

Mary Ann Gaskin

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When Mary Ann Gaskin was inducted into the University of Waterloo Sports Hall of Fame, she was regarded as one of the greatest female athletes to ever attend the school.

That's because she starred in both basketball and tennis. And, in her freshman year, she also played field hockey.

She got her start in tennis at about the age of 10, when she began playing at Southampton during summer vacation.

Back in Galt she continued at the Soper Park Tennis Club, and had early success, eventually earning a top-5 Ontario ranking and a top-10 ranking at the national level as a junior in both the Under 16 and Under 18 divisions.

Don Rope, an all-round athlete and member of the Cambridge Sports Hall of Fame, was one of her coaches at Soper Park in those formative years.

It was only the beginning of what would become a lifetime of involvement – and success – in the sport.

It was during this period, when she was still a teenager, that she became a ranked junior.

"I was surprised when someone said I was ranked in Ontario," she recalled. She thought it was a derogatory term.

"What is a ranking?" she asked.

In her last year as a junior she won the coveted Ontario Open title. But during the ensuing years, even though she continued to have success, there was nothing

spectacular, winning some small tournaments.

She admitted her focus on tennis was not absolute during those years.

After graduating from Waterloo with a bachelor's degree in math and physical education and a masters in psychology, and subsequently studying accounting at Laurier, she entered the working world.

At her graduation from Waterloo, an article appeared in the KW Record, describing her as the best female athlete to ever come out of the university.

It had been a remarkable university career. In 1969 she had won the Ontario University tennis championship, was MVP of the basketball team that won

the Ontario-Quebec championship – there was no Canadian tournament at that time – and won the prestigious Dean of Women Award for athletic and scholastic excellence.

With all these credits, she was among the first inductees, along with classmate Ron Smith, to the University of Waterloo Sports Hall of Fame.

As of 2003, she had earned six international team trips where she represented Canada, and had been captain of three Canadian teams. She had also competed at the world level in competitions in Australia, South Africa, The Netherlands, Ireland, and Austria.

She had also won a score of provincial singles and doubles (including mixed) titles as well as Canadian age-group titles, including the 55 singles and doubles titles in 2001. Her doubles partner was Peigi Fairs from London, who had partnered with Gaskin since 1987. "She's in the 65 division but plays 10 years down," said Gaskin.

All in all, the tennis was almost equal to the travel opportunities for Gaskin. "South Africa was amazing. I went on a Safari, and in The Netherlands we toured the canals and the Van Gogh Museum. It's just been a great opportunity to travel. We're playing for the pride of our country and it's really a great honour."

She met some great people, including her teammates, through tennis, and she wouldn't change it for anything.



Mary Ann Gaskin, right, with tennis legend Margaret Court in Perth, Australia in 1994.



Inducted 2002