

Heart Healthy

Fitness expert Denise Austin has made Cardio Tennis part of her routine.

>>> By Kristen Daley

FOR DENISE AUSTIN, it was only a matter of time before she would find a way to combine her expertise in fitness with her family's love of tennis. The health and fitness expert is married to former tennis pro Jeff Austin and sister-in-law to Hall-of-Famer Tracy Austin, so naturally, Cardio Tennis was a perfect fit.

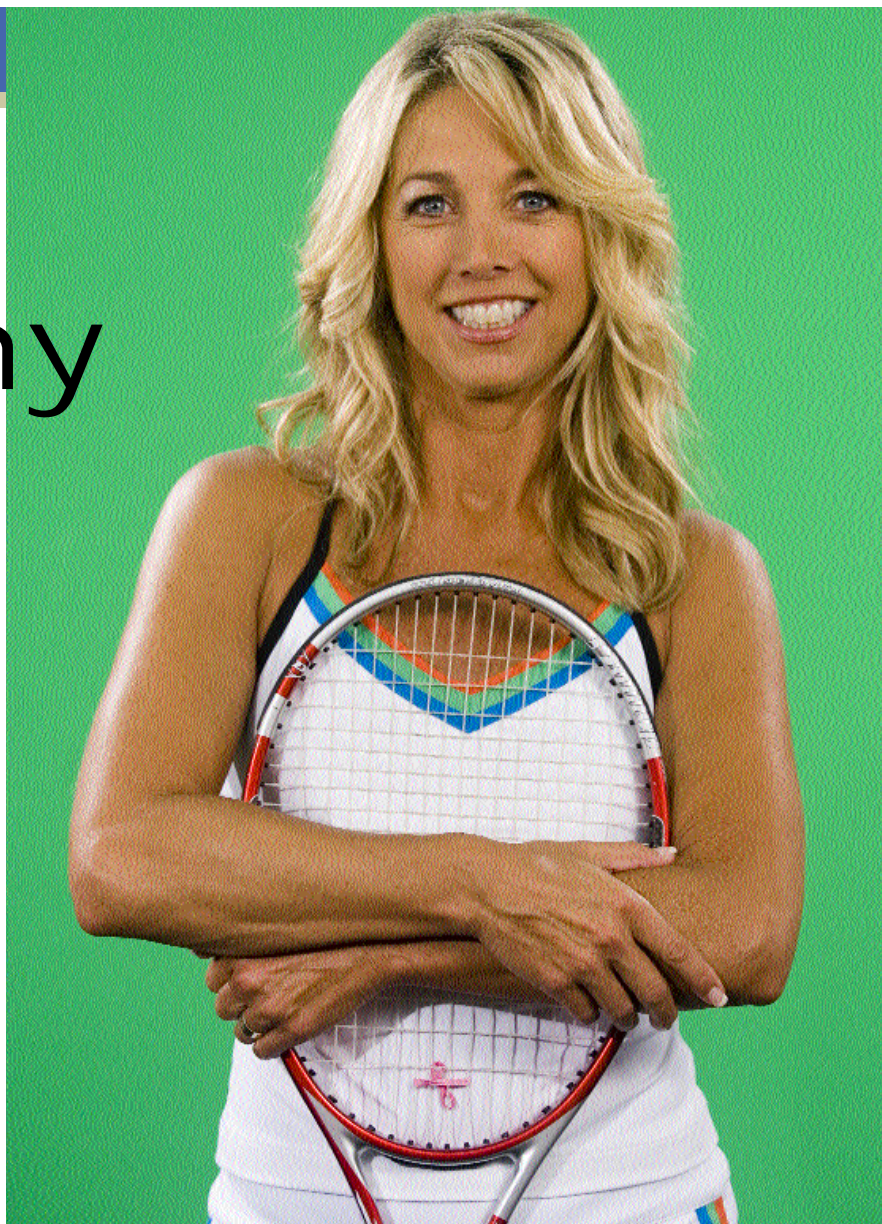
"It's such a great way to exercise," says Denise Austin, 48. "You don't really realize that an hour has gone by and you've just had a great fat-burning workout. And you're improving your tennis skills, too."

As the Cardio Tennis spokesperson, Austin participated in the unveiling of the program at the USTA National Tennis Center during the first week of the US Open. After a morning demonstration of the drill- and play-based exercise program, she was pumped and ready to take the court again just hours later. With a smile on her face and her feet constantly moving, she worked up a sweat with tennis teaching pros who had come from across the country for the debut of Cardio Tennis.

"Your heart is a muscle; you've got to work it out three to four times a week," says Austin. "Cardio Tennis is one of the most wonderful ways to stay healthy and stay fit." (To find a Cardio Tennis site in your area, visit www.CardioTennis.com.)

Austin spends 30 minutes a day, at least three days a week, doing some form of cardiovascular exercise. Since taking Cardio Tennis classes with Michele Krause, the Tennis Industry Association's Cardio Tennis manager, Austin says she and her husband have been re-creating the program on their home tennis court once a week. Jeff himself can be found on the courts at least three times a week. "Denise had never played tennis at all before she met me," he explains. Today, he says, she is a "nice club-level tennis player."

The couple have passed on their appreciation for the game to their daughters, Kelly, 14, and Katie, 11. "It's fun to have a sport



>> THE SPIN

Denise Austin

Plays: Right-handed

Favorite game: Singles

Favorite surface: Hard court

Best shot: Two-handed backhand


Favorite player: Roger Federer

that the whole family can enjoy together," says Denise. "And it's a lifetime sport."

Austin has spent 25 years promoting health and fitness to the nation, selling 20 million exercise videos. Her workouts have been featured on TV for two decades, and she has written a number of books on fitness. "My ultimate goal is to get America fit and get people exercising more," she says.

A gymnast beginning at age 12, Austin earned an athletic scholarship to the University of Arizona, where she received a degree in exercise physiology in 1979. In the early 1980s, she was introduced to fitness expert Jack LaLanne, becoming a co-host on his exercise show. Denise currently has two shows of her own on the Lifetime network.

"It's become such a wonderful career," says Denise. "I just love to get people energized about fitness, so that's why Cardio Tennis is so fun. It's part of my family now. It's part of what I do."

"We need to get the word out. Cardio Tennis is another great way to get a better body and feel good. I'm all about getting people to feel better." 

CAROLIN LEVY