

# Ciara Finucane:

## Brings Her Lucky Charms to Sarasota

She looks like the girl next door, but the girl next door doesn't have a brogue or was once rated tops in her country in tennis. **Ciara Finucane** isn't an easy name to pronounce. (Say: Keer-ah Fin-oo-can.) But she is an easy person to like. She may be one of the most interesting new residents to Sarasota who you haven't heard of yet. *Totally Tennis* columnist Ray Collins recently hit a few balls with her and asked her a few questions along the way. And when we say "along the way," we mean "when he could catch his breath."

**Where were you born and how old are you?** I was born in Dublin, Ireland. I am 27.

**What's the highlight of your tennis career?** I'm lucky to have had a few highlights in my career, the first one being the top-ranked junior in my country which, as a result, allowed me to travel all over the world playing the sport I love. Another would be getting a tennis scholarship to a top-ranked division 1 college (Ohio State). My first year we were not ranked within the top 75 schools in the nation but by the end of my senior year we were a top 30 team.

**Where have you traveled thanks to your tennis skills?** I have been all over Europe: UK, Spain, France, Germany, Poland, Slovakia, Croatia, Hungary, Portugal, Malta, Ukraine, Italy, Morocco, Tunisia.

**Any embarrassing moments in tennis?** Yes! I nearly knocked out my doubles partner when I served a ball in to her head.

**Ouch. How do you feel about international players taking the spots on American college teams?** Well, speaking from an international point of view I think it's awesome! In Europe there is nothing like what is offered here in terms of college athletics. For me it has opened up many doors and created so many opportunities.

**How did you first learn of Sarasota?** I moved down here right after graduating from college with a friend. I had never been in this area before and now I don't see myself anywhere else.

**How would you describe the local tennis community?** For tennis, I think this community is the best place to be. It has so much to offer. There is never a shortage of courts or great pros. Not to mention the weather!

**What are your favorite things to do in town?** I absolutely love this town and everything it has to offer. I like the size and the fact that you see familiar faces all the time. I like to run the bridge in the evenings and go to the beach during my down time.

**What do you say to those who think Sarasota is full of retirees?** I don't agree. There is a great mix of people around this town full of all ages. I have met so many people within my own age range.

**Who were your tennis idols growing up?** I grew up loving Andre Agassi and Steffi Graf. My favorite players to watch now are Roger Federer and Kim Clijsters.

**What's the one rule you'd like to change about tennis?** I really don't think I would want anything changed.

**There's a push among some younger players to allow the "let" serve to count if it lands in the box.** Well, back home in the juniors the 'let' rule was tried out and I really didn't like it at all! It didn't last long until it was changed back. I know that men's college tennis use that rule, but not women's.

**What's the biggest difference between living in the U.S. and living in Europe?** Everything here is just bigger. The houses, the cars, the food portions, the buildings!

**Are there any misconceptions about Ireland? Not all Guinness-drinking leprechauns?** Yes, I get that a lot; no, I am not a leprechaun; no I have never seen one. I don't just drink beer and we don't even have Lucky Charms in Ireland, or Irish Spring! However we are known for being very friendly and caring people and we have some of the best scenery in the world!

**What would you like to see yourself doing in 5 years?** I would love to see myself



Ciara Finucane and Ray Collins

expanding my tennis career. I have worked in college coaching also and I absolutely loved that and learned a lot. I am also trying to get into the sport events and marketing side of things. I find that very interesting.

**Where have you taught in the area?** I originally taught at The Colony when I came down here part-time, also El Conquistador, Serendipity, and Longboat Key Club. Now I'm mostly teaching at The Ritz. (See more Ciara's tips and more on The Ritz program on page ??)

**Why do you like teaching tennis?** I feel that I have a good eye for the game. I can pick up on the technical side of things quite quickly. I really enjoy helping people get to a higher level. I am very passionate about the game of tennis and I think this shows when I coach.

**What's the one piece of advice you would give amateur players? What do you see them doing wrong the most?** Just focusing on one thing at a time and working on it. Sometimes an overload of information makes things go from bad to worse in an instant. It's all about muscle memory as an amateur player so the first thing would be to break the old habits by hitting hundreds of the same ball over and over again.

**What are your other hobbies?** I love to be outside and I love sports so if it has anything to do with those, I'm happy! I like to swim, play golf, relax on the beach, listen to music, and spend time with friends.

**Do you have a motto, or a mantra, or a favorite saying?** "Don't practice until you get it right. Practice until you can't get it wrong."



Ray Collins is a former tennis pro and TV news anchor who now owns a Sarasota-based media consulting company. Details at [www.RayCollinsMedia.com](http://www.RayCollinsMedia.com).