

He's turning 98, and still quite the swinger

BY JOHN COLEBOURN, THE PROVINCE JULY 9, 2011



Ed Gladstone, who turns 98 on July 11, shows his form on the court during a regular Saturday-morning match at New Westminster Tennis Club on Royal Avenue.

Photograph by: Ward Perrin, PNG

Ed Gladstone is a tennis player who these days is treated like a star playing on centre court.

And rightly so.

Gladstone, who turns 98 on Monday, is an inspiration to everyone at the New Westminster Tennis Club when he starts to dazzle his opponents with some of his patented spins and lobs and drop shots.

Having played all his life, Gladstone has one last milestone he wants to add to his illustrious tennis résumé — he plans on being out on the court hitting tennis balls when he reaches the age of 100.

“I don’t think I’ll have any trouble with that,” Gladstone quipped after a doubles match that he won at the club in New Westminster’s Tipperary Park.

Originally from Middlesbrough, England, Gladstone began playing tennis at age seven. He got into the game in a big way when his parents moved to Canada in 1917.

He is a founding member of the New Westminster club and says playing tennis almost daily all his life has kept him feeling young and healthy.

"It is a very friendly game and you get lots of fresh air and exercise," he points out.

Even as he hits 98, Gladstone says his arm feels good when he finishes a tennis match. "My arm is fine," he said. "I keep it in shape."

Besides tennis, Gladstone used to be a runner. He was in a mini-marathon about six years ago, and got separated from the pack. "I got too far ahead and got lost," he recalls.

Gladstone comes from an age when tennis was a graceful sport, of white outfits and good manners. Reflecting on the top tennis players of today, Gladstone thinks Roger Federer is a great player who is a good ambassador for the sport. "You can't help but like Federer," he said.

Gladstone has played all sorts of top tennis players. He played Donald Budge, a six-time Grand Slam champ, and said that match was humbling. "I knew I couldn't beat him, but I loved playing against him."

There are about 250 members at the immaculate tennis club in Tipperary Park. Club member Frank Benoit, 66, said when you get out on the court with Gladstone, you never know where he is going to put the ball. "He's got a deceptive game," he said. "He's got all kinds of slices and spins, he drives his opponents crazy."

Mary Gorman, 73, was playing against Gladstone in the doubles match. "He is very inspiring to me. He makes me want to keep going."

Gladstone's wife Lorraine calls her husband's lust for the game "his passion."

"He's legally blind," she adds. "I don't know how he sees the ball."

Tennis club president Pierre Robinson calls Gladstone "such a gentleman on the court. It is inspiring to see him hitting everything back to his opponents."

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