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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Three Tennis Legends Inducted into Louisiana Tennis Hall of Fame

BATON ROUGE – September 18, 2018 – The Louisiana Tennis Hall of Fame Committee and USTA Louisiana announced last week three tennis legends will be inducted into the 2018 class of the Louisiana Tennis Hall of Fame.

John Bryan, of Corpus Christi, TX., is an exceptional tennis professional, with an outstanding record of former students who became successful teaching professionals and the distinct honor of coaching former World Number 6, Chanda Rubin.

Others to be inducted are Diane Simpson, of Marrero, LA., who is a highly-regarded volunteer and former USTA Louisiana President and current LTA Board Member, serving on numerous state committees. Donnie Leaycraft, of New Orleans, who was named to the All-SEC Team four consecutive years and became LSU's ALL-time Winningest Player in school history which still stands today will also be inducted. They are scheduled to be inducted November 30, 2018, during the Louisiana Tennis Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony, in Lafayette.

The Louisiana Tennis Hall of Fame was established in 1984 with the induction of the New Orleans Lawn Tennis Club, the Hall of Fame will grow to 37 members after this induction ceremony. The Hall of Fame honors those individuals who have made significant contributions to Louisiana Tennis, have accomplishments in tennis as a player, coach, official or volunteer and those that have shown great sportsmanship and character.

John Bryan

John decided to go out for the tennis club at a young age after realizing other sports did not work for him. Soon enough the club sponsor realized that John had some natural ability for tennis and encouraged him to really pursue the sport. He began practicing with his friend, John Dale and they began to team up and both began to play in some local tournaments.

John is totally self-taught and has an amazing ability to see something and copy it. A lot of people can demonstrate the correct way to do something right or the wrong way to do something, but John can

demonstrate them back to back to show the difference. This was a gift that was priceless to a young player trying to play without a coach.

After a six week circuit after high school, John Hoff from the University of Houston contacted John and he was given a scholarship to play for the university. He later requested a transfer to Pan American University in McAllen which was a tennis powerhouse and was one of the top tennis schools in the country going on to be ranked #2 nationally while John was playing there.

John always knew he wanted to be a Coach so he majored in Education with a minor in P.E. and ultimately got a master's degree from University of Houston. After graduation, John worked as a teacher and coached high school teams in various towns in Texas. It was during this time in the early 60's while coaching in Amarillo, Texas where John met former UL/LSU coach Jerry Simmons. This began a long friendship as Jerry Simmons describes as a "big brother/little brother friendship".

Various parents began to call and ask John to work with their children and as they all began to improve the program and John's credibility as a coach grew and grew. One of his players was Chanda Rubin, former World Number 6 in the world in singles, number 9 in doubles, Wimbledon junior champion, a Grand Slam singles semi-finalist and multiple quarterfinalist, and a Grand Slam doubles winner. Chanda spoke about John's abilities as a coach: "What I found was both special and, at the same time, ordinary. He taught me all of the fundamentals of the game and to this day, people in tennis still wonder how I learned such great fundamentals, and how to hit the ball so cleanly, in a place that was not considered to be mecca of tennis. Coach also taught me how to fight until the very end and never give up. As a result, I have had the record for some of the longest matches and biggest comebacks on the women's professional tour. But what is most remarkable is that he gave the same great base to all of the players that he worked with. This is the reason that so many of his students have gone on to success at many different levels."

As the program grew, John built two tennis courts with the mission to get his boys to college but John's love of tennis and coaching was big enough to help anyone else that wanted his help, well over 75 of his former players, went to college on tennis scholarships.

Louisiana Tennis Service Professional, Bill Phillips describes John as, "professional" and mentions how many conversations he had regarding individual player's development, on court demeanor, effort and his favorite word, heart.

After three decades in Louisiana the impact John has made in the tennis community and each individual player is immeasurable.

Donnie Leaycraft

Donnie Leaycraft began playing tennis at the age of eight in New Orleans, Louisiana and received a number one state ranking in every age group 12-18 and under. He was selected to play on the U.S. Junior Davis Cup Team along with teammates Michael Chang and Jim Courier. While attending Brother Martin High School in New Orleans he was chosen as a High School All American while compiling a 62-2 single record. Two of Leaycraft's biggest junior accomplishments were a top 10 national ranking in the Boys 18's and a victory over one of the greatest players of all time, Pete Sampras.

During his collegiate tennis career at LSU, he was named to the All-SEC Team four consecutive years. Leaycraft compiled the most career match victories and became LSU's All-Time Winningest Player in school

history which still stands today. He was a two-time college All-American and the only player from LSU ever to win the NCAA Division 1 Singles Championship in 1989.

As a junior in college, one of the major highlights of Leaycraft's tennis career was competing in the main draw of a major Grand Slam Tennis Tournament, The US Open. After graduating from LSU in 1990, he pursued a professional tennis career on the ATP Tour and eventually accepted a top coaching position at Nick Bollettieri Tennis Academy in Florida.

As a result of his accomplishments, Leaycraft was inducted into the LSU Athletic Hall of Fame in 1998. Leaycraft joined the Country Club of Louisiana in 1993 as Director of Tennis and held that position for the last 20 years. Donni has a USPTA P-1 certification.

Diane Simpson

Diane Simpson, of Marrero, LA., is a distinguished volunteer on sectional, state and local levels, for more than 30 years. She has served the Louisiana Tennis Association since 1986, serving in the following capacities; Member of Adult Ranking Committee, Area Representative, Louisiana Tennis Association Treasurer, Vice President, President and now an active member of the Louisiana Tennis Association Board of Directors.

For 16 years, Simpson worked and served on numerous state committees including, Nominating Committee Chairman, CTA Chairman, Grand Review subcommittee Chairman, a member of the Awards Committee and a member of the Junior Recreational Committee specializing in Junior Team Tennis.

Drew Meyers, a former USTA Louisiana President, may have said it best when describing Simpson: " In terms of service to Louisiana tennis, I am hard pressed to think anyone who has done more, volunteered more over the last 20 or more years than Diane Simpson. Time is our most precious commodity, and she has freely given so much of her time to Louisiana tennis, and she has never said "no" when asked to help. What a worthy candidate."

Diane also served on several Southern boards, she was a member of the USA League Tennis Mixed Doubles Subcommittee, Public Relations Committee and Chairman of the Awards Subcommittee.

Rocky Andry and Lester Sack, Hall of Fame Committee members describe Diane as exemplary in her work for tennis in Louisiana and someone who has been an outstanding volunteer for many years.

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The **USTA** is the national governing body for the sport of tennis in the U.S. and the leader in promoting and developing the growth of tennis at every level – from local communities to the highest level of the professional game. It owns and operates the US Open, the largest annually attended sporting event in the world, and launched the **Emirates Airline US Open Series** linking seven summer tournaments to the US Open. In addition, it owns about 90 Pro Circuit events throughout the U.S., and selects the teams for the Davis Cup, Fed Cup, Olympic and Paralympic games. A not-for-profit organization with more than 655,000 members, it invests 100 percent of its proceeds in growing the game. It is divided into 17 sections, of which **USTA Southern** is the largest. The 160,000+ USTA members living in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee make up USTA Southern, and account for nearly 25 percent of the total USTA membership. A professional staff housed in Peachtree Corners, Ga., carries out USTA Southern’s daily operations, but policy is formed and much of the organization’s work is executed via a board and committee structure of more than 200 volunteers. For more information about the types of programs and services offered by USTA Southern, visit www.southerntennis.com.

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