

Jacob set to hit the pro circuit as US college stint ends

Scotland's senior tennis player of the year, Jacob Fearnley, from Dalkeith, will look to British No 1 Cameron Norrie for inspiration as he prepares to leave his American university and hit the grass court circuit.

The links between Fearnley, 22, and Norrie extend beyond Scotland – the latter has a father from Glasgow – as both attended Texas Christian University in Fort Worth.

A difference is that Jacob completed his degree (in kinesiology) whereas Norrie dropped out towards the end of his course as the lure of turning professional was too strong albeit he finished top ranked American student player three times during his stint.

Jacob's record on the college scene is also highly impressive and as lead singles player this season he won nine of his first ten matches which he credits with bolstering his ability to win Challenger titles, singles and doubles, in Edgbaston (as a qualifier) and Luxembourg when undertaking a recent winter break back in Europe.

He now ranks just outside the world top 500 but momentum is very much on his side and 2024 could even be a big

breakthrough year especially as his final victim as Edgbaston was Kyle Edmund, former Australian Open semi-finalist.

Jacob told The Edinburgh Reporter: "There are a lot of good players who have come through TCU and the one that springs to mind is Cam Norrie who has reached the top 10 in the world which is really special."

Norrie was actually a Wimbledon semi-finalist in 2022, but lost out to Novak Djokovic.

Jacob added: "Seeing what Cam is doing on the pro tour gives myself and all the college guys a lot of motivation and confidence that the college route is a good one which produces top class players who can compete with the best in the world."

Asked recently by Tennis Scotland what he was most looking forward to post-college, Jacob said:

"The outlook after college is to be full-time on tour, I'm excited to play for myself and play pro tournaments. It's something I've always wanted to do since I was a little kid so very excited for that and looking forward to what's ahead for me.

"It has to be the grass court season, if I can get any opportunities on there that's what I'm most looking forward to and would be ready to jump at anything that comes my way so that's plan A.

"I'm just excited to be back and playing and to put in a good summer of tennis, play more Futures, the British (ATP) Challengers and obviously if I get another opportunity at Wimbledon that would be incredible. Hopefully I can build on what happened there last year, those were some of the most fun weeks of my life."

The Wimbledon reference concerned a doubles sortie in SW 19 last year with fellow Merchiston Castle tennis academy alumni

Johannus Monday.

Making the most of a wild card given on the strength of winning a Nottingham Challenger event they came through the first round before extending the current world No 1 pair Rohan Bopanna and Matthew Ebden to 5-7, 3-6.

So, Jacob could be at the gateway to exciting times and whatever happens on the pro circuit he will also maintain links with Scottish tennis, returning from the States to represent East of Scotland in the 2022 British inter-county championships albeit injury ruled him out last year when captain Alan Macdonald's squad again went close to lifting the highly prestigious team title.

"I love county week and hope we can get the strongest team possible to go on and win it. I think all players should play county week. It's a really great event and really helps your game" said Jacob.

Born in Worcester, Jacob was brought up in Dalkeith where his mum and grand-dad were both keen players.

"I started playing tennis aged about four. My grandad loved tennis and helped me and I have memories of playing with him and my mum in his backyard and on the courts at Dalkeith.

"Edinburgh will always be my home and when I first got into TCU I made sure they knew I was Scottish and was from Edinburgh!"

A name well worth noting is the spearhead who will leave TCU as the second best team in the ultra competitive US College circuit behind only Ohio.

PHOTOS courtesy of Tennis Scotland.

