



Mehdi Dhouib, TIA Alum

## A Feel Good Story

*Mehdi Dhouib, TIA Alum*

In the late summer of 2017, a young man named Mehdi Dhouib with a backpack and a racket travel bag arrived at JFK from the city of Tenerife, the quiet capital of the sunny Spanish Canary Islands. He was at the curb still scratching his arm from an *aguaviva* sting, those annoying jellyfish that show up in late August, when a person with a familiar face reached for his bag.

"Chacho! You look like you just came from the beach!" The tanned face of Tito, a fellow Canariones and tennis pro from TI Academy, was smiling ear to ear. "I can't believe you are still wearing your cholas...did you come straight from the beach!!" Mehdi casually replied, "There is nothing better than beach sandals for traveling, in fact for anything off a tennis court. Tito replied, "Too true my friend, but I hope you have a casual pair of trainers otherwise they will ask me who the beach bum is that I invited to play at our camp.

Tito put Mehdi's gear in the car and they headed for the Hutch. And so began a hastily arranged three-week trip to play at TIA's summer camp, or so it seemed....

After hitting balls with the pros, it was clear to everyone that this was a

special kid. His slow gait and calm demeanor camouflaged his game. He took the ball early and effortlessly, with a natural swing that was a joy to watch. Mehdi impressed so much he was signed up to play a men's open event at John McEnroe's academy at Randall's Island. Much to the chagrin of the seasoned players, and a bit to the surprise to the folks of TIA, this kid from Tenerife came in second at the tournament. The wheels were set in motion to change his plans for his senior year in high school and come to New York to train at TIA and finish high school in the states.

Lots of phone calls and a few conversations with his parents later, it was agreed that Mehdi would spend his senior year living with a family in Larchmont, attend Iona Prep, and train at TIA on scholarship. His parents' and his hope was to find a college for him in less than a year where he could attend on scholarship. Ideally, he would have had two years to build up a ranking and impress coaches, but a year was just enough. Playing a tournament every

weekend somewhere, and training after school during the week, he quickly made it into the top 20 in the East while taking out some of the top national players along the way. Many schools expressed interest, but in the end he wanted to stay near the friends and coaches at TIA, so he accepted a scholarship from Fairleigh Dickinson, a Division 1 school competing in the Northeast Conference.

Mehdi finished this past year as a freshman playing one singles and won rookie of the year for the Northeast Conference. His success on the court was matched by his success off, achieving top honors and becoming part of the international scholar's program. It is one of what we hope will be many success stories we can help write here at TIA. It is why we get up every day to be with your kids.

*By Cesar Andrade*



**TIA College Recruitment  
Services**

### IMPORTANT DATES

<b>July 5 - July 26</b>	<a href="#">TIA USTA Junior Tournaments</a>
<b>Now - Aug. 30</b>	<a href="#">Junior Summer Camp</a>
<b>September 3 - 15</b>	<b>TIA Closed</b>
<b>September 16</b>	Indoor Season Begins

## What's The TIA Difference? A Message from Coach Cesar



## INDOOR 2019 - 2020 SEASON

### JUNIOR ACADEMY PROGRAMS 2019 - 2020

**REGI  
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10U & JUNIOR ACADEMY

September 16 - June 21  
35 weeks

### ADULT ACADEMY PROGRAMS 2019 - 2020

**REGI  
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ADULT ACADEMY & PVT GROUPS

September 16 - May 24  
32 weeks

**REGI  
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HIGH PERFORMANCE ACADEMY

September 16 - June 21  
35 weeks

**REGI  
STER**

PRIVATE COACHING

September 16 - May 24  
32 weeks

**REGI  
STER**

PRIVATE COACHING

September 16 - June 21  
35 weeks



### My College Recruiting Experience

By Erika Vujnovich

Tennis opened many doors for me growing up and continues to do so today in the workplace. Potential employers I meet, review my resume and see that I played college tennis and taught tennis after school. This inevitably becomes the focus of our conversation. Something I am truly proud to discuss.

I grew up on the courts and trained at a high profile academy on Long Island, dedicating my time to the sport and academics. My goal was to play high-level tennis and attend a good school post graduation. Competition was fierce in my town. Whether you were competing in academics or athletics, the ultimate goal was to get into a top school after graduation. This warrants its own chapter, but as you can imagine growing up in this environment was not easy. The memories and emotions of success as well as rejection take me back to being a teenager – *following a dream to play collegiate tennis.*

Fast forward to Junior and Senior years of high school and the college recruitment process begins! And let me just say...it was a lot of fun!

The tears and frustration I often experienced growing up and playing

tennis were now well worth it. I was appreciated, I was wanted, and I was ready for my future.

During this exciting time, I spoke to and visited with coaches from several universities. I even had the opportunity to spend a weekend at a school to learn the ropes from members of the tennis team. This is where things got a bit tricky and lessons were learned; which I only hope I can pass along to others.

Just like most aspiring freshmen, the college application process was new and while it was exciting, it was also overwhelming. During my discussions with coaches, there was one coach in particular who was extremely enthusiastic about having me join the tennis team. As we continued to speak about the future, I was told by the coach that "there was no need to apply to any other schools." They were

looking forward to me joining the tennis team in the Fall. I therefore jumped at the opportunity to apply early. I made it. Why even apply anywhere else? I was in! My future was set! As I later found out, this was not the best decision made.

*(continued on page 4)*



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### *My College Recruiting Experience*

*(continued from page 3)*

As the weeks passed and I waited for “the” acceptance letter in the mail (yes, letters were sent by actual mail back then) I stopped pursuing other opportunities. However, when the day came and the letter arrived, my world fell apart. I didn’t get into my dream school. In fact, I didn’t even get wait listed; I was rejected!

When I finally calmed down and called the coach who had promised me the world, the only explanation I received was, “sorry, the school decided to take a different direction this year with acceptances.” Sorry? What? All I could think about were the other choices I let slip away. And that I had a lot of work ahead to submit applications by the deadlines.

Ultimately, things worked out for me as I was torn between two great schools and two reputable tennis

teams: Tufts University and Brown University. I went from devastation to having a really good problem. And more importantly, I achieved my goal to play collegiate tennis!

I certainly don’t want to scare anyone about the recruitment process but rather make people aware that they must look out for their own interests and leave all options open as they navigate through the process. I truly believe that everything happens for a reason. Flashback to the rejection letter and realizing that today is exactly where I’m meant to be. In the end, things work out and I wish only the best for all graduating Tennis Innovators Academy students getting ready for this awesome journey!



**TIA College Recruitment Services**



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