



PART I: THE PNW FINDS GOLD IN THE DESERT... TWICE!

In 2022 the Pacific Northwest section of the USTA had just one National Championship team. So far, teams from the PNW have already grabbed two National Championships...and we are only in February!

This past January at the Adult 65 & over National Invitational in Surprise, Arizona, the 7.0 women's team from Nordstrom Tennis Center, captained by Blair Stone and the men's 7.0 team from Harbor Square Athletic Club, captained by Bruce Adey, were crowned National Champions after battling their way to victory through tough draws loaded with the best teams in the country.

In Part I of this story, we follow the men on their long journey to the championship. The co-captain of the Harbor Square Athletic Club team, Ray Poletti had this to say about their road to the championship.

It has been a long journey to winning a National Championship. For me the journey began in 1990 when I was new to tennis playing out of the former "Gallery Tennis Club" which is now the site of Home Depot in 116th and Aurora. I joined a new USTA adult team and in our first year earned a trip to Nationals played in Palm Springs/Palm Desert. The next year the Gallery sold and the majority of us joined Harbor Square Athletic Club and they facilitated us by expanding their tennis facility. We re-formed the team and I was asked to captain it. I did so and within a few years had another adult team heading to Nationals this time in Tempe, Az. From that team we also formed a "senior" team which was at that time was 50 years and older. We did well and again earned a trip to Nationals and in that event made it to the final four and came in 3rd overall.

Since that time we have mainly stayed together and have had three other trips to Nationals with limited success until now. There is a consensus

and I have heard that teams that play mostly indoors (northern teams) do not have the ability to compete with southern teams. I am happy to dispel that myth. Our matches were all competitive and we won by just playing better. I was especially excited to see the women's team from Nordstrom Tennis Center win as well. USTA in the Pacific Northwest section is solidly on the map!! I will say that winning at National Championships is the absolute highlight of my tennis experiences.

Team captain Bruce Adee added his take on the experience of a lifetime.

Anyone who believes winning a national championship doesn't require a lot of luck is sorely mistaken. There are so many teams of equal quality it only takes a tie breaker here or even a point there to change the course of a season.

Our quest began last season when we came in second at the sectional playoffs. We needed a few additional quality players to advance. Between seasons we were fortunate to recruit new players for our team. We began this season with high hopes and a stronger team. We won all our matches but one. Even that one we felt we lost because we were unable to put our strongest team on the court. There are always team members who are traveling or injured.

We ended tied in won/lost record with another team but became league champions because we had an advantage in the USTA tie breakers for equal records.

We were looking forward to the sectional playoffs until one of our better players informed us that he would not be available. This development forced us to reconsider our lineup and make adjustments. Fortunately, we won all four of our matches to become section champions and earn a trip to the National Invitational in Surprise, Arizona. Of course, the final match was only won because we won a third set tie breaker on the deciding court.

Our hopes for success at the National Invitational were very modest. Several members of the team had been to a national championship in Orlando where we did not do well. In any case we were looking forward to a great experience. On the first day we won

our first two matches. Suddenly, we could see an opportunity ahead of us. When you are in this position you become more nervous and play more cautiously. We were very lucky to be able to win our third and fourth matches on the second day. The team was elated and exhausted.

We were very surprised to have reached this point in the tournament and to have been seeded number one for the final matches. Both final matches were grueling. Everyone was tired but the team never gave up. It truly was a team effort. When one doubles team had trouble the other two stepped up to win.

The tournament staff in Surprise were wonderful. It was a once in a lifetime experience. It was a pleasure to play on a team that played well and developed a camaraderie to cherish.

Congratulations again to the Harbor Square - Adee/Poletti team!

- Bruce Adee - Captain
- Ray Poletti - Co-Captain
- Rick Downey
- George Sampson
- Jack Hagel
- John MacDonald
- Bill Zinck
- Yun Hong
- Gordon Williams
- Jim Coghlan
- Ron Fredrickson
- Dennis Salveson