

For The Love Of Tennis

Two players and a little sports medicine

By: Deborah Liv Johnson



**Former champion tennis players
Raymond J. Moore and Peggy Michel
relax at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden.**

It stands against the majestic Santa Rosa Mountains like a giant bowl gleaming in the sun, a spectacular stadium for a home-town, world-class event. Spread across 84 acres, the Indian Wells Tennis Garden hosts the world's fifth largest tennis championship — the Pacific Life Open. Embedded in the past, present and future of this tournament are two former professional tennis players of Wimbledon and Davis Cup caliber. And they love tennis!

As the doubles partner to Australian tennis great Evonne Goolagong, Peggy Michel accomplished her ultimate goal of winning at Wimbledon. Capturing two more grand slam events along the way, Michel had a relatively short, but brilliant career. "In the early 70s we didn't play for money. We played for titles. We played because we loved the sport," reflects Michel. "I love the game. That's why I'm still in it."

As Vice President of Sales for PM Sports Management, Michel has parlayed her love for the game into a career. "My passion for playing has now transferred into my passion for this event. That's why I've been here since 1985." Following a lengthy hiatus from recreational play, Michel was challenged by a male friend. "When you've played professional tennis and retired, and people find out that you've won Wimbledon, they always want to go out and challenge you." Not properly conditioned, but still eager to win, she explained that she tried an American twist serve. Michel aced the serve, but when she hit the ball, she noticed a sharp pain in her shoulder. The result was a small tear in her rotator cuff (muscles and tendons that attach the arm to the shoulder and allow rotation). Michel made a dedicated search for a surgeon. The Medical Director for the Pacific Life Open tournament, L. Sam Reber, MD, Director of Desert Orthopedic Center/Eisenhower Medical Center Sports Medicine, was consulted, and Michel made her choice. "Dr. Reber came highly recommended. The procedure was minimally invasive. I had very little bleeding and very little pain," continues Michel. "Dr. Reber is a marvelous surgeon with very good bedside manner. You can see the passion for what he's doing in his eyes. I like that."

"Peggy had rotator cuff tendonitis and a partial rotator cuff tear," Dr. Reber explains. "We went in and eliminated the bone spurs that had built up and are very common in 'overhead' [tennis, baseball, volleyball] athletes. It's time critical because you want to treat it before the rotator cuff tear is complete. Once the rotator cuff tears you can still fix it, but you've really lost something. It's a much longer rehabilitation and the athlete is never really as strong as before."

Michel's path to recovery included rehabilitation with a physical therapist at Eisenhower. "The therapist was marvelous! He not only worked on my shoulder, but gave me a program to get my entire body back in shape." Eight years have passed since Michel's surgery, and she's remained pain and injury free. Her activities include golf and fast walking, and when the mood strikes, a good game of tennis.

At the helm of the Indian Wells Tennis Garden, and one of the founders of PM Sports Management (along with fellow Davis Cup player and Chief Executive Officer Charles Pasarell, Jr.), Raymond J. Moore led South Africa to the Davis Cup title in 1974. Ranked as the number one South African player for several years, Moore reached the rank of number eight singles player in the world in 1969...with a career that would last 17 years. His aggressive playing style brought him victories over some of the world's top players including Arthur Ashe, Rod Laver, Bjorn Borg and Stan Smith.

"I guess it was Nirvana," smiles Moore. "At the time, I didn't know what a good life we were living. We were traveling the world and doing something we loved." Moore points out that in tennis, like golf, you only get paid if you win. But in those days, that was the only real pressure he had.

After retiring from the professional tour, Moore coached the Swiss Davis Cup team in addition to coaching individual players. He also created a junior development tennis program for South Africa before turning his energy to the administration of professional tennis. He stayed active playing tennis and golf recreationally until his knee developed some real problems. Dr. Reber was his first choice for treatment.

"My knee was very sore and swollen. The cartilage had deteriorated and there were fragments," recalls Moore. "Ray had a lot of rough cartilage under his kneecap and some other areas of his knee. We did arthroscopic surgery and cleaned it up," explains Dr. Reber. "His injury was from the wear and tear of playing professional tennis. He's doing very well now."

After three months and a rehabilitation regimen, Moore's pain was gone. "I can play tennis every day if I want to," said Moore. "Dr. Reber is a wonderful doctor. He understands athletic injuries because he's an athlete. Athletic injuries are different from normal injuries."

For Moore, a full recovery is key to staying active. "There are several parts of the body that are really important in any athletic endeavor and the knee is one of those. You brace, you pivot and do all kinds of things with your knees...and they have to be strong. If they're not, you develop bad technical habits in your sport because one part of the body compensates for another."

Dr. Reber appreciates the support of Eisenhower in his endeavor to reach out to professional and recreational athletes alike. "Eisenhower and I have always had a great relationship. Their participation in the sports programs has been invaluable. It's given us flexibility to cover special events like the Pacific Life Open and major golf tournaments." As a tennis player, Dr. Reber is aware of how the game has changed. "There is so much more power. More speed. The athletes are better. It's true for all sports."

Peggy Michel and Raymond J. Moore don't play on the tennis circuit anymore, but they'd like the game to be around for generations to come. Tennis is, after all, only second to soccer as the most popular sport in the world. A total of 142 countries enter the Davis Cup each year.

Michel and Moore would like to continue drawing the world's best players to the Pacific Life Open, and with the support from other world-renowned tennis champions, they undoubtedly will. "Part of our new group of owners includes Chris Evert, Billie Jean King and Pete Sampras. They've given financial support and credibility to our tournament," says Michel. According to Moore, it's beyond the norm. "It's unique for athletes to put up their own money to be investors. It's really wonderful."

Dr. Reber and his staff will be waiting on the sidelines, ready to help whenever they're needed. For all the premier athletes who participate, that's a very good thing.