

# FRIENDS FOR LIFE



**Stephen Storer has been involved in more than one tennis role in Bendigo, but each position has helped him give youngsters a sporting chance for many years.**

**A** desire to pass on his passion for tennis all began at the Strathdale Park Tennis Club in 1970, when Stephen Storer was under the watchful eye of renowned coach Howard Welsh as a junior.

Storer became so inspired by Welsh that at 15 years of age asked how he could become a tennis coach himself. To his surprise, Welsh offered Storer an assistant position on the spot.

"I am always so thankful to Howard Welsh, who had the confidence in me to be a coach," Storer says. "The one moment in my life I will always be so appreciative was the day he offered me my chance to be a coach. It changed my life."

Welsh played a further part in forging Storer's coaching career, encouraging him to complete his coaching qualifications in Melbourne with the Tennis Coaches Association of Victoria and in essence prepared Storer for the head coaching role at Strathdale Park Tennis Club after Welsh decided to retire.

Storer held this position at Strathdale

Park Tennis Club for almost 18 years, after which point he was appointed as the resident coach at the Bendigo Tennis Association and formed the Bendigo Tennis Academy.

"I always remember when I came here. It was such an awesome feeling, because I went from being a club coach to an association coach and I always

remember saying that it was the next step in my development as a professional coach," he says.

The Bendigo Tennis Academy is based at the Bendigo Tennis Association complex, comprising 30 hard courts, 13 Plexicushion, as used at Melbourne Park for the Australian Open, and 17 Plexipave. It boasts being the largest hard court tennis complex in the Southern Hemisphere.

"Coaching at one of the best tennis centres in Australia is one of the things I love about my career," Storer says. "I also love being involved as an association coach and working closely with the manager Leon Retallick and the Board of the Bendigo Tennis Association.

"I enjoy being involved in the development of junior tennis players at an association and club level. These children are friends for life, many catch-up and say hello at later stages in their lives. I also enjoy coaching with my assistant coaches who are so helpful, loyal and passionate about the game of tennis."

Storer has had a strong influence with his athletes who have had the potential to succeed - allowing them the opportunity to further develop by participating within mainstream Melbourne or Queensland based academies.

"Over the years I have exposed children I coach to High Performance coaches such as Kane Dewhurst and Vince Dattoli at the Vida Tennis Academy in Melbourne and Chris Steel at the Pat Cash International Tennis Academy in Queensland," he says.

"These coaches set a high level of excellence in what they demand of their players. Once the children have experienced this, they realise I also am seeking the same professional approach to their tennis."

Storer has guided a number of people through their tennis paths. Currently Eliza Long and Leroy Miller are scholarship members of the Bendigo Tennis Squad.

Storer's involvement has shown him that in order to become a professional tennis player it takes a lot of dedication and commitment, but the underlying factor is how it makes you feel.

"Always enjoy the sport of tennis, and if you're serious about your tennis always think long-term, it takes many experiences both highs and lows to master the game."

For the last nine years, Storer has been instrumental as a coordinator for the annual 24 Hour Tennis Marathon held at the Bendigo Tennis Association, raising more than \$53,000 for local charities.

His time in the sport is also a telling factor of the positive dimension Storer can bring to the game of his athletes.

"From being involved in the sport for a long period of time, it's quite easy to draw from the many experiences you have had as a player and as an observer of the game, this supports your base of being a positive influence for the players you deal with."

Storer has a strong role with building the Victorian country base of tennis talent and will continue to do so for many years to come.

