

KILEY RABJOHNS | NORTHWESTERN TENNIS

Hi I'm Kylie Rob Johns I play tennis at Northwestern University I think from my coaches so far I've received so much advice And I think some of the most important things that they've told me are to just give it absolutely all you can every single time that you're on the court and in the weight room and doing anything for your sport And eventually it will pay off You don't have to spend 24/7 Just grinding for the sport but whenever you are try to just give it your all and eventually you'll see the progress you'll see the results You'll see it all coming together A lot of what I focus on in my training regimen is To be as tough of an opponent as possible Um I think it's really honed in on from the coaching staff that we're all tough outs on the team We don't want any opponent to want to ever play us again And I think that's something that we really focus on I also think mental state is a really important thing that we focus on I think tennis is a super mental sport and anything can get to your head really quickly So in practice it's also really important to focus on that I think a lot of the challenges that I faced throughout my tennis career are injuries in high school I think my first major injury was my Achilles and that took about 8 months to recover from I also have had like major foot problems that Have been just really annoying and nagging and have put me through like 6 different boots Um and I think that injuries just come up very frequently for me but I think it's definitely taught me how to overcome them and how to come back tougher During recruiting in high school I really didn't know where I wanted to go to college I knew I wanted to go D1 I knew I wanted to get A good education And my parents especially my mom really wanted me to get a good education And when I was looking at schools I was kind of looking all over the country I'm from 35 minutes away from the Northwestern campus So at first I was like OK I kind of want to get a little bit away from home But then talking to the coaches here talking to Claire and walking around the campus seeing it's right on the lake and it's such a great school such a great program I thought it was definitely the best possible choice to come to Northwestern and I'm so glad that I did Yeah so my dad played hockey at Yale and my mom was a figure skater And at first they We're trying to get my sister and I on the ice And I remember trying to skate around the ice rink And after like one lap I was like how many more And I think he realized really quickly that that was not going to be for me So he let me try a bunch of other sports soccer lacrosse tennis And tennis is the one that I stuck with But he ended up being my coach He had no tennis

background But he ended up learning about the game from YouTube and the Tennis Channel and coaching me all the way until college I think something in juniors that really helped me was playing as many matches as I could My dad would always take me to tournaments and we didn't travel that far We kind of just like stayed around the Midwest A bunch of road trips have been my weekends in high school And I think just getting as many matches as I could and especially at the beginning really playing up in age group even if it wasn't a super high level tournament just got me access to high quality matches that were close by And I think high school tennis brought a team aspect to everything that I had never seen before and it kind of motivated me in a different way for college because being on a team is just something that's so special when you're in an individual sport I chose Northwestern because First of all the coach Claire she cares about you so much as a person and a player And I know that she just wants you to get better at absolutely everything when you're here and pushes you to your max every single day And that's something that I really wanted and a coach And Also Northwestern is an absolutely great academic school which I think will help me a lot in life and challenge it has challenged me a lot throughout my years here Also it being so close to Chicago gives us so many opportunities to have fun and go explore a big city that's really exciting and has absolutely everything And also being right on the lake I know it's cold a lot of the year but for those months that it's not quite as cold it's so nice to have the lake right here I think from playing at the college level I've become a much better tennis player because everyone at this level is very talented and works extremely hard to get to where they are today So there's no match that is not extremely challenging And I think it's really taught me how to problem solve on the court how to figure out different opponents and how to really strategize and work with my coaches in order to get wins Technical things on the court that our strengths are My forehand slice and my backhand I think my forehand slice is very unique Not a lot of people Hit mostly a slice on their forehand but for me that's something that I've learned from a younger age starting with my dad wanting me to be like a little bit unique because he always told me that I'm not going to be able to overpower these big hitters which is super true But this forehand slice helps me kind of handle pace and change up every single point And then I do feel pretty confident in my backhand being able to hit it Deep and with more power than my forehand So that helps to have one thing on each side When balancing academics with tennis I do try to make sure that when I have free time especially early in the

quarter I am getting my work done as soon as possible so that I have as much time for tennis and I don't have to stress out on the court about academics. But then also so that I have time after tennis to kind of just relax and chill because at the end of the day that is what I want to do. I don't want to have to go back to the apartment and do a ton of work. I want to be able to get my work done first, play tennis, and then just be able to relax and enjoy. I think some of my goals going forward are just to get absolutely everything out of the next couple months that I'm here. We only have I think 11 regular season matches left and then the Big 10 Tournament NCAA's. And I just want to enjoy every moment and kind of get the most that I can out of it because I know I'm never going to get this opportunity again. Going forward after graduation I definitely want to have some fun. I want to enjoy life. I know I'll have a little bit more freedom without tennis. And I think I want to just use that to my advantage and maybe see some new places, travel with some friends. I think my advice for younger athletes who want to go D1 is to understand that it's going to be tough to get there. And you have to make sure that you are enjoying it every part of the way or the entire experience just will not be as fun as it seems. It is very tough, but the fun and exciting parts are absolutely the best and I think it is extremely worth the hard work that you will put in. I think just do everything that you can to get here and then really enjoy it. Hi, I'm Kylie Rab Johns. I'm a senior on the women's tennis team at Northwestern University and you can check me out at Next Level Prep.