Hannelore Barthel Interview

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You might think that the dude (or dudette, as the case may be) under the television camera's leering lens sporting sunglasses, a major sports brand logo, and a determined looked with a fist pump is the most important person in the player's box. But chances are, they're not. Nope. It's probably the family member off-camera. And in most cases, it's mom. Yup, good ole faithful mom. Been there through it all, and will be there when everything is said and done. **Mona Barthel** is blessed to have just one of those moms. Hannelore Barthel is the reason, most definitely, behind much of Mona's success.

Krista White: You have a doctorate degree, and so for you, education is very important.

Hannelore Barthel: I personally like to learn new things. To encourage a player to get an education is very important to their overall life success. Tennis is a small world inside the world. It is important to be able to see outside of it. Education, I believe, helps the player to do this. For those that achieve a higher level of education, it gives the young people peace of mind.

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Mona continued to work on her education while competing. She studied in Germany at a science education excellence center. The focus on science subjects and not on sports. I think there were some kids in Mona's class that still have no idea that Mona played tennis. While Mona had it on her mind to finish her education, she was always determined to be a tennis player. Now, Mona can attend university, if she wishes.

KW: What are several things that a parent should remember when their son or daughter is rising in the rankings?

HB: Always try to enjoy it. I try to enjoy watching Mona playing matches. But it is hard not to get nervous sometimes, especially at the Grand Slams.

It is also important to keep the atmosphere in the right way, to be positive and don't get too stressed about things. As a parent, your child feels your emotions. So, it is important to let them know that they are the same person whether they are wining or losing.

It is important your child feels good, and that they are not a terrible person if they lose. They must know that they are special. All the players are special. Making your child feel bad because they lost never helps.

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KW: What is one way that you and Mona keep a sense of normalcy while on tour?

HB: She takes a piece of home with her in my person. [smiles]

Mona is very interested in good nutrition, and she tries to find out what is good for her and what is good for her body. She tries to do the best thing for herself. This she does while she is at home or on tour.

KW: What advise would you give to parents of junior players?

HB: When Mona was younger, we owned an RV, and she could sleep in the back while I drove all night. It also allowed us to stay right next to the courts. Life was different back then.

When we got rid of the RV, we used to sleep in a tent. It was so nice. One trip, we had such a nice tour of England. It is not the way we travel now on the WTA tour, but these were very good experiences for many reasons. I think in this it is important to show your child that the money that you are earning is just enough to pay for a tent on a campsite. The player that has everything by a parent or someone else, doesn't get the opportunity to learn that they are the one earning their way.

Photo credit: Krista L. White, 2014, Miami.

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