

I am Rohan Bopanna

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as told to Preethi Mathani

Rohan Bopanna

To feel a sense of pride and self confidence, to be able to represent India at the Davis Cup, to hear the pride in my parents' voice, to experience a sense of personal contentment and to have the ability to give back to the people and sport that have formed an integral component of my being-these are priceless for me, Rohan Bopanna, a professional tennis player.

My father, a sports-enthusiast encouraged me to start playing tennis when I was eleven. Having played various field-based sports at school, tennis seemed like another exciting option to spend time out in the field. With an innate talent for the sport and with a strength that was a boost to my game, I started to consider formally training in the sport, moving to Bangalore and then to Pune to learn my game. My academic learning was always in parallel to my learning of the sport. However, academic choices were made based on the flexibility of the institution in allowing me to practice my passion, tennis.

Being a professional tennis player, and more importantly the journey to become one, has been an educational experience that has made me the person I am today. I have consciously chosen the medium of sport to educate myself in the ways of the world. Tennis and the training that goes with it have taught me a sense of personal independence and confidence. It has given me the ability to set standards, making me goal oriented and focused.



Some people learn to sustain the volleys that constitute their lives in school and college followed by a desk job that ensures them a source of survival and livelihood. I considered the possibility of playing a sport outdoors as a means to sustain myself and live a healthy lifestyle.

I understand education to mean learning from the experienced and translating that learning into my day to day existence on and off the court. I find the matches always seem more challenging than the practice games. My aim is to ensure that my serve is strong enough to get the ball across the net and to persist, capitalising on my strengths as I go along.

Sport is an education when it is actively encouraged and when there is genuine interest in a person. I started out as a reserved young child, but sport has made me more interactive and receptive to my surroundings. I am able to adapt to people and situations and have learnt to appreciate my surroundings. Tennis has given me the opportunity to be a global citizen, travelling across the globe and allowing me to meet a diverse group of people in the process. To be there in person and experience the diversity and share one's experiences is an overwhelming and fulfilling experience. I remember my match against Roger Federer in 2006 began with me very nervous but as I immersed myself in the match, it emerged as a game that was both challenging and interesting.

Sport as part of an academic curriculum would be a great balancing factor in helping a person grow and focus more on one's strengths.

A sports career versus a career driven by academia is one that should be based on a conscious decision taken by a person. Both careers require a need to set standards and goals for oneself. But I decided I would rather wake up every day to a healthy and wholesome existence that ensured I saw the light of day and the outdoors.

A wholesome regime, driven entirely by internal strength and focus towards the game, has aided my growth as a person. Playing doubles tennis which requires the meeting of minds and an understanding with another player helps create understanding and bonding. The essential need for both players on the team to perform in harmony makes for great team building.

Tennis is my passion and conviction and I play the sport, marking each day, enjoying each milestone and setting a further goal to wake up to every day.

Rohan Bopanna entered the professional tennis world in 2003 as a big-serving 23-year-old who promised to change the face of Indian tennis. After seven years of competing in prestigious tournaments (both national and international), he has cemented his position as a major force to reckon with, particularly in the international doubles circuit and in the singles in the Davis Cup.

In the year 2010, Rohan Bopanna reaffirmed his place in the tennis circuit as a finalist at the US Open 2010 and a quarter-finalist at Wimbledon. Rohan is a member of the Indian Davis Cup team and was instrumental in their memorable victory in the Davis Cup tie of 2010 against Brazil.

Category: Teacher Development

Subject: Sports and Physical Education

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