



# Nicol, champion to all

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Apart from her achievements, she has also taught us that talent and humility can walk hand-in-hand.

IT is rare for an athlete to retain the No 1 spot in the world rankings for an incredible nine years uninterrupted. It is extremely rare for talent to walk hand-in-hand with humility.

And it is certainly refreshing, considering all the bad press we have had in recent times, for a Malaysian to hit the world headlines for all the right reasons.

When the Professional Squash Association published its report on July 1 with the headline, "Nicol David celebrates nine years as Women's World No 1", I am sure it is not just Malaysians who rejoiced, but sports fans throughout the world.

However you may look at it, for an athlete to remain at No 1 for a remarkable stretch of 111 months, is an achievement that athletes in other disciplines will surely salute.

For comparison, I did a quick check on the men's tennis rankings and learnt that Roger Federer, winner of a record 17 Grand Slam titles in his career, currently holds the record for the most number of weeks at No 1. His total of 302 weeks, however, spanned three separate periods.

This achievement broke the record of Pete Sampras who held the No 1 spot for 286 weeks over 11 separate periods.

And our Nicol (*pic*)? If we convert her 111 months to weeks, that would be 444 weeks over one uninterrupted period. Amazing.



But I liked what she shared with the PSA.

"It certainly feels special and I can't believe that I have been World No 1 for nine years – the time has flown by," she said.

"Sometimes I get so caught up on working on getting better and improving myself that it's only when I take a bit of time off to reflect that I come to terms with it – I think I might only fully comprehend the magnitude of everything when I step out of the game, but that's not going to be happening anytime soon."

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If you have been following Nicol's career, you will notice one thing. It is practically impossible for the sports reporters to get her to say anything that draws too much attention to herself. She does not indulge in self-glorification and she just lets her achievements speak for themselves.

Many a great talent falls when the ego gets in the way.

There is much we can learn from Nicol, and not just in the realm of sports, with regard to humility.

Today, we see many situations, especially in the political arena, where individuals are simply too proud to want to eat humble pie.

A tense situation brought about by wrongful interpretation of any situation can sometimes be quickly diffused if one party is prepared to back down and say sorry.

It is also the same with the way we deal with our colleagues, friends and family members.

Meekness and humility may sound like very weak characteristics to have. But the reality is that being meek and humble can help us to overcome problems caused by pride, arrogance, ego, self-exaltation, haughtiness and self-will.

In the process, we learn to think of the interests of others first, and not act as if the world revolves only around ourselves.

It must feel good to be at the top, but being No 1 also means that everyone is trying to knock you off the pedestal.

Nicol cannot remain at No 1 forever and the Egyptian sensation Raneem El Welily is practically raring to dislodge her.

But when that day comes, I imagine that our Nicol will not be making too much of a fuss about it. Being the true ambassador of the game and the great sportswoman that she is, she will just move on and continue to give back to the game that has propelled her to international fame and glory.

**Executive editor Soo Ewe Jin likes Nicol's tribute to her family – "I would have never kept my true grit to be the best without my loving family backing me all the way" – as posted on her Facebook page.**