Athlete Biographies: Arthur Ashe

b. 1943, d. 1993

In 1968 he became the first African American tennis player to win a major men's tennis title, the U.S. National Amateur Singles competition. Also that year he won the U.S. Open and was the first African American to play on the U.S. Davis Cup team. He turned professional and won the Australian Open in 1970 and Wimbledon in 1975. He suffered a mild heart attack, had triple bypass surgery and retired from competitive tennis. He later had additional heart bypass surgery, which is when he contracted AIDS from a blood transfusion. He died 10 months later from AIDS-related infections. In 1997, a new tennis stadium in Flushing Meadows, N.Y., was named for him.

Arthur Ashe took a role in the political arena in opposing the Bush administration's policy toward Haitian refugees, and in projects such as demonstrations against apartheid in South Africa. The various programs he supported were combined into four categories under the Arthur Ashe Foundation. Funding and assistance are granted to programs that fall under: 1) education and literacy, 2) learner athletes and mentoring, 3) at-risk youth/inner city tennis, and, 4) public health.