

CROSS COURT

Luke Jensen invites them all – tall and small, male and female, young and *older* – to return his booming serve. Make that, *try* to return...

As the 1993 French Open doubles champion concludes a recent tennis clinic in Overland Park, Kan., the participants gladly accept his challenge. Essentially, they're volunteering, with eager smiles, to be in front of a one-man firing squad.

Many flail futilely at his kicker out wide. Their groans echo off the Indian Creek Racquet Club's walls. Most merely twitch at his heater, a yellow blur ripped down the T for an ace. All are awed by his remarkable effectiveness serving both left- and right-handed.

Just as impressive, however, is "Dual Hand Luke's" exuberance. To spread the word about the sport, the USTA/Missouri Valley Section couldn't ask for a more dynamic missionary than the 39-year-old Jensen.

His career on the ATP tour took Jensen, a fan favorite playing doubles with younger brother Murphy, around the globe. He has spent much of his 2005 summer traveling the Missouri Valley, conducting clinics and preaching tennis.

"I grew up in this part of the country," says Jensen. "I played World Team Tennis for the (St. Louis) Aces and the (Kansas City) Explorers. So, this area has a special place in my heart. I love the Missouri Valley."

Shelley George told him he would.

The USTA/Missouri Valley Section vice president and Jensen met through tenniswelcomecenters.com when Jensen visited the site earlier this year searching for locations that might be interested in his robust clinics. He contacted the North Dodge Athletic Club in Iowa City, Iowa, and found himself talking to the tennis director there – George.

Luke Jensen
brings his passion
for the game to the
Missouri Valley Section

for Love of Tennis

"He has a passion for the game," says George, "and it's spread like wildfire."

INFECTIOUS ENTHUSIASM If enthusiasm for the game were contagious, then no one could possibly be more infectious than Jensen.

Some tennis traditionalists may have frayed their brow at the Jensen brothers' high-fiving, chest-bumping style. But most fans loved the charismatic doubles duo. And no one ever doubted that the Jensens knew how to have fun on the court.

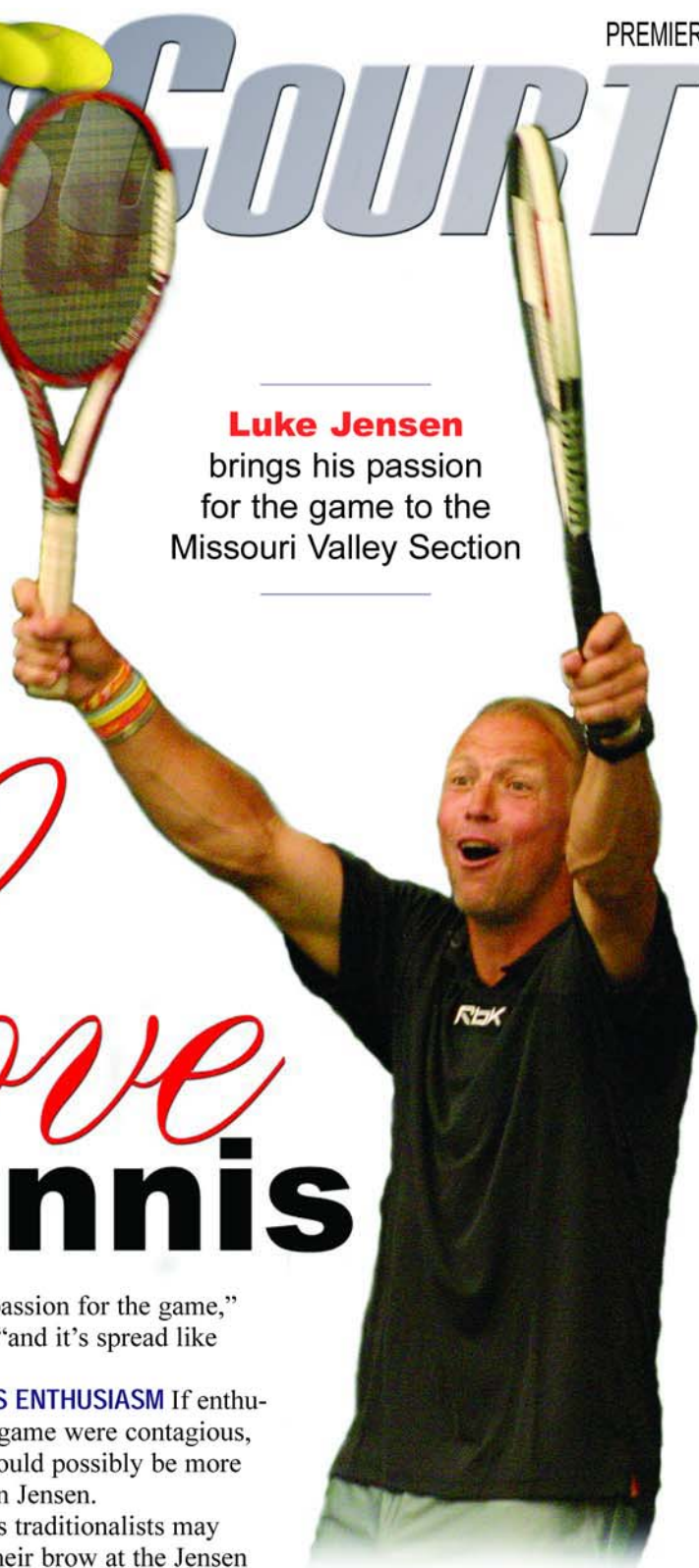
Luke still leaves them smiling as he

tours the Missouri Valley.

"This is my passion," he says. "Tennis is in my blood; it pumps through me."

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New publication part of our efforts to grow the game

Welcome to your newest Member benefit. *CrossCourt* is a mini-magazine that we hope will grow along with the game in the USTA/Missouri Valley Section. *CrossCourt* will differ from any other tennis publication you read in that the focus will be on our Section – our members, our events, our opportunities to share our love for tennis by getting more people on the courts.



But in *CrossCourt*, we're focusing on Luke's efforts to grow the game at the grassroots level – right here in the Missouri Valley. It's a story about a star player's down-to-earth approach to getting more

people who live in our Section playing and, as noted in the article, *enjoying* the sport.

CrossCourt is but one example of our increased emphasis this summer on doing more to publicize tennis in the Missouri Valley's five-state area. We've added staff to our PR team and taken strides to enhance our Website. If you haven't spent some time at missourivalley.usta.com recently, then rush to the net right now. We're updating the content constantly, adding new photos, posting feature stories and trying to make the site easier to navigate.

CrossCourt and missourivalley.usta.com are intended to work together – doubles partners, if you will. In print, online, anyway we can, it's crucial for us to get the word out and encourage more people to start talking tennis.

You can get ample stories about the game's superstars elsewhere. I know when you read that, the linesman in you may want to cry, "Fault." After all, Luke Jensen is on the cover of our premiere issue.

Well, I'd have to ask for an overrule on your out-of-bounds call. Just read the article.

This summer, the Missouri Valley Section has essentially adopted Luke. Sure, he has a great deal to say about building up the game at the elite level with which he is so familiar, including strategies Andy Roddick might try to become a real rival for the world's dominant No. 1 man, Roger Federer.

GO TO THE NET
missourivalley.usta.com
We're going to be encouraging you to go to the Web often in *CrossCourt*.
Learn more... Stay informed... Your Section Website is a great source for upcoming events, features, photos, results and more.
Answer the "Go to the Net" questions posed in *CrossCourt* and submit your responses to:
thenet@mvalley.usta.com
Correct entries will be entered in a prize drawing.

What do you think? Send us your comments. **Addresses** listed at bottom of page.

LUKE • From Page 1

Jensen suspects he was genetically programmed to "teach" kids – of all ages – to play and enjoy tennis. His parents were both physical education teachers, and his dad managed a four-court tennis facility in a small Michigan town.

While Jensen may now be getting a tad grey around the temples, the game will, for him, never get old. He has a lot of that Michigan little boy left in him whenever he gets his hands on a racquet.

"We had Luke here for two days and on the court 10 to 6 the

second day with no break. He was up every minute of it," says Greg Mahosky, tennis pro at the Country Club Hotel & Spa in Lake Ozark, Mo. "He doesn't show up, sign autographs, then go. He's on the court drilling with the kids."

'PEOPLE ARE PLAYING' Persistent media reports about "what's wrong with tennis" frustrate Jensen.

"The big thing that's *right* about tennis right now, from the grassroots level up, is that more kids are playing," says Jensen. "So are more seniors and more adults. I see it everyday. Mornings, afternoons and evenings, people are getting out and onto the courts. That's a great sign.

People are playing."

He simply wants to get even more people playing.

"Luke gets it. Community tennis is where it's happening, and he knows that," states George. "He wants to get people out moving and enjoying themselves on the court, especially kids. That's how the next great champion will get started."

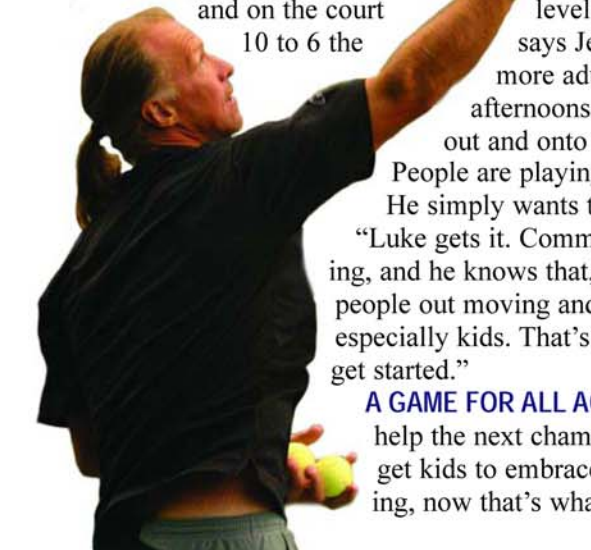
A GAME FOR ALL AGES Should he, along the way, help the next champ's game evolve, great. If he can get kids to embrace the game, get them up and moving, now that's what matters most to Jensen.

"My dad taught all the kids in town to play, and he wasn't looking for the most talented kids," Jensen says. "He was looking to get kids participating. It was about building human beings, happy, active and healthy."

Although Jensen obviously gets a charge out of teaching and cheering on tennis' next generation, the boys and girls not much bigger than their racquets, he truly admires those older adults, snow-haired men or women, still swinging away.

Glancing over his shoulder, Jensen spots two seniors playing a match on a court next to five little boys trading volleys, and he observes, "This is the way it's supposed to be. Just a bunch of kids playing, little kids and big kids.

"You can take lessons and go to clinics, but it's not about winning or losing, life or death. It's about being active and enjoying a sport your whole life."



GO TO THE NET
missourivalley.usta.com
What does Luke Jensen suggest you do to improve your volleys?
Visit the Web for Jensen's insights into playing doubles.

The USTA/Missouri Valley Section publishes *CrossCourt* quarterly. Feedback is welcome at USTA/Missouri Valley, Attention: *CrossCourt*, 8676 W. 96th St., Suite 100, Overland Park, KS 66212 or crosscourt@mvalley.usta.com.