



## Cover Letter:

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**Subject: Application for Tennis Instruction and Facility Operations Manager at Rob Leake Park**

Dear Alex Farned,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic interest in the Tennis Instruction and Facility Operations Manager position at Rob Leake Park. With a comprehensive background that seamlessly integrates strong management skills, expert tennis program development, and efficient facility operations, I am confident in my ability to drive growth, enhance customer satisfaction, and ensure the successful, smooth operation of your tennis center.

My experience aligns perfectly with the multi-faceted requirements of this role, encompassing both the instructional and operational pillars:

- **Management & Operations:** I possess proven expertise as a team leader and manager, effectively overseeing all aspects of facility use, including scheduling, maintenance coordination, and staff supervision. My experience ensures that the facility runs efficiently, safely, and is maximally utilized.
- **Program Development & Growth:** I have demonstrated a history of development and growth of innovative tennis programs, leagues, and tournaments, successfully accommodating all skill levels and age groups. My focus is on creating dynamic, engaging instruction that increases participation and retention.
- **Sales & Customer Service:** I excel at building strong relationships and leveraging exceptional customer service skills to drive sales of lessons, memberships, and court reservations. I am committed to creating a welcoming and professional environment for all patrons.
- **Community Engagement:** My successful work with the Tupelo Tennis Association and Northeast MS Tennis Association highlights my ability to connect the facility with the broader local community, fostering partnerships and expanding the reach of tennis programs.
- **Event Coordination:** I have extensive experience in coordinating leagues and tournaments, managing logistics from registration and scheduling to promotion and execution, ensuring high-quality, memorable competitive experiences.

I am eager to leverage my comprehensive skill set—from strategic program creation to the day-to-day coordination of facility use—to benefit Rob Leake Park. I am committed to achieving a high standard of operational excellence while fostering a vibrant, growth-oriented tennis community.

Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to the opportunity to discuss how my strong leadership and passion for tennis can contribute significantly to your team's continued success.

Sincerely,  
  
Daniel Ponders

## Experience and Qualifications:

This document outlines extensive experience in tennis leadership, programming, and community development, demonstrating a proven track record of successful program management, high-level volunteer coordination, and dedication to the sport.

### I. Professional Certifications and Organizational Membership

A foundation of professional training and long-standing commitment to local and national tennis organizations.

Organization	Role/Status	Dates/Duration	Key Takeaways
United States Professional Tennis Association (USPTA)	Certified	Current	Certified teaching professional ensuring adherence to best practices in instruction and program delivery.
"USTA Safe Play"	Certified	Current	Ensures compliance with USTA's stringent safety and well-being standards for all participants, particularly youth.
Tupelo Tennis Association (TTA)	President	2001 - Current	Long-term engagement and commitment to the local tennis community and its development.
Northeast MS Community Tennis Association (NMSTA)	Member	2018 - Current	Active participation in regional efforts to promote and grow tennis access across Northeast Mississippi.

## II. High-Level Leadership and Governance Roles

Demonstrated ability to lead at the sectional and local levels, managing volunteer teams and driving strategic initiatives within the USTA structure. United States Tennis Association (USTA) Roles

Role	Organization/Area	Dates/Duration	Recognition & Responsibilities
<b>USTA Local League Coordinator</b>	USTA Northeast Mississippi	2018 – Present (7+ Years)	<p>Directly responsible for organizing, promoting, and administering USTA Adult League play for the region, managing team captains, scheduling, and ensuring adherence to USTA rules. Increased adult membership from approximately 850 players to approximately 2,000 players. Coordinated and staffed site desks for numerous state championship tournaments.</p> <p><b>Awarded Mississippi's Local League Coordinator of the Year in 2021</b> in recognition of outstanding performance, participation growth, and administrative efficiency.</p>
<b>USTA MS Board of Directors</b>	USTA Section/District	Current	Actively contributing to the strategic direction, policy-making, and financial oversight of the sectional or district USTA body. This role involves fiduciary duty and high-level decision-making for regional tennis development.
<b>USTA MS Tennis Ambassador</b>	Northeast Mississippi	2019 - Current	Served as an official representative and advocate for the USTA mission, promoting membership, programming, and community engagement initiatives throughout the assigned territory.
<b>USTA MS Community Coordinator - Tupelo</b>	USTA Local Section	2004 – 2006	Managed and facilitated the execution of USTA programs at the grassroots level, specifically focusing on introducing tennis to diverse communities and schools.

### III. Program Development and Management Experience

#### Northeast MS Tennis Academy

- **Adult Programs Director: (2022 – 2025)**
  - **Scope:** Full responsibility for the design, budgeting, marketing, and execution of comprehensive adult tennis programming.
  - **Program Success:** Successfully increased adult participation through the creation of varied offerings, including instructional clinics (beginner to advanced), competitive flex leagues, social round-robins, team-based training sessions and tournaments.
  - **Oversight:** Managed and coached adult programs and ensured high-quality and engaging instruction. Directed and coordinated numerous local, district and state tournaments and championships.

#### ICC Health, Physical Education & Recreational Learning Advisory Board

- **Advisory Board Member: (Current)**
  - **Advisory Role:** Provides professional expertise on current trends and needs in physical education and recreational sports to the college board.
  - **Impact:** Influences the development of curriculum and community engagement strategies related to health and wellness, ensuring that recreational sports programming meets contemporary educational and community standards.

## Tennis Program and Operations Plan:

This plan outlines the instructional programs, player pathways, and operational strategies for a comprehensive tennis program, targeting juniors and adults of all skill levels, including adaptive and high-performance segments, alongside community engagement and marketing initiatives.

### I. Instructional Programs and Player Pathway

Offer a structured pathway for juniors and adults, ensuring progression and development at every stage.

#### A. Junior Pathway (Ages 4-18)

The Junior Pathway follows the USA's American Development Model (ADM) with age-appropriate equipment and court sizes.

##### 1. Red Ball Program (Ages 4-7)

Focus	Equipment	Court Size
Hand-eye coordination, movement, basic strikes	Red foam or felt balls, small racquets	36 ft. court
Group classes meet two-three times per week.		

##### 2. Orange Ball Program (Ages 8-10)

Focus	Equipment	Court Size
Rallying skills, basic tactics, serving development	Orange low-compression balls	60 ft. court
Group classes, introduction to match play.		

##### 3. Green Ball Program (Ages 11-12)

Focus	Equipment	Court Size
Advanced technique, court coverage, scoring	Green dot low-compression balls	Full court (78 ft.)

Focus	Equipment	Court Size
Focus on competitive play, preparation for yellow ball.		

#### 4. Yellow Ball (Ages 13+)

This stage transitions into the High Performance or Intermediate/Beginner Academies.

#### B. Adult Pathway (Ages 18+)

Program	Target Skill Level	Format
Beginner Clinics	New players, focus on fundamentals	Group lessons, 1.0-2.5 NTRP
Intermediate Clinics	Developing players, focus on strategy and technique refinement	Group lessons, 3.0-4.0 NTRP
Advanced Clinics	High-level players, focus on match tactics and drills	Group lessons, 4.5+ NTRP
Adult Leagues	Competitive match play	Singles, Doubles, Mixed, USTA & in-house
Private/Semi-Private Lessons	Individualized instruction for all ages and levels	Scheduled directly with a coach

## II. Specialized Instruction

### A. High Performance Tennis Academy

This program is for elite junior players committed to collegiate or professional tennis.

- Intense, daily training sessions
- Fitness and mental toughness coaching
- Tournament scheduling and travel support
- Curriculum:

### B. Intermediate and Beginner Junior Tennis Academies

Designed for juniors seeking to advance from Green Ball or Yellow Ball, but not yet ready for High Performance.

- Structured skill-building classes

- Weekly match play opportunities

### C. Adaptive Tennis - Red Ball for Adults

Adaptive Tennis - A dedicated program for players with physical or intellectual disabilities.

- Focus on mobility, coordination, and social engagement.
- Special equipment and court size used.

Red Ball for Adults uses the same equipment and court size as Adaptive Tennis. It is a fun social experience designed to bring new players to your courts and have them playing the game in 10 minutes.

## III. Player Retention and Recruitment

### A. Retention of Players

1. **High-Quality Instruction:** Consistent, professional coaching across all programs.
2. **Community Building:** Organize social events, such as mixers and local leagues.
3. **Feedback Mechanism:** Annual player and parent surveys.

### B. New Player Recruitment

1. **Introductory Programs:** "Introduction to Tennis" for juniors and adults.
2. **Partnering:** Collaborate with local schools and youth organizations.

## IV. Marketing and Community Engagement

### A. Marketing Strategy

- **Social Media:** Weekly content on Instagram and Facebook (drills, player spotlights).
- **Website:** Maintain an up-to-date, user-friendly website with clear program information..
- **Email Newsletter:** Weekly updates on programs, leagues, and events.

### B. Japanese Tennis Community Outreach

Committed to welcoming and serving the local Japanese community.

- Develop program materials and signage in Japanese.
- Host a dedicated Japan-focused Tennis program to accommodate the local Japanese tennis community.
- Bilingual coach to serve as a community liaison.

## V. Tournaments and Event Management

### A. Annual Tournament Schedule

Host a series of competitive events for juniors and adults:

- **Local Tournaments:** In-house tournaments for all NTRP levels.
- **Junior Tournaments:** Annual USTA-sanctioned junior tournaments.
- **State Championship Tournaments:** Maintain the two USTA State Championship tournaments that we currently host in Tupelo (55+ Adult Spring Championship and the Mixed Doubles Championship). Continue to foster the great relationships that we have with the USTA State League Coordinator and USTA Adult League Committee.

### B. Sectional Bidding Initiative

Submit a bid to host a Southern Sectional Tournament, capitalizing on our facilities and organizational capabilities. Tupelo currently has the accommodations to host the 55+ Adult Southern Sectional Tournament. Participants from nine southern states attend Southern Sectional Championships.

### Staffing Plan For Rob Leake Tennis Facility:

This document outlines the staffing plan for Rob Leake Park Tennis, detailing the roles, responsibilities, and relevant certifications/ratings for each key staff member.

#### Staff Roles and Personnel

Staff Member	USTA Rating	Role	Key Responsibilities/Certifications
Daniel Pounders	4.5	Adult and Junior Program Director, Facility Director	Manage the overall tennis program and facility operations. Organize and coordinate local tennis leagues and social mixers. Direct and execute tournaments for both junior and adult players. Assist in the design and delivery of all programs tailored for adult and junior participants.
Elise Otis	3.5	Junior and Adult Programs Coordinator	Instructional focus will be on junior programs (Red Ball, Orange Ball, and Green Ball levels) and beginner adult instruction.
Adam Holley	4.5	Junior and Adult Programs Coordinator	<p><b>Junior Development:</b> Focus on Red Ball, Orange Ball, and Green Ball progression, encompassing standard junior development, high-performance classes, and organized matchplay.</p> <p><b>Adult Programs:</b> Includes Cardio Tennis and private and group lessons tailored for all adult skill levels.</p> <p><b>USPTA and USTA Safeplay certified</b></p>
Brandon Harris	4.5	Junior and Adult Programs Coordinator	<p><b>Junior Development:</b> Classes focusing on Red Ball, Orange Ball, and Green Ball levels. Specialized classes for advanced juniors.</p> <p><b>Adult Programming:</b> Private and group lessons available for all skill levels.</p>
Yumi Hanson	5.0	Junior and Adult Programs Coordinator	Focus on expanding the Japanese outreach initiative and providing junior and adult program instruction for all skill levels.

Dennis Otono will also be included under our staffing plan. The extent of his role and responsibilities will depend on the level of involvement he chooses.

## **Financial Proposal: Rob Leake Park Tennis Center:**

This document outlines the financial and operational proposal for the continued management and improvement of the Rob Leake Park Tennis Center.

### **Financial Commitment**

#### **Proposed Financial Arrangement: Direct Monthly Payment**

In alignment with the terms of the contract agreement for the Rob Leake Park Tennis Center, I formally propose a financial model based on a direct monthly payment to the City of Tupelo.

This proposal guarantees a fixed monthly fee of **\$600.00**, payable directly to the City of Tupelo's finance department.

This direct monthly payment will commence upon the effective date of the signed contract and will remain the standard rate for the *entire duration* of the executed agreement, ensuring predictability and stability throughout the contractual period.

### **Operational Provisions and Equipment**

Commitment to providing all necessary teaching tools and equipment required for the operation of the tennis center and its programs. This ensures that the facility is immediately operational and fully equipped for all instructional and recreational activities.

### **Insurance and Liability**

To protect the interests of all parties, I shall maintain comprehensive general liability insurance with the following minimum coverage:

- **\$1,000,000.00** Combined Single Limit per Occurrence for bodily injury, personal injury, and property damage.

Provide the City of Tupelo with prompt proof of insurability and a Certificate of Insurance before the commencement of the contract and upon any renewal.

### **Capital Improvements and Management**

Propose a collaborative approach to capital improvements at the Rob Leake Park Tennis Center.

1. **Collaboration:** Work directly with the City of Tupelo and the Tupelo Tennis Association to identify and plan all necessary capital improvements.
2. **Management and Supervision:** All improvements shall be made solely under the City of Tupelo's management and supervision.
3. **Ownership:** All improvements made to the facility will belong to the City of Tupelo.

## **Economic Impact and Events**

Committed to playing a significant role in the economic impact of the City of Tupelo. We will achieve this by:

- **Maintain Current Tournament:** Consistently submit bids to USTA every two years with the goal of hosting numerous state championships at the Rob Leake Park Tennis Center.
- **Developing New Events:** Boost economic activity and visitor attraction for the City by actively seeking and hosting new tournaments and events. Primary targets include Junior tournaments and Adult Southern USTA Sectional tournaments.
- **Leagues and Clinics:** The existing leagues and clinics consistently attract players who travel from as far as 75 miles away. Continue growing the radius of our player base. While the economic impact may be less dramatic than a sectional tournament, our current programs are undeniably contributing to the local economy.

### Professional References:

The following table provides the names, titles, and contact information for professional references.

Name	Title/Affiliation	Address	Phone	Email
Russell Dendy	USTA MS Executive Director	248 Honours Dr Madison, MS 39110	(662)-456-6165	russelld@mstennis.com
David Kimball	USTA MS Board of Directors - President	113 Westlake Dr Brandon, MS 39047	(318)-364-6689	davidkimball06@gmail.com
Lindsey Brashier	USTA MS - Director of Adult League	3311 North State St Jackson, MS 39216	(901)-488-3366	lindseyb@mstennis.com
Ben Galjour	Adult Tennis Participant	1111 Lakeshire Dr Tupelo, MS 38804	(662)-397-0492	bengaljour@aol.com
Amanda Gholson	Parent of Student Athlete	5580 Lakefront Drive Tupelo, MS 38801	(662)-322-8921	amanda@88westagency.com

## Additional Information:

### Professional Experience

With over 23 years of experience in sales and 9+ years experience in customer service, I bring strong management and interpersonal skills that are vital for community growth and engagement.

Area	Duration	Focus
Sales Experience	23+ years	Regional Sales Manager. Managed sales department of 20+ employees.
Customer Service Experience	9+ years	Managed and directed customer service operations for over a decade as Customer Service Manager in the Hospitality industry, successfully streamlining service processes and fostering robust customer relationships.

### Tennis Community Dedication

My involvement with the Tupelo Tennis Association (TTA) spans over 25 years, demonstrating a long-term commitment to the sport locally.

I am deeply connected with the local and state tennis community, allowing for effective coordination and outreach. This involvement is extensive, encompassing various roles and organizations.

### Local and Community Engagement:

At the local level, I actively participate in and support community tennis initiatives. This includes organizing local tournaments and leagues, and working closely with local parks and recreation departments in Northeast MS to promote facility use and access. My strong relationships with local club professionals and dedicated amateur players provide a direct pipeline for communication and collaboration on grassroots development.

### State-Level Involvement and Networking:

On a state-wide basis, I maintain active membership and involvement with USTA. My networking within this organization gives me firsthand knowledge of statewide strategic goals, funding opportunities, and promotional campaigns. I regularly attend state and regional meetings and workshops, ensuring that my efforts align with the broader goals of growing the sport across the state and facilitating effective resource sharing between different tennis markets.

### **League and Event Coordination**

I have significant, hands-on experience in coordinating tennis activities:

- **Extensive Experience:** More than 20 years of experience in the direction and coordination of various tennis leagues, events, and tournaments.
- **Scope:** Managed activities across local, state, and regional levels.
- **Community Growth:** My goal is to be an active part of the continued growth of tennis and the entire tennis community.

**Tupelo Tennis is truly my tennis family, and I am passionate about its future success.**