

RAMY

A S H O U R

EGYPT'S

SQUASH

ICON

He is one of the rare players who has it all; attractive style, remarkable speed, charisma and an obvious love for the game. Ashour tells *Insight* how he developed his talent to go on and become the youngest player to achieve first place after the great Khan.

By Christine Kassarsey



After winning the World Junior Squash Champion twice. When did you first decide to become a squash player?

I began to play squash at the age of six, but it was not until I was twelve that I began to take my training seriously. My coaches kept encouraging me to resume in a more professional manner. It became a goal to torture myself and spend long hours improving my moves to become a skilled skilled squash player.

Who were some of your role models growing up and why?

Anyone, who has a strong character and is able to succeed whilst keeping their pride and honour. Jahangir Khan - his technique and success inspires any squash player. Jansater is another model, whose personality and modesty have impressed me since ages ago. Above all is my mother, whom I have always been amazed by; her strong ability to handle problems and hard situations is something that I try to take with me in every game. As well as my father, he's known for his calm and cheerful attitude. He has helped me a lot to balance my personality.

Tell us about the most memorable match you have ever played?

The Men's World Open Squash Champion in 2008 - it was one of the most important tournaments I've ever played as I successfully defeated the world's best player and the winner of the tournament, Amr Shabana, in front of a big crowd. It was an unbelievably competitive match, where we had pick up drop shots rapidly. Shabana was initially the winner of this game until the match took a strange turn. I became more energetic and thirsty to win. Those who watched this match possibly will remember how extraordinary and amusing this match was. It is by far the most important match of my life.

You have competed against many players, some of who were pleasant; others who tried to pull you down. Have your competitors ever inspired you?

The more my competitors are persistent, the more resistant and motivated I become. Yet, tournaments usually give more opportunities for players to get along, find common ground and become friends. It is important to

differentiate between respecting a player on one hand, and having the self-confidence to beat them in the game on the other hand. The presence of healthy balanced modesty acquaints me to learn from my competitor's mistakes and discover their points of strength to improve myself.

What are some of the obstacles you have faced during this journey? And how did you plan to overcome them?

Numerous. Enriching the self is the hardest obstacle, where you try to motivate your lazy self. Other than that, dealing with coaches, continuous exercising and injuries are problems that hinder my path. Unlike European countries, Egypt suffers from lack of sport education, making athletes prone to crucial unrecovered injuries that can prevent them from resuming their sport path. I suffered from muscles fatigue for almost two years as a result of wrong moves.

From your point of view, what is the most fundamental skill that can make you a great champ?

Having the will; pushing yourself beyond your limitations to achieve dreams without stressing yourself out. In order to be successful, you must have the courage, the purpose and the willpower to become the person you want to be. Many great players exercise hard regularly and earn 2nd and 3rd places; other talented coach potatoes athletes slacken their gift.

Tell us some personal interesting facts that your fans don't know.

Well, I love listening to all music genres, especially pop, trance and house. I also play a bit acoustic guitar. I have tried kite surfing before and I find it quite interesting. And I LOVE SUSHI!

What is your favorite thing about getting to play internationally?

It gives the opportunity to meet the best players of every nation and play against the best of the world in front of the crowd. These players come from different backgrounds and cultures, which makes it entertaining and interesting to talk with them and establish friendships. Winners usually attend other international sporting

events than the regular ones. In addition to the hospitality and appreciation I get from people, something that we don't get as much in Egypt.

Can you tell me about your training routine and split? How often do you train, and what are your core training philosophies?

Apart from the ordinary cardio, stretching and coordination exercises, every squash player concentrates on developing the frail points and get ready for the tournament phase, which lasts ten months.

How and when did the idea for opening 'Inspire Squash Academy' come about? Basically, I wanted to pass on what I had learned to others and share my victories and memories. So my brother and I decided to initiate an academy that targets small children aged 5- 14 years old, to develop young professional generations, capable to succeed on international basis. I am considering enlarging my business to reach other areas in Cairo like Heliopolis. This will help me connect with larger groups of people. I want to make a difference in people's lives and stress the importance of teaching them techniques and building strong and competitive personalities. I may also initiate classes for old players.

What's on the cards for the rest of this year?

I am currently trying to organise a match for an orphan charity exhibition with some other athletes to raise money. I am also preparing for the squash World Open that will be held in Qatar in December. I am highly motivated to participate since I couldn't compete the last couple of times due to injuries. I am looking forward to playing without any problems this time!

Insight questions:

Greatest triumph in life: A strong come back after being kicked down.
Sport you can't play: Curling
Worse mistake ever: Not meeting the right people at the right time to take care of me.

Most embarrassing situation: Trying to pull off a tricky move (to look cool) while playing and getting the opposite result.

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