



A SLICE OF SARASOTA IN *Boca Raton*

If John Ringling had designed a resort, chances are it would look a lot like the Boca Raton Resort & Club. Not only was it built in the same era as the Ringling Museum and the Ca d'Zan—many of the buildings feature the familiar Mediterranean-inspired pink stucco. Credit here goes to Addison Mizner, one of the best-known architects of the 1920's.

I had never heard of the place before we went. The name seemed relatively generic—but I was pleased to find the resort is anything but. It's a sprawling 356 acres with five buildings with over a thousand rooms on two different properties. Owners recently completed a \$220 million dollar renovation.

The facility has a split personality: There's the main campus featuring the beautiful and historic Cloister hotel—and then there's The Beach Hotel. It's a short shuttle (boat or bus) and a world away. We stayed in the newer place—overlooking three pools, the beach and the Atlantic Ocean. Talk about "best of both worlds!" Historic and beautiful vs. beachy and fun.

Oh yeah, we went for the tennis. *Tennis Magazine* recently ranked the Boca Raton Resort & Club as the 5th best club in the nation. The Director of Tennis is named (Eric) Silver but he and his staff are as good as Gold.

I was lucky enough to have Larry Gottfried as my teacher on the first day. He was too modest to tell me, but he was a former pro who beat John McEnroe years ago. I also recognized his name since his older brother Brian rose to third in the world back in 1977.

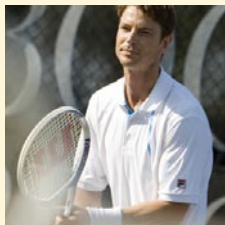
Anyway, I told Larry I'd been struggling with my open-stance forehand and he right away diagnosed it: He detected I was opening up my torso BEFORE I was hitting the ball—and he said hitting the ball late was putting too much pressure on my arm, and probably caused my tennis elbow.

Larry suggested I pretend my wrists are handcuffed during my forehand backswing. This was a perfect visualization and has since helped my momentum and torque into the swing.

During our lesson, Larry surprised me with occasional pearls of wisdom that I rushed to my notebook to write down. At one point he said, "There is no longer a cookie cutter way to hit the ball like there was in the old days." It made me realize the freedom and the confusion of the modern swing.

On the backhand, Larry noticed I wasn't bringing my racquet back far enough. He suggested I remember to point the butt-end of the racquet at the net like a flash light during my backswing. That way I'd be more likely to 'snap' into the ball. He also reminded me to dip the racquet head before impact.

The next day I drew a different instructor named Todd Roth. He also had a great quote I had to write down: "Good players move their feet when they have to but great players move their feet when they don't have to." He pointed out how much you hear pros squeaking their sneakers on hard courts.



On the backhand volley, Todd suggested turning my shoulders more and leading with the fist. It worked. Good tips. Good guys.

The Boca Raton Resort & Club has 30 beautifully manicured courts and a first-rate pro shop. Like the former Colony Resort on Longboat Key did so well, the staff here will line up matches for you, or get you involved in the many clinics they have.



All this tennis made us prime candidates for the Spa Palazzo. At 60 thousand square feet, it's the 2nd largest spa in the country (behind a resort in Las Vegas). They have 44 treatment rooms! Their signature treatment is something called a Ritual Bath that is said to help the immune system. The massage was simply the best either of us have ever had. My therapist Nina's background was in pain management, so she knew how to proceed more than the average masseuse.

After our treatments, we had access to the spa pool and waterfall whirlpools. Meals are also served on the pool deck at the spa. We didn't have time for golf during our visit, but the facility has two 18-hole courses. We probably didn't have time because we were too busy eating!

The Boca Raton Resort & Club features 14 restaurants and lounges—including "Cielo" on the 27th floor of the tower building. What a view! It's one of the highest skyscrapers in the area so it was easy to see Ft. Lauderdale to the south, Palm Beach to the North and the Atlantic Ocean to the east. "Cielo" was not only a great meal, it also had terrific red wine recommended by a wine specialist from Italy.

After dinner, we took advantage of Serendipity—a dessert restaurant that's modeled after a similar place in Manhattan. The signature dessert is a chocolate milkshake. Yum. Diet starts tomorrow.

Since the Boca Raton Resort & Club is on the water, boaters can arrive in the full-service marina.

Parents will be happy to hear about the extensive children's programs for kids ages 3 through 12. There's also badminton, basketball—and croquet!

John Ringling would have liked this place.

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