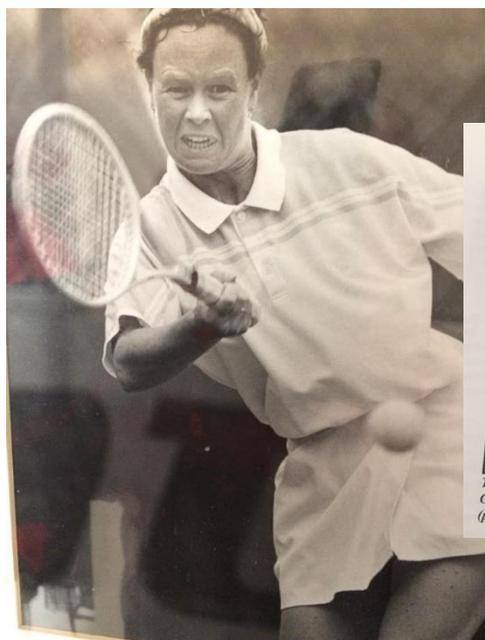


Louise Bothwell



The 1977 Irish Federation Cup team before their departure for Eastbourne with Michael Gavan, Gavan Gall Ltd., suppliers of the Irish blazers. From left, Geraldine Barniville, Helen Lennon (playing captain), Louise Tuff and Margaret Burns.



How did you get into tennis?

My mum and dad got me into tennis at Hawarden our local tennis club. It was a very family orientated 3 court club with fantastic tea's every Saturday.

What has been your greatest achievement in tennis?

I'm very fortunate as there have been several. Playing two consecutive years at junior Wimbledon, winning Fitz at u'14&18, representing Ireland in Fed Cup, making my debut at age 15, and coaching/captaining Ireland at u'12,14&18 in the four nations.

As a player, do you prefer singles or doubles?

I have always preferred singles. I love competing by myself, having to work things out on the court and not having anyone else to blame.

What's your funniest/favourite tennis memories?

"Funniest memory" - The Tuff family used to travel with our caravan to tournament weeks at Carrickmines, Galway and Rushbrooke parking on site which led to everyone knowing us. My funniest memory is from Rushbrooke when as juniors my brother Malcolm and I played against mum and dad in the handicap mixed final on at the same time as the championship singles finals. Virtually all the spectators were at our court shouting and cheering for my brother and I and booing if mum or dad won a point. I don't think the sponsors were too pleased!

"Favourite memory" - Peter and Sam always had a dream to play Davis Cup for Ireland and to watch this come true in Denmark in 2018 and both really embracing the experience and enjoying their time on court competing made me very proud.



What are the biggest lessons you have learned?

As a coach I still feel I'm learning every day. That said some things stand out for me: As coaches we have a great responsibility and should never forget we can influence lives; It should always be about the player not the coach; listen to players and the need as a coach to travel to junior ITF and futures and challenger level tournaments outside of Ireland to keep up to date with playing standards and be best equipped to coach and guide aspiring players.

How did you get into coaching?

My dad Sammy Tuff was an LTA pro qualified tennis coach and a TI tutor so I followed in his footsteps. I was very fortunate to learn from someone who was so very passionate and professional about their coaching and who loved playing the game. I went on from helping dad to be head coach at Belfast Boat Club and then after becoming a mum being head coach at Downshire Hillsborough, our local club where Peter and Sam first played tennis, and then subsequently (after training at Limerick University) a coach tutor.

What do you believe are the benefits of playing tennis/what has tennis given to you?

Benefits - Put very simply fun, fitness and friendships for life

Tennis has given me opportunities, life experiences, travel, friendships and a career. I had 4 years on a tennis scholarship in the US, I think I was one of the first Irish players to benefit from this. Training every day and playing matches was perfect for me (and a little bit of schooling). As a coach I can't think of anything better than having a coaching career in the sport you are passionate about.

What advice would you give to a female looking to get involved in coaching?

Get involved, it's very rewarding and you can help make a difference. You can be involved in grass roots coaching (it's as important to make a difference at club level as it is at a performance level) and if interested in performance coaching read, watch, listen to podcasts and work initially with an experienced coach mentor to hone your performance skill set. Either coaching route, set yourself high standards and surround yourself with passionate positive like-minded people. Ireland has many great female coaches, who don't currently have the same profile provincially or nationally as many male coaches. There is plenty of room for many more female coaches. **Just Do It!**