-15, 40-15 et cetera. A change has taken place now in the highly commercialized World Tennis League for the reason that the spectators are to a great extent novices to this game. They are coming for an evening's excitement, but they are not knowledgeable tennis players or tennis fans. So for them to understand what is going on down there on the court, the counting has changed to 1-0, 1-all, 2-1, up to a maximum of 4-3. But I do not want to say this would ever go any further than the World Tennis League, because as I foresee tournaments being played, there is, like in other sports, a certain conservatism, which does not allow the federation of sports leagues to change the decades old scoring procedure.

ME: Do you have any tennis tips for the novice player?

MR. MUELLER: A novice player, who would like to play tennis — say 9 or 10 years old, should have professional lessons. As in other sports, if you start learning things yourself, mistakes and wrong ideas creep into the game and these turn into habits. As you know, getting rid of negative habits is extremely difficult. Learn the game right off the bat in its proper way. That's what the tennis pro will do. By learning the proper fundamentals of the game you will become a decent tennis player. If you are a little talented, having had this professional tuition right at the start and if you are well co-ordinated, then there are only two things that I can suggest to the now advancing player. One is to add to your repertoire of strokes so your opponent never knows what to expect from you next. The second thing is to perfect the forehand and try and play for the spot, do lots of practising to gain control of the ball.

ME: Do you feel that one should always be a good sport whatever the circumstances?

MR. MUELLER: The answer is an emphatic certainly — it goes without saying. Basically, do you like to enjoy your sport and what you are doing or don't you? Do you like to be liked by people or don't you? When you enjoy what you are doing people will share this enjoyment of yours, right? When you display the right courtesy to your opponents and club members, which we again call good sportsmanship, then you are liked by them. Again this is only to your advantage, because you like to be friendly with people and you want others to be friendly with you. Talking about the courtesies, don't try to find ways and means of distracting the concentration of your opponent, of upsetting him. Don't say something he doesn't like, or not shake his hand after having won or lost a match, or any of the other courtesies that go spoken or unspoken with any sport that you participate in. You also have got to be a good loser if it is only for the reason that when you are a good loser you have been beaten by a better player. That means you have been playing your game — because you were not afraid of losing. A bad loser usually is afraid of losing, and he will tighten up during his game and become frustrated and start choking. A good loser is just what we expect, as good sportsmanship. Don't come with excuses that you are having an off day or this and that didn't work. No, rather, admit that at least on this day you have been beaten by a better player. So sportsmanship as far as I am concerned comes above all else.