

Winter 2023



Calendar

(dates subject to change due to weather)

1/27/24 USTA Eastern Conference (Part 1) in Tarrytown, focusing on Regional Council Training

3/16/24 Better Together HS Team Tournament at Sportime Port Washington

3/23/24 USTA Eastern On Court Conference (Part 2) at BJK National Tennis Center, featuring on-court demonstrations

visit www.usta.com/longislandregion for details on all events

...

follow us on Facebook at [Play Tennis Long Island](#)

On The Ball: News From LI



Honors and Awards!

USTA Eastern will honor several Long Islanders for their contributions to the Sectional tennis community at the annual USTA Eastern Awards Dinner in January.

The event will take place on January 27, 2024 in Tarrytown. For information about attending, please click [here](#). Local awardees are:

Lifetime Achievement Award- *Lawrence Kleger*

George Seewagen Award (Man of the Year)- *Steve Kaplan*

Courage Award- *Roslyn High School Boys Tennis Team*

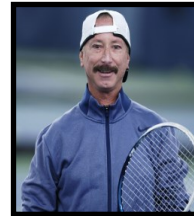
Special Service Award- *Michelle Stoerback*

Service to People with Disabilities Award- *Juan Pablo Perez*

10 and Under Award- *Sharon Rappaport*

Long Island Regional Volunteer of the Year- *Denise Schmidt*

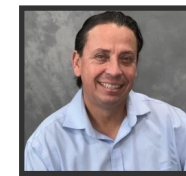
More information about each honoree will be available in the next issue of "On the Ball: News from LI."



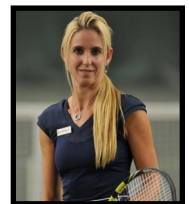
Kleger



Kaplan (at right)



Perez



Stoerback



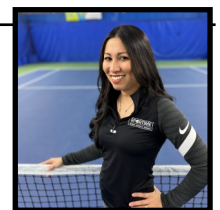
Roslyn Boys Team

National Award to Tito Perez

Tito Perez of Setauket has been named PTR Member of the Year by [Racquet Sports Industry](#) magazine. The award is part of the magazine's 23rd annual "[Champions of Tennis Awards](#)," which honor people, businesses and organizations dedicated to improving the sport and business of tennis and racquet sports.



Tito (center, front) led a PTR Conference in Bolivia this fall.



Rappaport



Schmidt

Recognizing Sportsmanship

sports·man·ship /
'spôrtsmən·ship/
Noun

fair and generous behavior or
treatment of others, especially in a
sports contest

Sportsmanship and respect for one's peers is a crucial part of high school tennis competition, and the USTA Long Island Regional Council is always proud to support excellent sportsmanship on the tennis court.

Highlights of the 2023 girls tennis season included the presentation of sportsmanship awards to one Nassau and one Suffolk County participant in the New York State Girls Tournament.

Kailin Gochna of North Shore (top) won for Section XIII and **Isabella (Bella) Spilotros** of Smithtown West won for Section XI.

The Long Island Council recognized sportsmanship awardees from the Nassau County Girls Individual Tournament with plaques. Mike Pavlides, USTA Long Island Regional Director, presented the Singles sportsmanship award to **Madison Lee** (left photo) of Great Neck South, pictured with her high school coach Andrew Tuome. In doubles, Pavlides presented the Sportsmanship award to Syosset's **Zia Mukherjee &**

Stephanie Marcheret, pictured with Brian Kline (Boys Tennis Committee).

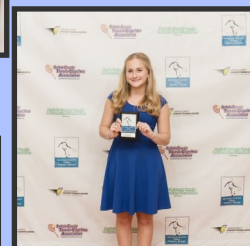
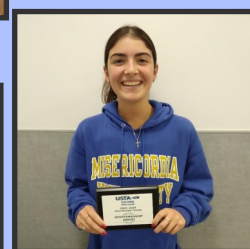
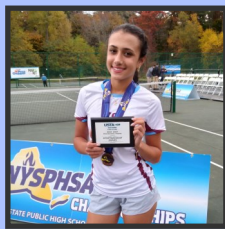
This year for the first time, the girls' season honorees also received a scholarship from the John McEnroe Tennis Academy. Jay Harris, director of the JMTA, presented the three Nassau sportsmanship awardees with scholarships to the JMTA College Recruiting Combine, which will be held at Sportime Port Washington in June. The Combine is one of the top college tennis exposure events in the country. The scholarships are presented in memory of Ethan Falkowitz and Drew Hassenbein, two Long Island boys who passed away in 2023. Ethan and Drew often spoke of their desire to play college tennis, and JMTA felt it was fitting to honor them in the presentation of this scholarship.

The Regional Council also provided sportsmanship plaques to all Long Island high school coaches who wanted to recognize one member of their team for superior sportsmanship. Nassau coaches recognized their students individually, while Suffolk County presented the awards at the Suffolk County Girls Varsity Awards Dinner.

Pictures of some of the sportsmanship honorees are here. To see all the photos submitted to the USTA Long Island Regional Council, please visit our [website](https://www.ustaonlongisland.com).

If your school presented a sportsmanship winner who is not pictured on the website, please send a photo including the name of the school and the honoree, to ustaonlongisland@gmail.com

Special thanks to Steve Ferrantello for sharing Suffolk County photos with "On the Ball: News from LI."



LI Turns Pink for Breast Cancer

October is breast cancer awareness month, and each year on Long Island, girls' tennis teams take part in spreading awareness by wearing pink at one or more matches. Participating schools in Nassau County this year are pictured here.



Massapequa



Herricks



Manhasset

In Suffolk County, the girls at the county individuals tournament wore pink. Also in support of breast cancer awareness and research, Commack held its annual Tennis With The Teachers Fundraiser Tournament for Play for PINK.

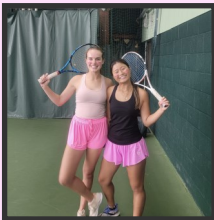
If your school participated in a pink match this past fall and their photo is not shown here, please [email us](#) a photo, including the name of the school and we will include it in the next issue.



Lynbrook



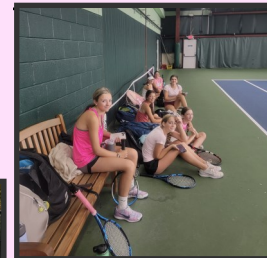
Herricks/Roslyn



Suffolk



Great Neck



Suffolk



Suffolk



Commack



Lynbrook



Suffolk



Hills East



Suffolk



West Hempstead



Suffolk

State Champions!!



Nina Wiese

coming home to Long Island.

Congratulations to New York State Singles Champion Nina Wiese (Garden City) and Doubles Champs Matilda Buchen & Julia Stabile (Westhampton Beach).

Nina was also Nassau County Singles Champion, and the team of Buchen & Stabile won the Suffolk County Doubles title.

Garden City had an amazing 2023, winning the Conference IIB title with an undefeated regular season record and winning both the Nassau County Singles and Doubles titles. The doubles champions were Kayla Castellano & Angelina Bravo. Kailin Gochna of North Shore won 2nd place in singles and Angel Walia of Herricks won 3rd. At doubles, Andrea & Lina Vases of Manhasset won 2nd place and Syosset's Diya Varma & Manami Wakazono won 3rd place. The top three finishers represented Nassau at States.



Cold Spring Harbor

The 2023 Girls' High School tennis season was an exciting one for our Region, with both the singles and doubles state titles

In Suffolk County, Smithtown East's Anya Konopka won the 2023 Girls' Singles title, while Middle Country's Maria Perez came in 2nd. Third and

4th place went to Lola Dangin (The Ross School) and Isabella Spilotros (Smithtown West). At doubles, Emilia & Evie Romano (Bayport-Blue Point) won 2nd place and Meredith Albertelli & Kylie Person of Sayville won 3rd. Suffolk had four entries to the NYS Tournament in singles and three in doubles. The USTA Long Island Regional Council was happy to provide vests to all the Long Island girls who competed at States.

In State team action, both LI champion teams – Cold Spring Harbor and Syosset – came in 2nd place in their respective state championship matches. Cold Spring Harbor (Nassau County Small School Champion) defeated Suffolk Champion Bayport-Blue Point to win the Long Island Championship.

Syosset, the Nassau County Large Schools Champion, defeated Suffolk County Champion Hills East to win the Long Island Championship.



Buchen/Stabile



Nassau team at States



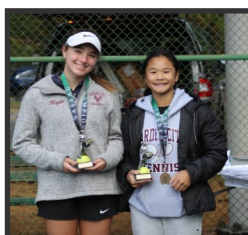
Suffolk team at States



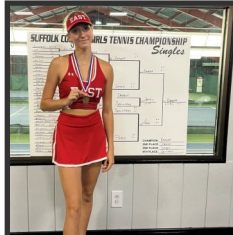
Bayport Blue Point



Hills East



Castellano & Bravo



Kanopka



Syosset

Local Happenings

Commack Pair Wins Adaptive Sectionals

Commack's Tyler Conover & Sebastian Wernecke were 2023 USTA Eastern Adaptive Sectional champions at the 3rd annual event held in September at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center. The pair competed in November in Orlando at the National tournament held at the USTA National Campus.



"I was really happy," Conover said of capturing the final point of the championship. "It was nice, and I have come a long way."

The tournament was played in a **unified doubles format**: one player with a disability competes alongside another player without one. Wernecke is a tennis pro who has worked with Conover since 2019 at Sportime Kings Park and the Old Field Club in Setauket.

In 2024, McIntyre said he hopes to further open up the draw to give more players the opportunity to participate.

"I'd like to be able to include more adaptive athletes and their families," he said. "I look forward to the day when the USTA Eastern Adaptive Sectional Championships is a weekend affair. We would have two full days competing on the National Tennis Center courts and maybe eventually hold the final matches inside Arthur Ashe Stadium."

For more information on USTA Eastern's efforts to make tennis more inclusive at the local level, please click [here](#).

USTA Eastern Visits Morley Juniors

Jenny Schnitzer, USTA Eastern Executive Director, and Jocelyn Alfalfa, Director of Schools & Community Tennis, visited Christopher Morley Tennis Center to watch the club's Red Ball juniors play and help out with one of the classes.



Morley Welcomes Senior League

The USTA Eastern Long Island Regional Council sponsored the kickoff event in November of the Long Island Senior Fun League indoor season at Christopher Morley Tennis. With nearly 100 members and organized by



Allan Silverstein and Susan Dalessandro, this league plays outdoors in the summer at Sportime Hempstead Lake Park and has moved indoors for the winter season. The Long Island Council donated court time and tennis balls to help the group launch their indoor season. Neil Thakur, USTA Eastern Community Tennis Coordinator Long Island, and Mike Pavlides, USTA Long Island Council Director, helped get the senior indoor season off to a great start.

Bethpage Student Wins Singles Title

Bethpage Park Tennis Center's Paige Wygodzki won the CHSAA Singles Title in her freshman season. Paige also helped lead St. Anthony's to the CHSAA conference championship and the state title.



Better Together

USTA Eastern's Long Island Regional Council, along with Sportime Port Washington and Advantage All Tennis Foundation, will host the first annual "Better Together" High School team tennis tournament on Saturday March 16th at Sportime Port Washington. Each team will consist of up to 3 boys and 3 girls playing in a World Team Tennis format. All proceeds will go towards the Roslyn Tennis Scholarship Fund. More details to follow on our [website](#).



USTA Leagues Update

By Becky Bellino, LI Adult League Coordinator

Looking back on 2023, I see that Long Island has much of which to be proud. The Region's many achievements and successes include:

Of the seven LI teams that went to Nationals this past fall, four finished in the top five:

- * 18+ 4.5 Men (Long Beach, Low) finished in 5th place
- * 55+ 7.0 Men (Kings Park, Marklin) finished in 4th place
- * 55+ 6.0 Men (LIHRC, Kronenberg) finished in 3rd place (see story, page 7)
- * 18+ 2.5 Women (Point Set, Crain) finished in 1st place)

The Invitational Tournaments are coming up in the winter and spring of 2024. Long Island teams representing USTA Eastern will be:

- * Ken Luba & Al Silverstein's team from Christopher Morley: 65+ 8.0 Men's League
- * Lydia Eitel's team out of Syosset: 65+ 8.0 Women's League
- * Shanon Blue's Long Beach team: 55+ 8.0 Mixed League
- * Tracy Kleinberg & Lisa Newell's Huntington team: 18+ 4.0 Women's Tri-Level League

Our Region continues to dominate in the Adult League Sector of the Eastern Section. Your grit and determination do



55+ 7.0 men



65+ 8.0 women



18+ 4.5 men



65+ men

not go unnoticed, and you all should be proud!

Now that we have peered into the past and taken a glimpse into the future, let's look at the present. The 2024 18+ Mixed Doubles Leagues will continue through the winter and our 2023 4.5 Tri-Level leagues for the men and women are approaching the end of their seasons. Winners will be determined in mid-December and will compete at Eastern Sectionals in January over Martin Luther King weekend.

Our 2024 Tri-Level leagues will begin

once 2023 ratings have been released. For the first time, we will have both 5.0 men's and 5.0 women's tri-level leagues. This is a new tri-level format that just started in 2023 and has gained traction quickly. As always, Long Island is at the forefront with high-level tennis competition. Our tri-level players will definitely enjoy these new leagues in the New Year.

Captain registration is now open for our 40+ and 55+ Mixed Leagues. If you are interested in forming a team, click [here](#) to submit the form. Please do so ASAP as these leagues will begin in February/March.

I'd like to close by wishing you all a very merry and bright holiday season and New Year. 2023 was full of promise and success. I look forward to an eventful 2024.

To reach Becky, please [email](#).



Eastern Scores Big Wins at USTA League Nationals

They may be dressed in lemon, but everything about Team Eastern at the 2023 USTA League National Championships was oh-so-sweet.

Decked out in a designated yellow hue, a staggering 12 USTA Eastern squads scored a Top 4 finish at the seven-week event, held in October and November. Three of those teams—including the 18 & Over 2.5 Women's national champions—hailed from Long Island.

Over the last two months, USTA Eastern has been documenting the experiences of those representing the section at the competition [on our website](#). Here, read about the Setauket-based 55 & Over 6.0 Men who finished 3rd in their division.

USTA Eastern's 55 & Over 6.0 Men's team—from Setauket—placed 3rd in their division on the fourth weekend of competition at the 2023 USTA League National Championships, held in October. The team—captained by Robert Kronenberg—proved to be one of the most fearsome teams on the court throughout the weekend in Orlando. They were undefeated during round robin competition, overcoming contingents from USTA Texas, USTA Middle States, USTA Florida and USTA Mid-Atlantic, to finish at the top of the leaderboard and earn the No. 1 seed heading into the semifinals.

En route to that semis berth, they lost just 76 games—and dropped only three of 12 courts. Multiple players amassed a perfect record; Kronenberg and doubles partner Robert Kelly captured one court 6-0, 6-0.

"Everyone on this team was an MVP," Kronenberg said. "All 11 players won at least one court. Rob Kelly went 5-0, playing three times with Heath Berger and twice with me. I went 4-0 playing with three different players. My first court with Dmitri Kharzeev, we ended

up winning in a super tiebreak 10-5 after three hours of play. Our individual and collective attitude was to fight for every point."

That mentality didn't dissipate after taking an unexpected semifinal loss to USTA Midwest. The team quickly regrouped to take on USTA Northern California for 3rd place, ultimately sweeping their West Coast opponents 3-0. (The division plays three doubles courts.)

"We looked at it as another opportunity to win," Kronenberg explained. "To us, it did not matter whether we were playing for first or playing to stay out of last. The goal was always clear."

The faceoff was closer than the scoreline indicates, as the Eastern squad won two of the three courts in third-set tiebreakers, and even the sole straight-set victory included a 7-6 set.

"Sometimes a score [like 3-0] does not tell the story of the match, and the match against NorCal was no different," Kronenberg said. "[But] my players have a lot of tiebreak experience. And the attitude in a tiebreak is the same, just fight for every point and minimize the unnecessarily risky shot. Of course, it's also a mental challenge, and our players were very mentally tough."

It was ultimately that mental toughness, Kronenberg said, that earned the team the exemplary 3rd place finish. That, he noted, and a strong bond among teammates developed after a decade of knowing one another through the game.

"This group is more than a bunch of random tennis players thrown together," he said. "We are all friends,

and some of us have been friends for 10 years. We socialize off the court, and that spirit of camaraderie and friendship permeates what we do on the court. There are no selfish players on this team. Everyone supports everyone else."

"While we were disappointed in not getting to the finals, we appreciated the magnitude of our accomplishment," Kronenberg said.



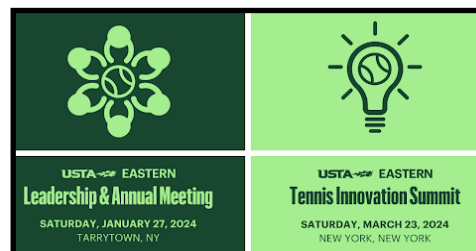
Mark Your Calendars

You're not seeing double. The Eastern Tennis Conference is entering a whole new era. In 2024, USTA Eastern will hold two separate events:

Saturday, January 27, 2024 - Annual Meeting (in Tarrytown, NY): A day of meetings among committee members and other volunteers, followed by the USTA Eastern Annual Awards Dinner.

Saturday, March 23, 2024 - Tennis Innovation Summit (at the Billie Jean King National Tennis Center): On-court sessions led by industry leaders covering the latest coaching advancements and other topics.

[Watch this video](#) to learn more about the changes to our annual event. Registration information will be available soon!





**EASTERN
LONG ISLAND**



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The USTA Long Island Regional Council offers **grant money for many kinds of tennis programs**. Grants are available for Schools, Community-Based Groups, Youth Programming (PAL, YMCA, JCC, PTA), Non-Profits, CTAs, NJTLs and Parks & Rec. Grants can be used for many key parts of tennis programs including equipment, trophies, coaches' training (teaching/education), food and beverage, clothing and court time. To find out if one of our grants can help your program get off the ground or continue to serve its community, [email us](#).

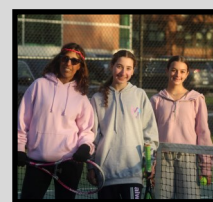
Congratulations to **Sportime Lynbrook's Excel High Performance player Gabby Villegas** who won the girls 16s singles title at the USTA L6 in Long Beach.



Way to go, Coach! Congratulations to **Plainview Head Coach Ellen Huang** for being named winning Nassau County Coach of the Year (pictured here with Nassau Girls' high school coordinator Shai Fisher).



The **Roslyn High School Girls tennis team** held its annual Tennis with the Teachers event, which honored Drew Hassenbein and Ethan Falkowitz. Port Washington



also held its annual Tennis with the Teachers event this fall.

Congrats to USTA Eastern on the 35th anniversary of the **Eastern College Showcase**.



USTA Eastern Long Island

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USTA Eastern Long Island Regional Council Executive Committee

Michael Pavlides, Regional Director
Jonathan Klee, Past Regional Director
Sunny Fishkind
Tito Perez
Jason Wass
Randi Wilkins

[Neil Thakur](#), USTA Eastern Manager of Long Island Region Schools & Community Tennis

We are committed to the promotion and growth of tennis, the "lifetime sport," for people of all ages and abilities to play and enjoy the game. Through the efforts of volunteers, USTA staff and strategic partners, we are dedicated to the highest standards of integrity, honesty and ethics in developing tennis programs in local communities throughout Long Island. Our mission will be served by having our youth, our adults and corporate partners enjoy the "sport for a lifetime."

On The Ball: News From LI is published quarterly by the USTA Eastern Long Island Region. Written and produced by Jacki Binder. Edited by Michael Pavlides. Founded by Daniel Burgess.