

World number 13 Cameron Norrie has his sights set on the top spot in tennis



LOVE STORY

Cameron Norrie is Britain's chance of victory at Wimbledon this summer. But he's not letting the pressure get to him, finds *OLIVIA EMILY*

Our British tennis number one has a Kiwi accent and a sunny disposition, smiling towards the future and its tournaments. Cameron Norrie has just moved to Monaco and is awaiting the Monte Carlo Masters – the beginning of clay season – when we speak on Zoom. Excited to get started, any doubts are dismissed with declarations of love for the sport. ‘It’s so addicting,’ he says. ‘You’re travelling to great cities, and if you win, it’s unreal. It’s like a drug.’

With over 1,800 professional male players, tennis is famously cut-throat. Currently ranked 13th in the world, does Cameron feel the pressure? ‘For me, it changes nothing,’ he says. ‘It just means there are 12 players better than me that I need to improve to beat.’ He recites his day-to-day training: jumping, sprinting, drills, physio and plenty of foam rolling. ‘It’s pretty mentally draining,’ he says. But travelling impacts Cameron most. ‘Even after being on the tour for six years, the flying gets to me every time.’

How, then, does he find balance in his life? It’s a simple reply with a wry smile: ‘There’s not much balance.’ But: ‘Tennis players have a lot of free time in the evening. I always have to eat, so we go to restaurants on tour and when anyone’s visiting. But I’m not the best restorer,’ he admits. ‘I’m someone who wants to do everything. When I have free time, I play golf or padel – if I’m not chilling in my hotel room.’

Cameron has been enjoying Netflix’s *Full Swing*, a new golf docuseries following the PGA tour. ‘They’ve done such a good job with it.’ What does he think of *Break Point*, Netflix’s tennis version, both mirroring the wildly successful and popular *FI: Drive to Survive*? ‘It’s great for the sport,’ he says. ‘I just don’t like the way they make tennis seem not as professional as it actually is – like it’s a joke of a lifestyle. If you watch Andy Murray’s documentary [*Andy Murray: Resurfacing*, available on Amazon

Prime] compared to that, it’s so professional.’ (Cameron is a big Andy fan – as is his Scottish father.) Would he star in *Break Point* if he was asked? ‘I don’t know if I would,’ he says. ‘It would be nice for them to find really hard working players to see how they train – but, in our sport, no one wants to give anything away!’

He also loves spending time at the beach, which is why Mexico’s tennis tournaments – Acapulco and Los Cabos – are among his favourites. But for his very favourite tournament, it’s back to rainy British shores for the Queen’s Club Championships. ‘I love being at home there. The whole grass season is just so special, and it leads up to Wimbledon, which I’m so excited for,’ he gushes.

It’s striking to hear Cameron – who has lived in South Africa, New Zealand, the US, and now Monaco – describe the UK as ‘home’ so simply (especially in his Kiwi accent). With a UK-based family now, too, why make the move? ‘In London, the weather wasn’t great for certain training blocks,’ he explains. ‘There are so many good players in Monaco and, in the clay season, you can go between the tournaments pretty easily. Then, obviously, the tax helps as well,’ he grins. ‘But mainly the weather. You

can play outside almost every day with great facilities and on great courts.

‘It was a big move, but I’m feeling good about it,’ he adds. ‘I love London and I’ll go there for Wimbledon and the grass season, so it’s not like it’s permanent.’

Before Monaco, Cam lived in Putney, where he cycled to tournaments and training at Roehampton’s National Tennis Centre to avoid traffic. ‘It became part of my warm up,’ he says. ‘And then I thought, I’m saving a lot of money doing this.’ He also realised it’s more eco than Ubering everywhere. ‘Tennis players are not the best for the environment. We fly a lot. But I’m trying to do what I can,’ he says, travelling by train where possible, including to Rotterdam, between Lyon and Paris and from Beijing to Shanghai. ‘I really feel good on the train,’ he says. ‘It’s more comfortable, you don’t have to check in, you can get there later... Even if it can be more expensive, I always prefer it.’

It’s this every-little-helps technique Cameron believes in most. ‘If everyone can take that approach to sustainability and the environment, it’s the best thing we can do. I’m trying my best. I know I’m way worse than a lot of people, but it is what it is.’

Would he ever try vegetarianism, I ask? ‘It would be really tough, trying to get enough protein,’ he ponders. ‘I think I could. I’d have to be really organised. Maybe after tennis,’ he says.

And what comes after tennis? ‘I have no idea!’ Perhaps he could pursue professional golf? ‘I’m nowhere near playing on the Senior PGA Tour or anything, but I don’t know. I’ll have to see. I want to give everything to tennis first – to get every ounce of talent out that I can. The ultimate goal is to be world number one. I’m going to do everything it takes to get it, and if I do, that’s great. At the end of the day, I’m going to just try my hardest.’

See Cameron play at the Queen’s Club Championships from 19-25 June, and at Wimbledon from 3-16 July. ■

