

# Pro Player Shares Court, Tips with Schools' Tennis Teams

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Since Vince Spadea left the St. Andrew's school to become a professional tennis player more than a decade ago, he has become accustomed to playing in front of large crowds around the world.

On a recent afternoon at the Delray Beach Tennis Center, the stands surrounding the center court were empty, but Spadea still found himself performing before a captive audience.

The world-ranked player visited the tennis center on April 4 and spent an afternoon working with players from the Atlantic and Boca Raton high schools' boys and girls tennis teams, as well as visiting high school program from Michigan.

Spadea and Atlantic graduate Richie Brown, now a senior at Northwood University, played a brief exhibition set before Spadea and Brown teamed up to exchange strokes with the high school players.

"I played high school tennis, I remember what it's like to be in that team spirit and wanting to go out and hit with professionals," Spadea said. "It's a great honor for me to be able to impact young people. If I can do it through tennis and be a role model, that's the greatest thing I can accomplish."

Spadea, ranked among the world's top 30 players, recently competed in the Nasdaq-100 Open tournament in Key Biscayne, where he reached the third round. Spadea helped St. Andrew's win the national title in 1990 before eventually embarking on a professional career, and said he still fondly recalls his own high school days.

"I remember that you're around teammates. You have a fun environment. It makes tennis more enjoyable," he said. "I think it's a great opportunity to be able to practice and help each other out and you really see a passion for team spirit and play some of the greatest matches in high school."

Atlantic tennis coach Ken Rubin, who also runs the [vincespadea.com](http://vincespadea.com) Web site, said he wanted to show area players who might aspire to play in college or professionally what it takes to compete at that level.

"Vince is a local, longtime Boca Raton resident," Rubin said. "This is a way for Vince to connect with the fans and the fans to get up close and personal with a professional player so aspiring tennis players can see the high degree of efficiency and strategy and the level of play between them and a top tournament player."

While the facility has hosted several major tennis events, Peter Doolittle, who does marketing for the tennis center, said it also was created for events such as this one.

"When the city of Delray Beach built this facility, it wasn't just for the big ATP events and the Davis Cup and the Fed Cup," Doolittle said. "It's for events exactly like this, where local kids from Delray Beach and Palm Beach County get a chance to participate in events like this."

The afternoon saw several lighthearted moments, including Spadea posing and singing a rap session with the players.

"It's exciting for an ATP player to come out and hit with the kids from high school," Boca Raton senior Jeannette Habib said. "I think everyone's enjoying it. He's really comical and he's friendly with the kids and he's very outgoing."

"It's really fun to get a chance to see No. 30 in the world," Boca Raton sophomore Lewis Brusentsov. "He's a funny guy. (He's) interesting."

Said Atlantic freshman Kathleen McQueeney: "I thought it was pretty cool. I'm glad that we got the opportunity to do it."