

Transcript for The Who's Dat Phat Girl Podcast - With Brooke Hoover **EPISODE #31- Tennis Anyone ???**

Hey y'all, I'm Brooke Hoover. A Louisiana native, actor, writer and comedian. I've lost 100 pounds through diet and exercise or shall I say "lifestyle changes". My twenty-year and counting health journey has taught me that just like taking a diet pill for weight loss, body positivity doesn't magically happen overnight.

I'm working on re-gaining my self esteem and re-kindling my love affair with Cajun and Southern comfort food in a healthier way all the while juggling eating as clean as I can, re-establishing myself in the entertainment industry which, as we know, is historically fat phobic all the while showing my inner phat girl some love - that's phat with a PH - pretty hot and tempting. Let me tell y'all a tale or two...

In honor of the US Open going on in Queens, New York these couple of weeks, I'm going to talk about one of MY favorite past-times - TENNIS.

I don't remember the exact hare that crawled up my butt to prompt me to play tennis but it could have been because my momma told me I couldn't take up violin because "You have a temper baby and I know you'll throw that violin when you make a mistake and violins are too expensive for people with bad tempers." So, at the age of 11, I guess I decided to try another kind of stringed instrument - the tennis racquet.

My dad was pretty agile at sports - baseball, golf, picking his nose (sorry Hoover Bob I had to throw that in there for the comedy rule of three at your expense) so we decided to just start volleying the tennis ball back and forth on our driveway. I had a purple and yellow Wilson racquet that was called The Wild Thing, I believe, and it was kind of LSU and Mardi Gras fabulous.

But, playing tennis on a rough and unpredictable aggregate driveway don't play well together, so I often spent much of the time predicting for the ball to go one place, it'd hit a tiny bit of rock and it'd go somewhere else, I'd get ticked off and hurl the racquet wherever I could throw it. My dad would simply say, "Brooke, you better go pick that racquet up if you want to keep playing tennis!" And, I'd shout, "Dad we aren't playing real tennis because we need a court. I wish we had our own tennis court or at least lived within walking distance to one!"

My dad wasn't about to allow me to be "extra" and build a tennis court for me, so we started driving to the BREC parks nearby. Problem solved. And, turns out, tennis kind of came naturally to me. I wasn't a genius at it but my hand eye coordination was on point.

Soon, I guess because my mom and dad thought that this was something I was good at, they enrolled me in lessons with a hippie bleach blonde lady with orange skin named Diana who liked to hit the ball back and forth with me for hours but not really give me much direction and it was heaven. On a few Saturday mornings

before our lessons, Diana would give me orange juice, which I swear was special orange juice because it tasted a little tart, a little too sour and a little TOO good. (And believe me I'm from Louisiana so I had special punch at weddings YEARS ago so I KNEW when alcohol was involved) So, my tennis playing on those special OJ days would be extra crazy. Extra crazy GOOD.

During these tennis moments with my Dad or Diana, I never once questioned, "I'm fat, I'm chubby, I can't do this." I just focused on the fact that my arms were long, my hand eye coordination was good and it was DAMN FUN.

THEN Diana started getting popular and she hired a few coaches and I stopped having private lessons with her and started having lessons with other coaches. There was one guy who was a tennis coach who looked like a young Jerry Seinfeld rockin' his white Prince tennis whites who always commented and noted that when he was fixing to hit the ball to me that I didn't do that quintessential tennis shuffle. That kind of boxer shuffle but for tennis players? I didn't want to do that. I just wanted to be like a cannon ball coming out of a cannon when I returned that first serve - stationary then deadly.

For the first time while playing tennis, this encouragement from young Jerry Seinfeld made me question, "is he just trying to get me to run?" "Am I doing tennis for exercise because I'm fat?" "Why did my dad REALLY encourage me to play this game?"

All those negative thoughts came up for me that had happened in other physical attempts that we've told tales about in past episodes - Swimming, Yoga and Dance. And, I'd be damned if it was going to happen to me in tennis. So, I told Diana that I didn't really get along well with any of her new coaches and I wanted to go back to having her just be my teacher. She agreed and we toasted with some special OJ.

It was about time to take my tennis game on the road and by on the road I meant to my favorite area of the country - the Smokey mountains of North Carolina where we spent my childhood summers. I had to step up my game because the only tennis courts were at country clubs and I had to wear tennis whites. And tennis skirts. And, bloomers. What the hell were bloomers? Basically underwear with special pockets to hold balls - tennis balls.

This was the part of tennis Momma always liked - shopping for the clothing. My usual tennis attire was a t-shirt and pocketed shorts. But, I was hitting 14 and I needed to be stylin' so Momma took me to a local boutique who sure enough had some tennis attire for this PHAT with a PH guhl.

The local boutique, owned by a nice lady named Debra, I believe, was like mountain resort wear at its finest. And, surprisingly she had a nice assortment of tennis wear and I was at the age and size where I wasn't wearing kids' clothes anymore - I was easily able to wear the large or extra large of the adult sizes - not yet in plus sizes -

so there was a lot for this girl to choose from.

Including bloomers. I had three pairs, black, red and blue because she was all sold out of the white ones. Momma said, "It'll be kind of like you're a tennis rebel, wearing these colors under your tennis whites." It COULD have been because Momma knew there wasn't another boutique that would have tennis bloomers for 75 miles. But, I thought the lewk would be pretty badass. The whole tennis attire vibe suited me - it was like dressy athletic wear - the tennis ladies who lunch and drink Mimosas and 14 year old Brooke were trend setting with classy athleisure before it was a thing.

It was one memory I have when I don't remember clothes and me being PHAT getting in the way. Skirts came naturally to me because thankfully my legs are my best asset.

I'm almost 99 percent sure I still have the same Adidas tennis skirt from the early 90s.

Then, it was time to start high school and after several attempts of not fitting in really anywhere in the sports realm and barely hanging on with the musical theatre kids because I always deemed myself an outsider (and if you want to hear more about these other sports teams attempts, I know you're just itching too y'all, - that's in the episode called Knight in Shining Sequins - Episode Number 15) and after a few years I decided to enlist in the Junior varsity tennis team with my new best guhl Sarah. I enrolled less for my general competitive sprit and more for something FUN to do after school that was a break from musical theatre and dance (again, because I viewed those things as "WORK" even as a teenager - albeit work that I loved but still WORK.) Luckily for us, the tennis coach was Dr. Hawking, a wonderful Australian man who was also the middle school science teacher. He was in charge of a few of us for chapel (kind of like homeroom, but homeroom for God) and we'd have to sing that morning has broken song and I can still hear Dr. Hawking in my ear going "BlackBUHD has spoken..." Anyways, there were no tennis team tryouts for Junior Varsity and Sarah and I told Dr. Hawking we wanted to play doubles and that was that. No big deal. He had better things to do like spend time on the Varsity team and eat Veggie Mite Sandwiches.

Every so often, my competitive nature would start to come out when Sarah and I were playing doubles. And, bless her for nipping that in the bud with me from the get go. She'd say, "Yo, we're going to get kicked off if you let that temper out. Now, just River dance it out." So, I'd do a River dance if I missed a shot or messed something up. The other team may or may not have looked at us like we were crazy loons or they may or may not have joined in on our River dance. I don't know. I was too busy River dancing to remember.

Once I was in France with our French exchange student Julien, having breakfast with him, his mom and his dad. They started talking about tennis and he asked me if I was a fan of Pete Sampras. I didn't know what the hell he was saying. I finally understood what he was saying and he got frustrated at me for not knowing who the

hell he was talking about. But, I tried to tell him that I played tennis more for the fun aspect of it and less for the competition so as not to let my temper creep out. I said, "Hey, I just like to whack balls." Which doesn't quite translate as easily in French.

College hit and then post-college and I wasn't around many tennis courts or tennis players. Until I met my boyfriend the one and only Mistah Hawwy who is a self taught tennis player, the captain of his VARSITY COLLEGE tennis team and quite adept at racquet sports. Basically, when it comes to tennis, Harry is like me on steroids.

We started whacking the ball together at the courts by his house a few times every week and those were like our dates because we're morning people. After nearly ten years, we haven't ever really played a game game or kept score. I can tell sometimes he goes easier on me and needs to play with someone better than me.

One of our friends also happens to be a tennis player. Once, Harry and him were playing tennis while we were staying with them at the Jersey Shore. The friend asked me to join in for a bit and, in order to try to impress this friend, the competitive spirit that I usually never allowed to come out of me when playing tennis came out like a beast, I threw off my Birkenstocks and went and started hitting those balls like a champ. The friend commented on how awesome I was. Then, he started mansplaining and nit-picking my form and, this was when I still smoked cigarettes, I stalked off barefoot and smoked a cigarette, mumbling under my breath, which is probably the most French thing I have ever done in my life.

A few years ago, the tennis courts in walking distance came to fruition - at a former Chromium dump turned into a local park just across the street from me in Jersey City. So, now, Harry and I could play either by his house or by my house - BUT after spending a million plus dollars on the park, the people didn't realize or didn't care that the tennis courts have a bad tilt that can't be good for a herniated disc or proper tennis playing so Harry and I drive to a hidden park and hit balls there.

What I LUV (LUV TENNIS PUN) about tennis is that it's always been about the sheer fun of it. I love nothing more than hearing that ball pop against the racquet. I love nothing less than the tennis grunts from other tennis players. That's annoying. Yes, I've tried to challenge myself and improve my backhand and now I do the tennis shuffle to get in some steps and cardio, but I'm not doing it to lose weight. I'm not doing it to get a scholarship to get into a good college (like I thought maybe my dad was doing with me in middle school) I'm just doing it because my boyfriend and I happen to both like it and it's pretty freeing as an adult to be able to do things just for the sake of loving to do them without any gain other than the sheer joy of it.

Will I go to the US Open this year? Doubtful. I've never been and I have no desire to go. Other than going if Harry wants to go because he keeps up with that healthy competition aspect of it. But, when you're someone like me who knows that for

herself the words “healthy” and “competition” don’t go together, you just keep doing it for the LUV (LUV) of the sport.

Thanks so much for listening, y’all. It is my hope to inspire, uplift and entertain you with this Who’s Dat Phat Girl podcast. So, if you’re HUNGRY for more, you can book me to speak or perform my solo show that inspired this podcast Phat Girl Costumes written by yours truly and directed by my best bud Brian Lady at your virtual or in person event. Please visit Brookehoover.com/fluffybuttproductions or email me at contactbrookehoover@gmail.com for more information. And, let’s follow each other on instagram - I’m @Br00keH00ver and those 0’s are not the letter O but they’re ZEROS. Not because I want to be a size 0 but because I guess I’m just so clever with my late 90s Yahoo! self

And, if you like this podcast, please give me a five star rating and write a review on Apple Podcasts and, please, most importantly, share with your friends, family and other people you may know who are as phat as we are - that’s phat with a PH.

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