

## **GETTING TO KNOW YOU... A LITTLE BETTER.**

This month we have a bumper crop of bowlers for you to meet – the Laceys, Darren, Nathan, and Jess and not forgetting major supporter, Hannah.

Darren took up the game of bowls by default, having been told he was too young to play snooker at the local hall, so his Grandad took him to Coedpoeth bowling green instead. It, therefore, has been no surprise that son Nathan and daughter Jess have followed him to the green. Apparently, they used to accompany Darren to Esclusham when they were very small as Hannah worked at weekends. Bowls then became a familiar part of life, and like most kids, they wanted to have a go too.

Darren plays at least four times a week, Nathan three and Jess twice. Keeping track for meal times must be fun.

Darren's clubs include Coedpoeth, Rhos, Bersham, Ifton and Esclusham, whilst Nathan and Jess play for Esclusham and Nathan playing for Coed Talon in the winter league.

The kids certainly have ambitions in the sport. Nathan hopes to play for the Wales Senior team in the future and Jess wishes to progress through the teams at Esclusham and on to win the Tackman Shield.

For 'Pops', he is very content with his involvement with the game. Darren was one of the Welsh Juniors of the early 1990s when they had a phenomenally successful run in the Junior County Championships winning the title 1994, 95 and 96.

Darren works for Minera Roof Trusses and young Nathan has recently started an apprenticeship with Airbus learning electrical engineering skills. From what I gather he has really settled into the work and is the youngest one on the course and well thought of by his tutors.

Jess is still treading the corridors and enjoying her time at school.

Nathan enjoys snooker – has Darren finally been allowed in? Jess prefers to spend time with her friends. Both seem to enjoy the bowls world, however and exhibit a determination and resilience beyond their years.

Asked who is the better player between brother and sister, the family wisely left this question unanswered. Darren and Jess do play doubles.

The name of Don James came up emphatically when asked about influences and help in the game over the years. Darren, in his Welsh Junior days like many others, would remember Don James's iron hand when it came to coaching for county games. Don playing Bad Cop and Good Cop with fellow coach Peter Higham. Darren would also like to thank George Jones who gave him a lot of advice when he moved to Esclusham. Darren told me of a particular teacher in school who was difficult to get on with until the teacher discovered Darren played Crown Green bowls. After that, the teacher was a different person. The power of the game you see. Nathan and Jess point to their Dad as the biggest influence. Hannah shouldn't be ruled out either. She

is a great source of support for all of them and has probably marked more cards than she cares to think about.

Food has to be quick and easy. Darren is partial to a curry while Nathan likes Domino pizzas and Jess is a McDonalds fan. On films, Nathan likes something with action such as Star Wars, Harry Potter and Rocky. He also finds that Russell Howard makes him laugh. Jess will trawl Netflix for something to view whilst Darren and Hannah catch their breath in this busy family.

They have travelled to Feurteventura, Lanzarote, Cyprus and Tenerife.

Darren does not admit to getting stressed, but Nathan and Jess hate losing, especially when a game is close and they are their own toughest critics when it comes to performance. They know what they did wrong.

Little nuggets of info are a delight to learn in this profile game. Nathan is ambidextrous, a useful skill in bowls, and he plays chess. How does he sit still long enough? Jess is an excellent swimmer and a 'brilliant singer'. Someone to sing the National Anthem for us before the games eh? And Darren? Take a look at the photo gallery at the end of the profile. He wields a mean brush when it comes to a waterlogged bowling green.

Darren, Hannah, Nathan and Jess are all disturbed by the decreasing number of young players and that teams fold due to lack of players of all ages. This has been a recurring theme in virtually all the previous profiles, but where you get families involved together such as this, there is every chance the game is safe for the future.

Their best advice is 'Don't give up'. I have heard this little gem mentioned many times and it rings true for bowls and life in general. Bowlers have a unique understanding of this concept. Never say die and it's not over until the last wood has been bowled. Hannah is a tower of strength and they are lucky to have her strong support.

This family have a great future ahead in the game. Nathan and Jess will go from strength to strength and learn from each game they play. The Welsh Junior Merit title beckons and it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that at least one of them will lift the trophy one day. And Darren? Well. There's always the brush... just look at the action!