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BIG BREAK

Colin on cue for snooker success





Hot potter Colin Matty at the table. He has built a successful career in coaching after learning the game from former snooker world champion Terry Griffiths.

COLIN ON CUE FOR SNOOKER SUCCESS

MATTHEW PANTER TALKS TO SNOOKER COACH COLIN MATTY WHOSE CAREER CHANGED WHEN HE MET WORLD CHAMPION TERRY GRIFFITHS, WHO SET HIM ON THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

It's no surprise that Colin Matty has become a top-class snooker coach.

He learned from one of the very best, after all.

Long after he had developed a passion for potting balls on a table – as a child at his grandad's Shropshire farm – he encountered a legend of the green baize, when Colin was in his 20s.

He began lessons with Welsh cue king Terry Griffiths, who had landed the World Snooker Championship in 1979, and Colin was given the opportunity to tweak his technique, improving his precision, timing and execution.

It proved an inspirational period for Colin, who had aspirations of making it as a player.

"Terry was strikingly similar to my grandfather (also Colin), both incredibly calm, almost Sergeant Wilson (Dad's Army) type characters," recalls Colin.

"Terry was fairly laid back and, for me, that was absolutely spot on because I didn't want someone who might get irritated if I wasn't improving or picking things up.

"I just really enjoyed going for lessons with him. You could have such a laugh with him but the things he taught me really struck home."

While Colin's game progressed, it was a chat with Griffiths about coaching which ultimately changed his life.

"I had a lot of lessons with Terry and did make progress," recalls Colin. "But I

wasn't good enough to take my playing career to the next level. I wasn't, for want of a better phrase, TV good.

"One day I said to Terry that I'd like to try and earn a crust somehow out of what is essentially a hobby.

"He said: 'Why don't you be a coach?'

"I just thought: 'Well, because I'm not an ex-world champion, like you Terry'.

"I also had my doubts because, at the time, I was 29 so I thought, 'who will come to me for lessons?'

"I, myself, had gone to someone with vast experience.

"But Terry sat me down and said rather than coach me how to play snooker, he would go over the things we had been doing from a coaching perspective and



Top left, Colin with former England footballer Peter Crouch and Welsh snooker wizard Terry Griffiths, who is also pictured with legend Alex Higgins.

it would all make sense. He said I had a nice demeanour and if I took that into my coaching people would learn from me.

"I owe him a lot. I wouldn't have had the confidence to do this job I am doing full-time if it wasn't for him."

The rest, they say, is history. Colin has now coached more than 1,000 people and regularly has more than 100 at a time on his books.

He has also just become one of a handful of World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association (WPBSA) coaches to complete a new Level 3 Certificate in Snooker Coaching. It has given him WPBSA Advanced Coach status – one just just six people in the world.

Not bad for someone who started playing snooker on a farm in Pitchford to amuse himself.

"My grandad was into snooker and had a snooker table on his farm, where he lived with my grandmother Dorothy," recalls Colin.

"When spending time with them, I'd go into this barn and whack balls about.

"I enjoyed passing some time and I liked the idea of getting good at it. I found I could pot balls quite readily.

"At the same time, I used to watch snooker with my grandad. This was the

time when Big Break was on the TV and snooker players were household names.

"So the sport did become a big part of my early life. It was therapeutic and relaxing, knocking some balls around – a nice pursuit to do.

"I worked on my game, kept practising and then coaching seemed the next logical step."

And so working with Griffiths followed.

"I enjoyed the process of getting better and the lesson itself," Colin reflects. "But I actually found it more interesting being taught different techniques and looking at the way Terry did things. Everything I learned off him, I try to put into my coaching now."

Colin, who has his own private snooker room near Shrewsbury, did his first coaching course with the WPSA about eight years ago.

He has since moved from level one to the elite level three and also holds a current Advanced DBS certificate, allowing him to work with children and vulnerable adults.

Still only 40, he has been a lead coach at Cue Zone at the World Championships in Sheffield and UK Championship in York.

And he regularly works with World

Disability Billiards and Snooker, offering coaching during open days at their events around the country.

He has also worked for Matchroom Sport events, including the World 9-Ball Pool Championship in Leicester and the Champion of Champions at the Ricoh Arena and, in 2021, worked on television show Crouchy's Year Late Euros, teaching former England striker Peter Crouch and current Manchester United and Scotland midfielder Scott McTominay to play the game.

"I thought it was a prank when I was called up by someone saying his production team were doing a show with Peter Crouch," Colin remembers.

"He said Peter was going to be doing a spot with Scott where they played pool and had a chat.

"They wanted it to look good and asked me to spend a day with them so they had basic skills in order that when they were playing pool against each other didn't look silly and there would be some good footage.

"So I went to work with them and they were two of the nicest people I have ever met. It was one of the best days of my life."

As his CV illustrates, Colin positively lives and breathes snooker and says the



Snooker coach Colin has coached and featured in a number of tournaments across the country including the Crucible, home of the World Championships.

sport has never been in a better place.

"In the 1980s you had a lot of household names but if you look at the opportunities available to players now, if you can get on the tour, it's fantastic," he says.

"There are 30 tournaments a year whereas, even as recently as in 2008, there were about eight. Barry Hearn has helped give it a shake-up with the Home Nations Series and other tournaments and now we are getting more people into seeing snooker.

"And, playing wise, Ronnie O'Sullivan, if he is playing, he's a favourite but we have the likes of Judd Trump, Mark Selby, Shaun Murphy and there are any number of potential world champions emerging from China. It's a case of if, not when."

You might think, when talking about the world's top players, that Colin might have the odd regret.

He did, after all, have ambitions of being a professional at one stage.

But his voice is never tinged with disappointment as he speaks. And why should it be?

He is, after all, still living his dream, coaching a variety of people from the aged of nine up – both men and women – in the sport he loves. He also coaches



8 Ball Pool and Billiards. And not just to Premier League footballers, past and present. His client list is wide-ranging, meaning no two days are the same.

"I have a chap of 86 who comes for an hour a week," Colin adds.

"His daughter drops him off and does his shopping and we set up a nice routine and he goes about it. He's in better nick than me! He is sensational.

"It's great. There are people who come to me because they enjoy the experience and learning little tricks and

those who just want to get better to beat their friends. Then there are people who want to be on the tour and take it to the next level. I just love what I do.

"Sometimes someone comes to me and says 'I want to make a 50 break and I'll be happy'.

"If I get a video off them and they say they have achieved that, it is one of the best feelings. I get satisfaction from that too. When anyone meets their expectation, it always gives me a buzz, whether it's big or small.

"There was one lad who just wanted to clear the colours off their spots – six colours – and had never done it.

"We worked on it and right at the end of the lesson, the last shot, he potted the black and we both nearly burst into tears.

"It had just meant the world to him and he will never forget what he achieved, it gave him a massive high.

"So for me, that's so rewarding.

"I wanted to be a professional player – that was the dream – but it didn't happen.

"And yet, to do what I am doing full-time, I feel I am one of the luckiest people in the world."

■ To find out about lessons with Colin, go to colinmattysnookercoaching.com