

Lance WUTTKE

Tennis Seniors SA Murray Bridge & Districts Life Membership – 2003



Lance got involved with tennis at an early age. He remembers playing his Dad when he was five years old. He found it easy to play Dad, as he could not play very well. Lance lived in the main street of Eudunda. 'Their family home was on an exceptionally large block backed by two main roads. It was part of a large block, which had his Uncle's home on it as well. They had their own tennis court on the block and Lance remembers inviting all his neighbours or anyone who wished to play tennis to come over. He also remembers playing by himself and hitting the ball against a brick wall near the court.

Eventually he joined the local tennis club. You had to prove yourself to be able to play in the "B" grade. In other words, you only played if you were good enough.

The town courts were opposite where he lived, and he remembers that the young ones were only able to have a hit once the 'oldies' had had theirs. They got to go to at various country locations near Eudunda. He remembers travelling to some of these in the back of a utility.

Later, he played at a variety of towns and in their tournaments. He got into umpiring when they moved to Adelaide. He found this very stimulating as he was able to watch professional players and learn from them. He remembers one player, ¹Pancho GONZALES. Pancho had such a strong serve, but his second serve was faster than his first and one 'Of the fastest in the world.

At the age of 14 he was able to get a job at the local Post Office. Remember this was at the time of the great depression. Initially he was offered a scholarship for the High School to further his studies and to eventually become a teacher. But he turned this down to be the messenger boy who delivered the Telegrams in the local area. Eventually after various country appointments as a relieving officer for the Post Office he finished up in the City at the G.P.O. in King William Street.

He went to Adelaide to get married to Gwenda in 1943. While in the City he played tennis for the West Torrens Club and this brought him into contact with Memorial Drive. He became interested in umpiring and he soon became one of the founding members where ²Phil READ was chairperson. This all happened prior to World War 2. After the war, he remembers umpiring Davis Cup matches as well as State Australian Championships. At one time while umpiring the finals of a State Championship match between ³Lew HOAD and ⁴Rex HARTWIG, Lew was serving for the match. It was a brilliant serve, Lance thought it was just out, but there was such a spontaneous uproar from the crowd that Lance just was not game enough to call it out, and Lew HOAD won.

He worked as a relief postal worker for several years, travelling all over the countryside. He then became a permanent, working at the Morgan Post Office, then moved to Mannum, Woomera and finally settling in Murray Bridge in 1967.

Lance arranged a meeting of mature age players in Murray Bridge and forwarded a proposal to form a Veterans Division in the region. This proposal was readily accepted, and he became the inaugural President of this Division, the largest of the four country divisions of the Tennis Veteran Association of SA.

Over several years Lance searched for the right formula of events, being the driving force to establish a Vets. Tennis Teams Carnival over the Easter period.

While at the 'Bridge' he became President of the Ramblers Football Club as well as being active in various Service Clubs. He also took on a new job as the Secretary/manager of the Murray Bridge Racing Club. This task was a new one and tested abilities, both as an initiative and as a productive effective outcome.

Over recent years he liked to play golf and tennis. He retired from this active side of the sports in 2003. The Veterans Murray Bridge & Districts Tennis Association which by the way he started here 'in the Bridge', honoured him by bestowing on Lance the only Honorary Life Membership title for his outstanding service to the club in 2003.

Sources:

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¹Ricardo Alonso "Pancho" González, known sometimes as Richard Gonzales, was an American tennis player. He won 14 major singles titles and was the dominant professional of the 1950s, winning seven world professional championship tours between 1954 and 1961; he still holds the men's all-time record of being ranked world No. 1 for eight years or eight consecutive years, depending upon the rankings source.

²Phil READ was a noted South Australian tennis administrator whose contributions over many years were recognised by Tennis SA in the naming of a perpetual trophy in his name the Phil Read Trophy that is annually awarded for the Most Outstanding Official.

³Lewis Alan HOAD was an Australian tennis player whose career ran from the early 1950s through the early 1970s. HOAD won four Grand Slam tournaments as an amateur. He was a member of the Australian team that won the Davis Cup four times between 1952 and 1956.

⁴Rex Noel HARTWIG is an Australian former tennis player, who turned professional in 1950 and was a member of the winning Davis Cup teams in 1953 & 1955. He retired in 1962.