



MatchPoint NYC



Courtside... With Nino Muhatasov Co-Founder & Director, MatchPoint NYC

The New York tennis landscape is always growing and evolving. There are a myriad of options, both indoors and outdoors, for local tennis players to choose from. So how does a successful tennis entity separate itself? How does a successful club increase its player base and continue to grow? New York Tennis Magazine recently sat down with Nino Muhatasov, co-founder and director of MatchPoint NYC in Brooklyn, to learn about his tennis career, MatchPoint NYC's beginnings, and the club's plans to continue to grow and build on its success.

What is your tennis background/when did you begin playing the sport?

I was born in Kiev, Ukraine, a former Soviet Union Republic. At the age of seven, I started playing tennis in school. Fast-forward to when I turned 12-years-old and was picked to be part of the Soviet Union Junior National Team. It was a special program for juniors ranked in the top 20 in the nation. We would train twice a day and the school schedule was designed to fit our tennis practice.

When did you come to the United States? Where did your tennis career go once you arrived in the U.S.?

In 1992 after the Soviet Regime, fell I came to the United States to play in tournaments. Many of the top players from the Soviet Union came here to train and play in tournaments. After traveling around and doing well, I was recruited to play at St. John's by Adam

Steinberg, who currently coaches at the University of Michigan. I played at St. John's from 1994-1998 where I played first to third in the singles lineup and first in the doubles lineup all four years. During that time, I became a two-time MVP (1995 and 1997), a finalist in the Big East tournament (1995), and I held the best singles record on the team all four years.

In 2000, I graduated from St. John's University with a master's degree in marketing. After graduating, I still felt that tennis was my true calling, and I became director of tennis at Hempstead Lake Indoor Tennis from 2000-2008. I mainly coached tournament-level players. Many of my students went on to win National and Super National events, including Danny Kerznerman, Polina Zaretzer, Dennis Druzhinsky and Eric Brezhinsky.

In 2008, I signed a contract to become a traveling coach with the Bondarenko Sisters. During that time, Alona Bondarenko was ranked in the top 20 in the world, Kateryna was ranked in the top 30, and together, they won the 2008 Australian Open Doubles Championship.

How did MatchPoint NYC come about?

After coaching on the pro tour, I had a dream to have a special place of my own. When the opportunity came to take over the lease at the old Brooklyn Racquet Club, I knew I had found the chance I'd been looking for. In 2009, Dmitry Druzhinsky, Sergey Rybak and I drew up the plans for what would be the new MatchPoint NYC, a home away from

home for any aspiring tennis player, and a health and fitness destination for the entire family. It took about three years to go through the New York City Department of Buildings to get the proper approval, and we broke ground on construction in 2012, finally opening the club in January of 2014.

What was your vision when you first opened?

The idea was to build a great tennis club, but also bring much more. We added a gym and fitness studio, and then added a pool. We wanted it to be a country club in Brooklyn. Some luxury was added by placing a gourmet restaurant on the second floor, overlooking our nine tennis courts and pool. The idea was to give parents the opportunity to enjoy themselves with a workout or a snack or meal as kids trained and practiced in our programs.

What is the coaching philosophy at MatchPoint NYC?

We have around 1,200 kids total in all of our programs: 500 in tennis, 500 in swimming and 200 in gymnastics. The programs are run academy style. In tennis, we have one dedicated coach on the court, with two coaches overseeing all the courts during the lesson to add more structure. The kids are required to take part in fitness training after their tennis lessons. Most of our kids in the tennis program participate in swimming and gymnastics programs as well, because we believe in a well-rounded athletic approach.



Sergey Rybak, Nino Muhatasov and Dmitriy Druzhinsky, founders of the 120,000-square-foot MatchPoint NYC in Brooklyn, N.Y.



What is in store for MatchPoint NYC in the future? What do you plan on adding to continue growing?

We have several WTA and ATP Tour players training in the offseason at MatchPoint NYC, including Kateryna Bondarenko and Alek-

sandr Nedovyesov. Most of the pros train in California or Florida, but MatchPoint NYC is proof that a world-class player can train in New York. We created a program for Kateryna Bondarenko during her offseason to prepare for the Australian Open. Kateryna started the year great, reaching the third round of the Australian Open by beating former two-time Grand Slam Champion Svetlana Kuznetsova in the second round.

MatchPoint NYC is spread across 120,000-square-feet and includes a full-sized gym with top-of-the-line fitness equipment, three group fitness studios, a junior Olympic pool, a rhythmic gymnastics center, a basketball court, a yoga studio and a restaurant. In addition, we will open a second location in Brooklyn next year. Our three-year plan includes establishing a presence in Manhattan and in Miami, Fla.



Andy Roddick, former "Little Mo" champion says, "It was my first big win!"

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