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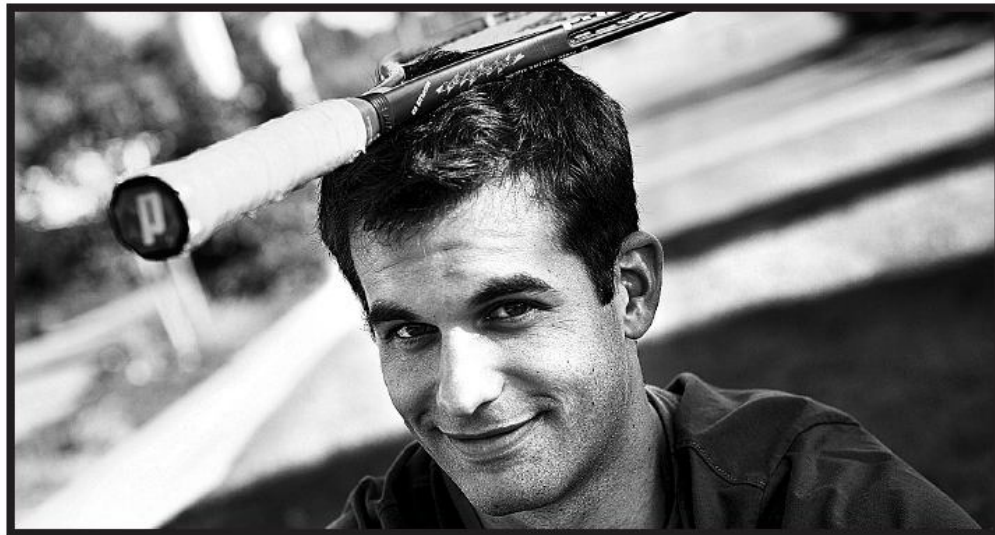
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CUE & A



Michael Kosta, a former professional tennis player who now makes his living on the stage, will perform this weekend at Jukebox Comedy Club, 3527 W. Farmington Road.

Courting a career in comedy

Michael Kosta leaves the tennis court behind to fulfill dream of making people laugh

Michael Kosta, had he not quit his job as a professional tennis player, would be spending his work days on a court in tennis whites, treating his body as a temple. Instead, he traded that life for one of a comedian. It's a nocturnal job, weekends are required. Drinks are on the house, and he often sleeps in hotels and spends countless hours in transit.

It might seem like a peculiar career move to some, but Kosta says the job fits his personality. He loves to mingle with his audience and make people laugh.

"Anyone who knows anything about me knows I want to follow my dreams," said Kosta, who moved to Los Angeles in 2007 to pursue a career in comedy. Kosta, a native of Ann Arbor, Mich., played tennis at the University of Illinois from 1998 to 2002, then played professionally for three years. He also coached tennis at the University of Michigan. While he spent his daytime hours on the court, he spent evenings on stage.

"All the while I was doing stand-up comedy as a hobby, and then a lot of opportunities developed and I decided to do it full time," said Kosta, 30, who performs this weekend at Jukebox Comedy Club. We checked in with the tennis-pro-turned-jokester before he darts into town.

— Danielle Hatch

What made you decide to make the transition from tennis

to comedy?

I was starting to get paid to do comedy. These were like \$20 to \$100 a night type things. It started to conflict with my coaching duties at Michigan; we would have recruits on the weekends, and I would have a comedy offer for the weekend, and I would have to do the tennis, but I didn't want to anymore. I wanted to pursue comedy, it was something I had always dreamed of doing.

How is the life of a comedian different from your previous career?

It's the same thing, except I'm encouraged to drink and smoke now.

You would never think comedy and tennis have similarities, but they do. For one, you're out there all by yourself. You can do terrible on the tennis court, you can do terrible on the stage, and sometimes it is your fault, and sometimes it isn't your fault.

The difference is, now as a comic, I have to force myself to eat well, work out and stay in shape. I get to the comedy club, and you're encouraged to drink. I always liked drinking anyways, so that wasn't that hard of a lifestyle to adapt to.

But, it's a party. My job is to entertain people on Friday and Saturday nights and make it fun for them.

How did you get into comedy initially?

I'm the youngest of four kids, and I think that actually had a tremendous amount to do with it. Eighty percent of stand-up comics I know and work with are the youngest in big families.

As soon as I started doing stand-up, everything started making sense. I was always the one speaking up in class, my parents were always telling me to stop talking. I think it's a complete desire for attention. If you're from a big family like I am, we were all sharing rooms and bathrooms. There's just a lot of humor in a big family, and you observe that and it becomes who you are.

What's the content of your show?

My act ranges anywhere from PG-13 to rated R. I talk a lot about my family, getting picked on by my brothers, my parents getting older and my mom never accepting my profession as a comic — she still can't wait for me to quit. And then I get in a lot about dating.

Are you working on any projects?

We shot a pilot last year which didn't sell, so we don't have to mention that.

What was it called?

It was called "America's Best." I went around competing in obscure events, kind of like "Recreation Nation," which did make it to air. We shot the pilot at the National Walk the Plank Championships in Key West, Fla. I had to dress as a pirate and there was a whole crowd of people. We were on an old pirate ship in the middle of the ocean, there were judges, and you have to walk the plank and fall into the ocean, it's a competitive event. There were judges with certain criteria: your overall style, your cos-

tume, your plea, your splash.

TV is very challenging, it's ruled by committee. I was a co-producer, but there was another producer, then the production company and the networks. That's why I love stand-up, because it's me. I get to decide what's in and what's out.

I saw a video on YouTube where you were approaching shoppers at the Mall of America. What prompted you to turn up there?

I think what prompts that is I'm stuck in a Ramada Inn for five straight days and I'm about to shoot myself.

Those videos are obviously not my comedy show, but it gives people a good look at who I am. I like to get to know the towns I'm in, and I like to get to know the people I'm around. In New Orleans I went to a Jazz Fest, and in Peoria — I don't know what I'd do in Peoria, I guess I would go to the casino, huh?

Or Big Al's. They probably wouldn't let you bring a camera in, though.

I don't think the casino would, either. Trust me, if the strip club would let me bring a camera in, I think I would've already shot it.

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Michael Kosta will perform this weekend at Jukebox Comedy Club, for shows at 8 p.m. Thursday (following the club's Pro-Am Showcase) and at 8 and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Tickets are \$14 with credit cards, \$13 with cash, except for Thursday's show and Friday's late show, which are \$10 with cash. Call 673-5853 or visit JukeboxComedy.com.