



Memorandum

TO: MAYOR & CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Mayor Sam Liccardo
Councilmember Raul Peralez

SUBJECT: RENAMING OF BACKESTO
TENNIS COURTS TO THE DON
JOHNSON TENNIS COURTS

DATE: February 20, 2015

APPROVED

Sam Liccardo FB

2-20-15

2/19/15

RECOMMENDATION

Accept staff recommendations with additional direction to install appropriate signage signifying the naming of the courts to the "Don Johnson Tennis Courts."

DISCUSSION

Don Johnson is a tennis legend. Don quickly rose up the ranks and played professional tennis from 1969 to 1972. He was the first African-American tennis coach at an east coast college, the Pratt Institute. This gave him the opportunity to meet his mentor and friend, Arthur Ashe. Don worked as coach and personal assistant to Ashe from 1970 to 1977. It was during this time that he helped set up the city's first national junior tennis league program (NJTL).

When Don and his family moved to San Jose in the mid-70s, he brought with him the NJTL concept. Over the next 30 years, Don would teach thousands of kids through the various tennis programs he ran in San Jose. Many of these programs and clinics were provided free of charge to children from low-income families; and many took place on the Backesto courts.

Don's hard work did not go unnoticed. In 2003, he was inducted into the African-American Ethnic Sports Hall of Fame and was the first African American initiated into the USTA Northern California Tennis Hall of Fame in 2004. In 2006, he was presented the Jefferson Award for Public Service and was honored for contributing to societal improvements within and outside of the tennis world. One of Don's last public events was to lead the grand re-opening of the Backesto courts in November of 2013. It is only fitting that they are being renamed in his honor.