

RISING STOCK

By: Joey Brew



In 2009 Colin Fleming and Ken Skupski completed a most remarkable journey. After starting the year competing on the lowly futures circuit, they ended it by becoming a double winner on the ATP World Tour.

“Flemski” as they call themselves, are both university graduates, Skupski from Louisiana and Fleming from Stirling. For Skupski, turning pro was the obvious choice after coming out of the excellent American collegiate system, but Fleming, who was forging a successful partnership with Jamie Murray before going back to complete his degree, went into work before deciding he didn’t want to look back on his life and think “what if.”

Although they go about it in different ways, both are orthodox doubles players who like to approach the net. Skupski is a ball basher in the mode of someone like Marcin Matkowski, while Fleming is a purer ball striker in the style of say, a Mark Knowles.



The British pair teamed up in late 2008 with immediate success, winning three straight futures from debut, and then triumphing in a challenger event in Jersey. In 2009 they continued their step up to challenger level with a further title together from

four finals. They came into the public eye line at Queen’s, where they defeated the Bryan brothers in a memorable match on centre court.

Their success seemed to impact their respective singles careers, with Skupski seemingly giving it up altogether, and Fleming forced to play challenger qualifying, which wasn’t always possible as Flemski was often appearing in the finals of the doubles in the previous tournament. Fleming though did win a futures event in London in September.

After a heartbreaking first round defeat at Wimbledon, Fleming and Skupski returned to the challenger circuit, reaching finals in Pozoblanco plus Manchester and winning the Granby title. Their big breakthrough came as they gained entry into an ATP Tour event in Metz, their first direct entry into a main tour event. They started the week with no expectations, but went on to win the title, defeating the former Wimbledon champions Arnaud Clement and Michael Llodra in the final. Flemski followed that win up in style, as they continued to fill their trophy cabinet, claiming the Orleans challenger and their second ATP Tour title in St. Petersburg.

In 2010, Flemski will undoubtedly be the team to watch as they start their first full season on the main tour. Expectations will be sky high following their successful 2009 season, with the ATP World Tour Finals in London surely being a realistic goal.

Firstly though they have to build on the foundation they have built up, and start to perform in the Grand Slams and Masters Series events where they will be playing against the world’s best, week in, week out, and they will be no longer the surprise package they have been so far.

That said, with the Australian Open so close, you can be sure that no team will want to play these two upstarts from Great Britain.