

# Aztec Tennis Reporter

Vol 9 No 4

COVERING SAN DIEGO STATE TENNIS SINCE 1999

September 2007

## Readers Respond: The Letters Debate Foreign Recruiting

Two months ago, when a subscriber cancelled *ATR* to protest overseas recruiting by American college tennis teams, we printed his letter. Now we print yours.

Here are a few of the things you told us:

Some (not all) Americans resent the award of tennis scholarships to foreign student athletes.

Foreign players deeply appreciate the chance to study and play in America and wonder why they should be denied the opportunity if they are qualified.

Excluding or including athletes solely on the basis of where they were born troubles many on both sides of the issue.

The debate over foreign recruiting should cause us to ask ourselves two fundamental questions:

Do children of U.S. taxpayers have first claim on tennis scholarships?

Do American universities exist solely to educate Americans?

Some fear that discussing this issue will provoke more disagreement. We think hearing from both sides in a single edition of *ATR* can help lower the temperature, stimulate thoughtfulness on both sides, and, we hope, affirm overseas recruiting as a valued part of U.S. college tennis. — J.M.

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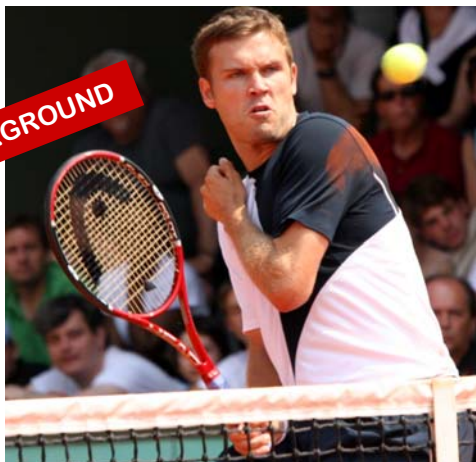
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## U.S. College Tennis: It's a Global Struggle

Students from 38 countries gained places in the final NCAA Division One American college tennis rankings for 2007.

Of the 125 top-ranked men, 76 were from overseas and 49 were from the United States. Of the top 125 women, 75 were from the United States and 50 were from foreign countries.

The Intercollegiate Tennis Association rankings for 2006 were similar: Of the top 125 men, 74 were from foreign countries and 51 from the United States. Among women, 69 were from the United States, 56



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**AN ALL AMERICAN IN PARIS: Aztec Alex Waske of Germany reacts to point-blank volley at the 2007 French Open. Waske's letter appears on Page 2.**

program few U.S. coaches seem willing to

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## Dear *ATR*: Calls for Recruiting Limits, Tolerance

*Responding to a letter ("Dear ATR: Cancel My Copy!", Vol 9, No 3, July 2007), our readers wrote:*

**Dear *ATR*:** On foreign tennis players: Basically they should limit the number of foreign players on a starting team. I would suggest no more than 50% of the starting lineup. America has great talent, yet a lot of players go unnoticed. Take Sam Querrey, a high school player from California who is now a top 100 player in the world after two years on the tour.

**Eric Collins**  
San Diego

**Dear *ATR*:** On the debate about whether U.S. coaches should recruit abroad: I wholeheartedly disapprove of codifying any discrimination based on race, religion, or *country of origin*. If a student-athlete qualifies to

meet the academic rigors of San Diego State University and qualifies for competition under NCAA rules, then why should he or she be precluded from competing? Limiting the number of scholarships available to foreign-born players is tantamount to saying there is such a thing as "too much diversity and it's a bad thing."

The real issue is the deteriorating state of tennis in the United States and what we, as players and fans, can do to support the sport's popularity. Why doesn't every USTA and ATP and WTA tournament organization establish a charitable "racquet drop," at which fans can drop off used equipment for donation to financially constrained young athletes?

I believe every sport's

from foreign countries.

In earlier years, NCAA and NAIA regulations limited the number of foreign players. But now, the rules are relaxed and many foreigners play U.S. college tennis.

Troy Collins, an Aztec who is also an African-American, has offered a suggestion: Recruit instead in the ghettos of America. Collins, who won the National Public Parks Championship, insists that the talent found at home would help win championships. To be sure, the idea would require a development

popularity is cyclical, with soccer and golf significantly more popular now than when I was growing up in the 1970s and 1980s. It may take some effort, but tennis will be back. Of course, it would obviously help if there was a Tiger Woods-equivalent on the tennis horizon.

**Jamie Clement**  
New York

*The writer is an equity research analyst in Manhattan and a former sportscaster for WPRB radio in Princeton, NJ, where he attended college.*

**Dear *ATR*:** Foreign recruiting has gone too far. On the women's side, four teams from California state schools made the

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In 1967, an obscure new American university began attracting tennis players from across the globe. When they showed up, they began tearing through their opponents.

"We went 24-0 that first year," remembers Bernis Duke, their coach. Before arriving in Tulsa, few of its players had heard much about Oral Roberts University. Few of their opponents had any reason to respect its tennis team.

Not for long.

Within a short time, Duke's teams reached the top ten of college tennis. In all, he recruited 125 players from 25 countries, including Italy, India, Finland, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Spain, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia.

"I saved a couple of guys' lives by getting 'em over here (and out of war

## He Wrote the World



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**LETTERMAN: Bernis Duke rises to accept induction into Intercollegiate Tennis Men's Hall of Fame in 2002 at Texas A&M.**

zones)," recalls the tall Arkansas native.

It all started because he could not attract Americans, so Duke wrote to foreign tennis

associations, offering full scholarships and a prize: introduction to life in America.

Ubaldo Scanagatta arrived from Italy. Today he is a top sportswriter.

Duke's success ignited a globalization of U.S. college tennis.

In May (2002), during the NCAA Men's Championships at Texas A&M, Bernis Duke was inducted into the Intercollegiate Tennis Hall of Fame.

Some of Duke's players showed up: Roger Zamudio of Mexico flew in from Los Angeles, where he is a movie producer, and Roy Brammer of South Africa, traveled from North Carolina, where he is a businessman.

As Duke stepped forward, they all stood and applauded the man who changed their lives and the face of college tennis. — J.M. (2002)

## Dear ATR: It's Gone Too Far, U.S. Teams Need Quotas on Foreigners

*Continued from Page One*

NCAA playoffs this year. Only two of the 24 starters were American (neither of whom was a top player). The number of quality American juniors is probably being affected adversely as the word gets out: "It's almost impossible to get a scholarship in tennis with the influx of international players."

On the positive side, Georgia Tech and UCLA reached the NCAA women's finals this year with only one international starter on each team.

I don't have the answer, but a quota like those used in every international league seems to be the only way to go. I recruit overseas, but we have seven players from the United States and two from foreign countries. I want to keep it that way.

**Hugh Bream  
Morro Bay, CA**

*The writer is the women's tennis coach at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, and coached the San Diego State men's team in 1988-1993.*

**Dear ATR:** I love reading about the teams at SDSU, especially about the women's team of 1997, which was when I started playing.

I read the comment about the foreign athlete situation ("Dear ATR: Cancel My Copy!," ATR 35, Vol 9, No. 3.) Back in 1997 I was John Nelson's first import from overseas. I have to say that it helped me a lot coming to SDSU, studying business, learning about the American culture, speaking the language, and improving in tennis with the help of John and Larry (Willens). Two years later, John recruited two friends of mine, Valentino Pest and Oliver Maiberger. Our team made it to the (NCAA) Sweet 16 for the first and only time. None of us was a pro before this time, we were just two years older than the U.S. boys because we have 13 years of school plus a mandatory year in the army.

I understand the point, that the U.S. players should come first, but please understand that we were not professionals before coming to school. That might have been true in other cases at other schools. Also the

best Americans who do not turn pro right away still get scholarships, and by competing against players from all over the world their game improves as well.

I agree that no school should have more foreigners on their team than U.S. players. But then again, what is being American? Just the passport? Or a green card? Wasn't it always one of the goals of the U.S. to make gifted young people come to the States and work there? And then they would eventually become U.S. residents. Maybe you should ask some of the Americans on my team if they liked it better with foreigners on the team or without. Obviously, we were more successful, but maybe they learned from us as well as we did from them?

**Alex Waske  
Frankfurt, Germany**

*The writer was an All-American at San Diego State*

*in 2000. He is currently a member of the German Davis Cup team and has ranked as high as 16th in the world in doubles (2007) and 89th in singles (2006).*

**Dear ATR:** I am strongly opposed to international players coming to our schools. They take away positions from Americans who go to college right after high school. An ordinary USTA player who goes to college at 17 or 18 cannot compete against foreign players who have already turned professional and competed all over the world.

It isn't right that foreign players take scholarships away from American players who need financial assistance.

We should not continue what has become a tradition: schools recruit foreigners only to win! I don't want my kids to face a situation where they cannot play college tennis because someone who is 21 from England (or Russia, or Spain) took their spot. It is not right!

We support these schools with our taxes and we need to produce more American players who can receive the education they need to lead a professional life. Overseas recruit-

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To subscribe, comment, or seek a correction, write [aztectennisreporter@yahoo.com](mailto:aztectennisreporter@yahoo.com).  
Editor: John Martin (Aztec Men's Tennis, 1957)

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## Where Are We From? 54 Aztecs from 20 Lands (1964-2007)

### WOMEN

Laura Agüero, 1999-2000, Mexico  
 Emelie Akerbrandt, 2000-01, Sweden  
 Ozge Atalay, 2007, Turkey  
 Holly Bagshaw, 2007, Britain  
 Claire Bateman, 1988-91, Britain  
 Helen Park-Bates, South Korea  
 Catherine Berry Davies, 1982-86, Britain  
 Jeanette Bhaguandas, 1995-1998, Britain  
 Emma Doyle, 1994-97, Ireland  
 Sarah Donovan, 1996-99, Britain  
 Indra Erichsen, 2002-05, Germany  
 Patricia Graf, 2003-04, Germany  
 Susheel Gulati, 1992-93, Britain  
 Dita Hauerlandova, 2004-05, Czech Republic  
 Yuki Hagiwara, 2006-07, Japan  
 Andrea Hermansen, 2005, Denmark  
 Simone Howard, 1996-98, South Africa  
 Katja Karrento, 2000-03, Finland  
 Eliska Krausova, 2005-07, Czech Republic  
 Merte Lindahl, 1996-98, Denmark  
 Sarah Longbottom Thomas, 1985, Britain  
 Anne Moeller, 1984-87, Denmark  
 Sisse Nielsen, 2005-07, Denmark  
 Evangeline Olivarez, 1988-91, Philippines  
 Katalina Romero, 2002-04, Mexico  
 Nina Spaeth, 2005-06, Germany  
 Silvia Tornier, 2000-03, Germany  
 Alesya Vidov, 2004-07, Russia

Dorota Wozniak, 1998-99, Canada  
 Milana Yusupov, 2006-07, Israel

### MEN

Steve Adamson 1995-98, Canada  
 Armando Carrascosa, 2003-04, Mexico  
 Achim Ceban, 2007, Russia  
 Max Cooper, 1986, Peru  
 Markus Dickhardt, 2004-2007, Germany  
 Graham Espley-Jones, 1983-84, S. Africa  
 Juan Andres Gomez, 2007, Ecuador  
 Chris Groh, 2004-07, Germany  
 Felix Hardt, 2002-2005, Germany  
 Jun Hernandez, 1993-94, Philippines  
 Richard Herrera, 1990-91, Mexico  
 Daniel Jung, 2003-2006, Germany  
 Rasmus Larsen, 2002, Denmark  
 Oliver Maiberger, 2000-03, Germany  
 Tole Marinkovic, 1989-90, Germany  
 Russell Meyers, 1985-87, Israel  
 Khalid Naffa, 2001-02, Jordan  
 Julio Noriega, 1985-88, Peru  
 Blair O'Hara, 1998-2000, Australia  
 Richard Ong, 1964, South Vietnam  
 Valentino Pest, 2000-02, Germany  
 Richard Stoakes, 1981-82, Britain  
 Benedikt Stronk, 2003-06, Germany  
 Stefan Timu, 2006, Canada  
 Billy Timu, 2006-07, Canada  
 Alex Waske, 1998-2000, Germany

Note: Partial list, derived from coaching records, circulation lists, and athletic department publications.  
 ATR apologizes for any errors and omissions.

## Dear ATR: Please Don't Keep Foreigners Out If They're Qualified

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ing must stop!

**Tamara Bridges  
 Houston, TX**

*The writer, an actor and pharmaceutical sales representative, played Aztec women's tennis in 1994-97.*

**Dear ATR:** I found the letter highly offensive. ("Dear ATR: Cancel My Copy!, ATR 35, Vol 9, No 3) I believe it carried quite a dangerous notion of jingoism in an age when improving global relations is a goal of most peoples and nations. I want to provide a

counter argument to the point of view that foreign players should not be recruited.

Recruiting foreign players is not simply about winning. In my post as director of National Scouting Report in Australia, I assist American college coaches with their recruiting of Australian athletes on a daily basis. There is a great demand for international players by American coaches. This demand comes for reasons other than "just winning."

I received an email from a coach at the University of

Washington, who explains what motivates American college coaches. She said she recruits international players to a bring a different perspective, attitude, sense of humor, and work ethic to the squad, in addition to their athletic skills. This sentiment is echoed by many U.S. coaches, at many levels.

Sure, every coach wants to win. America wouldn't be the country it is today, if nobody liked to win. College campuses across the globe are filled with students from

different countries. Most colleges across the world boast about the foreign students enrolled in their programs.

From an economic point of view, colleges want to attract out of state and international students because their tuition fees are significantly higher. From an academic and cultural point of view, foreign students bring their own qualities to a positive learning environment.

During my time as a college athlete, I made friends

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## Aztec Coaches Defend Overseas Recruiting as Wise, Necessary

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undertake without more resources.

At San Diego State, which recruited five Americans and a dozen foreign players for the 2007 spring season, both head coaches defended overseas recruiting as a necessary ingredient of NCAA competition.

Both coaches said they prefer to persuade more top American juniors, especially Californians, to attend San Diego State, but insisted that the rise of tennis as a top sport in many foreign countries has unleashed a flood of superior players eager to gain an American university education.

"We're in a competitive (NCAA) Division One environment with a high-level athletic program and the expectations are that we perform at a high level," said Peter Mattera, whose 25 years in the Aztec women's program makes him one of the nation's most experienced coaches.

"The expectation is that we're going to be successful and win. So we go after the best available talent. The American players who can help us succeed — we go after them first. But there are only so many American players" at the highest level.

Mattera emphasized that foreign students generally make excellent ambassadors for their university, the city, and the



Todd Thedinga Photo

**MENTOR:** Aztec Men's Coach Gene Carswell and SDSU's Achim Ceban of Russia during match against North Carolina. Carswell called attempts to exclude foreign players unwise and short-sighted.

nation.

Some American parents complain when foreign players receive scholarships at the expense of Americans. The mother of one prospective San Diego State recruit, who requested anonymity, criticized the university's reliance on foreign players.

Carswell acknowledged widespread unease.

"So many people are negative, and down on foreigners. There are certainly teams where there's not one American amongst the group. And I'm not a fan of that," Carswell said.

Even so, he argued, stripping U.S. college teams of foreigners would deprive Americans of a valuable experience.

Carswell, a San Diegan who competed at the University of New Mexico, played on Lobo teams with foreigners. "We're great friends to this day.

"I appreciated the competition; these guys were good," Carswell said. He added that a crop of talented American players is likely to emerge soon. But he cautioned against isolation.

"It would be nice to just develop our Americans, but how far do we go?" he asked. "If you don't go test yourself in the real world, then we're kind of living in a bit of a fool's paradise."

## Dear *ATR*: The Pro and Con of Overseas Recruiting for U.S. Teams

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from dozens of countries around the world. It has made me a better person from what I have learned from them, in all aspects of life, including my many beloved American friends.

I believe foreigners playing college tennis makes American tennis stronger, not weaker. If professional tennis was only played by Americans, the overall level of play at the US Open would be far weaker. Sampras, Davenport, Agassi, King, McEnroe, Evert, and many other American champions were pushed to the highest standards of the game by their international rivals. College tennis is no different. Imagine the world of sport if the writer's notion of exclusionism was employed everywhere! You could throw

the 'World Series' of anything right out the window!!!

The United States has always presented itself as the *land of opportunity* and never excluded anyone who could take whatever opportunities were presented and create success, as Andrew Carnegie proved. If Englishman Josiah Franklin had not moved to Boston in the late 1600s, what would America have lost? Well, a son, Benjamin, who was the only man to sign all three documents that established the United States: the Declaration of Independence, the peace treaty with Britain that ended the Revolutionary War, and the Constitution.

I hope the former subscriber can learn to look beyond a person's passport and continue to support the Aztec tennis teams. Go Aztecs!

Blair O'Hara

**Melbourne, Australia**

*The writer is a prize-winning international filmmaker and sports executive who played Aztec men's tennis in 1999-2000 under John Nelson, now the men's coach at the University of Hawaii.*

**Dear *ATR*:** Perhaps there is a compromise in order.

We loved our two foreign-born teammates (1984 Aztec women's team). We played under Carol Plunkett who recruited Cathy Berry from the UK (where I live now), and my doubles partner, Anne Moeller from Denmark. We did well, finishing fourth in NCAA Division 1. Everyone else on our team was born in the USA.

It's wonderful to include athletes from around the world, but I think we should develop athletes from ghetto areas as well. We should not forget ath-

letes from all socio-economic levels. They should be able to develop their skills and benefit from education. I believe that criteria should be used to recruit the majority of the team.

Recruiting always seems to create controversy. I remember that even in high school (La Jolla), Raul Ramirez was an "import" from Mexico. He lived with a wonderful tennis family (the Hageys had 10 kids). I also remember a guy named Ken Johnson who was a tremendous athlete (he played amazing basketball). He was not from La Jolla but ended up living in a judge's home.

On the other hand, Eric Erickson was a great quarterback who did live in La Jolla. Jeff Duback and a couple other students in my class

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## Dear *ATR*: Readers Debate Pro and Con of Foreign Scholarships

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went on to play professional soccer.

My point is that we have the ability within our country to develop deserving student athletes. Perhaps a small percentage of spots on our teams could be reserved for foreigners — to make it fair for all.

**Shelley Susman  
London**

*The writer played Aztec women's tennis in 1983-85. She currently campaigns to persuade municipalities in the United Kingdom to open their tennis courts to the public free of charge.*

**Dear *ATR*:** I don't have a problem with overseas recruiting as long as neither academic standards nor U.S. recruiting are compromised.

**Malcolm Leith  
Washington, DC**

*The writer played intercollegiate tennis for three years at Princeton.*

Dear *ATR*: Interestingly there is a similar debate going on here about the number of foreign players in the English Football (Soccer) League and whether it is to the detriment or benefit of our home-grown players. I am surprised that 'a former pro' would be able play for a college team. Although my time at SDSU was 25 years ago, there were very strict rules about receiving money and unless this has changed, a professional — even a failed one — would be ineligible, no matter where he came from.

Given then that former professionals are not the issue, barring foreign players from scholarships is a different point. I find it hard to believe that the U.S. players are not as good as the foreigners or are in need of some form of protected status. Recruitment on merit, not nationality, can only increase competition and therefore help to lift the standard of college tennis in general. Tennis is a global game and if, as you say, the state of US tennis is 'uncertain', closing the U.S. players off from outside competition and diverse styles of play is surely not the way to rectify it.

**Richard Stoakes  
Worldingham, Surrey**

*The writer, a member of the All-England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, played Aztec men's tennis in 1981-82.*

**Dear *ATR*:** I would like to thank *Aztec Tennis Reporter* for connecting the global Aztec tennis family.



*Aztec Tennis Reporter*

**MENTOR: Aztec Women's Coach Peter Mattera, one of nation's most experienced intercollegiate coaches.**

The team I joined in my first year (2000) included two other Germans, one Australian, and four Americans. Over the years we've had players from Great Britain, Jordan, Denmark, and Mexico.

Already during my time as a player there was discussion about reducing the number of foreign players. I would estimate that about 70% of the top 100 at that time were foreigners. Some think foreign players take away scholarships from American players. I think that this higher level of competition helps the players, universities and America as a whole.

What many Americans may not realize is that foreigners have a hard time gaining eligibility in the U.S. The reason is not their nationality, but the different views of what it means to be an amateur in America and Europe. Many foreign players lose one year of eligibility or fail to gain eligibility.

In my opinion, professionals who make good money from tennis should not be eligible. But there is a big difference between someone deciding to become a pro and someone who plays for a club team in his hometown with professionals on the team. If the rules haven't changed, neither the pro nor the club player are eligible for U.S. college play. This is not always fair.

For universities and coaches, it is important to motivate athletes and students. That means that their classroom performance has to be on a good level. In my experience, good athletes are

good students.

Without the German connection at SDSU, the men's team would have never reached the (NCAA) Sweet 16 in 2000 or become a dominating team in the MWC. The higher level in practice and competition helped everyone to become a better tennis player and a better person. More competition helps build character. We learned from each other and became a team that no one wanted to play.

The mixture of cultures reflected life on campus and in America as a whole. It never appeared to me that I had taken away a scholarship. I was one of the best in what I was doing and the best should have the opportunities. That is globalization. And to be honest, if the goal of an American is to become a professional player but can't make a college team, chances for a successful career are pretty slim.

If foreign athletes decide to go to the U.S., they leave family and friends behind, often for four years and have to adjust to a different culture. Of course, it is also a great time. For me it was the best time of my life so far. What I want to say is that these athletes are highly motivated to get a degree and do their best for the team. American athletes want that as well, of course.

But often (certainly not always), foreign-born players are more disciplined, which results in better records. Many stay in the States (some permanently) and give something back to American society. At the very least they are valuable contacts in Europe or wherever they go.

One reason America became the most successful and powerful nation in the world is that it gives foreigners the opportunity for their pursuit of happiness.

There are so many fields of sports, science, and economics in which America has benefited from foreigners, why should college tennis be different?

**Oliver Maiberger  
Lorch, Germany**

*The writer played Aztec men's tennis in 2000-2003, earning All American honors in both singles and doubles, where he teamed with Ryan Redondo, now assistant Aztec men's coach. Maiberger held the assistant coaching position in 2004-2005. He earned a bachelor's degree in international business and a master's degree in business administration from San Diego State University.*