

Q&A – Mikala Triplett, Tennis Director

What does 'Swell' mean to you?

Swell, to me, is a place where you can train to improve your health and wellness while also being surrounded by people with similar goals as you that help motivate you on your health and athletic journey. Growing up in Santa Barbara, staying active was a big part of my life and Swell embodies that aspect of the Santa Barbara community by focusing on the wellbeing and development of Santa Barbara athletics. Being a part of the Swell coaching team has given me the opportunity to use all that I learned in my competitive tennis career to enrich the junior tennis program, and that is something that I am proud to do since I grew up playing tennis in Santa Barbara.

How did you get into tennis and how many years have you been practicing it?

I have been playing tennis for 15 years. I grew up with older brothers and after trying the sports that they did like motocross and wrestling, my father put me into tennis. He started by taking me out to play at local tennis courts and once he saw that I was picking it quickly, he put me into lessons. Within a year, I started playing in the USTA 10 and under division where I made it to the top 10 in Southern California. I fell in love with the routine of training and competing very quickly.

Who was your biggest inspiration?

My parents played a big role in facilitating my success and inspired me to reach my full potential with tennis. They have both experienced a lot of adversity in their lives and were still able to accomplish so much. My mother immigrated to the United States from Mexico at a young age and served in the United States Navy right out of high school. Her strength and courage inspired me to always do my best and push myself to my limit. My father was a D1 track and field athlete and what he accomplished despite his difficult upbringing inspired me to become that best athlete that I could and to not make excuses for anything.

What achievements are you the most proud of in your tennis journey?

Early on in my tennis journey, I was scouted by and invited to the BNP Paribas Open in Indian Wells by Wayne Bryan. Being recognized by an important figure in the tennis world really solidified that I wanted to play tennis for the rest of my life and see where it takes me. I went on to play many national tournaments and when I was 13, I was a finalist in the Mike Agassi "No Quit" national tournament in Las Vegas. Another achievement that I am proud of is being invited to be on the Southern California team and winning the West Zone Team Championships at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. Also, when I was a freshman in high school, I won athlete of the year at the Santa Barbara Athletic Round Table, which was a big accomplishment for me during high school tennis career. Later on in my tennis journey,

I began playing ITF events and that was a proud moment for me because that was the highest point of my career.

How do you balance tennis goals with other aspects of your life?

Being that I started playing tennis at a young age, tennis goals and other aspects of my life seemed to have been intertwined so I learned how to stay focused on my goals but also make sure that I was not neglecting other parts of my life like school, friends and family. I feel like my goals and achievements enriched my life and relationships because I have learned many life lessons through tennis. Also, having a large family and taking trips that were not focused around tennis helped me balance my tennis career because it taught me that it is important to take breaks!

Can you share a piece of advice that helped you stay motivated to keep playing tennis?

Keeping positive and surrounding myself with a group of people that had similar aspirations as me helped motivated me to keep playing. When you train at a high level, it is important to have a strong group of friends that you train hard with because it encourages positivity and fun in the sport. Also, writing down goals helped motivate me. I believe that if you write down your goals and list ways to accomplish them, it will motivate you to get out on the court everyday and better yourself and your game. My family has also been a big motivation for me, their support and encouragement helped me keep striving to do my best.