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Junior Development Committee Junior Development Committee

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Juniors and Parents,

Hard to believe it's another month already and there is still so much to tell everyone! This month we're featuring one of our top juniors, and we've decided to incorporate some regular articles. We've included "Thoughts from the BLTA President" where Ross Hillen current BLTA president will give you some insight into Bermuda's governing tennis body. In addition, we've got a Coaches Corner, where we'll feature different tennis tips from different coaches on the Island. We hope you enjoy reading, but more importantly we want to hear from you so please send in your comments or emails via info@blta.com marked for the JDC. We'll be happy to respond to your queries.

FEATURED ARTICLE

"Ashley's focused on combining her passions"

One would think based on Ashley Brooks' tennis record that she started playing almost as soon as she could walk, not true; in fact Ashley started playing tennis when she was ten. Despite her late introduction to the game she has flourished has one of Bermuda's most talented juniors. At the age of eighteen now she is set to leave the junior arena. The JDC caught up with Ashley to learn more about her goals and aspirations as a tennis player and now as a coach.



Ashley's early coaches in tennis were Sheila Gomez who taught many players on the Island, and Ricky Mallory, former Number 1 player and Davis Cup representative for Bermuda. Ashley quickly rose up the ranks of the juniors in Bermuda achieving number 1 in her age group. Keen to pursue her passion for tennis Ashley attended the Van Der Meer Tennis Academy in South Carolina for four years. There she had classes for approximately 3 hours a day but the rest of the day was dedicated to tennis training and fitness. While there Ashley was involved in part-time coaching where she found she could combine her passion for tennis and her love for children.

When asked what she feels is her biggest accomplishment to date she found it hard to answer, she responded "I've had so many different successes, success is what you believe for yourself, not what others think you should be accomplishing". Ashley was very modest, she's had much success in tennis, representing Bermuda in the Junior Fed Cup and Adult Fed Cup on numerous occasions, as well as winning numerous junior and adult tennis tournaments. When asked what goals and aspirations she has for herself, its clear that Ashley is a driven young lady. "I want to achieve so many things." Ashley set personal goals for herself and worked hard to achieve them, for example one such goal was to achieve a top ten ranking while in South Carolina, she achieved a ranking of # 4 for South Carolina.

After completing her schooling at Van Der Meer Tennis Academy, Ashley applied to several universities for tennis scholarships. Of the thirteen universities she applied to, five already had their tennis teams selected; another five schools had offered her a half scholarship, while two universities offered her full scholarships. One school in particular Southern University in Louisiana was of particular interest. Ashley pursued discussions with Southern University but something inside her was telling her to hold off. Despite receiving a full scholarship, Ashley made a difficult decision, she decided to hold off attending university. Ashley felt it important to pursue her passion, she loved children and loved tennis and had been spending her summers away from school teaching under Brent Smith at the Tennis Stadium. The joy Ashley received from this pushed her to get her coaching certificate. Ashley pursued her Professional Coaching Certificate yet still remained in touch with the tennis coach at Southern University, (fully intending to take advantage of the scholarship at a later date). Ashley completed her coaching certificate, which she received the highest ranking in each part, that of Professional, unfortunately as she's only 18 and has had limited years of teaching, she cannot yet utilize the professional qualification until she's 21 or attained more years of teaching. For now she'll have to be content with an Associate qualification teaching under Brent Smith in the Manders Island Tennis Academy (MITA).

The JDC was keen to hear that Ashley is committed to training and developing upcoming juniors on the Island, giving back to the tennis community. She teaches adults and juniors as part of her coaching but finds many rewards from teaching the juniors. When asked if she would consider supporting the tennis bodies in the Island, Ashley keenly responded that she's been seriously considered becoming part of the broader tennis administration. Ashley recognized that junior tennis in Bermuda needs a boost. As Chairperson of the JDC I personally would welcome Ashley's young drive and enthusiasm to make a difference in tennis in Bermuda.

We welcome Ashley home and while she may not be participating in the junior tennis tournaments for much longer we know that she won't be disappearing altogether as she looks to make change and influence other juniors on the Island. We wish you every success Ashley!

THOUGHTS FROM THE BLTA PRESIDENT:

What is the BLTA? Who are the people behind it?
Ross Hillen, President of the BLTA answers these questions.

The BLTA is the national governing body of Tennis in Bermuda. Although tennis became established in Bermuda in the latter half of the nineteenth century we never had a national body until 1973. It is my understanding that initial discussions began in the late 1960's and the BLTA was finally formed by the tennis clubs of that time. One of the original 'architects' was Mr. Allan Simmons who is still very active in the Association's work and is well known to junior players because of his involvement with tournaments.

The tennis clubs have great influence over the BLTA's direction. Each Club is allocated a number of votes (up to 3) depending on the size of its membership. Each Club nominates a Club

Representative and an Alternate at each Annual General Meeting (AGM), which is held in the early part of the year. The 2006/07 Representatives and Alternates are:

ABTC: Larry Samuels & Philip Nearon
CBC: Bill Way & Marjorie Way
GBTC: Terry Smith & Kathy Coates
HTC: Brent Smith & Kirk Saunders
PGTC: Mark Melvin & Rhonda Caza

An Executive is elected for a 2 year term of office at an AGM. The current Executive comprises:

President: Ross Hillen
Vice President: Gill Butterfield
Vice President: Philip Cooper
Treasurer: Veronica Dunkerley
Hon. VP for Life: Allan Simmons

The non executive Secretary is Scott Wheeler.

None of the Club Representatives or the Executive receive any remuneration for their services. They are all volunteers. A new Executive will be voted in next year.

The BLTA bye-laws (our rules) require the Directors (Club Representatives and the Executive) to meet a minimum of 7 times a year, which is something we have little difficulty in achieving.

In the next JDC newsletter I will tell you a few things we have achieved in the last 2 years.

JDC SURVEY RESULTS:

Below is a summary of the key things juniors said in their Surveys:

- **Several juniors asked for after school tennis programs:**
You should know that Brent Smith who is responsible for the 'Tennis in Schools Program for the BLTA' is actively working on this initiative and as soon as it is up and going we'll let you know.
- **Juniors asked for more tournaments and for them to be better run**
We recognize this is a challenge for us and we're trying to set some common standards for all tournaments. In addition we're hoping we can incorporate some smaller tournaments perhaps based on age groups to get more events going.
- **The majority of juniors agreed there should be a National Coach, training all levels of juniors**
At this stage we can only advise that we have put a proposal before the BLTA to consider a National Coach and we'll keep you posted on our progress
- **Juniors want more opportunities to play matches**
Currently the Pepperidge Farm offers good match play but we have also emailed parents and asked if they want to share contact information to set up matches at their leisure. We've had some responses but would like more to consider sharing their contact information so our juniors are playing all the time.
- **Many juniors were not aware of how the rankings work or the importance of them.**
We will try to tackle this in subsequent newsletters, it's important to note that rankings are an important tool for tournaments. A person's ranking will decide where a person is placed in the draw and it may be a one of the tools for selection for overseas representation.

Thanks again to the juniors who took the time to complete the survey; we were impressed with the level of input you gave which shows we have some dedicated juniors out there!

TOURNAMENTS:

Updated schedule of tournaments till year end please note the Fairmont is now rescheduled per below:

DATE	EVENT	VENUE	CATEGORY	SURFACE
Oct 21 -28	Fairmont Grand Prix	Whaler Inn Southampton	Adult Event - Open	Hard POSTPONED SEE BELOW
November 9-13	Junior Reefs	W.E.R. Joell Stadium	Junior – Open	Hard
November 25- Dec 2nd	Fairmont Grand Prix	Whaler Inn Southampton	Adult Event – Open Hard Court	Deadline for Entry Nov 22 nd @ 6pm Whaler Inn
December 18-23	Junior CBC	Coral Beach	Junior –Open	Clay

OVERSEAS TOURNAMENTS:

The BLTA has received notification of the following U.S. events in December. If you are interested in entering either of these events please check out their websites. The Junior Development Committee would like to know if anyone plans on attending these events.

EVENT 1:

Event: “Little Mo” International Open for boys and girls 8–11 years of age. The event is open to any player from around the world.

Dates: December 7 – 10th

Location: Arlington Tennis Center in Arlington, Texas

Details: www.mcbtennis.org

EVENT 2:

Event: ORLANDO INTERNATIONAL JR TENNIS CUP DECEMBER 2006

Dates: December 16th – 19th

Divisions: 10's, 12's, & 14's for girls & boys in singles, doubles & consolation

Location: Orlando Florida

Entry Restriction: Must be ranked in top 200 of Island

Details: www.mqttennis.com

COACHES CORNER – TIPS FROM THE PRO

Our first tips come from Coach Steve Bean. Coach Bean has played and won many local events and been involved with the Davis Cup for Bermuda both as a player and coach, his experience both on and off the court gives him a unique perspective. A teacher by profession, he brings to the court his desire to mold young players both physically and mentally. Coach Bean can be found most times at the Port Royal tennis courts. Read below and see what Coach Bean wants you to know most.

Before assessing a player's skills or ability, Coach Bean finds value in spending time understanding what's inside a player or athlete. Many people can have the physical ability or strength and endurance for their sport, but not many can persevere and become the best. Coach Bean sees two key aspects which every athlete must have in order to be successful. First **commitment**, this seems a given but players must show their desire to be the best by being committed to their sport. Many athletes are built physically capable and strong but they don't always have the level of commitment because their desire is not there. If you think of kids who can stay up all night to master the Nintendo game they'll play for hours to get to the next level, if

kids have that same desire and commitment for more positive influences, sport, school, etc the results will be quite remarkable.

Once a player has demonstrated their desire through commitment, the second most important thing they should have is **heart**. What does this mean? A player may not have the best strokes, the best game, but because they have heart, they stick with it and withstand the pressure of the game. They can also withstand any outside influences that will turn you away from the game. Heart is a necessary ingredient outside of the physical.

Coach Bean is looking for commitment and heart from his juniors, and the JDC is hoping that we see the same throughout the Island.

Hope you enjoyed this month's newsletter, next month we'll have highlights from the Reefs Tournament, details on the 2007 upcoming tennis calendar and upcoming social events.

Thanks for your continued support and remember "**Tennis is a game for a lifetime**".

Sincerely,
Allison Towlson
Junior Development Committee