

# The Journal News

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## ***Backyard Sports Chips In With Purchase College Tennis Players***

By Gina Pernicano



Peter Nestel, head tennis coach at Purchase College, works with Dasia Harrison, 6, at a tennis camp run by Backyard Sports.  
- Photo Courtesy of Journal News

After reaching the Skyline Conference Tournament semifinals last season, the Purchase College men's and women's tennis teams decided to take their success to a different stage.

Teaming up with Backyard Sports, an organization that teaches tennis fundamentals and promotes positive values to young athletes, the Panthers agreed to instruct the 10-and-under program last month at New Rochelle High School and the YMCA in White Plains.

"By virtue of their leadership and their technical capabilities, they're exceptional examples for the kids," said Danny Bernstein, the founder and head coach of Backyard Sports. "They're passionate for the game and are using it to transform the lives of younger generations."

The program, assisted by Bernstein and his staff, uses a modified format established by the USTA for youth participants to see instant results. In addition to using smaller racquets, the group has employed lower compression balls to make learning the sport even easier for newcomers.

"For the longest time, every sport had modified their playing field and equipment except for tennis," Bernstein said. "Kids were not as successful at first, but the USTA recognized this and

made the changes, including the size of the court, to make it age appropriate. The kids are more successful now, are enjoying it, and are improving when they return."

Having seen the progress of Backyard Sports' other offerings in soccer and basketball, Purchase's head coach Peter Nestel jumped at the opportunity to get his teams involved. In a mere four weeks of work, they received tremendous feedback from both parents and campers, reiterating just how beneficial the tennis camp has been in its first summer.

"The model that they use by delivering after-school and summer programs to unserved communities is a fantastic model, but the way they execute their program is the difference between them and other groups," Nestel said. "They treat the kids like adults and it teaches them to behave more maturely. Backyard Sports offers guidance, mentoring, and just overall kindness, which is well-received by the kids."

Larchmont's Chris Matchneer, a junior on the men's team, was touched by the experience and was taken back to his own experiences at youth tennis camps.

"I think it's easier to teach tennis in this style and it's nice to introduce a sport that is normally not present in these areas," Matchneer said. "You see these kids who have never played tennis before pick up the game quickly, and you get to see them both learn and have fun. It's truly rewarding."

For more information about Backyard Sports, visit [byardsports.com](http://byardsports.com).

The Westchester Youth Organization is another community tennis program that was conducted last month (at Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville and at Fordham University).

The program is affiliated with the U.S. Tennis Association and the National Junior Tennis League.

For information about Westchester Youth Organization's fall and winter tennis programs, visit [wytennis.com](http://wytennis.com) or send email to [wytennis@gmail.com](mailto:wytennis@gmail.com). The organization is geared toward kids but also open to adults.