

## Racquet Geniuses

Youngsters take to the courts—  
in every shape and size

BY GEORGETTA LORDI MORQUE

**Dylan Murray, 12,  
Bronxville, New York**

In between homework and just being a kid, this 12-year-old from Bronxville is making history as the first boy from the United States to earn a number one squash ranking in Europe. The international squash circuit is territory few Americans have conquered, but Dylan Murray is breaking all records as one of the top junior players in the world.

Last summer, Dylan won the Pioneer Cup in Cologne, Germany, as well as the Dutch Junior Open in Amsterdam in the boys' under 13 division. He placed second twice at the Scottish Junior Open, took first place at the Spanish Junior Open at age 11, and also claimed third place at the British Junior Open this year. And if that wasn't enough to keep him busy, Dylan also competes here in the States, but in an older age group. Ranking number one in the boys' under 15 division, this year, he also won the U.S. Junior Gold, the national championships, without losing a single game.

Dylan is not the only Murray with considerable squash talent. His dad, Gerry, plays at an A level, and younger brother Ryan, 8, another rising star, placed sixth in the boys' under 11

nationals this year. His sister Megan, 15, is ranked in the top twenty in the US.

Dylan's first lesson came at age 4 when Dylan and his mother, Caroline, shared a court at the Bronxville Field Club with pro Gamal Amir, Egypt's former number one player. Caroline's goal was

enjoys many sports and competes on a school basketball team at Bronxville Middle School. He also plays AAU basketball and Babe Ruth baseball. Since there is so much pressure on kids today, the Murrays don't want Dylan to burn out on squash. "He plays and he loves it," says Caroline. "We'll let him

play and see what happens." For now, all eyes will be on Dylan as he continues to hold court in the world of junior squash.

**Nicki Ross, 14 and  
Corey DeLaney, 14,  
Chatham,  
New Jersey**

For 14-year-olds Nicki Ross and Corey DeLaney of Chatham, New Jersey, platform tennis is as much about friendship as it is about athletics. The two are uniquely paired as best friends and also national

champions. They are the number one team in the 14-and-under girls division of the American Platform Tennis Association, having won the National Championships and the New England Junior Open this year. Two years ago, they claimed the 12-and-under national title.

Since they attend different schools—Nicki is a freshman at Chatham High School and Corey an eighth-grader at the Pingry School in Martinsville—playing



DYLAN MURRAY

to get some exercise and keep her son entertained, but Dylan took over the hour as his mom watched in awe. Gamal later helped cultivate Dylan's Egyptian style of play, characterized as distinctly deceptive, tricky and powerful.

With his unprecedented victories at a young age, what's next for this rising star? Gamal predicts a promising future on the world squash front. However, the Murray family is content to take everything one step at a time. Dylan

NICKI ROSS, COREY  
DELANEY



"paddle," as the sport is colloquially called, is a way for them to spend time together. They both share a passion for the game and enjoy teamwork, which in platform tennis is the key to success. Nicki is the more aggressive of the two, playing offense, while Corey's strengths are off the wires.

It doesn't hurt that their mothers are both teaching pros and help coach the girls. Nicki's mom, Cindy Deatly Ross, is the pro at Noe Pond Club, in Chatham, New Jersey, where the girls play, and Corey's mom, Bobo DeLaney, is ranked number one in the country with her sister-in-law. In fact, Bobo's family represents a long lineage of players—Corey's uncle is a tennis and paddle pro on Long Island, and her grandmother and great-uncle are in the Platform Tennis Hall of Fame. Corey also competes with her dad in the New Jersey State Mixed Doubles Championships. For the Rosses, platform tennis is also a family affair. Nicki's late grandfather won a number of senior events, and in addition to her mom, her immediate family all play.

At the end of the day, the girls have a lot of fun, observes Cindy. "They encourage each other and laugh together about stupid errors." And, although their schedules are tightly packed with school work and other sports—Corey plays soccer, basketball and lacrosse and Nicki plays lacrosse and tennis—next year, the duo hopes to win the 18-and-under division and someday compete in adult tournaments.

**Blair Seideman, 15,  
Brookville, New York**

For the past several years, this Long Island native has been racking up points on the competitive junior tennis circuit, holding the number one ranking for girls in both the 16- and 18-and-under age divisions of the United States Tennis Association's Eastern section. On a national level, where East Coast players often struggle to advance, Blair Seideman has reached as high as number twelve in the 16's and number twenty-seven in the 18's.

Blair's success is the result of competing well in some of the most challenging junior tournaments in the country, such as the USTA National Clay Court Championships, the USTA National Hard Court Championships and other national and sectional events. In March, she reached the quarterfinals of the USTA Spring National Championships in Mobile, Alabama. Last year, she was one of the top point winners of the USTA Eastern Sectional Closed Championship Circuit, where she was rewarded with a day at the U.S. Open. This summer, Blair will represent Eastern in the USTA Junior Fed Cup in California, a competition among top juniors from each USTA section. Her talents have also caught the eye of the tennis industry—Babolat is her sponsor and supplies her with racquets, string, shoes and bags.

A lover of all sports, Blair started playing tennis at age 6, and by the time she was 9, she had chosen tennis over soccer and all other activities. Her parents are recreational tennis players and her sister

played in high school, but Blair is the first in the family to take tennis to higher levels. She's trained at many facilities and is currently working with Mike Kossuff at Sportime in Syosset, New York. She practices six days a week for two to three hours and works out in a gym twice or three times weekly. She also plays on the clay courts at the Mutton-town Club in East Norwich, New York.

"I have a lot of fight," she says about her game, since she's fast and gets a lot of balls back, and often frustrates her opponents. She also believes her experiences on the court have provided her with valuable life skills and have helped her mature. Although she's only a sophomore in high school, college is not far off and Blair's goal is a Division I tennis scholarship. "I'd like to go to college and reach my potential and maybe try to go pro." Given this rising star's record, the choices and opportunities could be endless.

—CCQ

BLAIR SEIDEMAN

