

EMMA RADUCANU

At the age of 18 Raducanu become the youngest British woman to win a Grand Slam.

Prior to her triumph at the USA Open 2021 Raducanu was ranked outside the top 300 in the world. Her stunning performance in the tournament propelled her to newfound fame and skyrocketed her ranking to the top 25. Alongside her tennis career Raducanu is also academically accomplished, showing her dedication and determination both on and off the court. Raducanu has earned plaudits for her grace and sportsmanship on and off the court. Her positive attitude and respectful demeanor make her a role model for young athletes worldwide.

She shared her story with our Guest Editor Milena Mirkovic.



What is tennis for you?

I think from the outside, the life of a professional tennis player can be viewed as very glamorous, but the reality is quite different. Yes, you're travelling the world, playing in some of the best venues and cities, following the sun, etc., however I think it is one of the loneliest and most emotionally challenging of sports. I think a lot of players would say the same thing. That all said, it's the sport I love and one that builds character and discipline unlike many others.

When did you start playing tennis?

I was five years old, I remember starting out when my dad would take me to the local park and the Bromley Tennis Centre in London.



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How did you get involved in sports?

My dad threw me into every sport possible as he believed they would all help my athletic ability. So from the age of five to eight I was doing horse riding, swimming, tap dancing, basketball, skiing, golf, and go karting!

Did you play other sports during your childhood?

Yes, all of the ones above, and I loved them all, and took lots different learnings from each one, but then tennis took so much time I had to stop most.

When did you start with your specialization in tennis?

I'd say around eight years old. As I said, playing lots of sports was

great for me and it helped me gain a diverse skill set ... but as I started winning in tennis, the tournaments would take up the weekend, so these other activities couldn't happen anymore and tennis took over.

Let's talk about your opinion on early specialization in tennis. So many tennis academies for young talents are opening up globally. Do you see this as an advantage for the future stars of the new generation?

Of course more specialized tennis facilities around the world is a good thing for future generations who want to pursue tennis as a career path, which is ultimately good for the sport. I would also still advocate though that it's a good thing kids not going too



Image left: Emma Raducanu at the 2023 Australian in Melbourne, Australia, January 2023.

Image below: Raducanu during her first-round match of the 2023 BNP Paribas. Indian Wells, California, March 2023.

Image right: Emma at Madrid Open on April 24, 2024 in Madrid, Spain.

Image right below: Emma Raducanu after she was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) by King Charles III in November 2022. Windsor, England.

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specific into tennis straight away, and actually benefiting from playing and being exposed to different sports from a young age. I think acquiring skills in multiple sports helps develop creativity and equips people better to handle fresh challenges later in their sporting life.

You've recently helped team GB qualify into the Billie Jean King Cup Finals. How would you compare your preparation for a singles tournament as an individual player versus preparing for a BJKC tie?

It's not too different to be honest, I think every player has their pre match prep routines, and once you get used to a new environment, conditions, you just try and follow the process that you and your team have in place.

Is it tough to be an elite tennis player today?

Yes, I spoke about it above. It has its challenges just like any elite sport does, but with tennis specifically, so long as you're ok with the travel, being good in your own company and being resilient, it's manageable and every week you have an opportunity to prove yourself.

What is your advice to young people who would like to become high level tennis players?

It's an amazing sport for young people to be involved in and I think has a lot of positives attached to it both on one's physical and mental wellbeing, but the most important thing I'd say when you're starting out is to just have fun with it!



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What do you think is the profile of a 21st century tennis player?

The physical side to tennis both in the men's and women's game has become a hugely significant part of the sport. However, the mental component is just as important if not more due to the nature of tennis, the quick momentum shifts, losing every week in front of yourself and also the public who comment without knowing the facts of what really goes on behind the scenes, it requires resilience to deal with.

How important is your medical team to you?

My off court team play a huge role. People often see players on the court and forget all the hard work that goes on behind the scenes with their teams, not just the coach, but physio, fitness trainer etc. It's a major investment but a very important one, and all in a bid to make our general 'health' and physical/ mental levels improve.

In your opinion, what is the ideal profile and a set of qualities that a Sports Medicine Physician should have?

I think being a good team player is a very important one, certainly for me. Someone I can trust. Also have an in-depth understanding of the specific sport they're working in, as well as wider sports culture and practices.

There is a big focus on injury prevention in sport. Do you follow any injury prevention programs?

Of course, me and my team are always thinking and practicing about how I can not only be best prepared to be match ready, but



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also how my body can sustain the relentless nature of the tennis calendar which is 'always on'!

What advice would you give to young people who dream of becoming top-level athletes?

My tips for anyone starting is at the beginning, just like everything – you may feel it's hard and like giving up but don't get discouraged. If you have a dream, go after it! And don't let anything get in the way of that.

Milena Mirkovic PT