

# Boys Coach of the Year - 2000

## *Tom Henderson - Ottawa*

Tom Henderson has been coaching tennis for 49 years – one year at Streator High School, 1 year at Illinois State University, and 47 years at Ottawa High School. This past season, Tom's team was 17-0 in dual matches, 1<sup>st</sup> place in the North Central Conference, 1<sup>st</sup> place in the Ottawa Sectional, and 6<sup>th</sup> place in the state tournament.

His number one singles player, Jason Bock, was conference and sectional champion and won four rounds in the state tournament. His doubles team of twins Tom and Ted Nagel were finalists in the state tournament and played a fine and close 3-set match against the New Trier champions.

If you ask Tom about his coaching philosophy, he responds very quickly. "I have changed." In the past, he expected very disciplined practicing and playing from his players. Now he likes to give the boys more freedom to try a few more things like two-handed backhands as well as slice. He is a hard worker and believes persistence pays off. His advice to young coaches is don't be afraid to work hard, put your time in, and have a strong commitment to the game and coaching. His advice to young players is learn to play from the baseline with good ground strokes and learn to serve well.

Tom retired from teaching in 1987. He was a social studies teacher with a love for U.S. history. During his last ten years of teaching, he was Ottawa's history department chairman.

His most memorable experiences and players are the Nagel twins getting to the finals of the state doubles championship in 2000, his son Tom winning a long 3-set match against Jim Carney of Joliet Catholic in the state tournament, and Tom's 6<sup>th</sup> place finishes in the state tournament his junior and senior years. In addition, two doubles teams are remembered, Don Harris / Brian Riley, and Don Fogel / Don Staley, who both finished 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the state doubles tournament.

Tom has put Ottawa on the tennis map in Illinois. Through his hard work and efforts, he has raised money for his teams, worked with players during the summer and off-season, has spoken at tennis clinics, and was one of the founders of the IHSTCA. After 49 years of coaching, he would like to coach the girls team one more year and then retire after 50 years of coaching.

Tom has been a major influence in the state of Illinois high school tennis scene. His simple philosophy of hard work and persistence pays off and has brought him success and the respect of all coaches in the state.