

PED 201

Interview: Petra Cada

2002 Commonwealth Game Manchester, England

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Petra Cada was the athlete that I interviewed from the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester, England. Petra is a table tennis player who won bronze at the 2002 Commonwealth Games. She began playing at 9 years old. Petra's father had been an avid player while he was in the Czech Republic Army. Because her father was a table tennis enthusiast he took Petra to a table tennis club in Spryfield, Nova Scotia. Here she quickly began to enjoy and excel in table tennis. She viewed it as being a fun way to exercise. While playing there she was selected to be on Nova Scotia's provincial team.

While Petra was on Nova Scotia's provincial table tennis team Ian Kent, who is involved at the national level with CTTA (Canadian Table Tennis Association), recommended Petra to try and qualify for the national team. In 1990 she qualified to join the national team. Every year she must qualify to be on the national table tennis team. In 1994 she moved to Ottawa in order to train with the rest of the national team.

Petra must practice three hours daily except for one weekend of every month. As well, she must take part in tournaments if needed. Since, Petra follows these guidelines she is able to receive financial support from CTTA. She has been receiving support from CTTA for the past 8 years. One month before competition she cuts down on physical training and starts to have shorter and intense practices. One week before competition she practices in the gym that the competition is taken place in. Practicing in the gym where the competition is taken place is very important. Different conditions allow for different results, which she discusses later in her interview.

She always enjoyed playing table tennis as a child and it has continued up until now. When she was young there was a Swedish table tennis player who she admired.

Petra and her table tennis team traveled along with some other Canadian sports teams on a plane to Manchester, England. The flight took seven hours. Once they arrived at the airport a delegation committee greeted them and brought them to the athletes' village. Once they arrived at the athletes' village they had to fill out forms for a passport, which granted them passing to and from the village.

Petra's best memory of the 2002 Commonwealth Games was when she won the bronze metal in the women's team event. Her worst memory was that it rained for the two weeks that they were in Manchester. The rain made the weather humid and therefore harder to play in. The way that the ball bounces off of the playing surface has to be counteracted in a new environment. The gym that the table tennis games took place in had no air conditioning so she had to adjust her playing to the conditions.

Petra's experience at the Commonwealth Games was extraordinarily unique because it was the first time that table tennis was in the games. This was the first time that table tennis had been added to the list of sports at the games. There are staple sports that are consistently at the games but there are some sports that are there some years but not others. She felt extremely proud of being able to represent Canada for the first time in table tennis at the Commonwealth Games.

Petra remembers the Commonwealth Games as being a time of unity. Everyone held a close bond because they were all involved with the games. An example of unity was the athletes' village. The village was divided into different countries but people walked around to the different sections and were friendly. She said that when you walked to the African part there were people playing music and dancing outside in a circle. In contrast, to the Canadian part where they were playing Frisbee.

She did not have to pay for the trip to the games. CTTA paid a part of the cost and the Commonwealth Games Association of Canada paid a significant amount, which was donated to them through private sponsors. Zellers donated money because the table tennis team did a photo shoot promoting them.

The females were treated equally at the games, according to Petra. She did mention though that generally male events are a higher caliber so more people attend those events.

She said that security was really high around the athletes' village, which was surrounded by barracks. No one could enter the village unless they had their passport, which stated that they were an athlete participating in the games. She thought that because of Sept 11, 2001 or the royal family they may have had more security. Petra noticed that the Americans were not as flashy as normal. The Americans did not have their flag up where they were staying, which was common for all of the countries to do. She speculated this to be a result of Sept 11.

Petra said that she did not know a lot about the Commonwealth Games because this was the first time that table tennis was added to the venue. She knew that the games are held every four years and only a select amount of countries participate.

She said that there has been a significant progression in the games. The games now have more countries involved ex. Africa. The event is growing in size and importance each time there is a new Commonwealth Games.

After the games were over Petra was able to go home and celebrate her medal victory. The victory helped to motivate her to strive for higher goals in upcoming events.

She viewed the Olympics of 2000 as being her most memorable experience because of its popularity as being every athlete's dream. Petra said that the Commonwealth Games of Manchester, England were the second best. She was really impressed with how well known the games are becoming. She liked competing at the games because of less competition. Lastly, the Francophone was the least liked because it is the smallest and has the least attention drawn to it.

She summed up her experience at the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester, England by saying that it was "memorable". Below is a picture of her playing in the 2004 North American Olympic Singles Trials.



