

# Zephyr Cove students make a racket on court



Zephyr Cove Elementary second-grader Sofie Hansel makes contact with the ball as classmate Aliana McLey watches. Photo Copyright 2014 Carolyn E. Wright

**By Kathryn Reed**

ZEPHYR COVE – *“To be a tennis champion, you have to be inflexible. You have to be stubborn. You have to be arrogant. You have to be selfish and self-absorbed. Kind of tunnel vision almost.”* – Chris Evert

The youngsters on the court don't know yet how true Evert's words are. They may not even be future champions or even know who won the U.S. Open this year. But they are quick learners based on most of them realizing a forehand is much easier to hit than a backhand.

Zephyr Cove Elementary School students are spending part of this week and next on the courts across the street from their

school. Prior to stepping on the court, physical education teacher Brenda Capshaw went over vocabulary, basic skills, and how to hold a racket. Even etiquette was part of the lesson plan. It seemed to pay off. As a group of second-graders walked outside the fence Sept. 9 where a couple people were playing they were super quiet. On the court it was rather orderly as everyone lined up on the service line to be fed balls by Stewart or parent volunteers.



Keiran Born, 7, sends a backhand across the net.  
Photo Copyright 2014  
Carolyn E. Wright

“I’m good at backhand,” exclaimed Keiran Born as a ball whizzed across the net for a winner.

He was the only player interviewed who said he preferred backhand to forehand. Maybe he’s following in Roger Federer’s footsteps. After all, the U.S. Open semifinalist is considered to have one of the best backhands of all time – and it’s not a shot often taught to kids these days.

Like many on the court Tuesday, this was Keiran’s first time to play tennis. Capshaw, who is in her second year at ZCES, said the idea for the tennis program came about from parents.

Rackets were secured, balls found and courts donated. Zephyr Cove Tennis Club Foundation, which operates the six courts on Warrior Way at the Douglas County park, donated the court time to the school for the two days of instruction this week, and two that will take place next week.

“Tennis is a sport that can be played at any age, but one that is so much easier to learn as a child,” Carolyn Wright, president of the tennis foundation, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “While there are so many winter sports for our youth to participate in, tennis is something they can take with them no matter where they live or how old they are.”



Mariana Hernandez returns a ball from parent volunteer Sara Dee. Photo Copyright 2014 Carolyn E. Wright

Aliana McLey is already a convert. She wants to play more than just twice in a two-week period.

“It’s really fun because you get exercise,” Aliana said.

That’s exactly what Capshaw is trying to achieve – getting kids to be active.

“Our curriculum is based on a wellness program, physical

fitness, getting them to move, and off the phone and video games," Capshaw told *Lake Tahoe News*. "Students who jump and get out use the same part of the brain as when they are reading, so active kids tend to be better readers than students who are sitting."

But she is the only PE teacher for the K-6 school. Students receive a minimum of 45 minutes of physical education each week. (Capshaw also teaches art, music, and the gifted and talented program.) While there is still recess in schools, students today are less inclined to organize kickball or handball games. More of them are just sitting around, Capshaw said. That is why PE has become more relevant for this generation.

"Getting PE back in schools is not just about sports, but more of an education about your body, moving it, keeping it healthy in fun ways through games and sports," Capshaw said.

Sofie Hansel is a believer in putting what is learned at school into practice in real life. She had played tennis a couple times before, as evidenced by her ability to adeptly connect her junior-size racket with the fuzzy ball. The best part for her was getting to hit ball after ball. She said it makes her want to play more.

If the adults involved in the tennis program have anything to do with it, Sofie and her classmates will find themselves at Zephyr Cove Tennis Club on a regular basis.