



Mari inspires mascot Jemima to be the best she can be

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Being mascot for national Women's Singles finalist Mari Baldwin has so inspired eight-year-old Jemima Choudhury that she is working hard to emulate her.

Mari was silver medallist at the Mark Bates Ltd National Championships in Nottingham in March, where she walked on to court alongside Jemima.

She also found time to knock with the youngster after her defeat to top seed Tin-Tin Ho in the final, as this video shows:

Since then, according to her dad Nahidur, Jemima has been throwing herself into practice sessions during lockdown, and started socially-distant outdoor training at the earliest opportunity.

He said: "For Mari to lose the final and still have time to knock with an eight-year-old spoke volumes for her. It shows what a class act the senior players are when it comes to encouraging the next generation of girls.

"Ever since that, it's almost like Jemima's possessed with it, I've never seen her so focused. She works really hard and she really enjoys it too."

Jemima is a member of the Draycott & Long Eaton club, where she is coached by Joanne Green and mentored by Erin Green, herself a national Cadet Girls' Doubles champion.

Nahidur said: "It helps having Erin nearby, who's one of the Table Tennis England female ambassadors.

"Erin and Mari are two of the main role models she's got and she feels inspired by them and wants to be the best she can be."

Jemima, whose 14-year-old brother Nathaniel is also a member at Draycott, said: "It was really good being Mari's mascot and playing with her. I want to be like her one day. I practise four times a week and I've been working hard."

Mari, who herself was only 15 when she reached the final, said helping younger players, particularly girls, was important and she said her final opponent that day in Nottingham was someone she had looked up to.

She said: "It's nice to help people and the only way to get better is by playing better people, so I'm glad she was inspired.

"I'll keep an eye on her progress – she might beat me one day, so I'll need to keep an eye on that!

"Tin-Tin's got into the top 100 in the world and that's a big boost for women's table tennis. She's very hard-working and kept up her academic stuff as well, which I also think is important."

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