

Interview with Jillian O'Neill - 2006

Saturday, April 15, 2006

Coach: Martin Simon (not present)

Q: What first attracted you to the game of tennis?

A: I started when I was six years old, mostly because my brother was playing street tennis. I loved it right from the start.

Q: At what age did you specialize in tennis?

A: I played ringette and soccer when I first started in tennis but by the age of 8 I started focusing more on my tennis. I prefer that it's an individual sport, the competition is great.

Q: Describe your relationship with your coach.

A: We are complete opposites; I am very high energy and outgoing he is so easy going. It's a good combination, he keeps me from getting too excited and he knows when to push me in practices.

Q: What does your coach do to keep you motivated?

A: He doesn't really need to do much, I motivate myself. I think in this sport, as a player you have to motivate yourself. No one else can do it for you. Sometimes in practice though, I get tired and he pushes me. I think that has made me tougher and more of a competitor.

Q: How has your coach's role changed over the years?

A: When I was starting out he had to manage everything, like making sure I didn't forget to get my racquets strung. I really depended on him. Now he makes me do more on my own, to teach me to be more self dependant. After all when I'm on the court I'm all alone and I have to be able to coach myself.

Q: What would you say is your coach's greatest strength?

A: Technically he is great. We spend a lot of practice time focusing on technique.

Q: Describe a good practice.

A: There has to be enough volume, I want to hit a lot of balls. Sometimes I play weaker players and it's difficult to get enough shots or get pushed hard enough.

Q: Describe your weekly training routine.

A: I do fitness everyday during the week, Mondays I focus on agility, Tuesday and Thursday I do Cardio, Wednesday and Friday I do Strength training. I also practice twice a day. I also do fitness on my own in the morning.

Q: How do you deal with the pressures of being a number one seed in a big tournament like Nationals?

A: It just depends on how you look at it. I don't see the pressure of what everyone else expects, I just focus on what I have to do. I always remind myself before a match to take the ball early and be aggressive.

Q: How does your coach help you prepare?

A: I usually meet with him before a match and we talk strategy. We try to focus more on what I have to do then what my opponent does.

Q: How do you prepare yourself mentally?

A: I like to listen to music and take some quiet time to myself.

Q: What do you think every coach should do?

A: Be positive and make tennis fun, especially for the young kids.

Q: What do you think every coach shouldn't do?

A: I hate when coaches give negative energy on the side-line. I see a lot of other coaches do that to their players and it really brings them down. It usually gives me the advantage.

Q: What is the biggest thing you have gained through tennis?

A: Confidence.