

# THE HISTORY OF USTA ATLANTA

USTA Atlanta, officially known as the Atlanta Community Tennis Association, began as a volunteer-run, non-profit tennis league that organized and ran local tennis leagues for adults in the metropolitan Atlanta area. Today, the home office is in Peachtree Corners, Georgia, containing six staff members and hundreds of volunteers who all support USTA Atlanta's efforts as the largest Community Tennis Association in the country. The USTA Atlanta territory includes the counties of Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett, and Paulding.

## THE 1970S

- Atlanta's own Pat Devoto and a small group of tennis friends went from town to town throughout the South, gathering interest in recreational tennis, successfully creating four levels of play for the pilot USTA league program
- 1,000 participants enjoyed the program at the local level and the first inter-city championships were held in Atlanta at the WCT Peachtree World of Tennis (Racquet Club of the South)



## THE 1980S

- To kick off the new decade, the USTA unanimously adopted a national league program that included levels 3.5, 4.5, and 5.5, with Southern being the first to offer a 2.5 level
- Martha Buttorff and Linda Nickels, both newcomers to the South, decided they wanted to play tennis at least one more day a week and formed the first 4.5 team in Atlanta
- USTA membership in the South rose to 22,000
- The USTA North Atlanta League formed a board of directors and filed articles of incorporation as a non-profit organization in Dekalb County, Georgia
- The first league season commenced with fifteen women's teams and three men's teams
- Articles of Incorporation for the USTA North Atlanta League were filed with the state, bylaws were created, and the first Officers were approved under the leadership of Andy Bigelow
- 50,000 players and all 17 USTA Sections were involved in the young league program
- Senior play began in Atlanta, allowing men and women ages 55 and older to participate
- For the first time, the USTA hired verifiers for competition and instituted a disqualification process
- The decade ended with 125,000 league players nationwide

## THE 1990S

- A 2.5 men's team from Tucker, Georgia, became Atlanta's first team to win a National Championship
- By the mid-nineties, over 3,000 players were verified each year.
- USTA officially adopted the Senior League as a national program with 3.0, 3.5, 4.0, and 4.5 levels of play
- The office included three paid staff members and twelve volunteers who worked together to deliver the league programs
- USTA League Atlanta hired an Executive Director to lead the organization's expansion into other areas of tennis
- Total participation for USTA League Tennis in Atlanta reached 20,000 players
- USTA League Atlanta changed its name to the Atlanta Community Tennis Association (ACTA)
- The Atlanta Community Tennis Association ran the most extensive USTA adult league tennis program in the nation
- New programs emerged, such as the Pro-Challenge, Pre-Collegiate League, Mixed Doubles, and the Singles League
- USTA Atlanta partnered with the Greater Atlanta Inner-City Games (GAICG) to offer organized tennis lessons and play for youngsters exposed to other non-traditional sports in the inner city of Atlanta

## THE 2000S

- USTA Atlanta reached a milestone as total participation in all USA League Tennis programs surpassed 40,000 players
- USTA Atlanta formed a youth foundation (AYTEF) to help meet the needs of under-served children in the Metro Atlanta area. AYTEF went on to win the 2013 USTA Georgia NJTL Chapter of the Year and the 2014 USTA Georgia Richard C. Botsch Educational Merit Award
- The Tennis Apprentice program was introduced, and the first season was offered at Piedmont Park
- Kicked off the inaugural season of the Red Hare Brewing Company Tennis League
- USTA Atlanta was awarded the 2004 Community Tennis Association of the Year by USTA Georgia, USTA Southern, and the USTA. They also received the Special Tennis Event of the Year Award from USTA Georgia
- USTA Atlanta received the 2005 Atlanta Falcons Community Quarterback Award
- USTA Atlanta was named the 2006 USTA Member Organization of the Year and received the "Best of Atlanta" award from Atlanta Sports and Fitness
- USTA Atlanta was named the National 2007 Organization of the Year
- USTA Atlanta partnered with Atlanta Track Club at the Peachtree Road Race
- USTA Atlanta was named the 2012 USTA Georgia and Southern Member Organization of the Year
- Tuesday Tennis on the Turf launched at The Battery Atlanta and won the 2018 Special Tennis Event of the Year Award from USTA Georgia
- The pandemic shut down USTA play, and the Singles Ladder was introduced through the TennisRungs application once play resumed
- Adult league participation grew by 2,000 players
- Red Hare grew to an average of 1,000 players per season
- The JTT 3 Day Qualifier had 300 players participate, making it the largest USTA Atlanta event
- The Singles Ladder averaged 300 players per season, and over 100 singles matches per week were being played
- USTA Georgia named USTA Atlanta the 2021 Community Tennis Association of the Year