

# Martin Goldberg

## Work ethic, determination served pro tennis career

By NEIL RUDEL

Those who played tennis against Martin Goldberg along the way do not necessarily remember him as the most graceful presence the court has ever seen.

"His play was more often characterized by a lack of grace," Doug MacCurdy, Goldberg's Hall of Fame presenter and former head of the International Tennis Federation, said.

"His feet really weren't that quick," Dan Magee, who played with Goldberg during his formative years in the late 1960s and early '70s, said.

But both agreed Goldberg compensated with a strong serve — "very hard and very high and tough to return," Blair Racquet Club pro Steve Genter said — a lanky frame and, most significantly, an uncommon will.

"Martin was 6-foot-2, 6-3 and he'd come to the net, and there would be no where to hit the ball," local tennis guru Paul Kopac said. "I played him in a tournament, and you couldn't pass him or hit it over him. He covered the court that well. And the thing I remember about him is he had an unbelievable work ethic, too. He worked hard to get where he went."

Goldberg played No. 1 for Altoona Area High School as a freshman and sophomore before transferring to Lawrenceville (N.J.) Prep. There, he teamed with such players as Jay Lapidus, who went on to become the nation's top-ranked college player at Princeton and later a distinguished pro.

When it was time to pick a college, Goldberg chose Williams (Mass.), which recently was named the top liberal arts college in the country by U.S. News and World Report.

Goldberg played No. 1 at Williams, becoming the nation's first All-American in tennis and squash.

"I know squash is not known much in Altoona, but it's a terrific sport and the conditioning is extremely demanding," Goldberg said. "I was as proud of what I was able to do in squash as tennis."

Goldberg, 46, won the New York City squash championship following a three-year run on the European satellite pro tennis circuit.

"I was using tennis as a means to travel and get a sense of the competitive scene," he said.

He had met MacCurdy at Lawrenceville, and MacCurdy recommended him for a job as a teaching pro in Hong Kong, where he won the South China Open in 1979 and the Hong Kong singles title in '80.

He accumulated points on the ATP Tour and was ranked among the top 600 players in the world. His best victories over Ken Flach, who at one time was



**Martin and racquets go hand-in-hand: The former pro tennis player also won the New York City squash championship.**

part of the world's top doubles team, and Peter Rennert, who played doubles with John McEnroe. He also won a 35-and-over title at the Maccabiah Games, Olympics for Jewish athletes.

"He beat many of the top East Asian players when he was experimenting with the satellite circuit," MacCurdy, now the head coach at the University of New Mexico, said. "Martin had tremendous concentration and fighting spirit. That's what made him such a great athlete. I've played him hundreds of sets, and I've never seen him let up, which a lot of people do."

During his travels, Goldberg would return to Altoona occasionally to see his family and catch up on the local tennis scene.

"I first met Martin when he was in college, and he was pretty good, but I didn't think he was that great," Genter said. "We played again and from then on, he beat me, and it just kept getting worse."

"Marty always had real good eye-to-hand coordination and a lot of talent," Magee, a two-year letterman at Dartmouth and four years older than Goldberg, said. "I guess I thought he'd reach a level the rest of us ended up reaching — solid amateur — but he went one step beyond."

Goldberg was tutored by the late Herb Faris, who founded the Altoona tennis program and for whom the Mansion Park courts, where Goldberg grew up, is now named.

"Herb's emphasis on fundamentals was very sound, and to this day, I think that's helped me," Goldberg said. "I was there all the time and playing



**Martin (front row, center) was the No. 1 player for the 1972-73 Altoona High tennis team. His teammates included, front row, from left: Tom Gault, Pat Dandrea, Gregg Pappas, Dave Longer, Steve Fishbaine, Gregg Morris. Back row: Jon Kadane, Terry Lukehart, Bob Stengle, Paul Chambers, Alan Disavor, Joe Roebuck, Dave Weible and head coach Herb Faris.**

everybody I could possibly play. He had us do basic drills, running stadiums at Mansion Park. Training and diligence were a big part of his program."

Goldberg, a securities attorney in New York City after living for many years in London, was a Faris favorite.

"He was a beautiful player and very fun to watch," Faris' widow, Suzie, said. "As a tennis player and a young man, Sandy (Herb) really liked Marty and was always very proud of him. He was disappointed when he left, but he knew it was probably the best thing for him. Marty's legend kind of grew as the years went on, and Herb felt he would have been be the first state champion (from Altoona)."

"I would like to have had a shot at winning a state title," Goldberg said. "(But) Lawrenceville was an excellent academic school and at the time had a very strong tennis program."

When Goldberg was learning to play tennis, there were no indoor courts in Altoona.

"We started out playing on the hardwood floor at the Armory," he said. "It was incredibly fast."

Goldberg's nemesis in high school was State College great Todd Lundy, who won four District 6 titles as well as a PIAA crown.

"He beat me a number of times, while he was at State

College or in a Middle States tournament," Goldberg, who is married (wife Betsy) with one son (Maurice), said. "He was a better player than me. One of my best experiences is after he had beaten me all those years, I beat him during his senior year at Harvard and my junior year at Williams."

The two also got to be friends and played doubles together on the European tour.

Goldberg becomes the second tennis player to be inducted in the Hall of Fame, joining Bill Parsons.

"As I got older, he (Parsons) was very gracious and we had some competitive matches that

helped me," Goldberg said.

He also mentioned players such as Magee, Dave Berry and Irv Grossman.

But the beginning of his interest in the sport began with his father, Allen, a Racquet Club fixture.

"The people who know him well know he combines a unique sense of humor and approach to life with what really counts," Goldberg said.

Martin's mother, Marilyn, died 10 years ago from complications following a skiing accident, and his father relocated to Washington, D.C.

"My mother just loved it in Altoona," he said. "She was very active in the community, and I can't say enough about what a terrific mother and person she was. She'd tell me you'd have to read five books for every tennis tournament you go to. I had a wonderful support group with both my parents."

Goldberg appreciates his hometown and the Hall of Fame award.

"It's wonderful," he said. "I've been fortunate enough to have lived all over the world, but I take pride in telling people I grew up in Altoona and I'm glad my brother and friends still live here because it's another reason to visit. I'm very lucky to have had my roots there."



## Goldberg bio

**Sport:** Tennis.

**Hometown:** Altoona.

**College:** Williams.

**Hall of Fame achievement:**  
Spent parts of three seasons on the European pro tennis circuit.

**Current residence:** Bedford, N.Y.