

SQUASH

MAGAZINE



THE ARLEN SPECTER US SQUASH CENTER BUILDING A HOME FOR THE SPORT

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LEADERSHIP PROFILE: TRACEY & SHANIN SPECTER

PLAYING IN 2008 (FROM L TO R) ARE TRACEY, HATTI, SHANIN AND ARLEN SPECTER, WITH JOAN SPECTER WATCHING.

The Arlen Specter US Squash Center project has been made possible through the generosity and vision of Tracey and Shanin Specter. Both are lifetime squash enthusiasts and met through squash at the University of Pennsylvania. Tracey competed on the Penn varsity team and was a member of Penn's 1983-1984 Ivy League championship team. Shanin was a member of the gold medal-winning U.S. 45-49 team at the 2005 Maccabiah Games and continues to play regularly. His love of the game was nurtured by his father, the late U.S. Senator Arlen Specter who was known as the most devoted squash player on Capitol Hill. The Specters have four daughters—Silvi, Perri, Lilli and Hatti—Silvi competed for the Shipley School while Hatti is a current member of the Penn Charter girls' squash team.

SQUASH MAGAZINE: What is your vision and hope about how the Specter Center will impact the future of squash in the U.S.?

SHANIN SPECTER: To be a national sport, there must be a national center. The Specter Center will host tournaments from U11 bronzes through to the professionals. It will be a place where elite athletes will come, stay and train. It will host an urban youth study and competition program. It may be an Olympic training site and will host the U.S. Squash Hall of Fame. It will provide the critical mass and center of gravity necessary to propel squash forward through the remainder of this century and beyond.

SM: Why do you believe Philadelphia will be an ideal home for the Specter Center?

SS: The Specter Center is located in the heart of the hub for squash in the midst of the Mid-Atlantic. With our eighteen singles and two doubles courts, Drexel's seven courts across the street and Penn's twelve courts close by, we'll have the greatest concentration of squash courts in the western hemisphere, all located a few blocks from the trains and buses and nearby to our international airport.

SM: What did squash mean for your father, Arlen Specter, throughout his life?

SS: Squash was central to his life. He often said: "I used to say that squash was the most important thing I do every day. Now I say it's the only important thing I do every day." Squash sustained and invigorated him. And to our joy and fitness, he passed squash down to us and to his grandchildren.

SM: Why is it important to you to be able to name the National Center after Arlen and make it part of his legacy, and what do you believe it would have meant to him to know this is happening?

SS: Arlen Specter and the US Squash Center are a perfect fit. He loved the game and was squash's go-to on Capitol Hill. He loved sports

and saw the potential of squash to bring fitness, competition and sportsmanship to all Americans. We are lucky that Drexel president and devoted squasher John Fry asked us to help. And we were delighted to say yes!

SM: Through projects including multiple high schools, colleges, and urban programs in the U.S. and internationally, and now the Specter Center, your squash philanthropy has centered significantly on creation of new courts and facilities. Why is court building such a central element of how you want to give back to the sport?

SS: There can't be squash without squash courts. There aren't nearly enough courts. So those of us who love the game and can help build courts should look for opportunities to bring the game everywhere. Relatedly, we are also big believers in urban squash programs. Wide access is key to wide participation, including internationally, such as through SquashBond in Israel, which brings together Israeli and Palestinian youth through squash.

SM: We've heard squash has an especially fun, romantic storyline for you and Tracey?

SS: We met on the Penn squash courts in 1982. One of us asked the other to play. A squash court is pretty intimate and you learn a lot about the other person fairly quickly. In our case, we learned enough that we wanted to see each other off the court too.

SM: What are the unique qualities about squash that attract you to the game and that drive you to support it so generously?

SS: Squash is phenomenal for health, competition and sportsmanship. It's a small place where you learn to get along with your partner. It's a highly efficient workout. It's easy to love as a beginner and sustains intense interest for a lifetime. It's a place where these timeless words of Arlen Specter ring true: "you're never too far behind to win and never too far ahead to lose." **SM**



TRACEY (R) AND SHANIN SPECTER