

Open Season

Part 2

Last month we brought you Shahar Pe'er. This month, the spotlight is on Dudi Sela, Israel's leading male tennis champion

By Howard Blas and Jamie Zimmer

Dudi Sela began playing tennis at age seven at the Israel Tennis Centre in Kiryat Shmoneh, which is in the north of Israel. He remembers spending time as a boy in bomb shelters when his town was bombed by Lebanon. Dudi also remembers watching his brother, Ofer, play in tennis tournaments. Tennis seems to run in the Sela family! Soon after the Sela parents immigrated to Israel from Romania, his father Michael, a bus driver, and brother Ofer, 13 years Dudi's senior, began taking tennis lessons—and both became top players in their respective age groups. When Dudi was three years old, he picked up Ofer's racket and fell in love with tennis. In fact, when Dudi was ten, he began commuting (by plane!) twice a week to Ramat Hasharon, the tennis capital of Israel. When Dudi was showing promise as a juniors player, the whole family relocated to the Tel Aviv area to be closer to the tennis center.

Dudi has three older siblings, Nir, Shirley and the aforementioned Ofer, who is one of his coaches. Sela loves soccer and supports teams of Kiryat Shmonna as well as Manchester United. His mother, Anca, is a nurse. He also loves hanging out with friends on the beaches of Tel Aviv.

Earlier in 2009, Dudi Sela put Israel on the tennis map during the Davis Cup's quarterfinal men's singles match which was played at Nokia Stadium in Tel Aviv. To the home crowd's delight, Sela beat Russian tennis champion **Mikhail Youzny** to earn a place the semifinals. *D'ash* American correspondent, Howard Blas, had the opportunity to catch up with Israel's tennis pride during the US Open. Here's what he had to say:

Dudi, how many times have you played in the US Open? What is your current ATP ranking?

"My current ranking is 35. This is my 3rd US Open."



Davis cup match against Peru

(Assaf Yekutieli)