

MY GAME: MOHAMED ELSHORBAGY

WORKSHOP

Mohamed Elshorbagy, the youngest player in the world's top 10, discusses his game with *The Squash Player* in the final part of a two-part article. He was the World Open runner-up in 2012 and won his first World Series event in Qatar last November, following it up with victory in the Sky Open in Cairo. An Egyptian, he is based in Bristol.

What are your key tactics?

It depends from player to player. Sometimes your A game may not work, so you have to have a B game and a C game. Some players just go on court and they only have an A game and if that is not working, they are in trouble. Since I moved to England, Jonah Barrington has been saying you must work on your B game and your C game. At the time I never had a B game or C game, I just went and played at a fast pace. I'm not scared to say that because everyone knows I like to play fast, but sometimes I slow the game down, like in the Qatar Classic against Borja Golan. That's my B game. You have to have different tactics.

What opportunities do you look for in a match?

I try to vary my winners.

Do you hit winners from short or deep?

I like to hit winners from the back. I know most players like to play safe from there, but it is important to hit winners when the player is in front of you so you can move them to the front. It is an important investment for the end of the match and it means the other players never know what you are going to do on court.

What are your strengths as a player?

I'm not sure. I think you should ask the other players about that. They will know more than me. I like to be strong during every point on court. I don't try to be better on one side and weak on the other. I try

to improve every side of my game.

What parts of your game are you trying to develop and why?

There was a summer two years back when my Mum put down on paper the goals that I needed to improve on and the main goal was my defensive game. My attacking game was very good, but I had to improve my defensive game because if someone was attacking me, I was in a lot of trouble. I would just run and my recovery shot would often be in the middle, so I would just

have to run again. Take someone like Nick [Matthew], for example. If Ramy [Ashour] goes for a shot, Nick hits a perfect lob and gets out of trouble. The defensive game is as important as the attacking game. You have to improve every part of your game – and defence is one of them.

What are your goals?

I try to improve as a player every day. All the players would like to win the big titles – the World Open and

the British Open – and get to world no.1. My goals include doing things other players have never done, that's what you get remembered for. I've concentrated every year on the World Open, that is why my performance in the World Open has always been better than the other tournaments. That's why I played the British Junior

Open again after I had won it and people said 'Why are you playing this again'. I would like to win as many titles as I can.

How do you improve your mental game?

It is the hardest part of the game. Talking is important. Some players find it hard to explain their feelings. I do this with my mother. I can easily express my feelings and explain how I felt after a match or when I was at 10-10, for example. It is important that I express myself to my mother. She understands how my brain works, so she can tell me what to do.

Some players of your age would be embarrassed and not want their mother there?

I think it is different because I have followed my mother since I was eight years old. My mother, father and brother are the people who care most for me, they are going to be there for me all the time. Someone else may be there for me today, but I am not sure they will be there for me tomorrow. Even if we have a big fight, I know they will never be on my opponent's side.

And what tips do you have for the club player?

Enjoy it.