

## How Playing Squash Helps to Build Confidence, Meet new People, and to Stay you Motivated - *Profile of Sarah Cao*



*Sarah Cao competing at 2019 Canada Winter Games in Red Deer, Alberta*

“Squash is an irreplaceable part of me,” says Sarah Cao, a 17-year-old grade 12 student, who has been playing since she was eight years old. She was introduced to the sport by a friend and currently plays at The River Club in Richmond, B.C. with the Shakiru Matti Squash Academy.

She says playing squash has “changed me completely” and has quite a list in this regard. She believes it helped her mature and, importantly, taught her how to receive criticism and accept losses gracefully. Typically, the only girl on her team when she was younger, she also says

she learned early on how to stand up for herself and how to get along with all sorts of different people. In addition, because training and playing has kept her very busy, she believes she has avoided much of the drama and conflicts that some of her friends have dealt with. Last but not least, she says the most meaningful message she learned from squash is that she can always improve and that the only way to do that is to work as hard as possible.

Shakiru Matti has been her coach since she started, and she considers him her most influential role model. He helped her develop not only her squash playing “but also [her] as a person.” She says her current favourite players are Nicole David, Amanda Shoby, Raneem El Weleily, and Laura Massaro.

She began competing at the provincial level at an early age and soon moved on to national and international tournaments. She participated in the 2016 Pan American Games in Brazil and in the 2019 World Juniors in Malaysia. She (along with her older sister Cindy) was part of Team BC that won bronze at the 2019 Canada Winter Games. Because of the current situation involving the pandemic, her future plans for competing are uncertain, but she very much wants to play varsity squash at university and that has kept her motivated to keep up with her training.

For young girls interested in squash, her advice is simply to enjoy playing the sport as much as possible and not compare yourself to others. “At the least, playing squash will build your confidence, help you meet people, and encourage you to push yourself.”



*Sarah, in black tops/bottoms, with Team Canada at 2019 World Junior Champs in Kuala Lumpur*