

# Derbyshire Squash Rackets Association

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## Individual Activity



Laura Hill (R) © Fritz Borchert

In preparation for the World Open in Madrid, Spain 21-27 October, Derbyshire's No. 1 lady Laura Hill travelled to the Vassar Classic in New York to gain some much needed match experience. Hill received a boost before leaving in the form of a 5 place rise in the World Rankings to No. 49 [WR49]. Although Hill's England ranking is No. 7, she must gain World ranking points to put her in an equivalent position in the top 30 in the World before pushing on into the top 20.

Hill's first qualifying round gave her valuable court time to recover from the rigours of travelling and New York's time zone. Hill began slowly and was held at 4-4 for a while by her game opponent, Victoria Chishimba (WR 149), but Hill found her length as her footwork improved. Hill took the first 9-4 and then fully asserted herself winning the next two games 9-0, 9-0.

The second round saw Hill playing her friend and travel partner, Dutch star Orla Noom (WR 40). Hill and Noom traded points in the early part of the first game, each trying to gain the ascendancy, but at 3-3 Hill's superior width and length pulled Noom off the 'T' and the gaps opened up. Hill kept the pressure on to take the 1<sup>st</sup> 9-3. In the 2<sup>nd</sup>, left handed Noom used her reach well, forcing Hill to the back and putting the ball away with some good volleys. Hill dug in and began to fight back from 5-1 down and reached 5-5. Points were traded, but it was Noom who had the first game point. Hill plays squash tough and played a long straight rally to wear down Noom. This worked well as Hill then picked off three quick winners to take the 2<sup>nd</sup> 10-8. Noom's head dropped and Hill was on a charge and powered to 9-0 for the game and match 3-0.

Hill was into the first round proper, but as a qualifier the draw was always going to be tough and in New Zealand's Shelley Kitchen (WR 11) this was particularly so. Although Hill had a relatively straightforward 3-0 win over Noom, playing with a heavy cold had taken its toll. Kitchen is a hard hitter and on these fast courts was in her element. The first went Kitchen's way 9-0, but Hill got a foothold in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and for a while there was nothing to choose between the two. Kitchen, who had just won the Elbow River Casino Open in Calgary, Canada and is on the verge of a World top 10 place, was in determined mood and in good form, and forced Hill into crucial mistakes, secured the 2<sup>nd</sup> 9-5. Hill made a good start the 3<sup>rd</sup>, but tiredness took effect and Kitchen won through.

Kevin White  
DSRA Chairman  
Kevin@derbyshiresquash.co.uk