

MIKE GILLESPIE

TIM McAvoy's Introduction Speech (Edited version)

Mike Gillespie is being recognized for his contributions to our sport for over the last 30 years—in the PPTA, the APTA, and the Junior program. In 2000, the first PPTA certification process was held. Mike participated in that groundbreaking event and has participated every year since. He has certified and mentored over 100 high profile pros. The APTA has benefitted from his expertise—he has chaired Nationals tournaments of many levels, as well as Junior National tournaments.

Mike has tasted gold at every level--Junior Nationals, Mixed Nationals, and Senior Nationals. His greatest contribution to the game, is his commitment to the growth of the Junior platform program, on a local and national basis. His students have won 14 National titles. He has made a big impact on the future of the game.

Acceptance Speech (Edited version)

When I was contacted about being inducted into the Platform Tennis Hall Of Fame I was stunned. I felt very honored to be included with such an impressive group of people in our paddle world. I feel very fortunate to have been mentored by exceptional pros.

In 1975, I was focused totally on tennis. I was invited by a childhood friend, Randy Macintosh, to play paddle. That first day I knew that this game was special and it grabbed my heart. The following year, I began playing junior paddle, with Ron Erskine, and also men's paddle. We would get a call at 6:30 at night from Phil Crane, our pro, looking for a fourth. My parents would drive me to the men's matches. Phil passed away 10 years ago and he did a lot for me.

In the late 1970s, I taught tennis at the Short Hills Club. The director was Hall-of-Famer Hank Irvine. I worked under him for five summers. He was a world class tennis player, national champion, and had a gift for teaching.

After college, I continued playing with Ron Erskine. We got to the Nationals finals and were ranked fifth nationally. Later this season, Ron and I are hosting and playing in the 50+ Nationals. From a partnership that started 40 years ago, we are hoping to defend our title. [Ed. note— They did. It was their fifth win in a row.]

One of the more fortuitous days occurred in 1987. A woman I had played against asked me to play in the Mixed Nationals *with* her. That was the beginning of a very special friendship. I would not be the person or the pro I am without knowing Gerri Viant. Teaching paddle camp with Sue Aery and Gerri helped form me as a pro. We are always looking to teach this fabulous game in different ways.

We met Lucy Moure at the Indian Trail Club during our paddle camp. In 2010, Lucy messaged me that there was an opportunity to run the paddle program at ITC. When I got there and

witnessed the facility and felt the vibe that the amazing club had, I knew that I wanted to be there. Gerri wisely suggested a young talented teaching pro from Westchester, Ana Brzova, as my assistant. I am very fortunate to co-teach with Ana and we are now in our 6th year together. She is a talented player, instructor and a great friend.

I wouldn't have gotten here if I hadn't met my wife Nely. She is the best of me. She is an educator and has a great love for learning.