

Good afternoon everybody,

I am very honoured and proud to be standing here today in front of you all! This is by far, the biggest occasion I have ever spoken at, including being the speaker of my psychology graduation classes, on three occasions, as well as speaking on behalf of all past graduates when Palacky University, the second oldest University in the Czech Republic, celebrated the 70th anniversary of its re-establishment, two years ago.

To be fair and speak from deep in my heart, then I have to start from the beginning. As you all know I come from Prague, Czech Republic which originates from Czechoslovakia, where tennis is very popular. The interest and following for the game can even be compared to that of soccer and ice hockey – the two biggest sports in my country.

I am very proud to be part of the gallery of legends, who have contributed to the success of our sport in both my country and around the world. However, on this big occasion, I would like to remember some of the most influential names from Czechoslovakia, that made our sport so popular, thanks to their huge successes. I truly feel their role in my achievement of being inducted, into the International Tennis Hall of Fame, today.

The history of tennis in my country began more than a hundred years ago. The oldest club, the I. CLTK, celebrated its 125th anniversary this year. From these early days I specifically would like to mention the Kozeluh brothers, with Karel being a Professional World Tennis Champion and Hall of Famer while his brother, Jan, reached a top 10 world ranking.

After the Second World War, major name joining the world's best was Jaroslav Drobný and then in the seventies Jan Kodeš, both of them French Open and Wimbledon Singles Champions. I am also very happy to say that Jan joins my team of friends here today.

In naming just a few from the men's side of our Czech history, I must also add the name of Ivan Lendl, the multiple Grand Slam singles champion, whose forehand I tried to copy. Of course, all of these legends are fellow Hall of Famers!

I stand here as a representative of women's tennis and the most important, heart felt person for me is my Mum, Vera. Being a Wimbledon singles finalist and a top 5 World ranked player, she will forever be a tennis legend. Her overall abilities and knowledge of the sport resulted in her being one of the most recognized coaches in the world. Additionally, her kindness opened doors for myself in places that I visited for the first time, long after her. Thanks to her and the help of our father Cyril my brother Cynda and I got the best possible guardianship into the tennis world, from a very young age. From the first steps, the best technique as well as very tactical and reserved leadership resulted in both of us staying active in the professional sport for many, many years. I, as a matter fact, competed on the WTA tour for 18 years and my brother for 20 on the men's tour. Winning the three Grand Slams together tops it all!

After my Mum became the Czechoslovak national coach big names like Martina Navratilová, Hana Mandlíková and others went through her coaching leadership. She captained first Czechoslovak Federation Cup victory in 1975 as well as victories in both the Soisbault and Sofia Cups. Unfortunately for us all, Mum passed away at the very young age of 50 but I believe she is watching over us ever since and celebrates together with my family and I, at this moment.

Let's not forget the later generation. Unfortunately, Jana Novotna, Wimbledon Singles Champion, Hall of Famer and my successful doubles partner, so sadly passed away last year at the age of just 49.

Today we cross our fingers for players like Petra Kvitova, Wimbledon singles champ, Karolina Pliskova – our first Number one WTA player from the Czech Republic, and many more. I only hope that this great achievement of mine will inspire more young players and kids to find love in the sport of tennis and will bring more success into our small country of 10 million people.

Winning in tennis always brought a special kind of excitement inside me. The final victory brings feelings that cannot be described in words. Every such experience is a mixture of tension, emotions and relaxation.

Being a dynamic sport, tennis of course brings dramatic moments. My career had its ups and downs with all the various emotions that brings. In the tense stages of big key matches, specially the Grand Slams, we didn't have the Hawk Eye system and right now that is the main part of today's tennis I envy the most. I can still pin point those matches from my past

On one hand it was a lonely fight but at the same time there is always a kind of teamwork because alone you cannot practise, alone you cannot play doubles, alone it is much harder to make any decision or find the best solutions.

From this stand I would like to thank all the people that helped me to reach my highs in tennis. I already spoke about my Mum, and again my thanks to my father Cyril and my brother along with my coaches, managers, sponsors, sparing partners, the tennis clubs that allowed me to practice on their courts and many others.

I do not want to forget anybody, including the WTA players from the past, who made it possible with their courage to fight for a better life for women's tennis players, headed by Billie Jean King.

Last, but not least, thank you very much to the Hall of Fame Committee for the nominations, to all who gave me their vote and of course all the people behind the scenes here in Newport – who work very hard making arrangements, taking care of the museum exhibits, travels, accommodations and much more, making the induction days even more memorable.

I shall finish with a saying:

“Champions work on finding ways for improvements and not wasting their time trying to correct mistakes” – and I promise to always be heading this way in my life both around and outside of tennis.

Thank you.