

GAME, CONNORS



...Jimmy, of course. And he's bringing a dozen of his closest 35-something buddies with him to Boca Raton for a head-turning week of the best men's tennis this side of the Atlantic.

Who said getting older wouldn't be fun?

Go, Jimmy, go, go, go!

Few players have impacted their sport so dramatically as tennis legend Jimmy Connors. While his relentless style and consistent groundstrokes have earned him the longest uninterrupted hold on the number-one spot in the history of men's tennis, his enthusiasm and outspoken personality have endeared him to fans the world over. And for good reason. We all love a champion, and he's that—and more.

Born in Belleville, Illinois on September 2, 1952, Connors lifted his first racket at age two, when his mother (and former teaching pro) Gloria Thompson Connors would roll balls to him. As a talented 19-year-old freshman at UCLA, Connors captured the 1971 NCAA Men's Singles Championship and achieved All-American status. One year later, he joined the men's pro tennis tour.

Over the next 17 years, he never dropped out of the top 10 in the world rankings and along the way amassed a record-setting 109 singles titles as well as eight Grand Slam titles. His reign as the world's best stood for three consecutive years (July 29, 1974 to August 16, 1977). In addition, he is the only player to have won the U.S. Open on three different surfaces (grass, clay and hardcourt).

After suffering a wrist injury in 1990, Connors, then 38, rebounded with a stellar 1991 Grand Slam performance. The oldest player on the tournament, he advanced to the third rounds of both the French Open and Wimbledon.

After an abbreviated 1992 season, Connors set forth on a new challenge—one that would satisfy his irrepressible desire for competitive tennis minus the daily grind of weekly tournaments.

He and sports marketer Ray Benton launched the Champions Tour—the first competitive men's tennis circuit composed entirely of past champions aged 35 and over. Through the efforts of its executive producer, Henry Brehm, who brings a wealth of sports marketing experience to the helm, the Tour has been a success.

Verdict on the future? Game, Connors.

BY JUDY DIEDWARDO

CONNORS...

What was the spark that motivated you to start the Champions Tour?

It began in 1991. I had just gotten back into tennis after having wrist surgery and being away for a year when my friend and business partner, Ray Benton, asked me where I saw my game going. I said, 'Well, I don't know how much longer I'm going to be doing this—the [players] are getting younger and I'm not, and it isn't as much fun for me out there anymore with all my buddies gone.' I told him that what I really wanted to do was play with my buddies. We talked about such a tour, one that would give me an opportunity to play with Borg and Vilas and Clerk and Nastase and Tanner and Stockton and Dibbs and Solomon—to bring back all the guys who had been away from tennis for a while. I also wanted to bring back the guys who *made* tennis in the '70s and early '80s.

Is this is an invitation-only tour?

Right now it is. But we're only a year-and-a-half old. Hopefully, as we grow and create more interest and excitement, more people will want to be a part of what we have and then everything will open up into tennis as usual—which is what I see for the future.

Is that the essence of the Tour's success?

Oh, yeah. Not only do we give people real tennis, but we give them the fun and enthusiasm that we have for the sport—both on and off the court. Plus, we are very accessible to the fans and the sponsors. The players don't play their matches and then go hide out in the locker room or go back to their hotel rooms and hibernate.

Is this a kind of "Field of Dreams" for the '90s?

That's a pretty good way of saying it, except that everyone involved had maintained some connection to the sport. What makes this exciting for these guys is the opportunity to *compete* again. I had never left the tour, so it was an easy transition for me. But I don't think many of them realized that we were going to be playing tough, competitive, all-out tennis.

In other words, no one was working overtime on their physical conditioning. How long did that last?

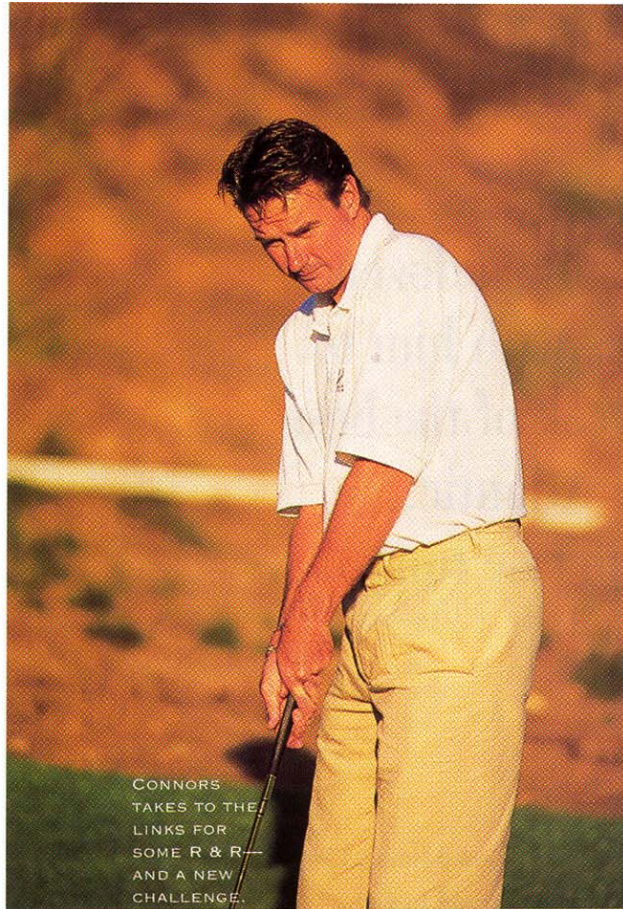
Not long! After the first tournament or two, the jump ropes came out, the jogging started, the coaches started appearing on the scene. Now, everybody is back to tennis business as usual. Everybody's pushing everybody else.

How do you stay in shape?

I do an hour-and-a-half to two hours of working out everyday—and that's when I'm not playing tennis. I'm not crazy about machines, but I have two that I use: a climber and a Stairmaster. When I play tennis I usually go out for an hour or so, and I continue after that with another 45 minutes of exercise.

Any weight training?

No. I always thought that longer, more supple muscles were better for my play.



CONNORS
TAKES TO THE
LINKS FOR
SOME R & R—
AND A NEW
CHALLENGE.

MICHAEL BAZ

1995 Corel Champions

PRESENTED BY U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT

April 5-9

BOCA RATON RESORT & CLUB

FIELD: Jimmy Connors, Bjorn Borg, Guillermo Vilas, Johan Kriek, Andres Gomez, Mansour Bahrami, Eddie Dibbs, Peter Fleming, Harold Solomon, Jose Luis Clerc, John Lloyd, Colin Dibley, Roscoe Tanner.

PRIZE MONEY: \$150,000

MEDIA COVERAGE: Prime Network (the "Sunshine Network" for South Floridians).

DESIGNATED CHARITIES: Pediatric AIDS Foundation, Cystic Fibrosis Foundation and National Wheelchair Foundation.

TICKETS: \$15-30 individual; \$139 tournament series; \$950 private box seats (four seats, all sessions). Call the Corel Champions tournament office at: (407) 447-5545. For hotel information call: (407) 395-3000.



CONNORS IS JOINED OFF COURT BY COREL SYSTEMS CORPORATION FOUNDER AND CEO MICHAEL COWPLAND.

What does your diet consist of?

I love junk food, which I eat when I'm away from home. Patti is the one who is into eating healthy—the fish and the chicken with no skin. So when I'm home I get the benefits of that. I would have a weight problem, but as long as I exercise it's nonexistent. If I stopped working out, I would gain weight in a hurry. As far as diet goes, I eat the foods that I was raised with: meat and potatoes. It's too late to change now, anyway.

What's your favorite junk food?

You name it! Suzie Qs, Twinkies, cupcakes, cookies, hot dogs. I also eat what I want when I want. I may wake up in the morning and want dinner!

Lately, pro tennis has come under an avalanche of criticism, citing players who, according to a *New York Times* story, play "boring, one-dimensional tennis." Fans don't feel connected like they used to. Your thoughts?

Well, to be honest with you, I don't watch that much tennis and I'm not involved in that tour anymore. But hey, it's their time. Good luck to them. I just hope that they continue with what we left them—that it's taken to the next level. They will do their own thing like the rest of us did.

So in a sense, you are providing them with a future for the sport of tennis...

Maybe! We're not only working 100 percent on the court, we're working 110 percent off the court to make the sponsors and the spectators and everybody who is involved in the event feel like they're a necessary part of it—which they are!

I understand that John McEnroe has expressed some interest in the Tour. Are the two of you friends?

We're more friendly today than when we were competing heavily against each other. When you're trying to be number one, no, you can't be friends—especially the two of us. "Mac" and I have the same attitude, the same drive. Today, it's a different matter. As for the Tour, he's shown some interest. He's committed to playing in the upcoming Champions Cup in Pebble Beach, California [May 20 and 21, 1995], which will feature John, myself, Borg and Vilas—the four players with the most Grand Slam singles titles. Beyond that, I don't know. I hope that either this year or next he sees how we are growing and succeeding and wants to be a solid part of it.

Do you think the women will catch on to this format?

I really don't know. I've heard through many grapevines that the ladies are trying to do a 35 tour in some way or another.

Whom do you admire most in tennis today?

I admire any athlete who goes out time after time and will give whatever effort is necessary that day. Now, is it possible to do that every day? For me it was.

That's a pretty high standard.

It's the only one I have.

continued on page 142

CONNORS FLANKED BY TENNIS GREATS BJORN BORG AND JOHN MCENROE.



MICHAEL BAZ

Setting the Stage

STADIUM: Custom-built 3,000-capacity structure.

PARKING: Four off-site locations; transportation provided by shuttle buses.

CONSTRUCTION TIME: Two weeks

LOCATION: Will span the resort's existing tennis courts 7, 8 and 9 (center court action will take place over court 8).

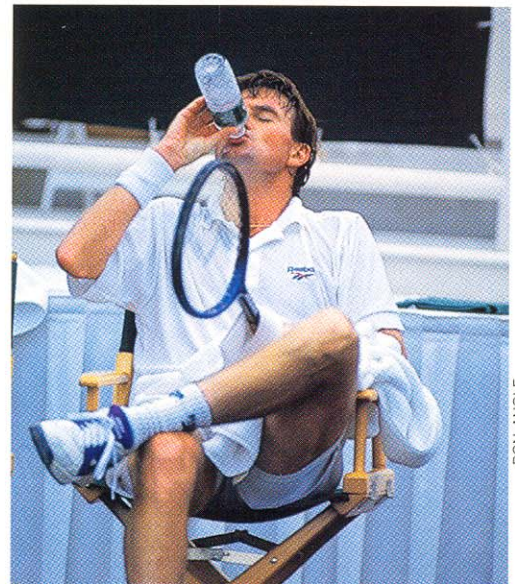
LOST IN THE SHUFFLE: 30-35 shrubs and hedges; 10-15 small trees; 8-10 flower beds; 3-4 custom-designed racket-shaped flower beds will be removed and relocated to make way for the stadium.

TENTS: Four food and beverage tents erected over a span of two tennis courts (21 and 22) plus an adjacent practice court.

INCOMING: Two television production trailers; power generators; two crowd pleaser trailers and complete water and irrigation hook-ups.

LIGHTING: Evening activities require the entire event and stadium area to be illuminated.

CONNORS ON WINNING: "I ADMIRE ANY ATHLETE WHO GOES OUT TIME AFTER TIME AND WILL GIVE WHATEVER EFFORT IS NECESSARY THAT DAY."



RON ANGLE

Signature CABINETS



Award winning designs for your kitchen, bath or built-ins

- New Construction
- Residential
- Renovation
- Commercial



Visit our Designer Showroom:

11891 U.S. Highway 1
North Palm Beach
Phone: 694-0146
1-800-273-2013

Does your family—wife Patti; son Brett, 15; and daughter Aubree, 10—play tennis?

Patti plays a little; Brett has a good game and is able to play but doesn't; and Aubree does little-girl things—tap, ballet. She also plays on her basketball team.

How's your golf game?

Good! I'm about a 13 or 14 handicap player. I was at the Boca Resort a few weeks ago and took some lessons from my new friend Stuart [Pierce], the golf pro. He was the first person to actually show me shots and give me something to work on. I'm not only looking forward to playing tennis there in April, I'm also looking forward to the golf.

You must be delighted to be spending more time with your family, now that your traveling schedule has eased up.

I've been on the road so much the past number of years that it's time for me to be around more—and when I can't, it just means I have to find ways to take them with me. Although I'm never gone for more than two weeks at a time, it's still tough. But during the summer months, when the kids are out of school, it's great. We go everywhere.

What do you do and where do you go to relax?

I enjoy milling around my house. I have two dogs, three cats, four horses, two kids, one wife—and a partridge in a pear tree. I like that. I like to go out in my pasture with my dogs and hit golf balls, or saddle up my horse and ride. I've never been afraid to be by myself. But I can only take that for a certain amount of time. I like to play basketball and golf with my son. I like to drive my daughter to her jazz class. Maybe not having done a lot of these things before makes them sweeter.

They say pink is in this Spring.

When was it ever out?

*Come in and see all
the colors of Spring at Nina Raynor.*

NINA RAYNOR

For the finest collections in designer evening wear, sportswear, and classic daytime.

1031 East Atlantic Avenue • Delray Beach • (407) 276-5714
Private parking at rear entrance.



Apart from product endorsements, have you been approached with any acting offers—or is that something you would consider?

Though I've been accused of acting on the court, I'm a one-take kinda guy. I don't have two chances to make a shot. As for an acting career, I'm probably the only

athlete who *doesn't* want to be an actor. I'm very satisfied with what I've done, who I am, and what I will be in the future. I'm not looking for another career. I had one—a damned good one—and right now I'm happy building the Champions Tour, being with my family, and working on my golf game.



Cartier Award – Elegance in Dining
Maxim's of Paris Champagne Award – Excellence in Fine Cuisine, Superb Service and Unique Ambiance.
Zagat Survey – “Refined service and classic cooking for an experience that’s well worth the price.”
DIRoNA – The Award of Excellence from Distinguished Restaurants of North America.
Golden Spoon Award – Florida Trend Magazine.

*Cafe,
L'Europe*

CASUAL LUNCHEONS 11:30 TO 3:00

CHAMPAGNE & CAVIAR BAR 11:30 A.M. – CLOSING

BISTRO AFTERNOON MENU 3:00 P.M. TO 5:30 P.M.

DINNER 6:00 TO 10:30

THEATRE NIGHTS 5:30 TO 11:00

SEMI PRIVATE ROOM FOR CORPORATE FUNCTIONS OR PRIVATE PARTIES

150 WORTH AVENUE, ESPLANADE, PALM BEACH • (407) 655-4020

CLOSED FOR LUNCH ON SUNDAYS

Tell me about your past success off the court—as a commentator. You seemed to be having a lot of fun. Why did you stop?

I was very comfortable on that side of the camera, and, yes, it was a lot of fun. But I felt that if I was spending that much time away from my family, and away from what I wanted to do, then I might as well go back and play. And so I did.

What is your attraction to South Florida?

For one, the tennis crowd is really strong in South Florida. Plus, I used to live in North Miami, so I still have a lot of friends here. Coming down and playing tennis, visiting friends and bringing the tour to South Florida makes for an all-around great week.

When I was younger and in the finals at Wimbledon, I stayed to myself. Today, I'm easy. I love going out. Patti's coming down and we'll be going out. We have our favorite restaurants in Boca, friends to see. And then before the important matches, I'll be taking care of myself like I always have.

Where can people spot you?

Besides the Boca Resort, where the tournament is being held? Nowadays, you can always find me on the golf course! ♦