

# Father knows best

By Eddie Kwok



Edith Tatana, on the threshold of an international tennis career can thank her father for her success. It has been a case of "father knows best".

Certainly the Tatanas have made tennis a family affair and one which was inspired not a little by Ruia Morrison Davy, one of the country's greatest women players.

"At a time when there are so many knocking so much that is Maori, it is good that someone like Ruia has shown what Maoris are capable of," said Graham Tatana the father and mentor of Edith, aged 15, Danielle, aged 13 and Kerry, aged 10.

Strangely, father figure Graham, a former New Zealand Schoolboy Kiwi — as expected from a cousin of the great Kiwi rugby league representative Henry Tatana — did not play much tennis himself. His wife, Ann, is unbeaten in Auckland first grade Unity Shield inter-club.

Edith, just returned from playing in Australia with New Zealand junior team members Belinda Cordwell, Julie Richardson and Michelle Parun, is in her second year of premier Caro Bowl inter-club. She would have beaten nationally sixth ranked Janine Parkinson on October 1 had she not defaulted because she had to leave for Australia.

Danielle is No. 3 in sister Edith's Ngatira Caro Bowl side and is the youngest girl to be playing premier inter-club in Auckland.

Kerry, the only boy, is still only 10 but was a finalist in the under-12 boys tournament.

It was because of his children's undoubted talent that Graham Tatana sacrificed much for their development. But to his dismay, in spite of financial sacrifices, he found that New Zealand coaches were found wanting in their guidance to bring out the best in his children's potential.

"Our coaches just do not have sufficient knowledge to bring out the best in our juniors" said Graham Tatana. "That was when I made use of my University training and obtained from America video tapes on coaching.

"These have shown stroke production for every stroke, return of service, serve and volley as well as tactics. I have used my training at University to appraise and sort out the material for coaching."

In spite of not graduating from Auckland University, Graham has used his analytical ability well.

There has been much improvement in each of the children's play. A trip to Florida last year was another eye opener for them.

"We were impressed with the early age at which the Americans begin. There were 10 year olds who could run rings around some of our Caro Bowl players.

"Another revelation was that a baseline player was not going to get far in world tennis."

The latter factor was instrumental in Edith, a successful and gifted baseliner who had beaten Belinda Cordwell and Michelle Parun with those tactics,

deciding to switch to a serve and volley game.

Graham Tatana admits that Edith, 10th ranked on the senior national list, sixth on the girls' under-18 list, third on the under-16 list and top in the under-14s has undergone a development stage.

"It has not been easy to switch but now she is serving and volleying rather than relying on the old baseline game."

Edith and Danielle have both been re-selected for the BP national training squad under national coach Kevin Woolcott.

The squad aims to produce players capable of representing New Zealand with distinction in women's Federation Cup and men's Davis Cup in the opinion of Graham Tatana "a step in the right direction."

"We were staggered by the ability of the youngsters who were playing in the United States and it was frightening that at eight or nine they were far above our junior standard.

"Ideally our children should be starting about six years old. There is not the money here to do that of course but certainly the BP national squads fill the gaps a little," said Mr Tatana.

Certainly, the Half Moon Bay water-sider has filled some of the gaps too. His enthusiasm and ability to assimilate and impart knowledge has been one of the factors in his children's success.

Father certainly knows best in this case.