

Sam Parfitt

D.O.B: 27/04/1990

Birthplace: Norwich, Norfolk

I started playing tennis at a young age, hitting relentlessly against the wall in my back garden. Both my parents played tennis and my father was my coach throughout. I went to Carleton Rode Primary School and played one or two small tournaments. My first tournament prize was a mint aero chocolate egg!

I then attended Diss High School and during my time there started competing a lot more. I represented the county and reached an under 18 county ranking of number 1. I began working with some top trainers and players in the region and realised that playing tennis and training hard was exactly what I wanted to do.

At 16 I move to London to play full time tennis at Sutton Tennis Academy, the premier tennis academy in the country. Here I trained for up to five or six hours a day and worked with Erwan Nicolas (coach to many world ranked players), Jeremy Bates (former British No 1) and Kimi Tilikainen (Finland Davis Cup Captain) amongst many other fantastic coaches and players. I was also lucky enough to train with Wesley Moodie who, at the time, was ranked in the top 5 doubles players in the world.

Alongside my tennis training I went to Cheam High School to do my AS levels. I was a part of the Cheam team that won third place at the National Schools Championships and also represented the borough of Sutton to win the London Youth Games. I was invited on to the AASE scheme set up by the Lawn Tennis Association for the top 50 players in the country and was very lucky to play National Club League tennis at the Queen's Club, the home of the pre-Wimbledon tournament. While at Sutton I also achieved my tennis coaching certificate and became the youngest ever Etchberry certified strength conditioning coach.

I decided to take my A2 Levels through a distance learning course but continued to use Sutton as my base for training between competitions. I played several international tournaments and began to think about how I was going to progress my tennis career after completing my A Levels. I had the option of trying to play tournaments all year round, going to Loughborough University or going to play college tennis in America. Many professional players have chosen the college route to the pros. It not only offers players four more years of competing before taking the step into professional level tournaments but also provides a training base with great facilities and good players. In Spring 2009 I moved to America to attend the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, funded by my Grandmother and a small scholarship from the university. Now I have seven courts literally about 15 metres from my bedroom. It certainly beats travelling all over the country to find a hitting partner as I often has to growing up. I am studying towards a BA in History with a minor in Psychology. I also have to fulfil a foreign language requirement, and I take science, maths and even fine arts!

I have two or three tennis and conditioning sessions each day, which are either with the team or individually with a coach. In the Spring semester we have matches every weekend against other universities. Sometimes we will travel up to ten hours for these matches! I have beaten two ranked division 1 players in my first three semesters here and was awarded the Southern Conference Player of the Week last semester. I achieved a maximum 4.0 grade point average and placed on the Southern Conference All Academic team. As part of being a member of a university team it is also important to meet responsibilities we have to the community. I have taken part in several fundraisers and am planning to set up one of my own, hopefully using the Student Athlete Committee, to which I've just been elected, as a platform to make this successful.

I have a great interest in politics and international affairs. I did some work experience in the Judicial Office at the House of Lords and have recently started researching and writing for an online Asia-Pacific news magazine. I have also begun work on a research project about how to use obsessions and compulsions to benefit sporting performance.

In the Summer of 2011 I plan to play events in Germany as well as some British tour events and my first world ranking events too. I hope to achieve a world ranking in doubles by the time I leave university and then compete full time. I recently played an event on a court which sat 15,000 people! It was nerve racking but a fantastic experience, just like every minute has been so far.

I am so grateful to the Mason Trust for their support and that the Trustees' have recognised my hard work. With their incredibly kind help I feel extremely positive that I can achieve my ambitions.

Hopefully I can extend my unlikely streak of hitting again the wall in my garden – not a broken window yet!