Israeli-born tennis star wears a cross, but his mother considers him 'Jewish'

Denis Shapovalov was first Israeli-born player to reach Canada's Rogers Cup semifinals since 2000, beating Nadal along the way

By **MARVIN GLASSMAN** | 14 August 2017, 7:07 pm | **1** 13











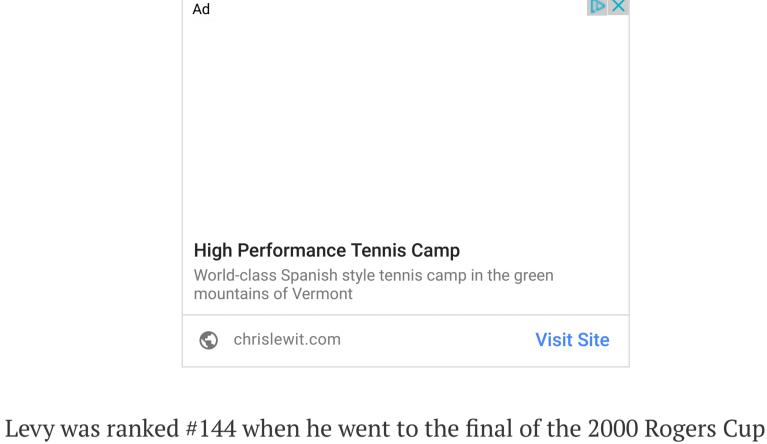


MONTREAL — Eighteen-year-old Israeli-Canadian tennis player Denis

Shapovalov made history at last week's Rogers Cup tournament in Montreal as the youngest player ever to make the semi-final round, and made headlines for beating superstar Rafael Nadal en route.

Born in Tel Aviv, Shapovalov also became the first Israeli-born player to

earn a berth in the Rogers Cup semifinals since Harel Levy finished as a finalist in the 2000 Rogers Cup in Toronto, then called the Tennis Masters Series Canada.



milestone, Shapovalov, ranked #143, also upset higher ranked players at the tournament.

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tournament, losing to Marat Safin of Russia. To achieve his historical

"I had my best week of tennis in my career, defeating so many players like Nadal, who are idols of mine growing up," Shapovalov told The Times of

Israel.

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Shapovalov was knocked out of the tournament late Saturday night, losing his semifinal match to fourth-seeded Alexander Zverev of Germany.



victories boosted Shapovalov's world ranking to #66 and has earned him some \$220,760 in prize money. Levy achieved a career high #30 ranking in 2001.

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Cup in Madrid. **CC** 'I had my best week of tennis in my career, defeating so many players like Nadal, who are

Under Jacob's tutelage, Shapovalov won the prestigious 2015 Junior Davis

a career peak rank of #11 in singles in 2011.

idols of mine growing up"

Shapovalova.

Israel as well.

Jewish, wanted to emigrate to Israel despite being an elite tennis player from the Soviet Union.

"Although my husband Viktor [and father of Denis] is Greek Orthodox and not Jewish, he was just as eager as I was to go to Israel," said Tessa

Tessa competed in tennis tournaments in Israel and coached Israeli

Shapovalov's parents came from the Soviet Union to Israel in the 1990s,

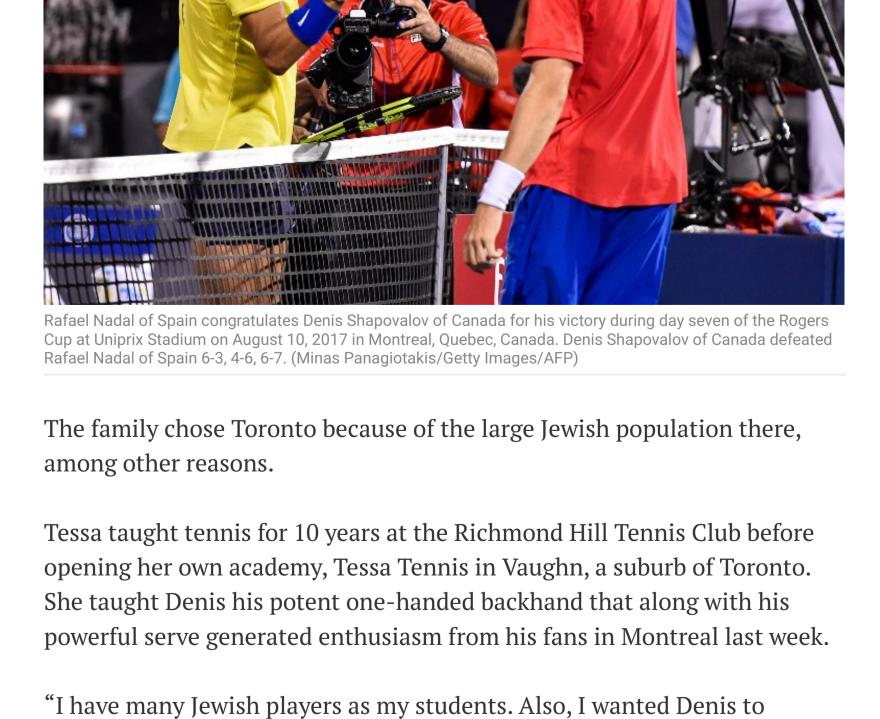
and he was born in Tel Aviv in 1999. His mother, Tessa Shapovolova, who is

youngsters while she was there. Denis's older brother Evgeniy was born in

"We decided to move to Toronto before Denis was one because it was too

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dangerous to continue living in Israel," Shapovalova said.



compete for Canada at the Maccabiah Games in Israel, had he not had huge

prominence as a professional tennis player," said Tessa.

Judaism — Shapovalov is since he left as a baby.

"My parents had a hard life and I respect what they had to do. I love playing for Canada, but am friendly with the Israeli tennis players I met, such as Dudi Sela [who also competed last week at the Rogers Cup]," said

Although born in Israel, it is unclear how tied to the Holy Land — or

Shapovolov wears a cross around his neck while playing matches.

"Denis identifies with his father's religion, but I consider him Jewish," said Tessa.

