

# CROSSING THE NET

Jack Lane received his first tennis coaching at the age of 12 as part of the All England Club's Wimbledon Junior Tennis Initiative, led by Club coach Dan Bloxham, which takes tennis into schools in Merton and Wandsworth. 11 years later, Lane is on the other side of the net...

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**I only ever played tennis as a mess around. If we had the chance, we'd play in local parks, drew a court on our road, it was good fun. Football was easier to get into, it was just there, you used to play it at lunchtime. I used to throw a tennis ball around a lot, but it never related to tennis, you had to have a racket as well.**

But when the Wimbledon Junior Tennis Initiative came into our school, I was invited to come down on a Saturday or Sunday and continued playing. It was just the buzz. I didn't feel like there was much pressure, because there were so many kids, and because I was quite shy, to start off with I could just sit back in the crowd.

I loved trying to beat my mates, you got to meet new people as well,

and it was a lot of fun. That boosted my confidence and then I started going on Wednesday and Friday evenings as well, which boosted it even more. There were squads of eight of us, whereas on the weekends it was a lot busier, they couldn't control the numbers. So I could just ease myself in and then they invited me to do more, which was just brilliant.

My competitive portfolio was not the best, I wasn't that confident and I beat myself up too much. But when I went to University I did play for the team, it was similar to the WJTI, more team-based, which suited me more than just the individual aspect.

As I got older, I started to help out with the coaching, even got sent to go and coach the US Ambassador for a couple of sessions. That was quite



an interesting experience. I got my qualifications, with the WJTI's help, and am now working as a community coach for Merton. We go into the local schools in Merton and give kids who've never come across tennis a chance to play. And then on a Saturday morning I still help out with the WJTI sessions as well.

What we're trying to do in Merton is pretty similar to what happened to me. Each school has a five-week coaching block for each term, and then we give out some leaflets, and if they enjoy it, they can come back to Harris Academy, which is a registered place to play now, and play. All the kids have to do is bring themselves and a pound and they've got a coaching session. You wouldn't get that value in many other sports, let alone tennis.

There's so many things that can be done. With the help of the WJTI and the charity Give it Your Max we'd like to run tournaments and get the numbers up. The kids I'm seeing in the schools, they're all enjoying it, but it just shows there was no link from school to club before. So I'd like to turn up to a session at Harris Academy and see eight kids for an hour, at least.

It's a sport I enjoy and to do it for a career is just a bonus. I don't think I'd ever take it for granted. Not many people can say that they really enjoy their job. I've been lucky enough to say I can do tennis coaching.

Find out more about the WJTI on [wimbledon.com](http://wimbledon.com)

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