

Could tennis ace Andy Murray get hooked on knitting when he retires from sport?

Tennis and knitting share similarities mum Judy reveals as she supports SWI craft revival campaign

Had world tennis number one Andy Murray failed to rise to the top of his chosen sport, he might have become hooked on knitting with mum Judy revealing that both activities demand similar skills.

Concentration, rhythm, timing and attention to detail are essential in both tennis and knitting, says Judy, who is supporting the Scottish Women's Institutes craft revival campaign.

Hailed as a stress busting, mood-enhancing pastime by Scottish stars getting behind the SWI drive to promote traditional handcrafts, knitting could be just the thing for Andy when his tennis days are over.

In a video showing Judy picking up needles and wool and knitting in support of the SWI the tennis coach says: "What it reminded me of is a lot of things I teach in tennis. It's great for manual dexterity, great for concentration, it's great for rhythm, and timing and attention to detail so there you go: tennis and knitting, it's all the same thing really."

The SWI has for generations been regarded as the leading organisation for learning, sharing and developing knitting, sewing, embroidery and handcraft expertise. Now, in its centenary year, Scottish personalities are backing the SWI as it leads the charge to bring nimble fingered talents to the fore once again.

ITV presenter Lorraine Kelly and TV presenter Martel Maxwell have also been reminded of the pleasure of knitting by SWI members who sent wool, knitting needles and part-made scarves and encouraged them to have a go.

Lorraine says: "I'm very happy to support the 'Save Scottish Crafts Campaign'. I learned knitting at school and find it therapeutic and a real stress buster!"

Martel took up the SWI knitting challenge weeks after having her third child, Guthrie, who features in her knitting film clip.

Martel adds: "It takes me back to knitting with my gran, so many fond memories and it got me thinking about the things that really matter. I have three wee boys and knitting can keep my boys warm... save money...and it is really enjoyable."

With handcrafts are no longer taught in schools and anecdotal evidence suggesting some people cannot tackle basic tasks like sewing a button onto a garment, the SWI fears that handcraft skills could be in danger of dying out.

Yet there is an appetite among women to take up handcrafts: an SWI survey carried out two years ago showed dressmaking, knitting and crochet in the top 10 skills women in Scotland would like to learn. The poll included cooking and arts and crafts among the top skills women would like to develop, other areas in which the SWI is renowned for.

SWI national chairman Christine Hutton said: “We have been promoting education and advancement of Scottish handcrafts since our very foundation 100 years ago.

“It would be a great pity for centuries-old skills to die out and we want to encourage people of all ages to enjoy learning through craft, and help nurture the next generation of craftspeople.

“Many of our own members learned on their mother’s or grandmother’s knee, and have developed and learned techniques supported by fellow members, or by attending specialist courses and tutorials run by the SWI.

“We are keen to widen our net by encouraging others to tap into the knowledge and expertise found within the SWI. Even in this digital age, there is a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction to be had from creating something by hand, in addition to the practical benefits of being able to sew or mend a garment.

“With 712 Institutes we have a huge network in Scotland and every Institute has a member willing to give their time to keep these skills going.”

The SWI wants to encourage anyone who would like to learn and develop handcrafts to come and join them, or to seek out their support for tutorials or skill-sharing events. For more details of how to find your nearest Institute, or how to join online, visit www.theswi.org.uk

Ends

Photos: Lorraine Kelly is getting behind Scottish Women’s Institutes and its campaign to promote and protect traditional handcrafts like knitting, sewing and embroidery.

Dropbox link to film of Judy Murray and Martel Maxwell knitting:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/zh3e5gkdqdrpaok/AADpXzyvYZq5mIHpUmR-FCf7a?dl=0>

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Notes to Editors:

Scottish Women's Institutes - The Scottish Women's Institutes (SWI) is one of the largest educational organisations for women in Scotland, with 716 branches spread across 32 Federation areas.

The organisation gives women of all ages the opportunity to learn new skills, build on existing ones and make new friends. Every Federation works to enhance local community life and constantly strives to preserve the quality of Scottish living.

The SWI was formed in 1917 as the Scottish Women's Rural Institutes with two main aims, to advance the education and training of those who live and work in the country, or are interested in country life, in home skills, family welfare and citizenship and to promote the preservation of Scotland's traditions and its rural heritage.

Scottish Women's Rural Institutes is a registered Scottish charity also known as the SWI Charity No SC011901.

www.theswi.org.uk

The SWI knitters who supplied the Scottish personalities with knitting kits were:

Lorraine Kelly: Mary Young, Tillicoultry SWI in Stirling, Clackmannan and West Perthshire. Mary learned to knit as a child and then knitted for her own children. She taught knitting to primary school children while on a break from full time home economics teaching when her family was young. I still remember taking home bags of knitting to pick up stitches and correct ready for following week!"

Judy Murray: Diane Johnston, Juniper Green SWI, Midlothian. Diane learned to knit "when I was so small I scarcely remember," she says. "My mother knitted for all of us and taught me. It seemed slow, so she told me stories and we sang songs as we worked. It was very special for me to have her undivided attention because she was a very busy farmer's wife, therefore knitting was special too. I have no daughters to teach but have my eye on my granddaughter!"

Martel Maxwell: Margaret Greig, Arradoul SWI in Banffshire who says: "My mum taught me to knit when I was about five. I started on dollies scarves and wee jackets 'to give my fingers practice' – Mum's words, not mine. All through the years I have knitted all sorts, for babies, children, Mum and Dad, husbands, (I've had two up to now!) But socks – never conquered socks. Two needles was fine, add a cable needle OK – but socks NEVER. Squares for charity along with scarves and chip baby vests but never ever managed socks. I did think of adding a gold fringe to the foot of the scarf though!"

The SWI-commissioned survey in 2015 revealed the top 10 skills most Scottish women would like to learn were:

- 1 Learning a foreign language
- 2 Learn to play a musical instrument
- 3 Arts and crafts including painting and drawing
- 4 DIY – including building, carpentry, carpet fitting, wallpapering and plastering
- 5 Sports – including diving, golf, martial arts, surfing and snowboarding
- 6 Sewing – dressmaking
- 7 Knitting

- 8 IT skills including how to use social media
- 9 Cooking
- 10 Crochet