



Chloe Ayling

Kent based Chloe Ayling changed careers in her thirties to become an LTA qualified tennis Coach. She runs the coaching programme at Kings Hill Community Tennis Club, winner of the Kent Tennis Community Venue of the Year in 2018, for the third year running. Chloe is currently taking her Level 4 Senior Club Coach qualification.



Here's Chloe's story as told to Kent Tennis volunteer, Susan Peters-Berg:

Starting out

Chloe started playing tennis against the wall at home and, while she did not have easy access to a club, she was able to use the courts at the school where her parents were teachers. Chloe's mother took her Level 1 coaching qualification to help out Chloe's first coach, Jean Harris, and Chloe rapidly started to show promise on the tennis court. By the age of seven she was chosen for the Norfolk County tennis squad and enjoyed success at both regional and national level. She was selected as one of the top sixteen young players in the country as part of the National Short Tennis scheme to play at Wimbledon during the Championships in 1988 and 1989. When her family moved away from Norfolk, she went on to represent Warwickshire at tennis.

Her inspiration

Chloe joined the Sussex Police Force in 2005 and after two years moved to London to join the Metropolitan Police Service, where she was promoted to Detective Sergeant. She had her first child in 2012 and second in 2014 and then returned to the Met with the intention of going for further promotion but found that having a family, working part time and juggling shift work were incompatible. It was Chloe's mother who encouraged her to look at becoming a tennis coach in a bid to achieve a better work-life balance, a decision which was strongly supported by her family. Chloe cites her mother as her inspiration; not only has she managed a very successful career of her own, she is also a talented musician and she regularly performs to the public and entertains residents in local care homes.

The challenges she faced

Kings Hill Community Tennis Club was started in March 2016 using the local park's two tennis courts. Chloe set up Taylor Made Tennis Ltd as a coaching provider and started out with the idea of providing a weekend tennis programme for around 25 children, hoping to expand into offering an after-school club, mid-week ladies group and social play at weekends. After just two weeks she had a huge waiting list and realised she needed to enlist some help. Sue Bamford advertised for a coach on her behalf and Deon Van Schalkwyk was the first coach she recruited, together with the teenage son of a friend. With funding from the LTA they had the court lines repainted, added junior blended lines and were up and running. By the end of the first year they had over 150 juniors regularly participating on the coaching programme

and three adult groups. In order to cope with the additional numbers of players, Chloe encouraged parents to get involved and they enjoyed it so much that some went on to take the Coaching Assistant courses. One of her parent volunteers went on to complete her Level 2 coaching qualification and is now an integral part of the tennis programme.

The community programme has continued to attract more players and now offers weekly coaching to nearly 300 children locally, whilst also bringing tennis to over 1100 additional children in six local schools. Seven junior teams and four adult teams also compete in the Kent Tennis leagues.

What made the journey more of a challenge?

A lack of facilities at the current site has made her coaching journey very challenging. There are no floodlights, limiting evening play during the winter. With only two courts, all adult Winter Kent league matches have to be played away, which is not ideal. In the summer, however, teams can play at home and the local Spitfire Pub generously provides their match teas and refreshments for free!

Chloe is working with the local Parish Council to expand the facilities to four floodlit courts on a new site nearby, as the current one has been designated for a church. The existing courts cannot be demolished until new courts have been built but the challenge Chloe faces is to convince the Parish Council and developers that all four new courts should be for tennis rather than multi-use play. One day she hopes that they will be able to raise enough funds to build their own clubhouse.

What in your opinion makes a great coach?

Chloe thinks that a great coach is someone who sees the individuals in each group. She wants to enthuse her players and ensure they not only achieve their potential in tennis but also feel good about themselves. Encouragement and team identity are key and she believes that having family engagement is very important because they are such a vital support group.

Where would she like to be in five years time?

In five years time Chloe would love to see the further expansion of tennis in Kings Hill. Although it will be great to be able to provide further support and opportunities for the most talented players, Chloe would also like to bring more under-represented groups of adults into the game as she sees tennis as a sport that all ages and abilities can enjoy together.