

WWII Aviators Shaped Up in Embry-Riddle Tennis Clinics

In 1942, Don Budge, a national tennis champion, went to work for Embry-Riddle as athletic director. Just five years earlier, he had been named the world's No. 1 amateur tennis player, and, in 1938, he became the nation's first grand-slam winner, winning all four major tennis tournaments as an amateur.

When the outbreak of World War II interrupted professional sports that were international in focus, such as tennis, Budge came to Embry-Riddle to use his tennis skills to aid the war effort. He and his brother, Lloyd, sought to “promote war work efficiency of the company’s civilian employees and students’ greater physical fitness,” according to an article in *Fly Paper*, the school’s newsletter at the time.



“In the first of a series of tennis clinics which Don Budge, world professional tennis champ, will hold in his official capacity as Embry-Riddle director of athletics, these eager lads are learning the basic principles of forehand return.”

— from *Fly Paper*, Aug. 20, 1942

Believing that tennis would be of great value in training fliers and mechanics, Budge offered tennis clinics to students at Embry-Riddle’s Technical School in Miami, which trained airplane mechanics. The school also trained U.S. and British pilots at several other sites throughout Florida.

According to Budge, tennis “quickens the reflexes, as well as sharpens physical condition.” He and his brother also organized games of basketball, bowling and badminton.

Budge’s tenure at Embry-Riddle ended in 1943, when he enlisted in the U.S. Army. Nearly 20 years later, he was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame.

— By Steve Craft, assistant professor of social sciences,
Daytona Beach campus

Help Embry-Riddle Preserve Its Heritage

“A Heritage Moment” is a series about Embry-Riddle’s rich history, featuring memories, photographs, and mementoes submitted by alumni, friends, and others who have had a connection with the institution, from its earliest days as a flight school at Lunken Airport in Cincinnati, Ohio, through its emergence as a global university.

If you have stories to tell or artifacts, photos, or documents you’d like to donate for the Embry-Riddle Heritage Project, we want to hear from you today. Contact Robert Rockett at (386) 226-6026 or rockettr@erau.edu, or visit www.erau.edu/about/heritage.html.