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## Hunterdon tennis club owner headed to Wimbledon after navigating ticket maze

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Tennis fans from around the world dream of seeing their favorite stars play live at the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club in England, but few actually win the privilege of procuring tickets to the annual Grand Slam tournament known as Wimbledon.

Unlike its American counterpart, the U.S. Open, Wimbledon is smaller, doesn't have night matches and creates such a demand for tickets that prices routinely soar into the tens of thousands of dollars.

That hasn't deterred Ken Schapiro, a managing partner of Courtside Racquet Club, who regularly attends the U.S. Open and has dreamed of "crossing the pond" to see his preferred players, 2008 Wimbledon champion Rafael Nadal and doubles aces Bob and Mike Bryan.

Schapiro wove his way through the complicated ticket maze and has tickets to this year's tournament, which begins Monday (June 21) and runs through July 4.

"I've never been to Wimbledon, so I've really had to read up on this process," said Schapiro, an Alexandria Township native who bought the tickets as part of an anniversary present for his wife. "I'm a big tennis fan, but my wife is a really big tennis fan. It's been her dream to go to Wimbledon, the French (Open) and Australia (for the Australian Open) to complete the Grand Slam."

Getting tickets to Wimbledon isn't as easy as logging onto StubHub or Ticketmaster. The primary methods of ticket acquisition include a public lottery, an invitation from one of the tournament's corporate sponsors or a package deal through one of the tournament's two official tour operators.

Fans also can queue, or wait in line, on the morning of each day's events, but there are a limited amount of tickets available for sale.

There even is a secondary debenture market, in which five-year ticket bonds are issued to fortunate ... and wealthy ... winners. Those tickets then can be sold to the public and often go for anywhere from \$8,600 to \$72,000.

Schapiro considered all of those routes before settling on trying his luck with one of the tour companies.

He cashed in on tickets for the Thursday, Friday and Saturday sessions during the first week of the tournament as part of a Wednesday-through-Tuesday tour, but declined to say how much he paid.

"It's going to be worth it, and the beauty of today is you don't have to do it live or on the telephone," said Schapiro, who bought Courtside Racquet Club ... which has more than 1,000 members ... in 1996. "You just have to know where to look."

Schapiro also hopes to conduct some business while in England, talking with former player and

current TV analyst Justin Gimelstob about bringing a professional event to Courtside Racquet Club this winter.

"I can't give any details about it yet, but we're looking at bringing some top players here," said Schapiro, who played at the club when he was a student at Hunterdon Central Regional High School in Raritan Township. "It's something to watch out for."

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Read more about Courtside Racquet Club and its summer programs by visiting the Heartbeats blog at <http://blogs.mycentraljersey.com/heartbeats> or on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/HeartbeatsMCJ>.

#### ON THE WEB

Courtside Racquet Club, [www.courtsideracquet.com](http://www.courtsideracquet.com)

Wimbledon, [www.wimbledon.org](http://www.wimbledon.org)