

# Candidate 1 evidence

## My Tennis Identity

Training endless hours a week, making sure every stroke is of a high standard, aiming to perform with the best; tennis brings me moments of joy and relief but also anger and discomfort. I have to stay physically and mentally strong all year round for the constant competitive matches. You could say tennis has taken over my life, but the question is, is it worth it?

Recently, I travelled to the magnificent island of Majorca to participate in a training camp for a week and compete against a Majorcan Academy in a friendly match with the South of Scotland squad. This was an excellent experience which saw me face many challenges along the way such as playing on a new court surface in the boiling heat with little time to adapt, playing in thirty-degree heat with little rest time. Looking back now, I realize how tough these conditions were, but it motivated me to achieve as much as I could in tennis to compete at that level.

I often feel that my training schedule is intense, especially during the summer. Training every day for around six weeks during the summer holidays, is always going to be physically tough; however, my dedication and motivation led on to greater things by winning many titles throughout this last summer break, varying from club championships to Scottish Opens. During the winter period my training is much more endurance and weight training, making me physically ready for the season ahead and staying fit throughout the Christmas holidays. During the winter break, as well as gym work, I also train indoors in Edinburgh facilities. This is good as I can play all year round and keep my high level up but, it also leads to tiredness and frustration as I rarely get a long period of time to rest which is often much needed after intense training camps or competitions.

I love the competitive side of Tennis, especially with my team beside me: my coach, parents and friends. They motivate me massively while I am competing even if they do get on my nerves sometimes with their excessive clapping or shouting. Looking back now I realise they only wanted the best for me and were simply trying to motivate me on court...I hope. There's nothing worse than a pushy parent from the sideline! Many think I am where I am today because of my hard work and dedication however, they are not entirely right. I wouldn't be where I am without the support from family: driving me to training and paying

for sessions and training camps. My mum has always said she can't wait until I'm seventeen so I can learn to drive and I don't blame her. My coach also has been invaluable planning sessions to work on improving parts of my game for future matches and tournaments and giving up a lot of his time to coach whilst balancing the time commitments of another job.

I have many idols and players I look up to including, Murray, Federer and Nadal. Another is Maria Sharapova, who said, "I've been playing against older and stronger competition my whole life. It has made me a better tennis player and able to play against this kind of level despite their strength and experience." ([www.BrainyQuote.com](http://www.BrainyQuote.com).) This particularly resonates with me, as I grew up the youngest brother playing against my brother and his mates. This helped me to play against more powerful opponents and help me build up physically as a tennis player. It also helped me mentally by going into a match expecting the worst, however after beating older players it helped me to go into every match with an open mind and go for the win each time. Despite idolizing Andy Murray, it was much closer to home where I found my immediate inspiration as I played every day because of my brother.

Tennis is a difficult sport to participate in all year round, especially in Scottish conditions. All courts in my local area are outdoor hardcourt, which flood easily. This affects the South of Scotland tennis district, and as we don't have all year-round facilities like Edinburgh or Glasgow, we often have matches cancelled due to poor conditions. Other district coaches and players admire the strength of the Scottish Border players considering the facilities we have.

One experience I will never forget is the Kilgraston Championships, which is an inter-district competition with every county in Scotland. I got to play for the U18s even though I was 15. This was a fantastic opportunity for me to play older and better players from all over Scotland. Looking back now I realise how tough it was for Team Borders as we had the youngest team. One moment I will never forget is the last place play-off, struggling with a young team we faced the Highlands. I was playing singles with a huge crowd cheering me on, with up to 100-200 people - the atmosphere was incredible. I gave one of my best performances that day for the crowd to witness; it felt like I was playing at the Davis Cup. This boosted my confidence massively after winning this match as I knew I could achieve what these older players were, if not better, if I stuck in and worked hard.

I have had many long-term goals in Tennis, but one I would love to achieve is to move to Majorca to become a coach; after playing at Santa Ponsa Tennis Academy I realised how much I loved the tennis there and the lifestyle, being surrounded by constant happiness of the locals and Spanish coaches who motivate you extreme amounts. This really inspired me to work towards my goal as this may be my future, I hope. However, I would need to budget as a large part of my wages would go towards sun cream as fair skin and Spanish sun is not a good mix! Another goal of mine is to start my coaching qualifications very soon as I want to encourage and improve young players like my coaches have done for me.

Overall, I love my tennis identity as I get to travel and have made friends for life as well as loads of fantastic memories that I will cherish forever. I have also learned about hard work and dedication, never to give up to whatever I put my mind towards. Moving forward I know there will be much more to come. Tennis will always be with me throughout my life whether I am playing competitively or coaching youngsters to be the best they can. I feel Tennis has made me the person I am today. After facing many challenges, to have young borders players watching and supporting my matches and looking up to me is an unbelievable feeling as I can help motivate young players to set their goals to work towards in the future.

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