



USPTA. ADVANTAGE

ELEVATING THE STANDARDS OF TENNIS-TEACHING PROFESSIONALS AND COACHES

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2023

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WE PLAY FOR PRIDE AND SO CAN YOU!



Photos courtesy: Sarah Flood

Every June, we celebrate and recognize Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ+) Pride Month in honor of a courageous group of Americans, that in June 1969, rose up to protest the violence and marginalization they faced in what became known as the Stonewall Uprising. This event served as a catalyst for the gay rights movement in the United States and all around the world.

The month of June is dedicated to uplifting LGBTQ+ voices, celebrating

their culture and supporting LGBTQ+ rights. Although I wish, like many communities that struggle with equity and inclusion, that this could be celebrated, emphasized and focused on all year-round.

As leader of the USPTA National LGBTQ+ Task Force and as an open member of the LGBTQ+ community, I try to make it my goal to always learn more about the world we live in and the different environments that surround us. Trying to embrace new knowledge about my community while understanding how to hurdle the obstacles that often stand in our way of equality is sometimes a challenge. But through tennis—knowing that the sport unites many people with the same passion—I try to imagine how I can serve others and have a significant impact to advocate for change and help shape a more inclusive future for everyone.

The pride flag—the imagery that represents the community—is symbolic of this unification, and much can be learned from its striking colors and the important values it represents.

The red in the flag is symbolic of life, while orange is symbolic of healing. Yellow represents sunshine and functions as the flag's radiant and bright center. The green in the flag is meant to convey nature and is associated with prosperity



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and growth, while blue represents harmony and the purple denotes pride and represents spirit.

While embracing these values, it is truly important we all help build a world where everyone gets to live openly and authentically, and that every LGBTQ+ person can be healthy, safe, celebrated and joyful in every area of their lives. Pride is a true celebration of this and helps others who are not part of our community deepen their understanding of LGBTQ+ issues and learn how to be effective allies.

The USPTA has multiple DE&I committees with the sole purpose of promoting, educating and raising awareness of these specific communities that may interest and include our membership. It gives tennis professionals and members of the community a safe place to be themselves while allowing others the knowledge necessary to communicate and collaborate, respectively. It also helps us on-court and in the industry to encourage



and welcome anyone and everyone who can love and play the game of tennis. As the chair of the USPTA LGBTQ+ Task Force, my goal has always been to include everyone who comes to us wanting to learn and to provide solutions as to how we can make a difference in the USPTA membership itself, as well as our local communities at large.

This year, we decided to organize two events, one in Orlando and one in Houston, called We Play for Pride. The idea was that each division would plan a tennis event that would highlight and celebrate the members of the LGBTQ+ community and bring them and anyone else who wanted to participate together to play, celebrate and connect.

The events were sponsored by multiple companies and supported by the USPTA, USTA and Houston Tennis Association, providing players and supporters food, music, entertainment and some good competition. Two task force members, Greg DeMoustes who originally came up with the We Play for Pride concept, along with Allie Pavlansky ran the Orlando event, while myself and Troy Toole ran the Houston celebration.

The Orlando event kicked off on the evening of June 23 with a fun round-robin doubles event, featuring music, food trucks and prizes, and followed with a sanctioned USTA doubles tournament on Saturday and Sunday. In Houston, we ran a co-ed social doubles event on June 24 with music and prizes, and we all gathered for lunch after the event. Both events were successes, as they included members of the LGBTQ+ community, as well as gained the support of others outside it. We had avid tennis players out there braving the heat and others just hanging out and supporting the events socially. The main take-home was that we were able to raise awareness and advocate for the LGBTQ+ community to promote



many hats: we are a coach, a friend, a sounding board, and in an industry that is all about people skills and how we communicate and socially interact with others, we can be a beacon of light,

helping and guiding people to live more fun-filled, happier lives. The USPTA has given us a platform to be able to help others and change lives, but in order to do that, we

must be knowledgeable, compassionate, empathetic and open-minded. My hope in the future is that eventually every USPTA division will hold a We Play for Pride event. It doesn't have to be a tournament or a big all-weekend affair—it can be a fun round-robin or small bracket—but my goal is that once a year, someone, somewhere steps up and runs an event to raise awareness and highlight a community that is long deserving of the equities and inclusion that others take for granted. Orlando and Houston will run our events to celebrate again next year, and we hope that other divisions will join us to celebrate Pride.

We should never stop striving for freedom, liberation and joy. Everyone deserves to live openly and authentically, and in the end, diversity drives innovation. We would all prefer to live in a world where uniqueness and being different is valued and celebrated. So go out there, be yourself and change lives! ✨

“ WE SHOULD NEVER STOP STRIVING FOR FREEDOM, LIBERATION AND JOY. ”

equity and inclusion. We donated the events' raised funds to local charities that provide the most comprehensive array of counseling services for life issues and help the local adult and youth LGBTQ+ members live more authentic, safe and actualized lives.

As tennis professionals, we wear so

