

MY SPORT TESNI EVANS

Four-time Welsh national champion Tesni Evans, a recent semi-finalist in the W50 Wadi Degla Open, tells Mike Dale about her life on and off court.

What is your earliest squash memory?

When I lived in Cardiff, Cassie Jackman and Sarah Fitz-Gerald visited our club to do an exhibition and play with members. I was about eight at the time and it was just amazing and so exciting to see them playing. I had a picture with them both!

How did you first become involved in squash?

Mainly because of my dad. He worked for Squash Wales and played all the time, so from a very young age I was at the club playing or watching every night after school. He's taught me everything on the squash court that I know really. He still coaches me to this day; his influence couldn't have been bigger!

If you'd never become a squash player, what do you think you'd be doing now?

Good question! I don't actually know. I'm not really good at anything else! I liked languages and psychology, so I would probably have stayed on at school to do one of those. I thought about being a vet, but I would have been too scared to put animals down!

What has been the most memorable moment of your career so far?

Winning the Sharm El Sheikh Open last year in Egypt. It was my first tour title (my only one) and I beat a few players who were ranked above me at the time. It gave me so much confidence and belief.

What's been your worst moment so far as a pro?

At the British National Championships in 2013 I tore my ankle ligaments playing Sarah Kippax in the first round. I had never had a bad injury before and it was a very painful experience! The pain, not being able to do anything except sit on the couch and having to rebuild the strength again was very hard to deal with.



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FACTFILE

Lives: Rhyl, North Wales

Club: Prestatyn Squash Club

Racket: Head Cyano 135

Coaches: My dad, Andrew Evans, and Wales national coach David Evans

Sponsors: Karakal, Ashaway and Sport Wales

When a match isn't going well, do you have a mantra, technique or tactic you resort to?

I try to just tell myself to relax. I always find I play better when I'm relaxed, so I try to enjoy it and hope I start to play better!

What changes would you like to see in squash?

I would like to see squash become an Olympic sport. We totally deserve it and I think if it happened, the sport would improve and get bigger, which it deserves.

What is your favourite shot?

It has to be a backhand volley drop!

What is your favourite practice routine?

The person at the back starts with a backwall boast. Then the person at the front has three shots to win the point. It's such a fun routine and makes you deceptive and decisive when you have an opportunity at the front of the court.

What parts of your game are you trying to develop?

I am trying to put more intensity and aggression in my game by volleying more and trying to take the ball earlier. I tend to naturally sit back a lot and can go quite passive, so I'm working on that.

What are your career ambitions?

My career ambition is to get as high up in the rankings as possible and try and win some World Series events!

Which three people would you most like to invite round to dinner?

Steven Gerrard, because I am a massive Liverpool supporter; the Queen, because I'd love to meet and chat to her; and Phoebe from *Friends*, but it would have to be Phoebe the character, not Lisa Kudrow herself!

What would you cook them and what's your favourite tipple?

A sweet potato cottage pie, which I make and love. My favourite tipple is a good cider!