



# Captured: The Ecstasy of the Win

By Barbara Wyatt



**H**ave you noticed the special national USTA poster on a wall at your club or tennis recreational center? Two smiling tennis players locked in a bear hug.

I'm embarrassed to say I've glanced at a PDF version on my computer more than once ... more than twice. The poster is of Frank, my tennis partner and me.

At the time of the photo, I was a new 4.0 player and agreed to co-captain a mixed 7.0 team. So-called "helpful comments" flew in from others ...

"A 4.0 woman will never make it to Sectionals on a 7.0 team."

"You can't support your 3.0 partner like a 4.0 man can."

I play for the competitiveness of the sport and the friendships gained. I pushed those critical voices out of my head.

Lo and behold, our team made it to Sectionals. Captains Judy and I, with teammates Gene, Steve, Yu, Vickie, Jeff, Frank, Steven and Gayle, were thrilled.

Those inner negative voices still echoed in my head. I don't have the skill to carry my court for a win. You can't support a 3.0 man. Plus our doubles team was at a disadvan-

tage because some of our players did not know the others. Judy and I penciled names on a Sectional scorecard, erased them, and re-penciled them onto another court. She handed me the final lineup.

"You're playing with Frank. He's over there."

Rumors said that Frank was on his way to becoming a strong player because of his success as a professional basketball player. But he was "a little inconsistent." Though I was curious what "a little" meant, I would be the best partner possible.

The match began. My nerves were on edge. Frank tossed the ball up for the serve and hit it with power. The ball landed inside the service box and dust flew up from its spin. Unfortunately, it landed on the adjacent court.

I smiled and thought, "This will be an interesting match." I relaxed and breathed. Frank's second serve hit the correct service box. The match was on.

We slammed the little yellow ball. We ran forward to lunge for the dreaded drop shot. We ran back to guard against high wild effective lobs. Our competitors had an arsenal of lobs, drop shots and killer serves that threatened to knock us off our game.

Frank and I talked. I learned his idiosyncrasies and he learned mine. He set me up

for several overhead slams against our opponents. I returned the favor and drove hard volleys over the net that guaranteed a clumsy return directly into the sweet spot of his racquet. We made each other better players.

Finally, the winning lob dropped into the corner of our opponent's court. I ran cross court at full speed with one intention: To jump into my remarkable partner's arms. A wide smile was on his face. He opened his arms and I took the flying leap. The photographer caught the moment as this 5'2" player jumped into the arms of her 6'6" partner.

Not all teams are filled with partners who have played together for years, or have practiced winning patterns for months.

Go ahead ... play for the joy of the game and new friendships. You might end up on a National poster and gain a friend for life.

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