

# Boys Coach of the Year - 2004

## *Steve Rudman – Highland Park*

Steve began his coaching career as a basketball coach of a junior high school team at Highland Park. After four years, he coached the Highland Park HS basketball team for two years. He made the coaching switch to tennis eight years ago to become the girls and boys coach at Highland Park. He makes a living as a financial consultant.

Steve played for the Highland Park tennis team, and, in 1980, he and his doubles partner, Marvin Mandel, made the All-State first team in doubles. He went on to play one year for Indiana University.

Steve loves to play tennis and is quite an accomplished player. Off-season he is involved with the team members by encouraging them to play tournaments, going to tournaments to watch them compete, and following their results on the internet. He is also an active board member of our IHSTCA and the Chicago District Tennis Association.

Competing with the kids on the team during on-court drilling and play makes for an atmosphere where he and the players feel good and have fun competing. Steve believes in creating a competitive environment in practice. He devotes about 70% of the practice time to drilling and 30% to match play. He believes that success is based on the TEAM concept. Everyone is important during the matches. Each match counts and every team member should be cheering each for each other. Former Highland Park coach Bill Ratlif taught this team concept to Steve.

Steve turned around a program that was faltering. He got the players excited about playing, taking lessons from good pros, and encouraged teammates, as well as himself, to push each other towards excellence and good sportsmanship. As of this date, Steve has an 8-year record with the girls team of 58-15-1 and a 7-year record with the boys of 78-14-3. This year, the HP boys had a dual record of 10-1 and finished with one first, two seconds and a fourth place finish at invitationals. His team won the Central Suburban League North Division, won the sectional, and finished 3<sup>rd</sup> in the state tournament. Both of his doubles teams reached the quarterfinals at state, with one of those teams, Brandon Fisher and Nik Ljuboja, finishing second.

Steve's teams have won four straight conference championships, two sectional titles, and also placed fourth in the state in 2001. His teams' number one goal is to win a conference title.

His proudest accomplishment was last year's team finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> in the state and his #2 singles player scoring almost as many points at the state tournament as his #1 player. Steve requires conditioning every morning at 6:45 and practice every day after school for as much time as necessary to accomplish the goals set for that day.

Steve believes the perfect player is one that has excellent conduct on and off the court, respects the game and opponents, and works hard to get better. Brandon Fisher is the one player Steve would pick to represent his perfect player.

Steve's advice to other coaches is to lay out the team rules at the beginning of the season and make sure the players and parents know what is expected of them. Ask parents to support the team at matches, not at practices. Set goals and what you want to accomplish. Have a good association with other coaches and learn from them. Coaches like Geoff Gluck, Jay Kramer, Mike McConville, Chuck Morrison and Pat Grant have been very helpful to him. He respects them and other coaches who have remained coaches and have helped out as volunteers even though they have retired from teaching or other jobs they may have had.

Congratulations, Steve. You have earned an excellent reputation and deserve this award.