

HANK WESCH

Young Strives To Make Game Better For All

His name is Daniel Young, his alias Dan The Tennis Man.

He's a fast talker and a fast mover who totes to the courts a bag of tricks that includes things like scissors, a sickle, an egg and a blindfold.

He believes he can teach anyone mastery of the fundamentals of any "classic" stroke in an hour. Though little known outside the Washington, D.C. area he would delight in a tennis teachers' challenge with nationally recognized instructors like Vic Braden or Dennis Vandermeer.



Young admits that the National Tennis Teachers College (NTTC) he founded four years ago has been considered a "thorn in the side" by some members of the established United States Tennis Association. And when Dan starts questioning several aspects of the game, and expounding radical theories of change, it's not surprising some would feel that way.

There's a bit of Flim and also some Flam in The Tennis Man. But underneath is an evangelist determined to increase tennis understanding and accessibility to groups that the game can pass by.

"One of the main goals of the NTTC is to raise the quality of tennis instruction at the community-recreation level," said Young. "If someone has a reputation as a player, or has shown some ability as a teacher, the tendency is for them to go off to the jobs at the private clubs. Economically, it's not profitable to go back to the community recreation center to teach.

"So the instruction available to people who can't afford country club prices isn't generally very good. The skills and the attitude toward the students of people teaching tennis through the community centers and recreation departments just isn't up to par."

Young has devised an assortment of techniques which he feels are proven effective and particularly applicable to players attempting to learn the game on public courts. The scissors and sickle, for example, he employs to demonstrate the forehand and backhand grips. The egg is used to help develop proper toss on the serve. Eventually he has students attempting, and doing surprisingly well, serving blindfolded.

"My technique is association," the 38-year-old Young says. "I try to relate the movements of tennis to everyday ones that people can understand. None of these things is a sure cure, but they give the beginner a point to start from."

Young's vision is to recruit individuals to NTTC, impart his teaching techniques to them via a 16-hour instructional course, and send them forth to pass the lessons on at community and recreation centers. The NTTC membership is small and the organization has had its primary impact in the East. But Young, who will be spending the next few weeks at Coronado, would like to expand its influence nationwide.

He would also like to influence tennis in many other ways.

"I'd like to see more things like 'signed' teaching programs for the deaf," Young says. "Tennis is a game where a handicap, not being able to hear, would at times be a real advantage.

"Tennis can be a way of developing motor skills for people who are otherwise physically or mentally handicapped," he continues. Young formulated a series of instructions for the D.C. Special Olympics. "The problem is there aren't enough people with the skill and willingness to work with these people."

For grade school youths being introduced to the game, Young advocates scaled-down equipment and the use of paddle-tennis sized courts. To aid beginners, he favors the use of more dividing fences or nets on public courts.

"One of the biggest fears of anyone who is first starting out is that they'll hit wild shots and interrupt someone else's game on the court next to them," Young says. "So they are tense as they play and that makes it even tougher for them to concentrate on proper techniques and keep the ball in the court.

"If there were more divider nets between courts at public facilities, a lot more people would feel easier about trying the game."

Young's questioning of the game extends to professional tournament procedure. "Why not limit them to one serve per point rather than two?" he asks. "The serve is just like

the drive in golf. You make your own conditions, so it's perfect for you to put the ball in play. It would certainly speed things up and make the game more interesting for the spectator.

"And why is it that in basketball you have 10 players and two referees, baseball 18 players and four umpires, and in tennis you only have two players but eight officials?"

Young will be asking questions, going through his gimmick bag and giving lessons and clinics for the next few weeks at the Oakwood apartment complex courts on Coronado in collaboration with Pat Stewart, the resident pro.

The two intend to conduct free weekly tennis clinics for the mentally or physically-handicapped on Wednesdays from 10:30-11:30 starting next week.

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NET PICKINGS — The final entry count will be in the 460 range for the Tribune Tournament starting Sept. 26 at Morley Field. The singles entry list includes 187 in the men's open division and 68 in the women's open and 110 more are entered in doubles... The Clairol Crown for 1981 is scheduled April 4-5 at La Costa, and tournament backers couldn't be more pleased with the first two qualifiers for the four-woman, \$200,000 event. Evonne Goolagong earned a spot by winning at Wimbledon while Chris Evert Lloyd gained entrance with her U.S. Open triumph.