



CA's tennis programs can help you learn the game or find competition in a league.

Make a racket

CA's tennis programs offer classes, leagues for players of any age or skill level

By Tripp Laino

We're fortunate enough to have nine year-round indoor tennis courts at Columbia Athletic Club and the Owen Brown Tennis Bubble. But the arrival of spring's nicer temperatures means many more opportunities for tennis, with 24 outdoor courts opening for the season, plus more leagues and lessons.

Of those outdoor courts, 18 are hard courts which are lit for evening use, with the six Har-Tru clay courts available during daylight hours. That availability is perfect whether you're brand new to the sport and taking lessons or a lifelong player looking to test your skills in a league.

If watching tennis is more your speed, CA is playing host to the 2016 America East Conference Championships on April 22-24 at Wilde Lake Tennis club.

League play at CA is varied, ranging from 18 and older to 65 and older, meaning you can find the perfect fit

no matter your skill or age. One of the major assets of CA's tennis programs is the Junior Development Program, which scales down the game of tennis for children who are learning to play.

The program is a game-based approach with a smaller court and a slightly different ball, which makes it easier for younger players to return serves and develop rallies, teaching them the game at a pace they can handle. These modifications help the players develop their skills until they're ready for a full-sized court and standard tennis balls. Along the way, they're also becoming better athletes.

"Our junior program is designed to develop essential athletic skills that can be utilized among other sports also," said Anish Manrai, CA's assistant director of sport and fitness, who was recently promoted after serving as CA's tennis general manager. "It's not just making them become a tennis player, but making them an overall athlete for playing the sport of tennis."

That program is a vital part of why CA was recognized by the United

States Tennis Association twice in 2015, winning an innovation award for tennis programming and being honored as a finalist for organization of the year. And it's not just children who benefit from CA's instruction. Lynne Borkowski has been playing tennis for five years, picking up the game at CA's courts.

She started out taking beginner classes and quickly met some friends who were also learning the game — some of whom are still her regular tennis partners today. As she progressed, she went from taking classes to playing in leagues.

"The leagues are fun; no matter how you progress there's always something you can learn," she said. "Not a lot of people understand you can be any age and pick up a racket."

Paul Hsiao is well aware of that. He's been playing tennis for about 40 years, and his older son, Michael, now 25, learned the game on CA's courts.

"In the spring of 10th grade, he said to me, 'I'm done with soccer and basketball — I want to be a tennis player like you, Dad,'" Hsiao said.

Michael was cut from the team at Centennial High School in 11th grade, but he and his father played daily at CA courts, first outside, then at the Owen Brown Tennis Bubble when it got colder. The following year, he was the No. 1 player on Centennial's team, Paul said.

His daughter, Kimi, is hoping to follow in similar footsteps. She's about to enter ninth grade and is currently taking group lessons to pick up the game.

"She's really blossomed from the group classes," he said. "Thanks to those classes, she has a good shot to make the high school team next year."

For more about CA's tennis programs, visit ColumbiaAssociation.org/Tennis.