



As part of our Women in Tennis Strategy, we're putting the spotlight on more Women in Tennis! In June we interviewed Sinéad Dunne, a Level 2 Qualified coach from Munster who tells us about her playing background, how she got into coaching and advice she has for any females looking to follow the same path!

What club(s) do you currently coach at?

Everywhere really. Currently mainly based out of Limerick lawn, Carrigaline, Kilaloe and Rosanna ltc in Tipperary town, as well as my home village of Lattin, Co. Tipperary. A tiny village, Lattin has no shop but has 4 tennis courts including 2 new state of the art artificial clay courts!!!

What is your background in tennis? (playing, coaching, committees etc.)

I was a decent junior provincial player and have continued to play grade 1. I am a level 2 tennis coach and have been very involved with the munster performance system for the last few years. I've coached children to provincial and national titles and have had players represented Ireland. One of my greatest achievements was been the non playing captain for u14 junior interpro (along with Cian Blake) in 2017 and senior non playing captain when we won the triple for the first time in 2018. I also have a huge passion for coaching schools tennis and have coached in schools throughout north munster including Glenstal Abbey in Limerick and Ursuline college Thurles.

After I finished playing competitive tennis as a teenager, I got involved with the munster branch for a couple of years which gave me a really good insight to how the Irish tennis structure worked.

What are your favourite things about tennis?

I am very competitive so love the competition side of it. However, from a tennis coach side I love the journey a player makes from when they first start and how they develop no matter the standard. Since the lockdown has lifted I'm really enjoying seeing children meet up to play everyday and just really enjoying their tennis. It reminds me of when I was younger, spending all day during the Summer at the club playing and having fun. It is the first time in years I am seeing that again so hopefully it will stay.

How did you get into coaching?

When I was a teenager, the club in Lattin asked me to do some beginners coaching for young kids on a Sunday morning during the school holidays and I really enjoyed doing it and wanted to learn more. During my leaving cert year there was a level 1 coaching course happening in Cork so myself and two others from Tipperary town did the course and the rest is history.

Were there any challenges along the way or as a qualified coach have you experienced any challenges?

When I first did my level 2, I rushed into it - I didn't have enough experience working with children and developing them so it didn't go my way. I learned and developed those skills over a number of years and then went back to do my level 2 and flew through it.

What is the most important thing for you when coaching teenage boys and girls?

You have to get to know them because if they feel if you have an interest in them they will be more open to trying things and working hard.

As a coach what is the most valuable lesson you have learned?

Communication is huge! The player needs to set their own goal rather than you assuming you are on the same page. Having a good and open dialogue with parents about the development process is very important as this can sometimes lead to a breakdown and tension.

As a coach what are your aspirations and also have you set any goals for the year?

It has changed since Covid-19 but now I feel I need to focus on a better work/life balance. I've started cycling now before my lessons or if I have a 30min break, hop on the bike and I have a better mindset and I'm able to be more present in my lessons and the pupils have already notice the difference. For my competitive players I'm just focused on getting them to reach their goals.

Is there anything you would like to see more of to encourage more females to coach tennis?

There are a lot of women coaching in clubs around at the moment but only a handful of female coaches are developing and producing national standard players so it would be nice to have more women doing that. I feel if there was more weekend tournaments it would be easier for females with families to watch some of their player's matches. I think the Facebook group set up by Gráinne is a step in the right direction.

Any advice for girls looking to get into coaching?

Coaching is a very rewarding career. Try and find a mentor with a track record to help you at the start of your coaching journey as it can get very overwhelming at the start.