



Ray Collins goes

ONE  
on  
ONE

with Carling Bassett-Seguso, Former Top Ten

## Carling Bassett-Seguso

Carling Bassett-Seguso was born into one of the wealthiest families in Canada 48 years ago. She was one of Nick Bollettieri's first students and rose to Top Ten in the world. She was also an elite model. Over coffee in a downtown Sarasota Starbucks, Carling opened up about her struggles with bulimia, her marriage to one of the game's top doubles players, their five kids (ages 26 to 3) and her odd relationship with Anna Kournikova.

### When and how did you start playing tennis?

I had occasional tennis lessons on the court where we lived when I was 7 or 8. I was a tom-boy. I played a lot of sports. Tennis was the last thing on my mind. My older sister used to play in all these tournaments and I was the tag-along.

### How did you wind up with Nick Bollettieri?



Ray Collins and Carling Bassett-Seguso

My dad had come down to look at land at the Players Club and he heard about this great coach. Nick could sell you a Rolls Royce if you only had a dollar. That's how good he was. To this day he's on the court at 5:30 in the morning.

I was terrible when I first came to Nick's. I lived in his house. There was no IMG. The summer before, I had lost 0-and-0 in the nationals, then I came to Nick's at age 11,

and I won in the nationals six months later, singles and doubles.

Nick wanted us to do well for his own ego, in a good way. He wanted to make something of himself. He got great young players. Jimmy Arias was there, Kathleen Horvath came, and he drove us hard. You either thrive on it or you don't. The first six months there I cried all the time. I wasn't used to just playing tennis, going to school a few hours a day, and being away from my family. I was thrown into it without any decisions. I had just turned 11.

### So Nick initially took you on—not for your tennis skills, but because of your family's wealth?

Absolutely.

### What was your relationship like with Jimmy Arias?

He was my best friend, and five years after we got there we started dating. He was my first love. To this day we're great friends.

### How did your struggles with bulimia start?

I remember that one vividly. I was at Amelia Island after I got to the finals. Two of the girls from the academy were doing that (forcing themselves to vomit to lose weight). I started getting into

modeling and I said, "Maybe I'll just do that occasionally." I couldn't even do it at first, and it became a four and a half year battle. I was throwing up several times a day.

What is nice about women's athleticism now, it's empowering to be strong. It's accepted. Whereas when I was playing, it was "oh you're chubby." And when you're at that age, you don't realize you need that muscle.

### You married Rob Seguso (who along with Ken Flach was the world's best doubles team for years). What was it like marrying a guy on the tour?

I always dated famous people. Because you can! We're totally opposite. 100%. We've been married 27 years. I've been very lucky to be with somebody who adores me more than life itself. He doesn't have the battles I do. He can separate himself emotionally from things, which is good.

### Your kids are 26, 23, 21, 4 and 3. Did you plan to have a second set of kids?

No, I really wanted to have Lennon (their 4th child) and Rob gave in, it took me two years to have her. But low and behold, at 45, I was pregnant again. If you're physically fit it's much easier to raise children. I feel like I'm 20.

### Are you a better parent now than with the first set of kids?

I think so. I love it. I enjoy them so much. Before it was "Okay, where's the nanny?" And now I literally volunteer to do whatever I can. It couldn't have come at a better time in my life, as there were other things in my life that were horrifically devastating, and I won't get into that.

### Did you want your kids to be pro tennis players?

I drove them hard, they all had scholarships, but I'm a different parent now—and I want them to find what they love to do, and that's the worst thing a parent can do is to push them into something they don't want to do. But if they love it, that's a whole different thing.

### How often do you play now?

Hardly at all since my last baby was born.

### What do you do in the free time you have?

I'm just taking up ballet. It's something I've never done, and now I'm dancing like 2-and-a-half hours a day. I don't know half the terms. I also like to write. I've written screen plays. I took courses and was hooked. I like to create.

### You were the highest-ranked Canadian in WTA history for decades, and now along comes Genie Bouchard.

I don't know her, but I love the way she plays. She's aggressive. I saw her at Wimbledon and said, "This girl is amazing."

### You've been called the "1980's precursor to Anna Kournikova." Have you met her?

Oh, many times. (Rolls eyes.) She almost hit me in the face with a ball when I was playing with (Jim) Courier and she was playing with (John) McEnroe (in Toronto). The second serve went right at my face. She's not one of my biggest fans. I don't know why.

### Looking back over your life, is there anything you would do differently?



I don't like to say I would have done anything differently because I wouldn't be where I am now if I would have. I think my career could have been a lot longer but I wouldn't have the family I do now. If I hadn't gotten into bulimia...

### Are you happy now?

Yes, I'm very very happy now. And my two little girls couldn't have come at a better time. I don't know what would have happened to me if I didn't have these little girls.



### Anything else you want to talk about?

There's nothing I won't talk about.

### Clearly.

Clearly? Ha ha. Whatever.

Ray Collins is a TV newscaster on ABC 7 and a media consultant. More details at [www.RayCollinsMedia.com](http://www.RayCollinsMedia.com)

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