

Calling the shots

The future star of British tennis has used mental tenacity to his advantage on his rise from council-estate kid to sporting ace

Words CHARLIE ALLENBY

At just 21, Paul Jubb has already overcome his fair share of adversity. Orphaned as a young child and raised by his grandmother on a council estate in Hull, Jubb is a firm believer that everything happens for a reason – he even has the phrase tattooed on his arm. “Everyone has their own path, and whatever things come your way – good or bad – it’s meant to happen,” says the tennis star. “It’s your response to that which will determine where you go.”

In Jubb’s case, it has taken him around the world. In 2019, while attending the University of South Carolina, he won the men’s singles title at the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Men’s Tennis Championships, following in the footsteps of Jimmy Connors and John McEnroe and earning a wildcard entry to that year’s Wimbledon.

The Brit failed to progress beyond the first round of the iconic tournament, but since then his career has been a rollercoaster, with highs such as turning pro and signing to Andy Murray’s management company, and lows that included a season ravaged by injury and COVID cancellations. Jubb now lives in London, where he’s training as part of the Lawn Tennis Association’s Pro Scholarship Programme – a scheme that financially supports players with top-100 potential.

Jubb is now fighting fit and ready for a full season. And, although his journey to this point has been less than straightforward, he says he wouldn’t have it any other way.

THE RED BULLETIN: How did you develop the strong mindset needed to overcome adversity?

PAUL JUBB: That mindset was built into me from a young age. The way I work it to my advantage is just having self-pride. I always respect my opponents, wherever I’m playing, but once I’m on the court I’m going to do my best to not make it easy for them to win.

What part did your grandmother play in that development?

She had to play [both] the mother and father roles, so yeah, she’s been a big rock in my life.

How easy was your progression in tennis while growing up?

The thing that I struggled with [back then] was getting to places – organising that sort of thing was a lot harder. [My grandma didn’t drive, so] I ended up having to organise lifts or get on public transport at night so that I could train. Getting over that was something I struggled with; sometimes I just wanted to go out with my friends – a much easier option. But my coach Jonny [Carmichael] helped me get into the mindset that these are the things you’ve got to do if you want to start moving forward. And I’ve always had a competitive nature.

What was it like swapping Hull for South Carolina when you were offered a scholarship in the US?

For sure I didn’t know what it was going to be like in the States. When someone mentioned the college route [to get to the pros], I knew that was the next step

of my journey. Once I’d been [in South Carolina] for a while, I realised how big a move it was. A lot of people weigh up a few options, but I didn’t do any of that – I just signed the papers.

Winning the NCAA men’s singles title in 2019 won you a wildcard entry to Wimbledon. What was it like to play on hallowed ground?


It’s the pinnacle of our sport and where everyone wants to be – you feel like royalty. It was completely unique. It was great to get that experience under my belt, although the match has pretty bad memories [he lost 3-1 in the first round]. I use that as extra motivation. It makes me strive to play there again in the future. I’ve got to get back and put it right.

You’ve been described as Andy Murray’s protégé. What’s the best advice he has given you?

It’s obviously good to be associated with Andy, be a part of his agency and also get to train with him, but I’m on my own journey. I’ve got to focus on that. Now I’m going to play a full year’s schedule, it’s inevitable that I’m going to lose more – only people like Novak [Djokovic] go week-to-week taking titles. The main thing Andy said was to focus on how I’m going to respond and not dwell on that loss. That’s the thing about tennis – you’ve got to go forward without letting the last week affect the next.

You already have a title under your belt in 2021, having won a tournament on the ITF Men’s World Tennis Tour in Egypt. Is the top 100 in sight?

The main thing is getting a lot of matches under my belt. Hopefully I’ll get my ranking up a bit as well. I’m taking it match by match, though; if you think about the ranking too much it can get on top of you. I obviously have aspirations to get into the top 100, but what will be will be. It’ll come. Right now, I’ve just got to continue that momentum. Instagram: @pauljubb_99



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