

# ONTARIO TENNIS



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PHOTOS BY PETER FIGURA

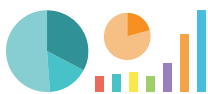


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OTA EVENT CALENDAR



Patricia was one of Canada's best women players in the 1990's.

# PATRICIA HY-BOULAIS

from CAMBODIA to MISSISSAUGA

**L**ike many players who started early in life, Patricia Hy came from an athletic family. Her father competed in Davis Cup for Cambodia as a player and served as the team captain. Her mother had been a national badminton champion in Cambodia. However, in the early seventies, a revolutionary communist movement created a level of political unrest that would eventually develop into one of the most notorious genocides of the 20th century. With revolution in the air, Patricia's uncle who was the right hand man for King Norodom Sihanouk urged Patricia's father to leave the country. As Patricia's father was the captain for the Davis Cup, he used the opportunity of traveling for a Davis Cup match in Vietnam and added on a vacation in Hong Kong. When Davis Cup ended, Patricia's father sent the players back to Cambodia and he flew to Hong Kong to meet up with Patricia's mother where they made their new home.

During the time that Patricia's parents were away, she and her sister lived with their grandparents. It was not until six months later that Patricia's mother returned to Cambodia hoping to bring her two daughters to Hong Kong. During the years of the revolutionary communist movement in Cambodia, all passport holders were required to have an exit visa when leaving the country. When Patricia's mother tried to apply for the exit visa to go to Hong Kong, the application was denied and their passports were confiscated by the government office. Because Patricia's father never came home from the last tennis trip, the government made the assumption that he was a spy and had defected.

Patricia, her sister and mother were held hostage for a year. With no hope in recovering their passports and obtaining the exit visas, Patricia's grandmother went to seek an escape plan with the help of an agency. With the anticipation of a difficult and dangerous journey, the family was advised to only take one

child and to return at a later date for the other. With her heart broken, Patricia's mother had to choose and decided to leave the younger of the two. The escape journey included taking a 15-hour bus ride to the outskirts of the Cambodian-Thai border, then taking a tuk tuk through the rice fields staying several nights staying at random villages with strangers, and going on foot for the last several miles through the corn fields to the border of Thailand. At which point, the agent bribed the guards to let Patricia and her mother through. While in Thailand,

Patricia's mother was able to negotiate with the local authority to grant them traveling privileges to Hong Kong. After three months of waiting, the passports were granted and Patricia with her mother were happily reunited with her father. Unfortunately for Patricia's sister and the rest of the family, the Cambodian border was closed one week after they departed.

Having been forced to leave everything in Cambodia, life in Hong

Kong was tough. Patricia's father gave up competition and took up coaching. He started his coaching career on a public court facility where the policy required courts to be booked a week ahead with a limit of one hour for one court per person per day. The family got up before dawn every morning to get in the long queue hoping to get enough court time for Patricia's father to teach. At age 7, Patricia took up tennis from watching her father and he was her coach until she was 15. In addition to playing tennis, Patricia did other sports to enhance her agility and hand-eye coordination through field hockey, badminton, and squash.

Patricia achieved great results very early in her career. She played her first tournament at 9. By 13, she was recognized as a top player in Southeast Asia. She was endorsed by the Hong Kong Tennis Association to compete at the junior Grand Slam events. At 14, she won an ITF junior event and won the Hong Kong Open

**THE ESCAPE JOURNEY INCLUDED  
TAKING A 15-HOUR BUS RIDE  
TO THE OUTSKIRT OF THE  
CAMBODIAN-THAI BORDER, THEN  
TAKING A TUK TUK THROUGH THE  
RICE FIELDS THROUGH SEVERAL  
NIGHTS STAYING AT RANDOM  
VILLAGES WITH STRANGERS.**



Patricia and Yves head up the Tennis Department at Ontario Racquet Club.

PETER FIGUERA

Championship putting her at #1 in the Hong Kong Women's Singles. At 17 she competed in 5 events at Wimbledon, the Ladies Singles Championship, the Ladies Doubles Championship, the Mixed Doubles Championship, the Girls Singles Championship, and the Girls Doubles Championship, playing more than 20 matches in the two weeks. She was the finalist in the Girls Singles Championship and won the Girls Doubles Championship. That year she achieved a world ranking of #65 in the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) and #7 in the Junior International Tennis Federation. Rather than turn pro immediately, she decided to go to UCLA for one year, where she majored in Business Administration with the intention of

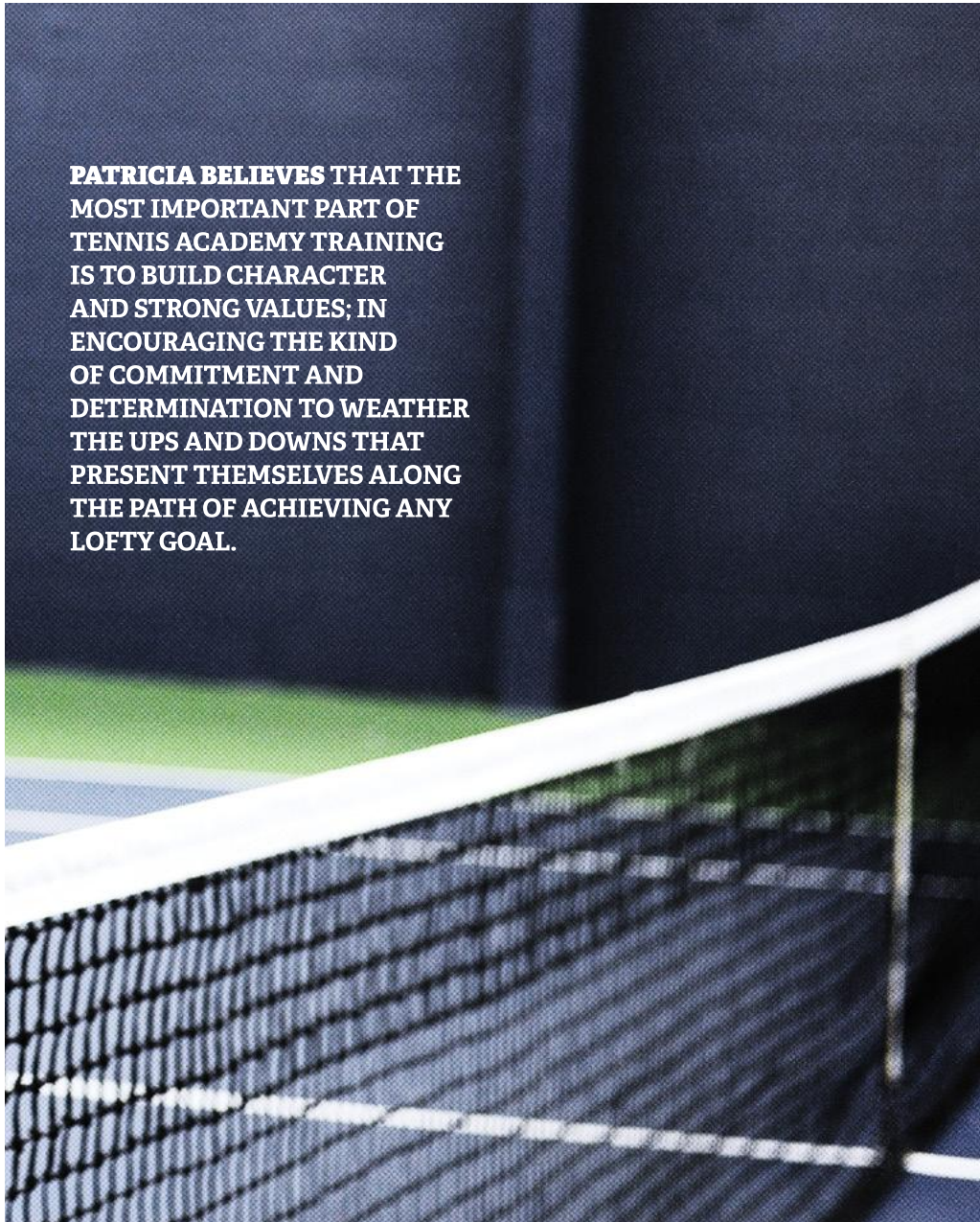
following her dreams to turn pro after one year of university. With the demands of school, and varsity matches, maintaining a WTA ranking in the top 100 was a struggle. A series of injuries and her inability to play with the tenacity of her teenage years shook her confidence. With the future of her tennis career as a professional looking dim, Patricia decided to return to UCLA to complete her undergraduate studies. As fate would have it, the summer after the second year at UCLA, Patricia was granted a wildcard into two WTA tournaments in Asia where she won one and got to the semi-finals of the other. Feeling that she was given a second chance in her tennis career, she left school and turned pro.



Five years after embarking on the pro tour full time, Patricia was not able to recover the level of play that she once had. With a modest ranking of 280, Patricia started thinking seriously about hanging up her racquet for good. Then, her best friend suggested that she seek help from Simon Bartram, who was a coach with All Canadian at York University at the time. Patricia moved to Toronto, worked with Simon and her game started to turn around.

At about the same time Yves Boulais also arrived in Toronto from Montreal to work at

**PATRICIA BELIEVES THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF TENNIS ACADEMY TRAINING IS TO BUILD CHARACTER AND STRONG VALUES; IN ENCOURAGING THE KIND OF COMMITMENT AND DETERMINATION TO WEATHER THE UPS AND DOWNS THAT PRESENT THEMSELVES ALONG THE PATH OF ACHIEVING ANY LOFTY GOAL.**



the All Canadian where some of the top Canadian players trained. When Simon left All Canadian to take up a post at the Toronto Lawn Tennis Club, Patricia followed him, but eventually the difficult commute proved too exhausting and time consuming. Patricia turned to Yves in hope of working together to see if they could extend their personal relationship to be player and coach. Their partnership took Patricia's tennis to a different level reaching her highest singles ranking at 28th and doubles at 36th in the world and she was ranked #1 in Canada for 8 years. During Patricia's career, she competed in three Olympics - Los Angeles (in '84 for Hong Kong), in Barcelona (1982) and Atlanta (1986)

**AT 17 SHE COMPETED IN 5 EVENTS AT WIMBLEDON, THE LADIES SINGLES CHAMPIONSHIP, THE LADIES DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP, THE MIXED DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP, THE GIRLS SINGLES CHAMPIONSHIP, AND THE GIRLS DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP, PLAYING MORE THAN 20 MATCHES IN THE TWO WEEKS.**

for Canada. She also competed in numerous Federation Cup ties, she represented Hong Kong while she was a resident there and later Canada, when she received her Canadian citizenship. She is an inductee as a player into the Canadian Tennis Hall of Fame as well as the Hong Kong Tennis Hall of Fame.



Patricia was featured on the cover of the 1997 Ontario Tennis magazine.

When Patricia finally stopped playing the tour in 1998 at the age of 33, Patricia and Yves opened their own tennis development program in Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. Before long the family had two additions Isabelle and Justin, both of whom are following in their parents' footsteps with tennis. Patricia believes that the most important part of tennis development training is to build character and strong values; in encouraging the kind of commitment and determination to weather the ups and downs that present themselves along the path of achieving any lofty goal.

Patricia and Yves returned to Canada in 2015 to head up the Tennis Department at Ontario Racquet Club on the courts where Patricia won her Canadian National Championship titles. There, Yves is the tennis director with Patricia helping aspiring youngsters to become the best they can be and to help them cope with the ups and downs of playing competitive tennis, and make the best decisions about the role tennis plays in their lives. **OT**