

## The British Real Tennis Academy 2019-20

### A Dedanists' Society report

by Josh Farrall & Graham Tomkinson

**T**he British Real Tennis Academy is the UK national coaching programme for the best young players in the country. Each year, it typically selects 25 or so young players who are a mix of amateurs and professionals, men and women and from 12 to 24 years of age. Players are selected from across all clubs on the basis of match play results, commitment, potential and the recommendation of their club head professional. The Academy curriculum includes real tennis strokeplay, matchplay, physical training, nutrition and sports psychology. Players are streamed into squads according to age and proficiency. Coaching of the Senior Squad, the lowest handicap players, is delivered via individual one-on-one sessions with coaches such as Rob Fahey and Ben Taylor-Matthews. Coaching to all other squads is delivered via a mix of group coaching days at Queen's and Middlesex, match play days at Wellington with Dan Jones and additional private sessions for players in the high performance programme. The real tennis coaches include Rob Fahey, Ben Ronaldson, Bryn Sayers, Ben Taylor-Matthews, Dan Jones, Chris Bray and Andrew Lyons. The Society works with the Department of Sport Sciences at Brunel University to ensure that the design and content of Academy programmes include current research and best practice from the wider world of elite sport. The Dedanists' Society funds and runs the Academy. It is also a primary sponsor of the World Under 18, the British Under 21 & 24 and the British Girls Under 15 & 19 Junior Championships. The Society receives significant funding and support from the T&RA.

During 2019-20, the Academy delivered 16 group coaching days and a further 50+ sessions of individual one-on-one coaching to 27 of the best young players in the country. These individual sessions included tennis coaching, physical training, sports psychology and match video analysis.

Coronavirus and court closures shortened the coaching season by 3 months.

### Academy Players 2019/20

Player	Handicap June 2020	Better/worse than June 2019	Club
<b>SENIOR SQUAD</b>			
Shenkman, Robert <sup>hp</sup>	3.0	(0.5)	Manchester
<b>DEVELOPMENT SQUAD</b>			<b>AGE 16-23</b>
Bristowe, Freddie <sup>hp</sup>	11.5	4.4	Wellington. New York
Batstone, Ned <sup>hp</sup>	11.6	2.6	Radley
Gale, Levi *	11.6	2.4	Radley
Flynn, William <sup>hp</sup>	15.0	10.0	Seacourt
Zwalamen, Lea van der <sup>hp</sup>	15.3	1.0 Studying oversea	Queen's

Player	Handicap June 2020	Better/worse than June 2019	Club
<b>INTERMEDIATE SQUAD</b>			<b>AGE 16 – 20 (mainly)</b>
MacDonald, Ivo	19.5	10.0	Cambridge Uni
Yorston, Benedict	20.3	0.2	Radley, Oxford Uni
Clifton, Jack*	21.4	1.0	MCC
Smart, Zack*	22.7	(0.9)	Freelance
Lidington, Henry	24.4	(1.2)	Bristol, Sea-court
Lumley, Tara	24.5	(2.6)	Queen's
Taylor, Oliver	25.2	6.0	RTC, Durham Uni
Elmitt, Charlie	29.8	8.8	RTC, Durham Uni

Notes:

(i) \* = Professional player (3 of them) - all others are amateurs.

(ii) <sup>hp</sup> = High Performance Programme = extra coaching for high potential players.

# TENNIS UK

JUNIOR SQUAD			AGE 14 – 15 (mainly)
Trueman, Max	24.0	17.8	Seacourt
Medlow, James	27.9	9.6	Seacourt
Garson, Magnus	35.4	22.0	Radley
Dyter, Matthew	38.6	2.6	Jesmond
Jones, Max	39.1	0.3 injured	Seacourt
Alder, Ed	44.2	18.0	Radley

CADET SQUAD			AGE 12 - 13 (mainly)
Vallat, Bertie	35.2	10.4	Queen's
Henman, Henry	37.8	9.8	Radley
Rossiter, James	39.3	7.7	Queen's
Parsons, George	41.7	6.0 injured	RTC
Sweet, Willem	44.5	7.4	Wellington
Hetherington, Tom	50.6	9.0	Jesmond
Sweet, Cesca	58.5	1.1	Wellington

## General Comment

The handicaps of 50% of Academy players improved significantly over the last 12 months. Outstanding achievements in this regard were delivered by William Flynn, Magnus Garson, Henry Henman, Ivo MacDonald, James Medlow, Max Trueman and Bertie Vallat. An annual improvement of 7 points is a good performance for higher handicap players and an improvement of 4 points is good for those with lower handicaps. Handicap is not the only valid measure of a player's performance but it is certainly clear and objective. Typically, the rate of a player's handicap improvement is not constant. It varies from year to year depending upon practice, coaching and the adoption, or not, of fundamental changes in technique, fitness and mental strength. A player's handicap may deteriorate in the short term while he or she is adopting new methods for longer term benefit.

This year, we launched a high performance (hp) programme of additional personal coaching for players with especially high potential. We put the ladies-only squad on hold and coached young women and men together, streamed according to handicap. The Cadet Squad completed its second year and is now an established success.

The number of young professionals in the Academy, including trainees, fell from four to three players. It is encouraging that a number of Academy players are interested in becoming professionals and certainly have the talent to do so.



Photo: Robert Shenkman, winner of the U24 Singles



## Tournament Achievements

Congratulations to the following for special achievements during the season:

### Championship Winners 2019/20

British Junior Tournaments

Under 24 singles Robert Shenkman

Under 21 „ Freddie Bristowe

Under 20 " Ben Yorston

Under 19 , girls Cesca Sweet

Under 18 „ William Flynn

Under 16 „ James Medlow

Under 14 „ Bertie Vallat

World Under 18 singles Freddie Bristowe

(Held every 2 years)

### Other Notable Achievements:

Freddie Bristowe Seacourt Silver Racquet – winner

British Open - 2nd round

William Flynn British Amateur entry at age 17

## Clubs

Congratulations to Radley on being the home club and primary developer of 22% of the young players in the Academy.

### Distribution of Academy Players by Club

Number of Academy Players	Clubs
6	Radley
5	Seacourt
4	Queen's
3	RTC, Wellington
2	Jesmond Dene
1	Bristol, Cambridge University, Manchester, MCC.



Ned Batstone in action



Josh Farrall presenting Freddie Bristowe with the Junior World Champion trophy



*The Dedanists™*

The game is beholden to all clubs with the drive and capacity to recruit and develop the young players who represent the future of real tennis and from whom Academy players are selected.

### Programme Directors & Coaches

Programme Directors Graham Tomkinson, Stef King, Simon Roundell.

Tennis Coaches Chris Bray, Rob Fahey, Dan Jones, Andrew Lyons, Ben Ronaldson, Bryn Sayers, Ben Taylor-Matthews.

Physical Training Andy Chinneck, Graham Smith

Sports Psychology Aura Goodman, Alex Lucas, Alison Maitland

Diet & Nutrition Tracy Parker

Microtactics Tennis coaches plus Graham Tomkinson.

Academy Chairman Josh Farrall