

## COACHES' CORNER

### EVANS TAKING WALES TO NEW HEIGHTS

Chris Robertson guided Wales to unprecedented heights when he was national coach between 1994 and 2010. Now his protege, former world no.3 David Evans, has picked up that baton in his role as senior high performance coach.

Wales are currently in the top division of both the men's and women's European Team Championships for the first time ever and last December the women came ninth in the World Championship, their best finish since 1987.

"I've had lots of influences in squash, but the two main people were Phil Miller, who helped me greatly through my junior career, and Chris Robertson, as he coached me throughout my

senior career," said the 2000 British Open champion.

"Wales were very fortunate to have somebody of Chris' calibre and I benefited from this greatly. It was a big loss to Wales when Chris left, as he helped take Wales to a very high level in both junior and senior squash. I still speak to Chris quite regularly and try to pick his brains on squash matters."

Robertson is now England's head coach and the two met at the World Team Championship in Canada, where Wales lost narrowly after Tesni Evans had shocked England's former world champion, Laura Massaro.

"Tesni is our highest-ranked player at the moment at 31 in the world, but I believe she has the potential to be in the top 16," said Evans, who moved to Wales Squash and Racketball after four years as Jersey's director of squash.

"She has beaten Laura

and two other top-10 players at various stages through the year, so shows she has huge potential.

Evans' squad also includes Peter Creed, Joel Makin, Deon Saffery, Emyr Evans and Owain Taylor, but he doesn't always get to work with all of them on a daily basis for geographical reasons.

However, he stressed: "I try to get on court with them as often as I can. I believe it is extremely important to get to know my players well and build up an honest relationship with them.

"We obviously identified areas of their game to work on and it's my job to put sessions in place to help this process.

"The game today has changed considerably since I

played, but the fundamentals are still the same. You need to consistently hit your target areas all over the court, so lots of my sessions are around hitting.

"That is not forgetting the



Wales senior high performance coach David Evans

importance of the players' physical condition, as that is an essential requirement for any top player.

"I am still new to coaching, so I'm learning all the time."



### GUEST COACH

*Pete Genever, the Malaysian national coach, provides tips on a key coaching concept*

### IT'S ALL ABOUT WALLS

As the game evolves with technological advances, improved power and fitness levels, the art of match strategy is ever important.

In watching Ramy Ashour secure his recent world title we were treated to a masterclass in using the court dimensions.

Here are a few simple ways to use the court better and improve your performance.

**Use that side wall:**

In defensive strategies, prevent your opponent from taking the volley or the ball early.

● Play medium-pace straight drives from the back, aiming to hit the side wall around shoulder height a foot behind the service line.

● Imagine you are over-hitting the crosscourt drive and with the dropping ball, hit the side wall behind the service box.

● Before serving, observe where your opponent is positioned before picking your side wall target. Practise a slower-paced shot in these situations and attempt to merely brush the side wall, leaving the ball soft in the back corners. This could turn defence into attack within one shot, so be ready to capitalise.

● Another excellent way to get help from the side wall is on the straight drop. Fade the ball into the side wall via the front wall and floor.

Practise hitting front wall to floor on all straight drops

in match play, eventually angling the ball to touch the side wall when your opponent wants to hit.

In defence your objective is to tap into your opponent's emotional frailties! Force them into making rash decisions, getting upset and blaming everything but themselves. This is extremely satisfying to watch and can gain you the initiative.

**Attacking the side wall, back wall or floor:**

Having been defensively solid, let's turn our attention to attacking opportunities.

● When the ball is away from the side wall and sitting up, play straight or crosscourt drops, but do it with purpose. Try to hit down positively on the ball and hit the side wall with some bite.

● Use solo practice to perfect the attacking straight length,

especially from the 'T' area. See if you can get the second bounce to within a racket length of the back corner. Even better if you can get the ball to finish in the back wall nick. Take your time and focus on a clean and meaningful strike.

● Lastly, practise getting the ball to bounce twice before touching the side wall or back wall on your crosscourt drive and boast.

Whatever the situation, if you have your opponent in trouble, then finish them off in style and retreat to the bar to tell everyone about it in great detail!



Ramy Ashour (right) using the full dimensions of the court