

Tennis Great Lori McNeil Joins Zina Garrison Academy

Written by Forward Times Staff
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American tennis legend Lori McNeil has joined Houston's Zina Garrison Academy as Director of Tennis. In this capacity, McNeil will coach, mentor, and inspire young tennis players attending the Academy.

"We address every area of development," McNeil explains. "We want to nurture the complete individual, both on and off the court. That's the beauty of sports – you learn life skills, discipline, and self-worth. It's not just forehands and backhands."

After learning tennis alongside her close friend Zina Garrison under the tutelage of American Tennis Association champion John Wilkerson, McNeil went on to an impressive collegiate and professional career. She won three Big Eight Championship titles as an All-American player while attending Oklahoma State University. As a professional, McNeil won 12 World Tennis Association tour singles titles and 40 career doubles titles, including the mixed doubles championship at the French Open.

Following her retirement in 2002 after a 17-year professional career, McNeil served as the Assistant Coach of the U.S. Olympic Women's Tennis Team in 2004 and 2008. She also worked as a High Performance Coach for the United States Tennis Association from 2004 through 2012. McNeil was inducted into the Texas Tennis Hall of Fame in 2000.

"Ideally, I wanted to come home to Houston and work with John Wilkerson, but I had to get experience on my own first. But I always talked to John on a daily basis, asking him questions and getting his advice," McNeil says.

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In conjunction with McNeil's arrival at the Zina Garrison Academy, the Board of Directors has commissioned a set of three silver coins featuring the images of Zina Garrison, Lori McNeil, and John Wilkerson. Each coin will bear the likeness of one of these athletes / coaches on one side and the logo of the Zina Garrison Academy on the other. The coins, designed and manufactured by noted Houston silversmith Max Lang, are fashioned from solid 925 silver and appointed with an antique finish. The first edition of these coins will be offered as an auction item at the Zina Garrison Academy's upcoming gala luncheon at the Houstonian Hotel on Monday, November 19, 2012. For tickets and information, call Linda Elliott at (713) 857-3167.