

Youth tennis program revamped, relaunched

Philadelphia native Rob Coles was just 7 years old when he first picked up a tennis racket, embarking on what would become a 30-year career as a tennis player, coach and instructor at private clubs and community organizations across the country.

Now Coles is bringing his talent and passion for the sport he loves to Lee College as the new tennis professional, directing a revamped youth tennis program that kicked off this fall.

The tennis program will include private and group lessons for children aged 4-18 years, with an emphasis on helping students develop strong hand-eye coordination and proper footwork and movement. There will also be opportunities for free match play, junior team tennis and in-house competitions.

“Every class we do will be age and skill-level appropriate,” said Coles, who played tennis at Slippery Rock University. “The goal is to get all the kids playing — both with their peers in class, and against their peers in class.”

Coles was initially drawn to tennis because of his intense competitive spirit. After playing and coaching extensively from Pennsylvania to California and many states in between, he saw how the sport gave young people more than just the motivation to be their best. Through tennis, they also learn the value of hard work, patience and taking the time to think things through, he said.

“At higher levels, tennis becomes a moving chess match; there are many parallels between what happens on the court and what happens in life,” said Coles, who still keeps in touch with many of his pupils and maintains contacts at top collegiate programs. “With kids, you can see their growth as they create goals and achieve them. It’s really fun to watch their game get better and become part of their lives.”