

173

SLAM

Continued from page 1B

district with Avon Park, Bartow, Lakeland Kathleen, Lake Gibson, Lake Wales, Mulberry and Winter Haven. That's not to belittle the likes of Sarasota Booker and Palmetto that were in the Streaks the district the past few years.

Jessica Bishop beat Lake Placid's Alana Robinson 6-1, 6-0 at No. 2 singles, and Sebring senior Jennifer Stills beat Ellie Regaldo by the same score.

Sebring's Kristen Ritter, one of eight of Hollinger's players (also McGuire) to have come out of Koahou's tennis program at the Country Club of Sebring, defeated Lady Dragon Jaime Hall 6-1, 6-4 at No. 4 singles. Blue Streaks Kendall Walter eased by Dee Grigsby 6-1, 6-1 at No. 5.

Heer and Bishop easily won their No. 1 doubles pro-set, 8-1.

Results of the No. 2 doubles match between Sebring's Caitlin Harris and Lauren Schomer and Lake Placid's Hall and Grigsby were not available at press time.

Lake Placid travels to LaBelle on Monday at 4 p.m. Sebring hosts Avon Park on Monday at 4 p.m. at Sun 'N Lake Golf and Country Club.

Sebring will work out with Koahou at the Country Club of Sebring on Tuesday before hosting Mulberry for a District 8-2A match on Thursday at Sebring High School.

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\$18

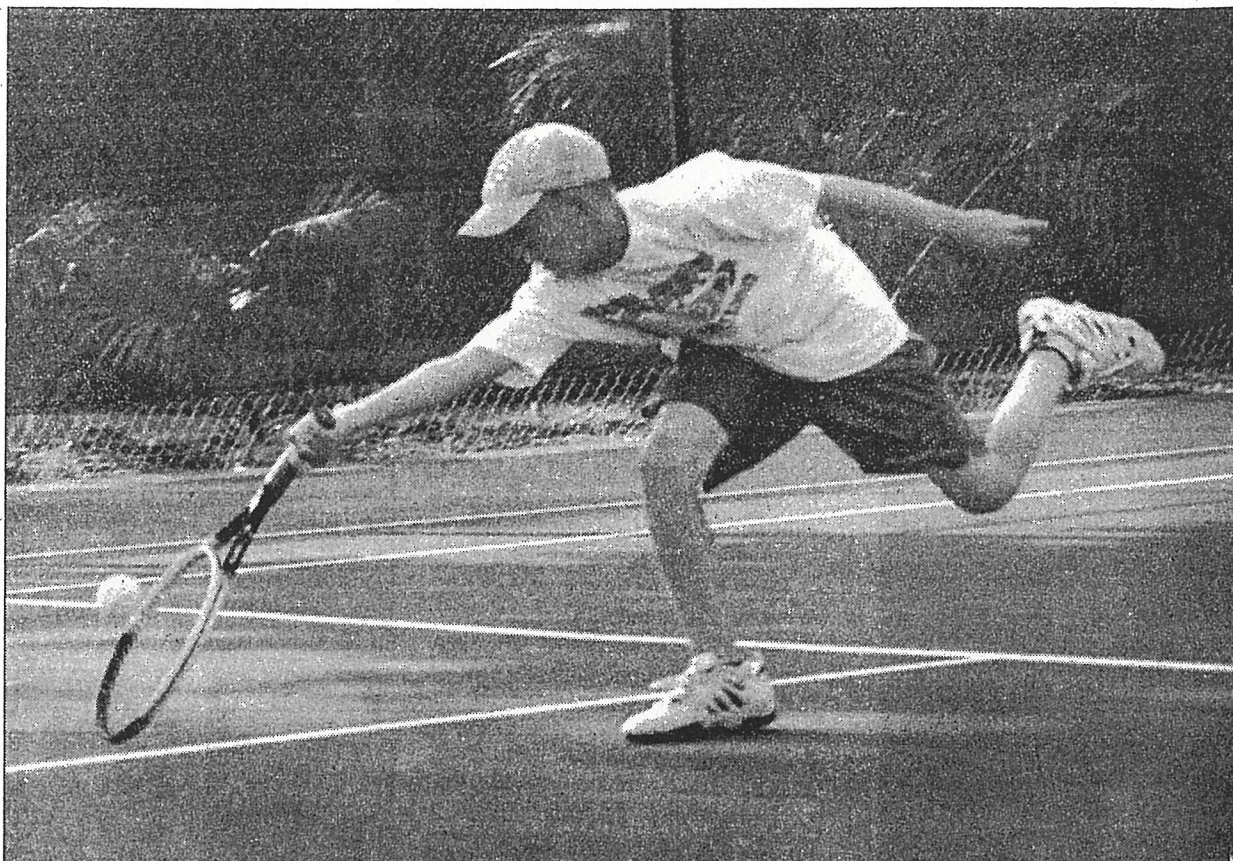
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Tee Time	635-2676
Suggested	676-1109

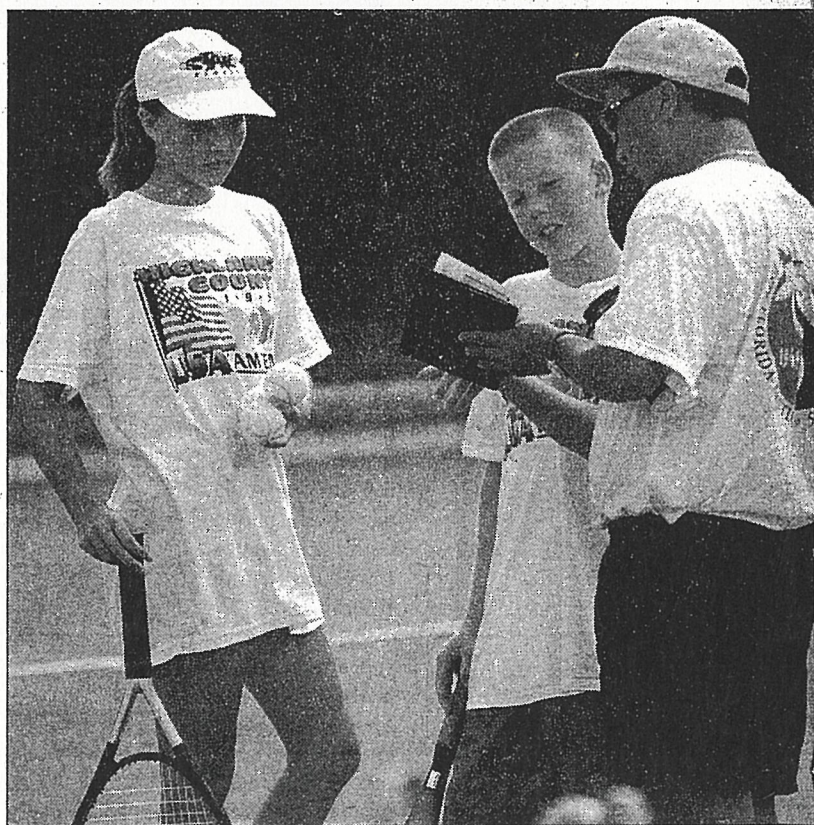
Expires Feb. 29, 2000

USA TEAM TENNIS AT STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS



USA TEAM
TENNIS

Photos by TIMOTHY BOULAY/News-Sun
Kenny Futch (above) tries in vain to get to a shot from a Melbourne opponent during an 8-4 loss in boys' singles action Friday in Lakeland during the USA Team Tennis State Championships. John Koahou (right photo, right) explains a rule to Candice Anderson and Futch prior to their mixed doubles match on Friday.



Tennis

Second Turkey Open a smashing success

By JOHN KOAHOU

Special to the News-Sun

SEBRING — The Second annual Turkey Open Junior Tennis Tournament once again made its mark for Highlands County's junior tennis players. Held at the Country Club of Sebring Saturday and Sunday, this season-ending event has attracted some of the top ranked juniors in the state of Florida.

Good words about this hospitable, family-oriented tournament has reached international ears with girls from Santiago, Chile playing for the girls' 16s singles title.

The tournament was favorable to our Highlands County juniors with Kenny Futch (unranked in 1999) defeating Nick Maurillo (ranked No. 136 boy's 12s) in the finals of the boys 12 singles division. Brother Jeffrey Futch walked away with the boy's 14s singles consolation medal.

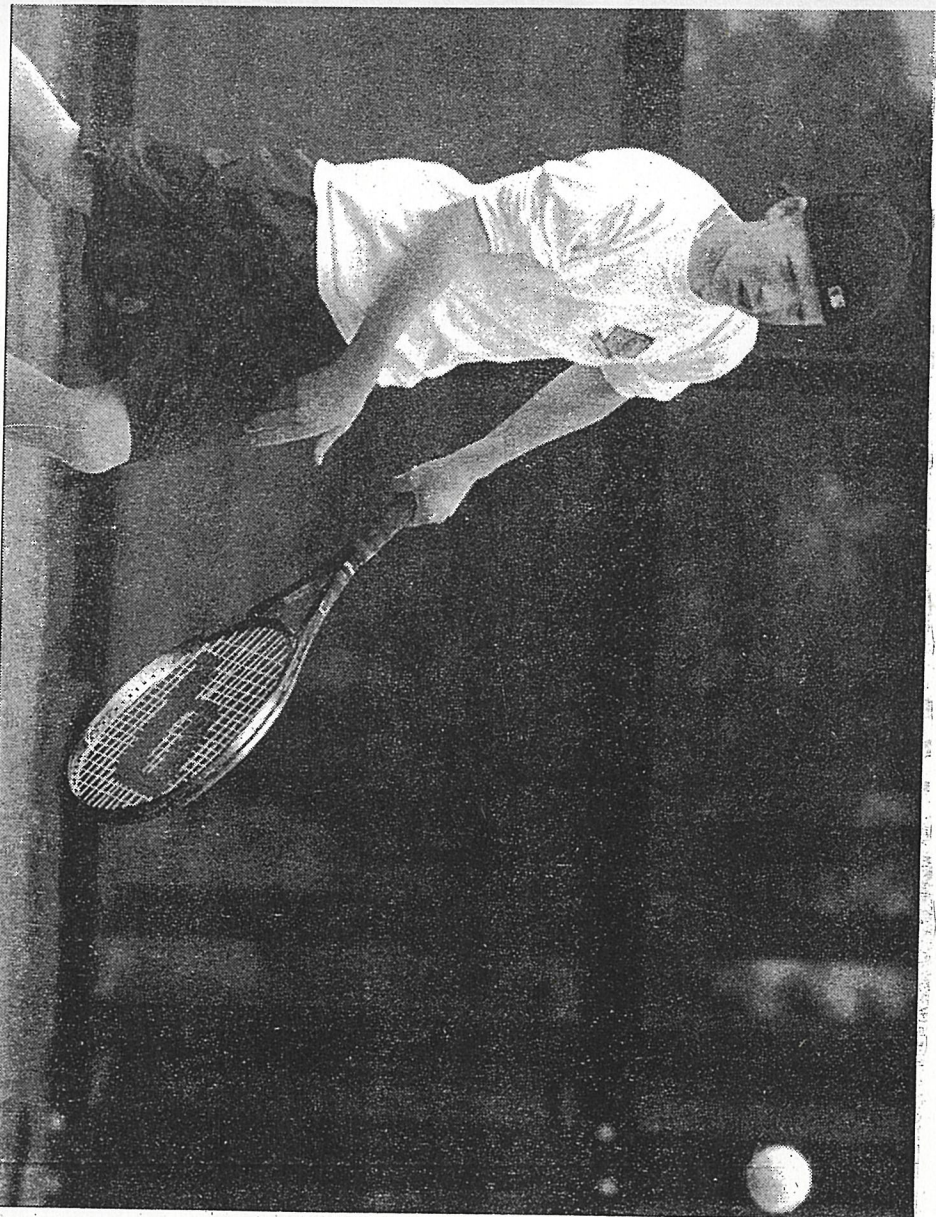
Jeffrey Coleman came back to the

courts to earn a boy's 16s singles consolation win.

The girls of Highlands County produced great results in the 14s singles division. Kristin Ritter made it to the semifinals and Candice Anderson (who entered her first 14s event) walked away with 6-1, 6-0 win to take the consolation finals medal. Katie Haviland entered her first 16s singles division and made it to the semifinals of the consolation bracket.

One more notable player who entered his first 12s event was Garrett Anderson, who made it to the semifinals against eventual champion Kenny Futch, who won 6-1, 6-0.

Once again, the reputation of this Turkey Open is growing and is aided greatly with the support of tennis patrons such as Jeff Futch, Custom Homes, Highlands Independent Bank, Jack Miller, Highlands Regional Medical Center and the News-Sun.



Jeffrey Futch follows through after a backhand return during a match on Saturday.

SCOTT DRESSEL/News-Sun

Highlands' USA Team Tennis shines at state

News-Sun

USA team tennis of Highlands County was well represented at this year's USTA/Florida USA Team Tennis State Championships in Lakeland, last Friday through Sunday.

Area league coordinator John Koahou was very pleased to see all four of the age divisions entered: co-ed 12s, 14s, 16s and 18s. This has been the third year Koahou's troops have attended this, the biggest USTA program event in Florida, and the second time there have been four age divisions entered.

"Our teams had a lot of tennis to play this weekend, and had opportunities to play various positions from singles, doubles and mixed doubles," Koahou said. "The most rewarding part of the tournament was the cheering and support of teammates and parents as our players played spectacular points against players from Lakeland, St. Petersburg, Englewood, Lakewood and Hillsborough."

The co-ed 14s, 2.0-2.5 level, team finished third overall in the state and

won all their matches in their flight including the first place team from Treasure Island, who ended up with a total of 118 points. The Sebring Smashers ended with 111 points, seven points shy of going to the sectional tournaments in Jacksonville.

The co-ed 18s team led their flight after two days of match play, but fell short of players on the last day.

Sebring's Robby Bordin, Rick Carruthers and Cindy Bowser carried their team through three events and defeated the other two. They fought hard at Florida Southern College and throughout the whole tournament.

The co-ed 12s team, captained by Cathy Raupp, showed great promise with players from Sebring (John



KOAHOU

See TENNIS, page 4B

TENNIS

Continued from page 1B

Michael Vicker and Joey Chait), Lake Placid (Shane Stager), and Okeechobee (Ryan Fulford). The team borrowed two girls, to qualify the team, from Lake Wales and Winter Haven.

The co-ed 16s, headed by former Lake Placid standout Ana Carias, produced exciting matches at Imperial Lakes Country Club. The team fought hard against good players at the 3.0-3.5 level with Sebring's No. 1 Singles Matt Schnell and future

"The most rewarding part of the tournament was the cheering and support."

JOHN KOAHOU, Tennis professional

standout Kenny Futch, pulling the boys' events, and Kristin Ritter (Sebring High School) and Carolyn Roberts (Hardee High School's No. 1 singles) pulling the girls events. Solidifying the rest of the team was Samantha Collins (Okeechobee) and David Wofford (Hardee) who played mixed doubles and doubles.

All teams showed that Highlands

County is in the rise in USA team tennis. Each year's results places these teams closer to the sectional in Jacksonville and for the co-ed 14s, a future chance at a regional bid to Stone Mountain, Ga., against the best teams from Texas and the Caribbean.

"What a fine season for team tennis, and we look forward to next year," Koahou said.

1979

Tennis carnival for kids Saturday

By **JEFF CANTWELL**
Sports Editor

SEBRING — There are still some openings for Saturday's USA Junior Free For All Tennis Carnival at the Country Club of Sebring. But you'd better reserve your free session today, because otherwise it will be too late to get in on the fun.

The Country Club of Sebring and the *News-Sun* are presenting this nationally sponsored USA Junior Free For All for kids ages 8-18. May is USA Tennis month, and Saturday's festivities will be running at the same time as countless other Free For Alls around the country. Instruction will be by John Koahou, a USPTA teaching professional and director of tennis at the Country Club of Sebring.

"This Free For All is planned for growth," said Koahou, a former standout collegiate tennis player. "I want kids that have never touched a racquet to come out and have some fun."

"This is part of the funnel system. It all starts with the Free For All and then the lessons (USA Tennis 1-2-3) and USA Team Tennis, which we already have established at the Country Club."

"This is the best way to get kids out there: offer refreshment, door prizes and basically make it a fun, carnival atmosphere."

Koahou currently has over 75 Highlands County juniors involved with the USA Tennis 1-2-3 teaching and USA Team Tennis programs. He's wanting more local kids to follow the United States Tennis Association's motto of "Get In The

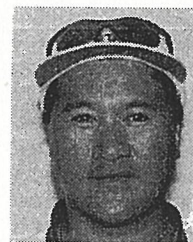
See **TENNIS**, page 4B

FOLLOW THE BOUNCING BALL



SCOTT DRESSEL/*News-Sun*

Tennis balls were bouncing all around Friday morning at Hill-Gustat Middle School in Sebring as John Koahou (right), USA pro at The Country Club of Sebring, put on a clinic for the students. The rackets used by the students were donated by the USTA/ Florida Section and The Country Club of Sebring. Koahou said he would like to put on clinics at Avon Park Middle School and Lake Placid Middle School in the near future.



KOAHOU

Tennis, Hawaiian style

John Koahou brings fun, native beliefs to courts at Country Club of Sebring

by CINDY MARSHALL

Light/Weekend Editor

SEBRING

A large supply of tennis balls and rackets, a container full of Jolly Ranchers and some Hawaiian spirit are what John Koahou takes to the courts when he instructs his students.

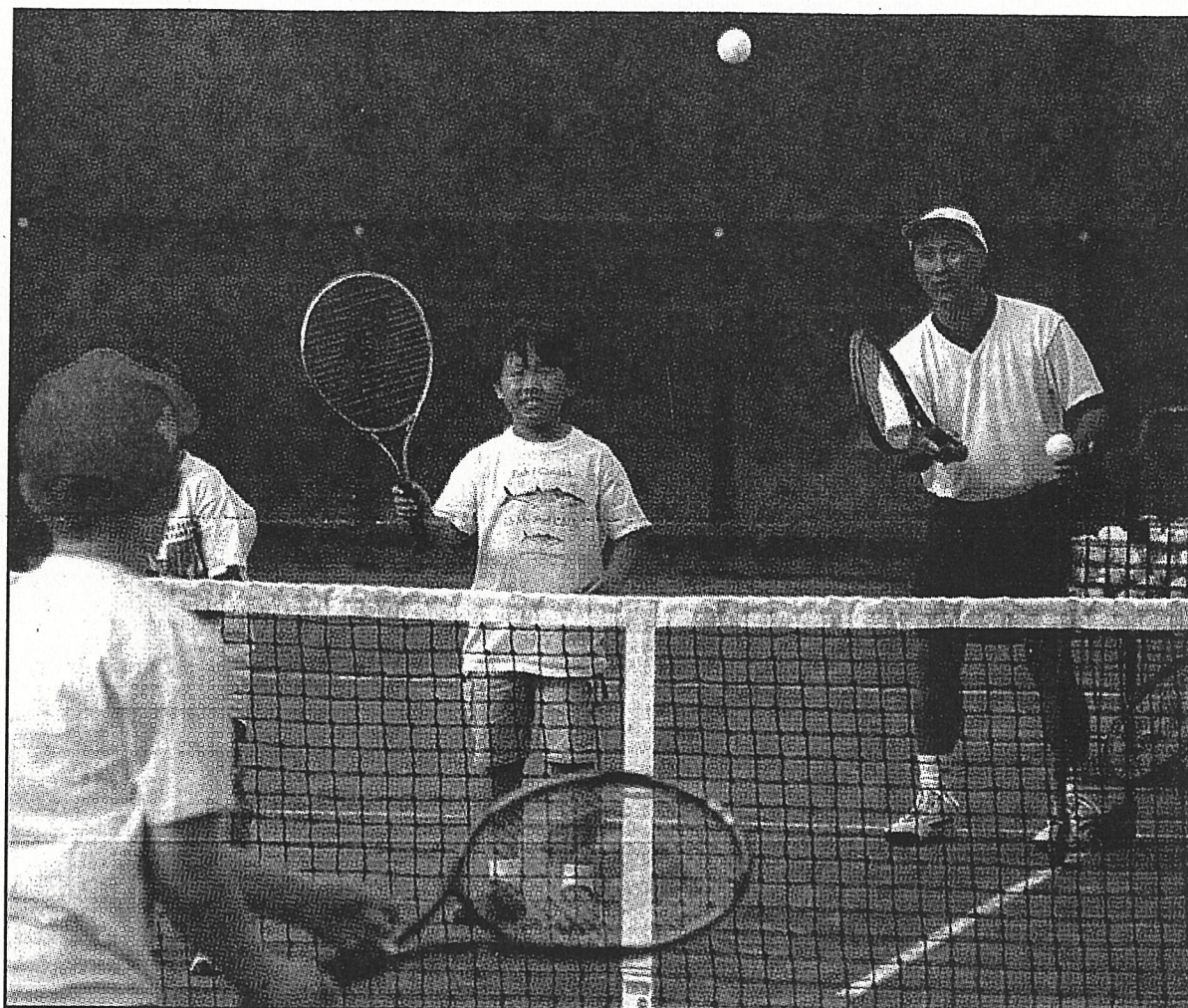
Koahou, a United States Professional Tennis Association instructor at the Country Club of Sebring, landed in Highlands County five years ago and hit the ground running. He is a certified professional tennis instructor in Highlands County and has 26 years experience in the sport. He has played the sport on all levels from juniors to United States Tennis Association sanctioned tournaments to college matches. He has taught tennis lessons at various levels for children as well as adults.

Koahou is a member of the Polk County Professional Tennis Association, the USTA, the USPTA and the United States Professional Tennis Registry. He was a member of the Highlands County Tennis Association and still helps the organization with projects. Koahou is traveling this year to four different middle schools to implement the USTA program in the physical education classes as well as organizing tennis tournaments, clinics and leagues for the community.

This long list of credentials and accomplishments is impressive, but it's not what makes Koahou a smashing hit with his players.

Born and raised in Hawaii, Koahou shares some of his native beliefs with his students.

"I brought some Hawaiian spirit



JEFF CANTWELL/News-Sun

John Koahou (right) works with a group of 7- to 11-year-old USTA students on the courts at the Country Club of Sebring Friday afternoon.

to Highlands County. I teach a sense of respect. This is a gentlemen's sport," Koahou said. "There is an etiquette rule they have to learn. It's not a yelling type of sport. It's a watch and listen type model that I bring to them," he said.

Most importantly, Koahou provides fun in his tennis lessons. "You have to have fun. That's the first thing I teach."

Younger children have a shorter attention span, so Koahou has learned to change the games frequently to stimulate their learning

experience. He begins his lessons with a routine of running laps, stretching muscles, going over the rules, hitting "a lot of balls" and executing several drills. Then the games begin.

"Games are a kid's life," Koahou said.

The games Koahou refers to are not the simple singles or doubles played by most tennis players. Children can be found on Koahou's courts hopping up and down like kangaroos while playing the game, King and Queen of the Court.

There's even a version of baseball played on his tennis courts.

Fun is even emphasized with his more competitive players who participate in the Junior Novice and USA Team Tennis programs. Koahou has a competitive spirit, but includes some "light fun" in the game for his serious players.

"It's hard for them. Expectations are high and parents put pressure on them," Koahou said.

While the kids from Highlands,

See HAWAIIAN, page 3B

HAWAIIAN

Continued from page 1B

Hardee and Okeechobee counties and Frostproof compete in a league at the country club, Koahou prepares them for the finale. His students travel to Lakeland in the summer to pair off in a statewide tournament featuring some of the best players in Florida. There are more than 1,000 players who compete in this tourney.

Regardless of their outcome, Koahou said, "They are all winners for participating in the event. This tournament brings out the best in their talents."

Koahou was very proud to see one of his students, Mary Jane McGuire of Sebring, continue playing tennis in college in Manhattan, N.Y. McGuire, who was already ranked in the Juniors, was 14 when she began lessons with Koahou.

"John is very positive with the kids," said Bob McGuire, Mary Jane's father and women's tennis coach at South Florida Community College in Avon Park. "He doesn't try to force his style on them. When he helps you, he is real quiet and watches your style. He gets the real picture before making any suggestions."

His method of teaching has been widely excepted by local families as well as people who travel from neighboring counties to participate in his programs. Koahou has been very pleased with this area. He said Highlands County and the Country Club of Sebring immediately felt like home to him because the people here are like "ohna," which is Hawaiian for family.

"I knew I found a place here. The country club and the county is very family orientated. It's all about family," Koahou said.

Families are what motivate the children in his tennis tourneys, clinics and leagues. Although, Koahou has learned that a container full of Jolly Ranchers also inspires the kids to work harder.

"I never walk out onto the courts without my Jolly Ranchers," Koahou

'There is just something about the first time a child hits a ball over the net and you see their face light up.'

Tennis pro JOHN KOAHOU

admitted. What started out as a routine or simple ritual in college with his doubles partner, has now developed into a motivational tool for the children he teaches today. "It's a great reward for them."

Area families and the Country Club support Koahou's efforts to implement the game to children who may never otherwise get the chance to pick up a racket. According to the local tennis pro, this is a sport that has very little expense.

Any expenses incurred in Koahou's tennis clinic are covered by the USTA and local businesses. The Countywide Tennis Blitz set for April 23 and 24 at the Country Club of Sebring is a free clinic for children ages 6-18 who want to learn the basic fundamentals about the game of tennis. The USTA provides funding for the loaner rackets and balls. Highlands Regional Medical Center and the *News-Sun* provide other monies to host the tournament for local children.

Times for this clinic are 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. for ages 6-12, and 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. for ages 13-18. Koahou explained that this clinic is a one-day session so students should pick whichever day best fits their schedule. To register call 382-8538.

This is the second year for the clinic. Last year approximately 200 kids came out and Koahou anticipates 300 this year.

Even though Koahou spends the majority of his time teaching lessons

at the Country Club and area schools running clinics and coordinating tournaments, he still has a desire to expand his tennis program. He wants to reach out to the more needy children in the county.

"I want to form an association to help people with no money or low income families. I want to take care of my own county," Koahou vigorously said.

His goal is to implement a tennis program with organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club and Children's Home Society. Koahou, who claims to be a "public parks product," realizes there are children in public recreational programs who can benefit from learning the game. He will not only teach them about a competitive sport, but some very important lessons in life.

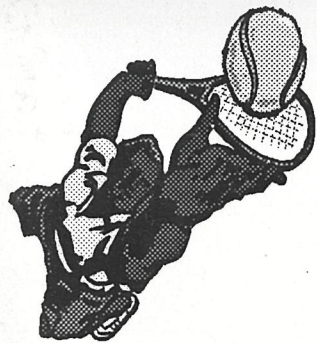
Koahou, an avid baseball player, first learned how to play tennis at the age of 14 in a public park's program in Hawaii. His mother initiated him into the sport and paid for private lessons when he took the game serious. Koahou's family, including 12 cousins, were dedicated tennis players.

Koahou graduated from the University of Northern Colorado in 1987 with a major in business administration. His first desire was to own a tennis shop, but quickly realized running a retail business takes a lot of hard work. After a short stay back in Hawaii, Koahou moved to North Carolina where he worked as a tennis director at a resort in Sapphire Valley. While traveling the USTA circuit, he played in Lakeland and heard about Sebring.

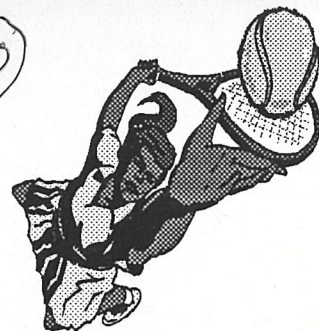
Little did Koahou know Sebring would become his home and the place where he would meet his lifetime companion, Cathy. They were married last September.

Koahou carries an enormous load onto the courts, but it's the families and children who keep him coming back for more.

"There is just something about the first time a child hits a ball over the net and you see their face light up," he said as he smiled with pride.



180



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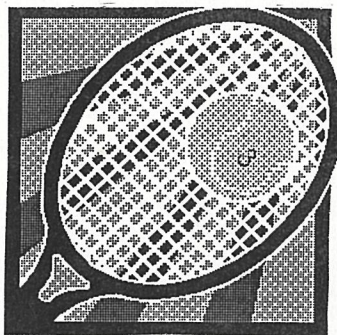
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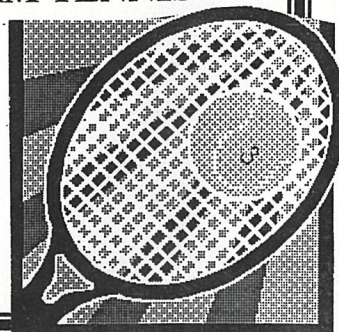
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