



BAHAR UTTAM & THE BOSTON LOBSTERS

| By Kellie K. Speed

The Boston Lobsters, New England's professional tennis team within World Team Tennis, is looking forward to bringing some well known tennis greats to their home base of Ferncroft Country Club in Middleton, Mass. this season. Owner Bahar Uttam purchased the team after selling his engineering company, Synetics Corporation.

"Talk about a dichotomy going from being an engineer to a sports nut!" laughed Uttam, who now serves on the Board of the USTA Tennis & Education Foundation. "Tennis has always been my passion and I was fortunate enough to sell my business in 2002. I knew I didn't want to be a consultant so I turned to Jesus and asked what I should do and got the answer to follow my passion so I asked myself what can I do with tennis?"

The Boston Lobsters made their debut in 1974 and has had several owners since its inception. "Bob Kraft owned the franchise at



one point so I asked him why he gave it up," he said. "There were several owners at that time and they were going in different directions so that's how it all started. I looked into the team and got in touch with Billie Jean King and told her I wanted to bring it to Boston. I met with her and thought it would be a fun thing to do so she told me I just needed to find sponsors and a venue."

Before the team made its home at Ferncroft, they first started playing at Harvard. "I live in Cambridge so I was looking at the Cambridge environs so I could get to the matches easily," Uttam said. "New Englanders want to be outdoors in the good weather so that was an impetus for me to look for an outdoor venue. The North Shore is a hot bed of tennis so I searched there for a venue and found Ferncroft. It's going to be our third season there this year."

Uttam credits the founding efforts of Billie Jean King for bringing such female greats to play with the team. "Everyone looks up to Billie Jean King," he said. "If it wasn't for her, tennis wouldn't be what it is today. The players really appreciate her for what she has done for them. Tennis has gone to a new level nationally. It's the fastest growing sports in the U.S., as



reported by the Sports Industry Association. I believe we have ridden the wave in bullet fashion and created a buzz in the community. I think our product is outstanding as we provide value and entertainment to our fans."

What is the team's reaction playing against such big names in tennis? "The lesser experienced players are in awe playing with an icon but we are one big happy family," Uttam said. "If you go to a tennis opening, you can't even get close to someone like Venus or Serena Williams. Here, they sign autographs for kids and spend about 45 minutes with them. I also take

them to each sponsor and spend about 15 or 20 minutes with each of them."

What does the future hold for the team? "There are two things I would love for the Boston Lobsters; one is to see the team make it to the finals," he said. "We play for the King Trophy and I would love to bring that to Boston. The other is to fill the stands every night with families."

If the past few seasons are any prediction of Uttam's continued success, the future certainly looks very bright for the Boston Lobsters. ♦