



Denver Post Photo by Teresa Ford

FIFTH GRADER LEARNS THE RUDIMENTS OF TENNIS IN HER FIRST LESSON
Theresa Laratta, left, watches Sherri Hoffman, instructor, do forehand stroke.

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MANY QUESTIONS RAISED

Columbian Tennis Program Teaching More Than Serves

By BARBARA TRAMUTT
Denver Post Zone Writer

A beginning tennis program is providing a group of northwest youngsters with more than instruction in volleys and serves.

For most of the 16 Columbian Elementary School fifth graders at 4030 Federal Blvd., tennis is raising some interesting questions.

Why, for instance, are these "really neat" teen-agers coming across town just to teach the pupils how to play tennis? And who cares enough to give them balls and rackets?

The answers come from a Columbian teacher, Lew Rosenberg, who works in the Denver Public Schools Program for Pupil Assistance. Always looking for programs that will help under-achievers or eager learners, social misfits or shy children, Rosenberg and Dr. Irwin Hoffman, a friend and teacher at George Washington High School, concluded that tennis might be a good prescription.

"WE WERE HAVING breakfast together when our conversation turned to children," Rosenberg recalls. "Knowing the marvelous job Doctor Hoffman does with children in tennis instruction (Hoffman is a tennis pro at Green Gables Country Club), I mentioned how much I'd like for Columbian children to learn tennis."

Before breakfast was over, Hoffman had offered the services of his own children as instructors, providing they would agree. They did agree and Sherri, a 1978 graduate of

Cherry Creek High School; Doug, a sophomore at the school, Brad Bierenkoven, a seventh grader at West Middle School, and Mrs. Hoffman, also a tennis player, offered their help.

Since many of the children at Columbian would be unable to provide tennis balls and rackets, Hoffman offered to supply the equipment.

Rosenberg had to work out the technical problems, including finding available courts. Two Skinner Junior High School courts were reserved for Friday afternoons.

"WE KNEW we had to establish a program that could be controlled, and also have standards that would go beyond 'just' a tennis program," Rosenberg explained.

Children wishing to take the instruction are required to attend school and the tennis classes regularly, demonstrate good sportsmanship and commit themselves to aiding and instructing without reimbursement as the program grows.

Some of the pupils plan to play tennis during the summer. They may borrow balls and rackets, but the rackets must be returned next fall in good condition, Rosenberg said.

"Though no one can anticipate what will happen in future years," said Rosenberg, "the program is off the ground, excitement is high, and students from a more affluent environment are giving their time and energy to others."