

Rosa Stephens



How did you get into tennis?

I started playing tennis in my teens. I used to play on a court in a small town in the Pyrenees, where I spent most of my summer holidays. It had a surface that could stand the big temperature fluctuations in the area. A few years later I joined a Club in Barcelona that had clay courts. I was just a casual social player and played for fun with my siblings and friends.

What is your background in tennis? (playing, coaching, volunteering, committee work)

I have been involved at various levels: social player, a parent, a club volunteer, Leinster Tennis Competitions and Junior Committees & Council member, and finally a staff member of Leinster Tennis.

How did you get involved in tournaments?

In 2004 I started running short social events at club level to give young players the opportunity to practice what they learnt in their coaching sessions and followed on by introducing a friendly interclub league for Under 12s in the spring to fill a gap in the DLTC League calendar. The league was later formalized and became part of Leinster Tennis events. I am a great believer in the role of the Leagues in helping players to develop their skills within a team and fun environment. It also facilitates players whose parents may not be in apposition to bring them to standard open tournaments due to work or other family commitments.

During my time in Leinster Tennis, I run many Provincial and National match-play events.

I was involved with the Tennis Europe Under 14 Tournament in David Lloyd Riverview from 2004 until it moved to Dublin City University, and with Fitzwilliam Junior Open since 2007. In 2019 I was Tournament Director of the ITF-18 and Tennis Europe-12 in David Lloyd Riverview.

Have you experienced any challenges since you started?

I think the main challenges are the weather and finding court facilities to run the events. Courts are less of an issue when running club events or leagues, as it mainly requires coordinating with club management and other committees' members.

In Open tournaments, staying calm after a long day juggling with schedule, weather and parents may require some effort.

Have you done any courses or training?

I did an Umpires training course (two days over one weekend) run by Fergus Murphy and a training session on Tennis Tournament Planner many years ago. I attended the Sports Ireland Project Management Course and have done online courses on Digital Marketing, WordPress website publishing and Mail Chimp. Although the last few are not directly related to officiating, they are useful to improve communication with broader audiences and marketing.

Preparing well before the event helps to run things smoothly. Having enough supervisors cuts down the number of problems that may arise.

It is not possible to accommodate everybody and facilitating one person may inconvenience many more. It is better to politely say "I am afraid this isn't possible" than ending with an unfair situation for somebody that had agreed to the initial schedule and may arrangements according to it.

What advice would you give to girls looking to get involved in running tournaments or becoming officials?

Familiarize yourself with the rules. Keep a copy at hand if you are not fully confident. Attend one of the Umpire courses that Tennis Ireland or its Branches organize. Start with small events, asking for advice or shadowing somebody with experience.

Is there anything you would like to see more of to encourage more females to run tournaments or become officials?

Workshops on officiating and an online resource section with step-by-step templates on requirements, scheduling, formats, etc. A professional pathway for those interested in following a career in officiating part or full-time.

We need many volunteers but also more ITF qualified umpires and referees to cater for the many ITF and Tennis Europe tournaments in Ireland, which are likely to grow in the future. Most tournaments take place in the summer when teachers and college students may have some free time. Officiating could be a very viable option for them.