

Anastasia Kavounov



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Biography

Tennis started out as a coping mechanism for Anastasia Kavounov, after her father died in a car crash when she was four years old. Now that she's 12, the sport is a major part of her life, and the Mississauga native trains and competes constantly in hopes of making it a career.

She's putting a lot of energy into her training, especially during the winter, when she wakes up at five in the morning to train for two hours indoors before school. So why does she do it? "Just knowing what the end result is going to be," said Kavounov, explaining that her goal is to turn professional and win major tournaments.

Shortly before her father, Denis, died, Kavounov had started learning about the game. Denis had played various sports, and Kavounov's mother, Maryna, played tennis growing up in Ukraine.

Although she's too young to remember much about her father, Anastasia still thinks about him every now and then when she's playing.

"I just focus a lot on tennis and school work, but definitely when I play tournaments — I'm Catholic, so I like to pray a lot — I'll win a match and (think) I'm doing it for him, too," she said. "I know he'd be proud of me if he was here."

Kavounov attends Hollycrest Middle School in Etobicoke, which offers a high-performance program to help her balance her school work and training.

She has risen through the ranks and is now second in Canada among girls age 12 and under. In March, she finished second at the U-12 indoor nationals in Calgary and partnered with Scarlett Nicholson to win the doubles championship.

This summer, Kavounov finished first place in singles title, at the outdoor nationals in Mont-Tremblant! For next year, she hopes to compete more in the U-16 age group because she enjoys challenging herself against older competitors.

"You don't have anything to lose, but you still have to play your heart out and try to win every single match," she said.



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Seeking Refuge: Getting to Know Canada's Next Rising Star Anastasia Kavounov

Tennis has always been innately considered a fiercely individual game, probably the most lonely of any sport. In the words of former world number one Andre Agassi, "You're out there with no team, no coach and no place to hide."

Yet, there are some players—especially some of the greatest to ever pick up a racquet — who were seemingly always able to find the calm in the chaos, using the strictly individual nature of the sport as a sort of refuge from their own personal problems off the court.

With tennis continuing to be on the rise in Canada, particularly in the greater part of Ontario, it was only a matter of time until this nation encountered a player who has been able to courageously use the pain of her past to fuel a dream to becoming one of the best in the world.

Meet Anastasia Kavounov.

Currently ranked one of the best U12 juniors in all of Canada, the 12-year-old is already one of a number of bright talents to emerge from a very talented generation of young Ontarian players, but she has a very compelling backstory. Born and raised in Mississauga, Kavounov lost her father, Denis, in a tragic car accident when she was just four years old. Struggling to come to terms with his sudden loss, Kavounov and her mother, Maryna, turned to tennis, a sport that she began taking up shortly before her dad's passing and after the insistence of her mother, who played the game growing up in Ukraine.

For outsiders who might not recognize the appeal of tennis, one could wonder how this exceptional young talent was able to find solace in such a physically and emotionally demanding sport. But as the 12-year-old explains, "When you're hitting the ball, all your thoughts of sadness and anger go away because you're focusing on making the shot perfect. I forget right away about all the bad thoughts and the calmness of just hearing the ball bounce off your racquet is exhilarating."



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While she did try her hand at a number of other sports in her formative years, nothing really stuck with Kavounov more than tennis, and it's the reason why she (and her family) have been forced to plan their lives around her strenuous playing schedule. As a result, much like a number of her peers, the 12-year-old attends Hollycrest Middle School in Etobicoke, which offers a high-performance program that helps her balance the ball with the books. It's a huge help for the young Mississauga native, as she joked that she couldn't even imagine going back to the days where she would have to go immediately from school to a two-hour practice, followed by very difficult studying periods at night.

With that being said, her training schedule remains extremely demanding, requiring her to wake up at 5 a.m. five days a week to practice for two-and-a-half hours before attending school. "After school, I would sometimes do fitness," she explained in great detail. "In the summer, during school, I go straight after school to a three-hour practice. When there's no school, I do two hours before 12 noon and another two hours after 3 p.m."

While she certainly makes all of these sacrifices because of her love for the game, Kavounov already has her eyes set on some very ambitious short- and long-term goals, now that she will be moving into the U14 division in the New Year. When asked about these objectives, she declared, "For me, the minimum [for me] is getting a scholarship [to go to university], but definitely becoming a professional player and representing Canada proudly and winning many big international tournaments [are some of my long-term goals]."

"Also, I want to win many Grand Slams and become number one in the world and be able to represent my country proudly and most importantly make Canada proud."

For someone who has already been through so much at the tender age of 12, it's these goals paired with the inspiration she draws from her late father that inspires Kavounov to confront every challenge with a positive attitude in her quest to one day playing professionally. "I think he would also be supporting me all the way and would be very proud of me," she said.

In order to achieve these goals, Kavounov and her mother have set up a GoFundMe page to help cover some of her travel and training expenses. She hopes that by telling her story, she will not only be able to inspire others but also show "that you need to put into everything that you're doing, even if you don't have the strength or support [from a full family, such as no father or mother]," making her one to watch out for in the coming years. Story written by Max Gao.



Accomplishments and Footage

Player Ranking

#2 in Singles

#3 in Doubles

Girls Singles (Under 12)

2017 ACE CUP U12 Interprovincial October 20th-22nd

2017 ACE Super Series U10-U16 (4 Star) & U18 (3.5 Star) December 26th-31st

2018 OTA U12 Indoor Provincial Main Draw March 9th-13th

2018 U12 National Selection Main Draw May 25th-27th

2018 OTA U12, U16 Provincial Main Draw June 25th-30th

2018 Under 12 Rogers Outdoor Junior Nationals / Championnats Junior Canadiens Rogers

Girls Singles (Under 14)

Headwaters U14 Provincial Circuit November 10th-12th

2018 OTA GU14 Team On Summer Circuit July 12th-15th

2018 OTA Grass Court U14, U18 July 23rd-29th (4 Star)

Girls Singles (Under 16)

ACE U12, U16 Provincial Circuit December 8th-10th

Girls Doubles (Under 1)

2017 ACE CUP U12 Interprovincial October 20th-22nd

2017 ACE Super Series U10-U16 (4 Star) & U18 (3.5 Star) December 26th-31st

2018 Under 12 Indoor Junior Nationals / Championnats juniors canadiens Rogers ensalle

Girls Doubles (Under 14)

2018 OTA Grass Court U14, U18 July 23rd-29th (4 Star)

2018 OTA GU14 Team On Summer Circuit July 12th-15th

Video Footage: <https://bit.ly/20OwrQ8>

