

DIAMOND'S CRYSTAL CLEAR VISION

The inspirational head coach behind one of Wales' leading tennis academies shares his ideas with BTQ on how to grow British Tennis

Sena Tenney, director and head coach at Diamond Tennis Academy (DTA) in Cardiff, has a passion for getting more people to play tennis and tells us how he is constantly looking to grow the game in South Wales.

With more than 10 years' coaching experience, Sena has set up, established and grown DTA, which is an LTA-registered venue. In recognition of this, he received the University of Wales Institute Cardiff's (UWIC) Young Enterprise Scholar of the Year 2010 and LTA Clubmark accreditation.

"I used to play at county-level events around Wales and the West and

“Through our links with both schools and the local community we are able to stimulate interest in tennis and continue to develop many players”

was really interested in the coaching aspect of the sport. I completed my first coaching qualification in 2000 and took it from there.”

Continuing to coach part time throughout university, the 28-year-old gained a degree in accountancy and management, which gave him the necessary background to go on to set up his own tennis academy.

While working with a local tennis club, Sena rolled out a school club link programme with local schools in the Cardiff area to attract more juniors into the sport and grow his programme (see page 38 for information on how to do this). Sena also worked with Tennis Wales and used available courts at Heath Park. He used the excitement generated by Wimbledon to raise awareness of the DTA programmes, which encouraged him to register the club with the LTA. He was then able to source funding through Tennis Wales to gain access to more floodlit courts, providing more opportunities to play.

“Last year we topped our membership at 115, which was a great

boost. With the new year we're back promoting tennis through our club school link programme to ensure we're taking tennis to children who may not have had the opportunity to play the sport in the past.

“Through our links in both schools and the local community we are able to stimulate interest in tennis and continue developing many of those players, helping them make the most of their ability.”

Following the fantastic development of the DTA and the programmes on offer, it was recently awarded Beacon status as part of the AEGON Parks Tennis programme, delivered by the LTA and Tennis Foundation. This is a national accolade that recognises the best community-focused facilities offering free and affordable tennis. To date, AEGON Parks Tennis has awarded 97 sites with the status.

Former LTA president Derek Howorth visited the club before Christmas to present it with its Beacon plaque and see how it is helping to grow the game at all levels. →



Sena (centre) and colleagues revitalise Welsh tennis



Diamond Academy has secured the best facilities possible

“It’s great to see the work Diamond is doing to ensure that people in the local area can play tennis”

→Derek says: “Diamond Tennis Academy has made great strides since it was first set up in 2006, developing its own coaching programme, complete with holiday camps, tournaments and after-school clubs at various locations in South Wales. The club is certainly leading the way in securing the best possible facilities for tennis and a programme of tennis activities to suit all ages and abilities.

“It’s great to see the work Diamond is doing to ensure that people in the local area have as many opportunities as possible to play tennis.”

As well as coaching keen tennis players, the DTA encourages players to compete both within the club and externally. This is both a fun and effective way of developing their skills and keeps players in the game longer as they strive to reach the next level. Operating several projects in conjunction with local authorities and Tennis Wales, DTA has a permanent base at Heath Park in Cardiff where

most of the coaching throughout the year takes place.

To achieve Beacon status, facilities must offer access to quality, affordable coaching as well as regular competitions for all ages and abilities.

Members of the DTA pay an annual fee that allows them to access coaching and entitles them to free use of DTA club courts. As the venue is registered to the LTA, DTA members also qualify for free British Tennis Membership, among various other benefits and discounts.

Group tennis courses for kids run for a duration of seven weeks during term time, with continuous assessment and groups organised by age and ability. Individual coaching is also available if preferred by the player.

Another popular service provided by DTA is after-school tennis clubs, which are focused on children in years two and three. After attending a taster session, 20 children are selected to attend the club for a 10-week course costing £30 each. The school also benefits from 12 hours of free curriculum-time coaching that can be used to train up a school team for the Cardiff Sports League.

Sena was overwhelmed to receive both the national recognition and a visit from Derek Howorth, in one

SENA'S TOP FIVE TIPS for coaches...

- Plan your programme in advance
- Research your area and tailor your programme to the demand
- Programmes are always well received out of school term time
- Make pricing accessible to all
- The more people that can come the longer it will last

of his last official duties before handing over the role of LTA president to Peter Bretherton.

Sena says: “The club was extremely proud to welcome Derek and to have achieved Beacon status. You get on with your day-to-day job and forget there are people out there keeping an eye out for your progression and successes so to achieve this status and for Derek to actually present us with the award was fantastic.

“It was great to meet him and get his views on tennis. He has a wealth of knowledge in this type of area so to pick his brains on this was a great opportunity.”

In addition to DTA’s AEGON Parks Tennis Beacon presentation, Sena was personally awarded the same day with the 2010 Young Enterprise Scholar of the Year from the UWIC.

It was awarded in recognition of his work, and supported by the Welsh Assembly’s Knowledge Exploitation Fund, which provides financial assistance to high and further education institutions in Wales to promote entrepreneurship and innovation. **BTQ**

For more information about the programmes at Diamond Tennis Academy please visit www.diamondtennisacademy.co.uk

FOR MORE INFORMATION about Parks Tennis please visit www.lta.org.uk/BTQ



Sena passes on his knowledge to a young player

AEGON PARKS

AEGON Parks Tennis aims to increase community access to tennis in parks and communities nationwide. Delivered by the LTA and Tennis Foundation, AEGON Parks Tennis is a key programme in the drive to increase participation and grow tennis at all levels. The long-term aim is to have an AEGON Parks Tennis site acting as a Beacon of community tennis excellence, and offering free and affordable tennis opportunities in each of the local authority areas in Britain.

South West News Service



Sena realises school links are critical to growing tennis



QUICK-FIRE QUESTIONS...

- **DESCRIBE YOURSELF IN THREE WORDS?** Passionate, determined, respectful
- **IF YOU COULD BE ANYONE FOR A DAY WHO WOULD YOU BE?** President of the USA
- **BEST PIECE OF ADVICE YOU'VE EVER BEEN GIVEN?** Winners never quit and quitters never win
- **WHY TENNIS?** The blend of power, skill, fitness and tactics, battling against an individual
- **WHEN WAS YOUR FIRST MATCH?** 1992, I was massively outplayed
- **MOST MEMORABLE TENNIS MOMENT?** Playing for Cardiff against Nantes, in 1998, and helping the team win, while remaining undefeated
- **TOP TENNIS PERSON?** Mark Tennant, Inspire 2 coach and Julie Williams, Tennis Wales [tennis mentors]
- **BEST PLAYER OF ALL TIME?** Pete Sampras
- **PROUDEST COACHING MOMENT?** Coaching the U12 boys' county cup team
- **WHAT WOULD YOU HOPE IS YOUR LASTING IMPRESSION AS A COACH IN THREE WORDS?** Improvement, fun, fitness
- **WHO INSPIRES YOU?** Jay Z
- **IF YOU COULD COACH ANYONE IN THE WORLD, WHO WOULD IT BE?** Venus Williams, to try and get her to be able to beat her sister
- **FAVOURITE COACHING MOVIE?** Remember the Titans / Coach Carter
- **GRASS OR CLAY?** Grass
- **COACHING OR PLAYING?** Coaching