

# Still Young

## After All These Years

BY RICHARD OSBORN

He's just 20, but it sure feels as if Donald Young has been in the (sometimes unforgiving) tennis spotlight for ages.

That can happen when you turn pro at age 15.

Young — who won the Comerica Bank Challenger in '07 but stalled at a career-high No. 73 in '08 — has fallen short of the weighty expectations that were (fairly or unfairly) thrust upon his shoulders when he turned pro in '04, inking high-profile deals with Nike and Head. Here was a kid with all the tools, all the strokes — a raw talent who seemed destined for Grand Slam greatness. A sure thing, right? But success hasn't come as quickly as some predicted. In his six years as a pro, he's gone a lackluster 11-39 on the ATP Tour. And after doling out the wildcards

for several years, the USTA stepped in last summer and, in all intents and purposes, said enough is enough. The message arrived on Young's doorstep in the form of a letter from the powers that be at the USTA.

The Chicago-born lefthander told reporters at the '09 U.S. Open that USTA Player Development chief Patrick McEnroe & Co. said the support from White Plains (and the wildcards that come along with it) would all but evaporate if he didn't break away from the cocoon-coaching of his parents — Ilona and Donald, Sr. — who, for better or worse, have never let their son wander beyond their grasp.

"Where I come from, the family is a pretty big thing," Young said.

Young stopped short of deeming it a falling out, saying, "We're cool. We all talk. I don't think they dislike me — it's just a difference of

opinion, how I need to develop."

However, in his new book *Hardcourt Confidential*, McEnroe denies ever having tried to crop Donald's parents out of his career picture. Said PMac, "[It's] the one thing I knew *not* to do, even though it's at the heart of the issue."

What McEnroe claims he *did* write was that the USTA had been more than flexible with Young through the years, but that in order for him to take the next step he would need to leave the family compound in Atlanta and come train on a more full-time basis at the USTA Training Center in Boca Raton, Fla. His parents, Mac said, were welcomed to join him, but he made it

clear that the USTA coaches would be calling the shots.

The U.S. Davis Cup captain also said that, despite a subsequent 45-minute telephone conversation with Donald Sr., there was still no meeting of the minds. McEnroe would tell him how his son "has no physical stature, he's just not strong and fit enough...He has to accept our authority, and be willing to go out there and kill himself like these other guys do," only to have Donald Sr. reply that McEnroe "was getting bad information from the assortment of USTA coaches."

Now ranked just outside the top 100 at No. 113, Young has been finding success at Challengers. In May (with Ilona courtside), he won his fifth career USTA Pro

Circuit event, beating fellow American Robert Kendrick at the L.A. Men's Open Challenger at the Home Depot Center in Carson.

Young's last four Pro Circuit titles have come in California, as he previously won in Aptos ('07), Sacramento ('08) and Calabasas ('09).

"I don't really like the trip out here, but there's just something about California," said Young, who the following week reached the semis of the Weil Challenger in Ojai.

So, for now at least, Donald Young has decided that blood is thicker than water. Only time will tell if he's right. But time is something he still has working for him. After all, he's still young.



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Four of Donald Young's five career USTA Pro Circuit titles have come in California.

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**WHO:** Past, Present, Future ATP Pro  
**WHAT:** \$75,000 Comerica Bank Challenger  
**WHERE:** Seascape Sports Club  
**WHEN:** July 10-18  
**INFO:** (831) 688-1993, [seascapesportsclub.com](http://seascapesportsclub.com)

### 23 YEARS OF CHAMPIONS IN APTOS

1987 Scott Melville	1997 Jan-Michael Gambill
1988 Brad Pearce	1998 Cecil Mamiit
1989 Mark Kaplan	1999 Michael Hill
1990 Henrik Holm	2000 Bob Bryan
1991 Chuck Adams	2001 Jeff Salzenstein
1992 Alex O'Brien	2002 Brian Vahaly
1993 Patrick Rafter	2003 Jeff Salzenstein
1994 Shuzo Matsuoka	2004 Kevin Kim
1995 Daniel Nestor	2005 Andy Murray
1996 Albert Chang	2006 Alex Kuznetsov
	2007 Donald Young
	2008 Kevin Kim
	2009 Chris Guccione