

GOING UNDERCOVER FOR NICOL

by Norliza Noordin

I was just six months old at the National Sports Council of Malaysia at the time I was assigned to accompany Nicol David and her coach, Liz Irving, to the World Championship'05 in Hong Kong. I had undergone a one-week intense training for the SportsCode software with our Asian Regional Consultant, Michael Hanning, from the Sportstec Ltd. of Australia and was trained on the tactical aspect of the game by Kenneth Low, ex-national player and national coach for the junior team.



Hong Kong World Championship'05: Nicol's 1st Championship Title

Without a doubt, squash is a fast moving game as compared to hockey or football. When you are analyzing and coding a squash game, you must always be intuitive, well focus and into the game. It is important to know the rules of the game and to understand the different type of shots being executed. All sports analysts must have patience. A game can last up to 2 hours depending on the players playing on the courts for example Nicol David verses the Grinham sisters. Hence, the outcome is late working hours.

My analysis feedback differs from my fellow colleague for the hockey team as I do not provide real-time match analysis feedback and my camera is placed at a stand still position. My role is to spy on our opponents. If I had exposed my Apple Laptop for analysis purposes during a live match then my presences and reasons there will be known. I am there to detect the opponents' strengths and weaknesses by extracting their winner and error shots. My undercover job was successful as some had thought I was part of the news crewmembers or just a camera lady for the team.

After capturing both Nicol's and her opponent's match that she will take on the following day, I will then record, collates and analyze performances based on coach's requests by using the SportsCode software. These are basic information of a coach's request for analysis feedback:

- Where was the error or winner shots executed
- Where did the ball land for the error or winning shots
- What type of shot was used for the outcome of an error or winner
- How many times the error or winner shot executed in each position on the court

I will then present to Nicol and her coach of my findings for them to strategize a new game plan, if necessary. From there, I would listen and observe and grasp every detail from their conversation and occasionally would ask questions for guidance. Do not be surprised but these few pieces of information can reveal a lot for a player to tackle their opponent's strengths and weaknesses to their advantages.

What a better way to learn and to specialize in squash through the knowledge and working exposure with Liz Irving and Nicol David, herself. I was given a chance to work with a World Class athlete and to grow with her. The knowledge and experiences I had gained has helped me to better understand my job as an analyst and to specialize in squash and at the same time to better understand the needs of our players. This is what I call PRICELESS KNOWLEDGE!