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METEORIC RISE OF MISSISSAUGA'S BIANCA ANDREESCU REVIVES LOUISE BROWN'S LEGACY

NEW MISSISSAUGA TENNIS SENSATION RECALLS AN OLD RELIABLE, SAYS JOHN STEWART



JOHN STEWART
Column

"I believe in myself because I believe anything is possible."

Who's to argue with Bianca Andreescu, the 18-year-old Mississauga native in the midst of a spectacular season that has sportswriters breaking out their cache of breakthrough descriptors,

starting with "skyrocketing" and matriculating through "meteoric" to "whirlwind" and beyond.

Andreescu has jumped in women's professional tennis rankings from 242 last October to top 50.

She'll be top 25 this week after her performance at Indian Wells, Ca. where she mugged former world No. 1 and 2017 Wimbledon champion Garbine Muguruza in straight sets, on the way to her first major victory.

You can understand why she - and we - are beginning to believe.

She emerged on the national radar when she pulled off back-to-back upsets of former world No. 1 Caroline Wozniacki and Venus Williams in Janu-

ary. Then she played her way into the Australian Open through qualifiers and won a match in the main round before winning a World Tennis Association 125K tourney at the end of the month.

Her hot hand came to her country's offence in the Fed Cup qualifiers. She won two singles and a doubles match as Canada swept the Netherlands to advance.

Although born in Mississauga, the animal-loving teen returned to Romania with her parents (her favourite player is Simona Halep) for a period before returning to Canada and starting to train at the Ontario Racquet Club on Southdown Rd.

Then she joined the U-14

program at Tennis Canada where the senior vice-president of development happens to be Lorne Park-raised Hatem McDadi, who lost the Canadian Men's championship at ORC to Andrew Sznajder in 1987.

As exhilarating as it's been, Andreescu's dream ascent makes you nervous in its stunning speed. There's an urge to take her aside to whisper the simple caution: "Eugenie Bouchard."

One is also reminded of Mississauga's first lady of tennis, Louise Brown. Her career arc demonstrates how tennis and sport has changed so dramatically.

She was 24 before she began playing serious competitive tennis.

As Mike Toth, former

Mississauga News sports editor, relates in his book *Birth To Millennium*, Mississauga's Sports Heritage, Brown had a dominant career from the late 50s to early 70s.

The Applewood Acres lefty finished in Canada's top 10 for 26 consecutive years (No. 1 in 1957 when she won her first big prize, the Canadian singles title at 35, No. 2 for seven years and No. 3 for seven more.) She was invited to play Wimbledon three times, was 19-time champ of Toronto's Lawn Tennis Club and captained Canada's Federation Cup team five times.

She won the gold medal at Canada's first Summer Games in 1969 while her son David captured the

bronze. That year, they became the only mother/son combo to play the U.S. Open.

Brown was the first person inducted into Mississauga's Sports Hall of Fame and one of the inaugural six in Canada's Tennis Hall of Fame.

It's highly unlikely that Bianca Andreescu even knows Louise Brown's name.

Nonetheless, she's paying her legacy forward - or serving it backward, one of the few times that works in tennis.

John Stewart is a retired long-time journalist with the Mississauga News. His column, My Back Pages, appears each week.