



WILANDER ON WHEELS

Turning Fantasy Into Reality, at a Court Near You

BY CHRIS ODDO

TWO YEARS AGO, SEVEN-TIME GRAND SLAM CHAMPION MATS WILANDER REALIZED THAT A TRAVELING TENNIS CLINIC WAS HIS NEW CALLING IN LIFE. So he, along with his friend Cameron Lickle, drew blueprints for Wilander on Wheels on the back of a cocktail napkin while sipping drinks at – of all places – the International Tennis Hall of Fame.

The rest is history. Mats and Cameron have traveled to tennis clubs around the US conducting clinics for players of all levels and ages. Their headquarters when they're on the road? A Winnebago bus.

When I spoke to Mats and Cameron to discuss their recent adventures, they were filling the bus with gas. At that point it hit me that everything I read about Mats Wilander, Winnebago buses and the perpetual tennis road trip wasn't a joke.

"We sleep in it, yeah, of course," said Mats regarding the beat-up Winnebago. "It has to be a business where we don't lose money every time we take the thing out of the garage. The Ritz Carlton is not an option."

And this is why Wilander on Wheels [WOW] is one of the coolest things in tennis. This is the life of two of the world's most famous tennis vagabonds: Mats Wilander, tennis legend and camping enthusiast, and Cameron Lickle, an ex-Navy nuclear engineer and tennis captain.

The team is making the fantasy – prohibitively expensive camps where it costs tens of thousands of dollars to hit with legends – a reality. With WOW, it's simple: gather 10 to 20 of your friends to pony up \$200 bucks each, and Mats and Cameron will travel to your locale to teach tennis. And when they arrive, they will make you work.

"We're not trying to wear them out, that's for sure," says Mats of his teaching philosophy, which emphasizes footwork as a major building block of a sound game. "But we're certainly trying physically to get them to give 100 percent because it's really hard to break down another tennis player unless you move your feet at 100 percent."

Wilander, a natural teacher, made the transition from player to traveling instructor seamless.

"I was always interested in technique and trying to break down my opponents weakness and figuring out what shots to hit and where," he says. "I look at teaching the same and try to help players with what I see."

Wilander's tennis IQ was never in question, says Lickle, but being personable is what makes hitting



with Mats so enriching. "He's [Wilander] literally one of the coolest guys I've ever met, and his ability to interact with people is his strength," he says. "He's one of the most humble guys I know."

Wilander keeps instruction simple, which is a big plus for tennis students who get overwhelmed with new information.

"My philosophy is the harder you work and the more you watch the ball, the less you have to worry about hitting the ball," says Wilander. "Then you're enjoying everything else, and once you relax, you're likely to hit better shots."

Lickle, a US Naval Academy graduate and former Captain of the Naval Academy's tennis team, complements Wilander with a keen sense of business – and the fact that Lickle sleeps in the cramped alcove above the Winnebago's steering wheel is bonus.

"I have to sleep with a Vornado fan wherever I go," chuckles Lickle, "because when I was on the USS Nimitz, (a US navy aircraft carrier, one of the largest warships in the world), all the pipes were running near my bed. When I sleep in the Winnebago I pretty much do the same thing."

Lickle takes everything in stride as the team enjoys a corner on the market in traveling tennis clinics. As long as there's gas in the Winnebago and tennis players who want to make their dreams of improving their game a reality, Wilander on Wheels is in business.

"The true reward at the end of the day is seeing how enthusiastic people are about their tennis," says Wilander and Lickle. "They're smiling. You can just see that everybody is so excited. They're living a dream."

AT-A-GLANCE ▾

Wilander on Wheels

Mats Wilander | Seven-time Grand Slam singles champion, one-time doubles, inducted into the Int'l Tennis Hall of Fame, 2002.

Cameron Lickle | Captain of the US Naval Academy tennis team and nuclear engineer before becoming the straw that stirs the drink for WOW.

Price | \$200+ pp, 1.5 hour clinic. Custom packages available.

Post clinic meal | Mats and Cameron often join students at the club.

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