UC SANTA BARBARA
THE Current

March 7, 2019
Shelly Leachman

Match Point

Athleticism and strategy, absolutely. But courage and integrity, too, are essential attributes of an accomplished tennis player.

“Tennis itself fosters many of these qualities, and there are elements to the game which are also life lessons,” said John Arnhold, former chairman of the board of the International Tennis Hall of Fame. “Discipline, commitment, honesty, focus, perseverance — all of these you can associate with tennis.”

Arnhold’s passion for the sport and steadfast belief in its values is perhaps matched only by his firm belief in his alma mater, UC Santa Barbara. His latest generosity to the campus reflects all of the above.

Together with his wife Jody, Arnhold ’75, a trustee of the UC Santa Barbara Foundation, has donated $5.25 million to UC Santa Barbara Athletics in support of its women’s and men’s tennis teams. Their goal: to enhance the experience of student-athletes and their fellow Gauchos, as well as of the broader community.

How? By funding a brand-new new tennis complex at UC Santa Barbara. The Arnhold Tennis Center will provide six new courts, two refurbished courts, a team building complete with locker rooms, team lounge and storage space, and stands for more than 300 spectators.

“Creating this central facility on campus is about supporting our student-athletes and building a love of the sport, and hopefully creating a ripple effect where the values of the sport also have an impact on the greater community,” said John

Arnhold, who is in his second full season as a volunteer assistant coach for the women's team. "We'll now have the opportunity to engage a much larger audience who will be able to observe outstanding student-athletes and appreciate high-level competition in the original 'sport for a lifetime.'"

"This gift is a tremendous investment in our campus and tennis community, which will also raise the national profile of Gaucho tennis," said UC Santa Barbara Chancellor Henry T. Yang. "The Arnholds are not only exemplary philanthropists but also highly engaged volunteers who are generous with their time and visionary guidance. In addition to his leadership as a foundation trustee, John's work as a volunteer coach in our tennis program makes a meaningful difference in the lives of our student athletes through inspired coaching and wisdom that transcends sports. I deeply appreciate John and Jody's passion for excellence and their great friendship to our campus."

The New York-based Arnholds are passionate about the arts and humanities, which have been a focal point of their philanthropy to UC Santa Barbara. They have gifted more than $3 million to the English department, providing essential support for students to engage in research, and made comparable investments in theater and dance for student productions and for visiting artists-in-residence. Their expansive generosity to campus also includes leadership investments in creative curricular initiatives as well as UCSB Arts & Lectures.

And then there is tennis, where the Arnholds have been supporting scholarships for a number of years. UC Santa Barbara's intercollegiate tennis programs are both NCAA Division I and hold an impressive combined collection of Big West championships. In the Arnhold Tennis Center they'll get facilities befitting their competitive status, according to athletic director John McCutcheon.

"It truly is a transformational gift that also serves as a leadership example to other potential donors who have been invested but maybe want to do more," McCutcheon said. "This will raise the bar.

"John is involved heavily in our tennis programs and he believes in what we're doing with our student-athletes — providing great opportunities for them athletically, academically and socially," McCutcheon added. "We really appreciate him for his personal involvement. He knows the student-athletes and they know him; it's a really unique relationship. He's part of the family."

That notion was seconded heartily by women’s coach Simon Thibodeau.

“In addition to his generosity, John is a precious asset to our program as both a coach and a mentor,” Thibodeau said. “His tennis expertise and advice are priceless and he brings the most positive, sincere and humble energy to our young group of women. We feel lucky to have John with us and look forward to working with him for years to come. With the Arnholds’ support of our scholarships, UCSB women’s tennis already is competing at the highest level possible. With this new facility, our program will finally have a real home and will continue elevating our overall success.”

Men’s coach Marty Davis characterized the planned new facility as “reason for celebration.”

“The fact that the Arnhold Tennis Center will have dry courts, behind-court seating for fans and a building that will house team rooms, showers and lockers goes beyond my wildest dreams,” Davis said. “The Arnhold Tennis Center will vastly increase the visibility of UC Santa Barbara’s winningest sports programs (UCSB Tennis has won more Big West Championships than any other sport on campus over the last decade), improve the experience of our student-athletes, aid our recruiting efforts and help us continue our climb to the NCAA Sweet Sixteen.”

In other words, advantage, Gauchos. And in John Arnhold’s words, his involvement with the teams — and with UC Santa Barbara overall — has reciprocal impact.

“I really love being a mentor — I’ve been doing that my whole life in business,” said Arnhold, who on his frequent trips to campus visits classes, watches student presentations, attends lectures and rehearsals and sees as many productions as he has time for. “There is a certain energy and vibrancy being around young people who are excited about what they do, whether it’s studying a piece of literature, performing in a play or a dance or hitting tennis balls. You can see how much they love doing what they’re doing and it is this passion and high level of achievement which I admire so much.”

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community

of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.