

# Holding *court*...

Having grown up in Surrey, tennis star **Tim Henman** has his roots very much in our county. As he looks forward to taking part in a 24-hour charity tennis marathon, involving many clubs from around the area, here we put him under our spotlight...

WORDS BY CAROLINE HARRAP

## You went to school at Reed's School in Cobham - tell us about your time there?

It was great fun. It was a very exciting time in my tennis life, playing two hours of tennis per day, six days a week. It was extremely helpful.

## Did you have a favourite teacher who particularly inspired you?

Not especially, although I remember being inspired by Bjorn Borg following my first visit to watch Wimbledon. Later, I found Stefan Edberg very influential as I was lucky enough to practice with him a lot.

## Have you been back at all?

Yes, I keep in regular contact with the school, and through my Tim Henman Charity Foundation I still fund some of the tennis scholars there.

## At what point did you know you were going to be a tennis player?

I first dreamt of being a tennis professional when I was six years old.

## What was your favourite moment of your tennis career?

Probably my first match on Centre Court in 1996 vs Yevgeny Kafelnikov. That's where it all started...

## You have since become a regular commentator on TV - what's the funniest thing that's happened in the commentary box?

I find working alongside Sue Barker very amusing, as all I can associate with Sue is when she used to pick me up from school in her car when I was 13 years old. I can't seem to get this out of my head when I'm sitting alongside her on the TV!

## With Wimbledon on our doorstep, what would be your top tip for readers going to the event?

Go to Henman Hill and just soak up the atmosphere there!

## You're also an ambassador for the Bright Ideas for Tennis charity... tell us about that?

Yes, I am delighted to support Bright Ideas for Tennis. Inspiring players of all ages and abilities, increasing participation levels and improving facilities are fundamental to raising the overall standards within the game and this is exactly what Bright Ideas are doing. I share their passion and commitment towards these goals and I look forward to helping them in the future.

## Everyone is very excited about watching you play in their 24-hour tennis marathon - how did that come about?

I have connections with Danny Sapsford, the MD of Bright Ideas, through our time on tour and in Davis Cup teams together. He approached me last Wimbledon, and his enthusiasm towards the event was contagious. I'm just glad to be able to help.

## What are you looking forward to most about the event?

Seeing how tired Danny and Stuart (Rhodes), a former Surrey County player, are after 24 hours straight! And obviously raising a lot of money for a great cause.

## Judging by the many Surrey tennis clubs taking part, it seems the local tennis scene is thriving; would you agree?

Yes and no. There are a lot of great clubs within Surrey that are thriving, but there are still a lot that need help. And besides, this event is not just about helping the clubs, it's about helping communities, improving facilities that will enable more people from all walks of life to take up the sport.

## Do you have a favourite tennis court/club in Surrey?

Wimbledon of course!

## How about a place to visit?

I'm a member of Queenwood Golf Club

near Ottershaw and I always love spending time there.

## Andy Murray is a Surrey resident himself - are you two pals?

Yes, absolutely, and I have thoroughly enjoyed watching his fantastic career unfold. To be commentating on his Wimbledon triumph last year was a real highlight for me too.

## What advice would you have for Surrey youngsters hoping to follow a career in tennis?

Work hard, enjoy yourself and follow your dreams.

## Are any of your own children following in your footsteps?

Not really. They play a little tennis but I don't think they'll end up as professionals. I want them to enjoy the game without being too pushy. They enjoy a host of other sports and activities, which is totally led by themselves; I think that's important.

## Finally, tell us something we don't know about you...

I have a melchior (24 bottles) of red wine sitting in my wine cellar at home and I'm just looking for a good reason to open it!

### Need to know:

**What:** Forte Village 24hr Tennis Marathon  
**Where:** National Tennis Centre, Roehampton  
**When:** From Sunday February 2, 12noon, to Monday February 3, 12 noon  
**Who:** Organised by Bright Ideas for Tennis  
**Why:** To raise money for local tennis clubs  
**How:** People are welcome to watch and admission to the event is completely free  
**Offering support:** In order to make a donation to the event, visit: [mydonate.bt.com/events/24hrtennismarathon](http://mydonate.bt.com/events/24hrtennismarathon)  
**Find out more:** For more information on the Forte Village 24hr Tennis Marathon, see the website: [brightideasfortennis.org](http://brightideasfortennis.org)



## The low-down...

Former Davis Cup player, Danny Sapsford, the managing director of the Bright Ideas for Tennis charity, will be joined by former Surrey County player and now Bright Ideas charity benefactor, Stuart Rhodes, for a 24-hour tennis marathon.

They will be partnered by a number of Davis Cup and GB Fed Cup players including Bright Ideas for Tennis charity ambassador Tim Henman (former GB number 1, Wimbledon semi finalist, ATP World number 4), and Jeremy Bates (former GB number 1).

Other players at the event, which is sponsored by the Forte Village resort in Sardinia, will include Jamie Baker, Barry Cowan, Melanie South, Karen Cross, Katie O'Brien, Chris Eaton, Andrew Richardson, Luke Milligan, James Auckland, Lee Childs.

Providing the opposition over the 24 hours will be 11 tennis clubs from Surrey, one from Kent and one from London.

"In order to further our fund-raising, and to pay for larger capital projects within clubs, I came up with the idea of a 24-hour tennis marathon," explains Danny, who lives in Weybridge. "I wanted an event that would be challenging, but also include the clubs that we were helping in order to give them a real sense of ownership.

"I have been fortunate to have the support of many of my peers for this event, and now that most of the preparations are complete, I'm really looking forward to the event itself."

Each of the participating clubs has a capital project for which they are attempting to raise money, ranging from new practice walls to court resurfacing and new floodlights to clubhouse refurbishments.

Above: Tennis star Tim Henman is looking forward to competing against Surrey clubs in the 24-hour tennis marathon