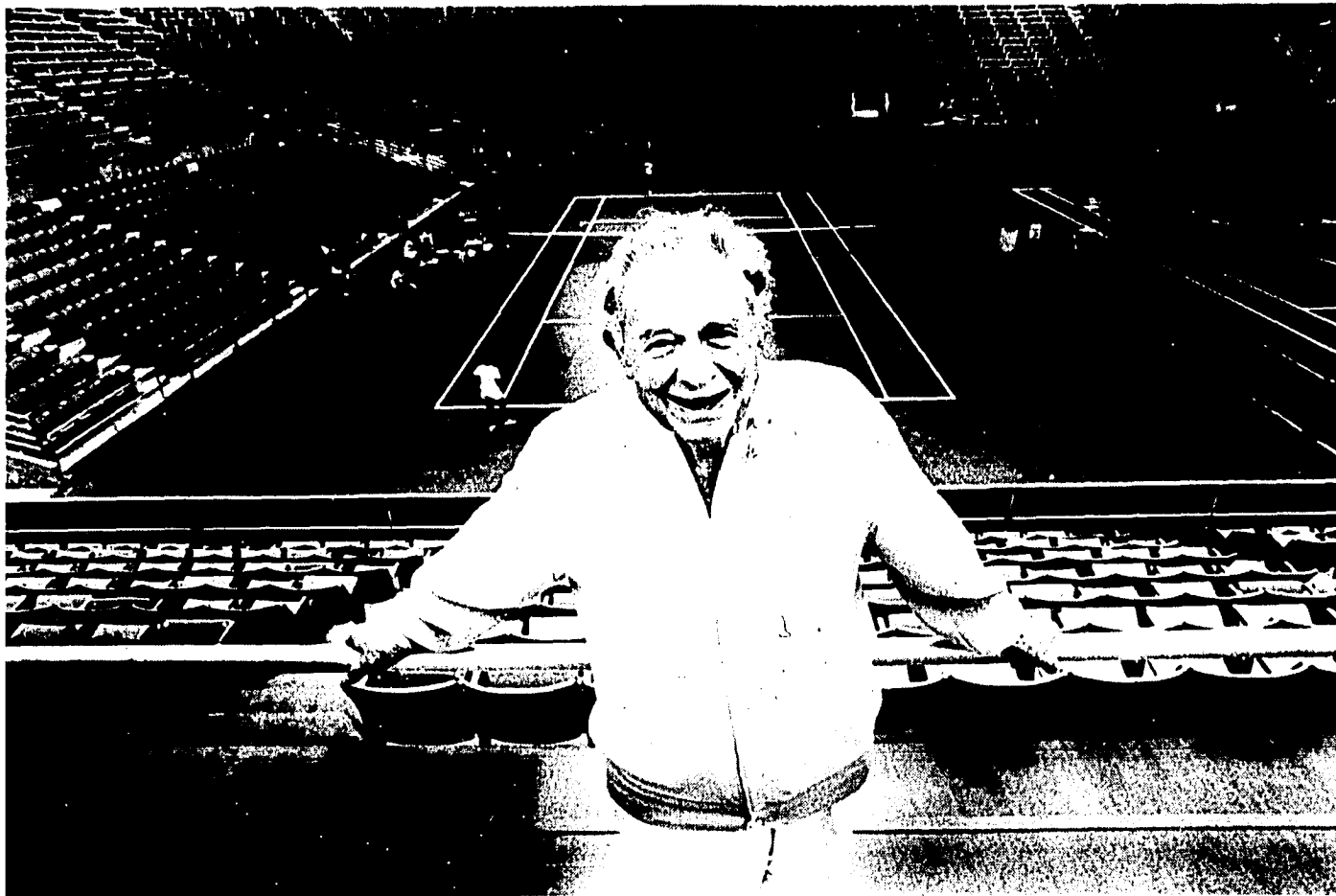


Ackerman's Achievements Net Hall of Fame Honors: UCLA Tennis Coach ...

RIPTON, RAY

Los Angeles Times (1923-1995); May 17, 1984; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times
pg. WS22



CASSY COHEN / Los Angeles Times

Bill Ackerman, at the new tennis stadium at UCLA, was the school's first tennis coach. Ackerman has been inducted into the College Tennis Hall of Fame.

Ackerman's Achievements Net Hall of Fame Honors

UCLA Tennis Coach Worked With Many Top Players, Won School's First NCAA Title

By RAY RIPTON *Times Staff Writer*

A couple of years ago, Bill Ackerman had to give up tennis after he pulled a hamstring and broke a blood vessel in his leg when he took a snill on the court.

Ackerman turned 82 on May 7.

Although he was forced to stop playing the game he loves and had played for about 70 years, Ackerman, UCLA's first tennis coach, will remain forever a part of tennis. That was assured Wednesday when he was inducted into the College Tennis Hall of Fame at the 100th NCAA tennis championships at the University of Georgia.

It may have been accidental that Ackerman's enshrinement in the Intercollegiate Tennis Coaches Assn. hall on Georgia's campus in Athens coincided with the appearance this week of coach Glenn Bassett and the Bruin tennis squad in the finals of the NCAA championships. UCLA defeated Stanford, 5-4, Wednesday to give Bassett his seventh national title at the school. But chance probably had little to do with it.

Ackerman was the coach and Bassett one of his star players when UCLA won its first national championship of any sort as the Bruins captured the NCAA tennis title in 1950.

Ackerman had been a UCLA tennis player, and in his sophomore year, 1921, was named coach of the Bruin team, which won a Southern Conference championship that year and went on to win four more in a row, playing

against such schools as Pomona, Occidental, Redlands, Whittier and Caltech, then known as Throop Institute.

The success of Ackerman's early teams for the school, originally called the University of California, Southern Branch, is more striking when you realize that the Southern Branch lost its first football game, in October of 1919, 73-0—to Manual Arts High School.

When UCLA moved up to the big time in the fall of 1925 and joined big brother Cal, USC and other major universities in the Pacific Coast Conference, success did not come as easily for Ackerman.

Joined Pacific Coast Conference

It took Ackerman seven years before his Bruins won their first PCC tennis title, in 1932. They did, however, win nine more PCC championships, culminating in the 1950 NCAA win, before Ackerman gave way to the late J.D. Morgan, whose tennis teams went on to win seven national titles.

Ackerman had to give up coaching men's tennis in 1933 (although he coached the UCLA women for four years after that) because he had taken on more responsibility for the university when he was named graduate student manager. There may have been some aspects of student activities that Ackerman did not direct for his alma mater in those Depression years, but it would have taken a sharp detective to discover them.

Reporting to Ackerman in those years were the directors of publications, music, drama, athletics and the athletic news bureau, all the coaches, and, from Kerckhoff Hall (then the student union) the custodial staff, the auditor, the assistant manager and managers of the student store, cafeteria and ticket office. The newer student union, built in the early '60s, was named for Ackerman when he retired in 1967.

Most people connected with the university from its beginning to Ackerman's retirement in 1967 will tell you that the A in UCLA stands for Ackerman, not Angeles.

So pervasive was his influence that it might have seemed he owned the university. And, if it weren't for a quirk of fortune, he might have.

It seems that the land that was to become the UCLA campus was owned near the end of the 19th Century by one John Wolfskill, who hired Ackerman's father, Fremont, a civil engineer, to survey the acreage. When Fremont Ackerman completed the job, Wolfskill offered him part of his holdings as payment for his services. The engineer, however, took cash.

If Bill Ackerman's dad had taken land instead of money, the son might have been as big a California land baron as Frederick Rindge, who once owned all of Malibu.

In an interview at his Brentwood home, Ackerman
Please see ACKERMAN, Page 23

ACKERMAN

Continued from Page 22

said that had he owned UCLA instead of working for the school, he wouldn't have had to battle with 45 student councils over such things as appropriations. "That got to be tedious at times," he said, "but it was also a lot of fun. I would rather have been with the students, anyway, than spend my life cutting out coupons (to keep track of his investments)."

Besides Coach Bassett, who was co-captain of Ackerman's 1950 national champions, Ackerman coached a flock of top student players. They include Jack Tidball, who in 1933 became the first Bruin to win an NCAA singles championship, and the late Herb Flam, the 1950 national titlist in singles and, with Gene Garrett, in doubles.

Tilden Skilled at Psychological Game

Ackerman said that today's players have better strokes and equipment than the ones he coached and that tennis has become "more of a serve-and-volley game: You've got to be able to go to the net."

He said that players now "are psychologically about the same as they've always been"—except for Bill Tilden, the top American tennis star of the 1920s.—

If Tilden were still living, he said, "Big Bill" would be as good a player as a Jimmy Connors, but he would be better at psychological warfare.

Once when Tilden had hit an unbelievable winner, Ackerman said, his opponent cried out, "Oh, my God," and Tilden replied, "Look, please call me Tilden."

Will Join UCLA Hall of Fame

On June 10, Ackerman, with other former Bruin athletes and coaches, will be inducted into UCLA's Athletic Hall of Fame. He said he will be honored as a tennis and baseball player, a coach and an administrator.

He said he enjoyed his roles as player and coach because the students "loved me. But once I became an administrator and started saying no to them, I became an ogre."

After he took that hard fall on the tennis courts and was seriously considering giving up playing, a pleasure that his arthritic knees had not been able to interrupt, Ackerman said he tried once more to play.

"But I figured that somebody's telling me I better quit. So I quit."

Pointing to his rose garden, rife with color in the hot morning sun, he said that hoeing and weeding are what he does for exercise these days. "I like gardening, and I can do all the bending and stretching you can do in a gym."

And anyone can see that his roses are easily No. 1.