



# COACHING & SPORT SCIENCE REVIEW

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# COACHING & SPORT SCIENCE REVIEW

The Official Coaching and Sport Science Publication of the International Tennis Federation

## EDITORIAL

Welcome to Issue 65 of the ITF Coaching & Sport Science Review.

The main focus of this edition of CSSR is sport science applied to tennis. The articles range from confidence and resilience in the game, developing tennis players, to mood states and trajectory as a basic fundamental tactic.

Other topics in this issue include tennis sociology, foundations of learning, wheelchair tennis research, personal branding for tennis coaches and a tribute to tennis coaching legend Vic Braden.

Close to 600 articles have been published in the CSSR since 1992, and today, in its 23rd year, the review is produced 3 times per year in the 3 official ITF languages of English, Spanish and French and made available free of charge on the ITF coaching web at <http://en.coaching.itftennis.com/coaching-sport-science-review>

The ITF is making a considerable effort in offering its coaching resources in a variety of formats that reach all audiences. The last e-books published by the ITF include 'Coaching Beginner and Intermediate Players' and 'Tennis Psychology' both in Spanish. To download your copy of Coaching Beginner and intermediate Players please click [here](#). Tennis Psychology is available to download by clicking [here](#).

The parents' role is more important in [Tennis10s](#) than at any other stage of tennis because children are very influenced by the behaviour of their parents at this age. A guide for parents is available to help them better understand Tennis10s and how they can help ensure that their children have a positive experience playing tennis. Creating a player-friendly platform for children to be introduced to competition at a level suitable for their age and understanding is vital. Parents can assist in creating a positive playing environment for their child by providing the right support and encouragement. Please read on [here](#).

The ITF Tennis iCoach website remains at the forefront of online coach education, presentations from the 2014 ITF Regional Coaches Conferences are already uploaded and available. Each month Tennis iCoach publishes an Editor's Pick for free. There are over 1500 presentations on Tennis iCoach from leading experts all around the world. For just \$30 per year you can keep up to date with the most current tennis specific coaching information. Please click on the following link for a tour of the site [www.tennisicoach.com](http://www.tennisicoach.com).

The [ITF Worldwide Coaches Conference](#) by BNP Paribas will take place in Antalya, Turkey, from Tuesday 17 to Saturday 21 November 2015. The event is being organised by the ITF in conjunction with the Turkish Tennis Federation (Turkiye Tenis Federasyonu) and Tennis Europe and will be held at the Kaya Palazzo Resort and Convention Centre. For more details click [here](#).

The theme of this year's Conference is 'A Player Centred Approach to Long-term Development: Participation to Performance'. The Conference will have presentations related to four distinct ages of player development:

10 & under (Building phase)

11-14 years (Development phase)

15-18 years (Junior phase)

19-23 years (Transition to Professional phase).

Registration will open at the end of April, for more information on this prestigious event please go [here](#).

You can find more information on the venue [here](#).

We hope that you will find this 65th edition of the Coaching and Sport Science Review informative and that it will allow coaches across the world to build on and develop their coaching knowledge and to be more effective in their work as coaches. We also hope that you will continue to make use of all the other coaching resources provided by the ITF which can be viewed on the coaching webpage; [www.itftennis.com/coaching](http://www.itftennis.com/coaching).



The Kaya Palazzo Resort and Convention Centre

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# Tennis is a game of strong and resilient confidence

Janet Young (Victoria University, Australia)

ITF Coaching and Sport Science Review 2015; 65 (23): 3 -4

## ABSTRACT

*This paper reviews confidence' and why it is important to players. Strategies for coaches to guide players in developing, maintaining and regaining (if required) confidence are highlighted.*

**Key words:** confidence, coach, mental, belief

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## INTRODUCTION

It is not uncommon for coaches to tell their players to be confident and/or to play confidently. Such advice is sound but it often leaves players at a loss to know how to be confident, how to maintain it during a match, tournament event or season and, if required, how to regain it if lost. Players generally know when they feel confident – they are positive, focused, goal-directed and self-assured, hit the ball cleanly and go for their shots, thrive on the pressure of training and competition and have no doubt as to their ability to perform well. Awareness of being confident may not be sufficient with some players in need of a coach's help to gain a fuller understanding of the 'what', 'why' and 'how' of this much desirable and admired attribute. To address these aspects let us examine confidence in more detail and see what role a coach can play in guiding players to develop and nurture confidence.

## WHAT IS CONFIDENCE?

Interestingly, there are numerous definitions of confidence to be found in sport literature. A popular one proposed by Weinberg and Gould is "The belief or degree of certainty that individuals possess about their ability to be successful in sport" (p. 322). More simply conceptualised by Rotella (2004), confidence is "thinking about the things you want to happen" (p.37). In this context, players who are confident think about what they want to happen on the court in contrast to players who lack confidence thinking about the things they do not want to happen on the court.

In terms of the nature of confidence, a number of key features are listed in Table 1.

Key Features of Confidence (adapted from Rotella, 2004; Vealey & Dan Vernau, 2010; Weinberg & Gould, 2007)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A subjective and honest evaluation, belief and/or expectation about a player's abilities – physical, technical, strategic and psychological - to meet the challenges and perform to the best of his/her abilities</li><li>• Not something players are born with but can be developed and cultivated</li><li>• Must be earned and comes from within</li><li>• Players develop confidence in specific aspects of their game (eg. serving, retrieving, forehand, game plan) but this does not guarantee feeling confident in all of the game's demands and challenges</li><li>• Individual differences as to the extent to which players possess confidence</li><li>• Transient, fluid, fragile and dynamic – can change frequently and quickly. An individual's confidence is not static</li><li>• Can be influenced by a range of factors (e.g., weather and court conditions, comments from significant others, pressure to win, lack of practice etc)</li><li>• Does not ensure error-free performance or victories rather confidence enhances the chances of success</li><li>• Assumes a realistic understanding of the effort and work involved to perform at a player's best</li><li>• Possible to be overconfident and underestimate opponent (this provides a possible explanation for 'upsets' over more highly ranked players)</li><li>• Determinants of confidence are many and varied – prior success a main source of confidence together with thorough physical and psychological preparation</li><li>• Associated with many positives including enjoyment, high self-esteem and good performances</li><li>• Generally possible to restore confidence if it is lost or lacking</li></ul>

Table 1. Key Features of Confidence.

As noted in Table 1, confidence is not what a player hopes or wants to do but rather is a realistic and positive anticipation of what a player expects will happen. Confidence reflects a player's innermost thoughts about what he/she is capable of doing and fully appreciating the work and effort required to perform well. Confidence does not guarantee success but certainly increases the chances of it happening. It is however noted that players can possess too much confidence and be 'over-confident' as to the outcome of matches. Sometimes in these matches opponents are underestimated and 'upset' results can occur.

Considerable time and effort is generally required when it comes to developing confidence. Genuine and resilient confidence is earned after many hours, days, weeks and years of dedicated work and commitment to the game. There is no magic wand! However it is thought that the dedicated work and effort are well worthwhile because confidence brings its own rewards including:

- Assisting a player to develop a 'winning' (versus 'not losing') match strategy
- Allowing a player to focus on relevant cues during a match and not be distracted by his/her own self-doubts
- Facilitating good decision-making because a player is thinking positively and constructively
- Arousing positive emotions including feeling relaxed, competent and in control
- Helping a player 'to dig deep' at critical times during matches
- Enabling a player to give his/her best efforts and enjoy his/her tennis

It is also noted from Table 1 that confidence is generally a fragile attribute. For many players confidence can be quickly and easily lost. A range of factors can contribute to this including a player's own self-doubts, an unexpected loss or a 'string of losses' and negative comments from significant others (including coach, parent and other players). Warning signs of a loss of confidence can include a lack of enthusiasm and enjoyment in playing and training, serving double faults in pressure situations and an inability to execute certain shots or play as would normally be the case for that player. To understand how best to maintain confidence, and regain if required, let us further explore the ways players might build confidence.

## How to Build Confidence

It is thought that the main ways a player can build confidence include:

- a) Persistent, deliberate practice and training of physical and psychological skills
- b) Receiving constructive and positive feedback, encouragement and guidance from a support team, including coach, parents and friends
- c) Successful performance accomplishments - be it wins, good performances and/or making progress in skill/game development and achieving goals or targets.

Recently Vealey and Vernau (2010) suggest that systematic physical preparation allows players to trust themselves in executing their skills during the pressure of competition. In a similar vein these authors propose that systematic psychological preparation facilitates sound decision making and allows players to respond appropriately to competitive pressure, distractions and setbacks. To this end players may engage in positive self-talk and imagery for example. Coaches and other support persons are deemed to be important in setting the right 'tone' and culture around a player. An environment that reinforces the abilities, capabilities and potential of players is conducive to players feeling confident about themselves and their game. Finally, nothing breeds confidence better than 'success'. Vealey and Vernau highlight the confidence that can be derived from solid match performances (not only wins but also losses where a player plays to his/her ability) and reaching targets or goals for developing their skills.



## ROLE OF THE COACH

It has been identified that coaches can help players develop, maintain and regain (if required) confidence (e.g., Vealey & Vernau, 2010; Weinberg & Gould, 2007). So what can coaches do? Some suggestions follow for consideration. Although these are listed in separate categories (for developing, maintaining and restoring a player's confidence) there is considerable overlap with some suggested strategies applicable at all times when guiding a player to achieve his/her full potential.

### What coaches can do to help a player develop confidence

- Encourage and assist a player to set realistic, challenging and achievable goals. Then support a player to work towards achieving these goals, regularly giving positive and constructive feedback as progress and targets are achieved
- Focus on a player's skill development and bring in, or refer players to, fitness specialists or sport psychologists to help fully develop physical and psychological skills if these areas are considered outside a coach's area of training and expertise
- Set up regular match play scenarios that simulate pressure situations where players can test their skills, assess the progress they are making, identify areas for additional work and achieve some success
- Lead by example. Assume a positive disposition and enjoy one's coaching in accord with high standards of ethical conduct
- Be mindful of what you say to players. Words need be chosen wisely and should help to make players feel good about themselves and their tennis
- Select players (e.g., Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Serena Williams) as illustrations of ideal role models for players to observe and emulate

- Encourage players to recall, and record, their 'best performances' and identify what things they were doing, feeling or experiencing prior to and during such matches. Suggest a player use this information to form a 'template' to follow to play well on a regular basis
- Offer extra coaching, training and practice sessions to allow players to feel that their shots, play and fitness and other skills are at levels players are happy with
- Allow players to learn, make mistakes and take responsibility for their decision making. Facilitate a learning environment where players are consulted and, indeed, are empowered to take control over what happens out on the court
- Together with a player, put together a support team (e.g. trainer) that a player feels believes in him/her

### What coaches can do to help a player maintain confidence

- Provide a positive, consistent, fun and supportive coaching environment
- Adopt an 'open-door' policy where players feel comfortable to discuss any issues of concern. Assure players that any issues will be addressed in a confidential, non-judgmental and prompt manner
- Discuss with players their template (as above) for best performances. Encourage players to 'replay' in their minds those times when they played at their best and picture themselves repeating such occasions
- Offer extra match play, training, practice and coaching to 'fix' or improve any aspect of a player's game that is causing concern
- Refocus players' attention on the '3 Ps' (i.e., preparation, practice and planning for matches)
- When watching players compete, attend to your own body language and refrain from showing despair, concern or disappointment. Provide constructive feedback after matches that focus on what players did well and also areas for on-going improvement. In these discussions continue to stress development, addressing challenges and improvement (versus match wins or losses)
- Regularly consult with players as to the progress they are making to meet goals and targets. Seek suggestions from players if goals and targets are behind schedule and then work with them to revise or update their coaching program

### What coaches can do to help a player regain confidence

- Remove the distraction of 'winning' for players and refocus on 'improvement' and 'fulfillment of potential' as measures of success
- Reassess with players their goals and targets to ensure they are not overly demanding but still challenging and achievable
- Review with players any video clips, newspaper articles or other material that highlight a player's achievements or good performances. Use these reminders to rekindle players' enthusiasm for the game
- Remind players that confidence can, in most cases, be restored and rebuilt. Ask players for their own solutions to any pressing issues or concerns and provide assurances that you will provide support (including coaching and training) where possible
- Keep a balanced perspective and remind players to do so themselves. Lead by example by not panicking or being judgmental but rather be realistic that changes/fluctuations in confidence are to be expected
- Facilitate a 'forward looking' approach where learning and perfecting the game is fun but very challenging

## CONCLUSION

A player's confidence is continually tested in tennis. Points are invariably lost in any match, easy shots can be missed and players' 'winning streaks' always end. Defeats are inevitable even for champions. Accordingly, players need to work at their confidence. It is not 'a given' for anyone and requires cultivating, nurturing and sometimes restoring. This article suggests that the goal for players is to have strong, resilient and realistic confidence and, to this end, coaches have a very significant role to play. They can guide and support players to find solutions to a fear of playing/losing, nervous double-faulting and a loss of enjoyment in playing that are often symptomatic of a lack of confidence. Tennis is a game of confidence and, although confidence comes from within a player, coaches provide a vital clue as to why some players find the answers to see their shots consistently go to their target. That's confidence! But an individual approach by a coach is vital. No two players are the same and a holistic, caring, empathetic and supporting approach is required. Confidence must be earned just as Roger Federer and Serena Williams have done in their pursuit of establishing a tennis legacy.

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[RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ICoach CONTENT \(CLICK BELOW\)](#)

**Tennis**  **Coach**



# Vic Braden: The legacy of a coach, researcher and visionary

Miguel Crespo (ITF)

ITF Coaching and Sport Science Review 2014; 65 (23): 6-7

## ABSTRACT

*Vic Braden, one of the greatest tennis coaches of all time, passed away in October 2014. Braden was a player, teacher, coach, psychologist, journalist and author. However, above all, he was a major force in tennis due to his vision which influences how tennis is taught at all levels. This article is a reflection on some of the facets of his career through the books and resources he produced. "Vic Braden doesn't just teach you how to play tennis; he teaches you how to love it".*

**Key words:** coaching, instruction, vision, humour, legacy

Article received: 10 January 2015

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## INTRODUCTION

Vic was an educator who always looked for creative ways to help people play tennis better. This personal goal provided him with plenty of excitement and new knowledge. He truly believed that playing a sport should be one of the finest treasures known to mankind.

He felt that tennis had lost too many people because we lack the knowledge to find ways to keep them involved. His method to retain people in the game for a lifetime was improving while having fun.

Most of his books and resources are essential readings for those who want to improve their game. In this article we will review some of the main principles of his work and pay tribute to his contribution to the game.

## RESEARCH

Vic Braden was one of the first tennis coaches to use sport science by doing research and applying the results in his daily coaching. When talking about five elements of success in tennis (1993) he mentions genetics, physics and engineering, psychology, experience and conditioning. He used scientific data to confirm many of his beliefs about how to hit a tennis ball and to explain some common myths and fallacies that hold players back.

His first book "Tennis for the future" (1976) he explained how his tennis college was built specially as a teaching facility complete with an array of ball machines and TV cameras for video replay. He also built special courts, individual instruction lanes, and sophisticated classroom equipment.

Vic was very grateful to many scientists who helped with his research over his career. These experts came from different fields such as biomechanics (Gideon Ariel, Andrei Vorobiev, Jack Groppe and Bruce Elliott), psychology (Rainer Martens and Arnold Mandell), motor learning (Richard Schmidt, Richard Haier, Ray Brown and Dean-Brittenham), physics (Howard Brody, Hans Liepmann and Patrick Keating), medicine (Charles Dillmann) and neuroscience (Daniel Amen) to name a few. He always encouraged coaches to trade lessons and knowledge with any scientists that belong to their particular club(s) (1998).

## HUMOUR

One of the key characteristics of Vic's instructional approach was the constant reminder to have fun while playing. He had a great sense of humour and in all of his books he showed readers how to get more fun out of the game. In his book "Laugh and win at doubles" (1996) he explains his "laugh and win" philosophy in the words of Tracy Austin: "We worked unbelievably hard, but we also laughed hard and we had a lot of fun." He was adamant in the idea of the laughing coming before the winning.

He considered doubles a game that should be competitive and enjoyable, not a war. He always loved tennis doubles as a player, a coach, and a spectator. He saw the doubles game as a great opportunity to retaining people in the game when he said that "the

doubles aficionados practically go to their grave before they give up the sport." The title of one of his books "Sportsathon: Puzzles, Jokes, Facts & Games (Puffin story books)" (1986) is self-explanatory.

This section can be summarised by saying that Vic's philosophy was a combination of principles to boost the player performance while enjoying the game. As he said: "And don't lose sight of my motto, 'Laugh and win', the heart of my teaching philosophy".

## PSYCHOLOGY

Braden was a licensed psychologist and the mental side of the game is very present in the vast majority of his books. In his doubles book he covers issues such as brain typing, personality matchups, competitive spirit, communication, concentration, anticipation, choking, coping, partnership, choosing partners, etc.

In his book "Mental tennis" (1993) he explained tennis as a psychological game by using four concepts: the mind-body connections; the psychological states, moods, affects, feelings and problems that impinge in the game; the importance of "smart" and "intelligent" tennis; and the relevance of strategies. He covers crucial topics such as fear and anxiety, stress and choking, self-esteem, self-doubt and self-fulfilling prophecies, distractions and external stimuli, anticipation and cues, anger and toughness, as well as the fear of winning and failure.

He stressed the importance of assessing and knowing yourself mentally in order to set goals adapted to the reality of your personality. He also dealt with the coach-player relationship which has to be based on mutual respect. He obviously wrote for the parents and suggested the importance of re-evaluating the winning concept to get what everybody wants from tennis by achieving what he explained as the "win-win" condition.

Finally, he was one of the first to speak about mental practice, and meaningful practice on the court by practicing with the data and breaking habits.

## PARTICIPATION

Now that the tennis world is focusing on the importance of increasing participation worldwide, Vic constantly campaigned for the sport's growth by promoting schools programmes and the doubles game. As a former elementary school teacher, he saw hundreds of young children who could benefit by being involved in tennis.

His Junior Tennis Ambassadors Program created in 2007 is an amazing project since it teaches young elementary and junior high students to coach any student in their school at no cost. He applied the results of his experiments with young students, in which he found that they possess amazing abilities as athletic coaches, when properly trained. The Program provides free instruction for adult volunteers who will supervise young elementary and junior high school tennis coaches. The young tennis coaches also receive free instruction that qualifies them as permanent tennis coaches for classmates throughout the school year.

## TEACHING AND COACHING

Vic was very grateful to all the students who had taught him how best to teach them. He also respected a lot his fellow teaching professionals by recognising their investment in helping people and thanking for their friendship.

As he stated: “The big issue is to teach the scientific principles to students in such a manner that they maximise performance and enjoyment of tennis in the shortest period of time.”

Braden was a true coach. He wanted people to improve their game. He was a master of intervention and correction techniques. When I first met him, I found him in front of a TV explaining the backhand to a veteran beginner player who wanted to learn the topspin effect.

In his book “Quick fixes” (1990) he not only presents the majority of problems tennis players come across and lists the cures to each problem, but also he addresses some of the many common errors that are taught in tennis instruction. In other books, he also covers very practical aspects such as dealing with performance slumps, changing the learning environment, using the most of practices, etc.

## CONCLUSION

In his last book “If I’m Only 22, How Come I’m 82?—Tennis Is More than Just a Sport” (2012) he reflected on how tennis has changed people’s lives and recaptured some highlights and anecdotes from the couple of thousand events in his tennis career.

It is very sad, and somehow annoying, when we find young coaches and coach educators that do not know about the history and the impact of great teachers, coaches and scientists such as Vic Braden, Stanley Plagenhoef, Svatopluk Stojan, Jean Brechbühl, Gilles de Kermadec, Harry Hopman, Roberto Lombardi, Jelena Gencic or Larisa Preobrazhenskaya, to name a few. I feel that we have the obligation to pay tribute to these great personalities of tennis coaching by spreading out their knowledge and their contributions to our game (Martin, Pestre & Peter, 2014).

Vic was a visionary, a terrific game changer who revolutionized tennis by using an amazing combination of sport science, coaching experience and fun. He has impacted tennis as a player, teaching professional and broadcaster and his legacy is present in every single tennis lesson taught by coaches willing to help players to improve and enjoy the game.



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[RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ICOACH CONTENT \(CLICK BELOW\)](#)

**Tennis**  **iCoach**

# Developing co-ordination for under 10 players

Peter Farrell (Tennis Ireland, Ireland) & Merlin van de Braam (LTA, UK)

ITF Coaching and Sport Science Review 2015; 65 (23): 8 - 9

## ABSTRACT

*Co-ordination is a key physical skill in tennis along with others such as speed, agility and the ability to produce power. Whilst some of these attributes are essential to play tennis well, good co-ordination is necessary to play tennis at all. This article takes a closer look at co-ordination and the five sub-components that underpin it; orientation, differentiation, balance, reaction and rhythm. The aim of this article is to provide coaches with ideas for exercises and drill variations to help develop capable and co-ordinated athletes for the future. The exercises in this article are taken from the book "Tennis Co-ordination Exercises", written by the first author.*

**Key words:** coordination, drills, under 10, variation

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## INTRODUCTION

In the past children developed co-ordination skills as a by-product of "play". However, in today's sedentary society it is much rarer to see children playing on the street, taking part in chasing games, skipping, or even just kicking or throwing a ball around. Safety concerns keep them indoors, and the ever growing digital and computer gaming market further reduces the likelihood of free play. It is therefore essential that a coach integrates co-ordination based exercises into their lessons and programme to help children develop the skills that will allow them to cope with the demands of tennis.

A point in tennis requires a player to make multi-directional movements toward the path of an incoming ball. The ball can be approaching at different speeds and trajectories and with varying types and levels of spin. Every shot in tennis therefore puts co-ordination skills under the microscope due to the small margin for error. Good co-ordination means that the player can control their body parts in space and time, in such a way as to achieve a desired result during stroke production. For young children, that means hitting the incoming ball back over the net and into court, ideally with enough accuracy to make the next shot difficult for the opponent.

As stated before it is imperative to develop basic co-ordination skills early on to ensure children continue as participants of tennis. Without the ability to bounce, catch or throw a ball in a controlled manner, children will find it very difficult to learn or enjoy tennis and are likely to choose a sport that is less demanding from a co-ordination perspective. The following sections aim to explain what the underlying components of co-ordination are, give an example of each component in action, and then how they can be developed using on-court exercises.

## Co-ordination: A closer look

Co-ordination can be broken down into five separate skills or sub-components. These are orientation, differentiation, balance, reaction and rhythm (Crespo, Reid & Quinn, 2003).

Skill	Definition	Example
Orientation	The ability to determine and modify the body's position and movements according to the oncoming ball.	When a child receives a ball that comes directly at their chest they are able to recognise the shot will not be possible and move to one side.
Differentiation	The ability to adapt a learned stroke or movement to a new situation.	A more compact backswing in reaction to a very fast oncoming ball i.e. improvising to the needs of each ball. A player that is "robotic" lacks the ability to differentiate.
Balance	The ability to maintain your head above the base of support (i.e. legs) when stationary or moving - or quickly return to a position of balance when put off-balance.	When returning a wide shot, the child can hit a stroke and recover with just one step after the shot i.e. they do not fall out of the court.
Reaction	The ability to respond quickly and appropriately to external stimuli.	Quick recognition of the sudden change in a balls speed and trajectory after a net chord.
Rhythm	The harmonious use of sequential parts of the body i.e. the right part of the body is used at the right time, with speed and acceleration applied when appropriate.	A groundstroke with a continuous action (i.e. no long pause). The forward swing is significantly faster than the backswing.

Table 1. The five sub-components that make up co-ordination (from Reid, Quinn & Crespo, 2004.)

## On-court exercises

Armed with a better understanding of what makes a co-ordinated player, this section will now explore practical exercises to develop the individual skills or areas. The exercises below are well known to every coach of young children. They address either eye-hand or eye-foot co-ordination and use a combination of ball only or racket and ball exercises within an individual or group setting. The purpose of these exercise explanations is not to provide new or innovative drills, but rather to present a list of variations of well-known drills. The key message is that the variations are designed around the sub-components of co-ordination mentioned above. For example, a coach may notice that their young players often miss when the ball comes directly at them. Whilst most co-ordination exercises will help a player for an issue like this, it is possible to vary an exercise to focus more specifically on this issue (orientation) and hence get better results. Examples of how to do this for all five sub components are given below using some well-known co-ordination exercises.









<p>Bounce two balls down, one with each hand, keep them going.</p> <p>Adaptations: Differentiation: Substitute harder or softer balls in every time the exercise breaks down, or after several successful attempts.</p> <p>Rhythm: Use tennis balls of two different types simultaneously e.g. red and green</p> <p>Orientation: Move from point A to point B while performing the exercise and maintain bounces whilst dodging other group members</p>	
<p>Standing at the doubles sideline or service line, roll a ball so that it stops between opposite the singles and doubles sidelines.</p> <p>Adaptations: Differentiation: Increase or decrease the distance from the end target</p> <p>Reaction: Similar to above, vary the distance however do not notify players of the target until they are actually executing the throwing action.</p> <p>Balance: Throw the ball to the target area whilst standing on one leg</p>	
<p>Toss a ball into the air, let it bounce once, then trap it under your foot.</p> <p>Adaptations: Differentiation: Use different types of tennis balls (e.g. red, orange), which have different bounce characteristics</p> <p>Orientation: Toss the ball over your head, turn and move towards it then trap it.</p> <p>Rhythm: Trap the ball after a specified number of bounces under your foot (e.g. 3)</p>	
<p>Place a tennis ball on the racquet strings, move from Point A to Point B while keeping the ball in place.</p> <p>Adaptations:</p> <p>Balance: Hop on one leg from A to B, while keeping the ball on the strings</p> <p>Orientation: Move through a 'slalom' course made from a number of ball cans</p> <p>Differentiation: Hold the racquet at various heights or using different grips e.g. shoulder height, chopper, semi-western grip.</p>	

Table 2. Examples of co-ordination exercises.

### Fun and enjoyment

If children are enjoying an activity they will concentrate and remain motivated. When implementing coordination exercises a coach should be guided by the participants – they should pick up clues from rising noise levels or negative body language. These indicate that it is time for a new exercise or at least a variation of the current exercise. This will refocus players and regenerate motivation.

### Maximum involvement

To get the most out of a session and the pupils, coaches should seek maximum involvement when working on co-ordination. Simply put, this means that;

- All students are engaged all the time
- No dead time or waiting
- Inclusive scoring and competition structures

Elimination should be avoided where possible because those who most need the practice are usually the first to be knocked out. Consider inclusive alternatives to the scoring system e.g. a player who makes a mistake gains a point or 'yellow card', but stays in the game. The player with the least points or yellow cards at the end is the winner.

### CONCLUSION

A lack of co-ordination will have a significant impact on a child's enjoyment of the game. Conversely, strong co-ordination skills can form the foundation for success in tennis and sport in general. Coaches will see more improvement when they challenge their pupils across all facets of co-ordination, and ensure variation and fun is ever present. It is hoped that the present article provides food for thought so that coaches can design their own drill variations that place emphasis on all areas of co-ordination, from reaction and rhythm to differentiation and orientation.

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NOTES: This article is based on the book "Tennis Co-ordination Exercises" by Peter Farrell, published in 2014 by Tennis Coach Ireland (available at [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)).

[RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ICOACH CONTENT \(CLICK BELOW\)](#)

Tennis  iCoach

# Personal branding for tennis coaches

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## ABSTRACT

*This article identifies the need for personal branding in one's career – a phenomenon that has gained importance in recent years. By establishing a personal brand coaches are able to differentiate themselves. Four key steps in establishing a personal brand are identified: self-assessment, creating one's personal brand, marketing one's personal brand, and evaluation and adjustment. In addition, the role digital media channels can play in the process is discussed.*

**Key words:** personal branding, career, digital channels, social media

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## INTRODUCTION

Tennis coaches should start establishing a personal brand, whether a small club, a large academy or a professional player employs them.

A brand is a particular identity or image regarded as an asset. A personal brand can therefore be defined as the identity or image that makes a person valuable. The phenomenon of personal branding has gained importance in recent years, and is no longer unique to professional athletes and celebrities. Peters (1997) expresses that everyone needs to understand the importance of personal branding, regardless of age, position or the business they are in. Individuals are CEOs of their own companies: Me Inc. The article 'The Brand Called You' (Peters, 1997) is attributed in bringing the concept of personal branding to a wider audience. The web, in particular the rise of social media, has since made personal branding a must for one's career.

### Advantages of personal branding

Employers, potential employers and customers have access to - and take advantage of - the opportunities digital channels offer them. They vet whether a coach's skill set is satisfactory for the job and whether a coach is sufficiently trustworthy and reliable to coach them or their children. Regardless of someone's intentions, the world forms an image of them and their capabilities. If people do not manage their own brand, then someone else will do it for them (Kaputa, 2005). By establishing a personal brand individuals have the ability to control, to a certain extent, how others perceive them.

Personal branding is a great tool to differentiate oneself (Shepherd, 2005) – to sell oneself – and can help in every area of life (Hearn, 2008). A personal brand will make an individual stand out among the crowd. In 2007 the ITF estimated that there were 40,000 coaches in the USA alone (Crespo, 2010). That is an abundance of supply (i.e. tennis coaches) for both potential employers and customers. A well-crafted personal brand could get one noticed in this abundance of supply.

### PRACTICAL

A well-constructed personal brand will answer the following type of questions: Why are you as a self-employed coach acquiring new customers over other coaches?

Why should the academy choose you over other coaches to coach a new talent?

How does a top-100 player know you can help him/her reach the top-30?

Another advantage of personal branding is the positive effect it can have on one's career (Khedher, 2013; Ward & Yates, 2013). Establishing a personal brand requires self-assessment, yielding a clearer view of future goals and how those can be achieved. Ward & Yates (2013) mention how personal branding can enhance one's career with promotions, increased responsibility and additional visibility. Furthermore, establishing and managing a personal brand gives motivation to develop additional skills.

### Essential steps in constructing your personal brand

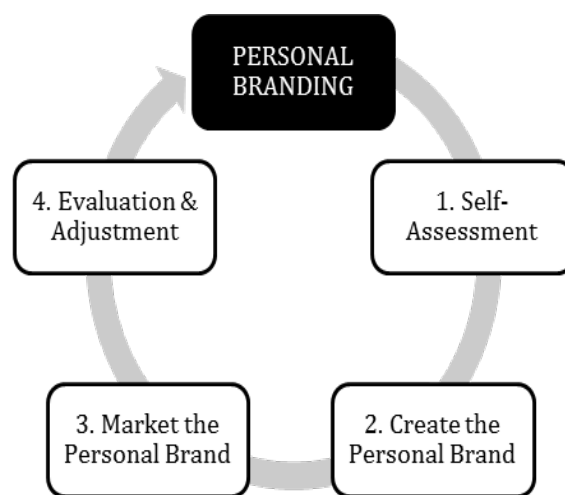


Figure 1. The personal branding process.

There is no one right way to create a personal brand (Peters, 1997). Personal branding is an ongoing process (Hearn, 2008). Constructing and managing it requires time and effort. Peters (1997), Shepherd (2005), Khedher (2013) and Ahmed (2014) all provide key steps in the personal branding process. The process can be outlined by four phases. The first phase is self-assessment. The second phase is the creation of the personal brand. The third phase is to position the brand – to market oneself. The final phase is evaluation and adjustment.

### Self-assessment

Ahmed (2014) correctly points out that personal branding is not about building a special image for the outside world. It is about understanding the unique combination of attributes – one's strengths, skills, values and passions – that makes one valuable and packaging them in a way that differentiates oneself. However, the path to understanding this 'unique combination of attributes' is oftentimes difficult. A good starting point is assessing one's strengths and weaknesses. Other elements that should be evaluated are values, interests and dreams. Having a goal (e.g. a certain job) and knowing the target audience (e.g. young talents or professional players) are key elements to know before establishing a personal brand.

A 360-degree feedback from peers, employers or customers can provide new insights. This is especially useful when a person finds

it difficult to make a personal assessment. It also provides a view of one's 'pre-branding' image.

<b>PRACTICAL</b>
Basic questions that can help you in your personal assessment: Who are you? What do you do best? What have you done lately that makes you stand out? What places, activities and people give you energy? What motivates you?

### Create a personal brand

After concluding the self-assessment process people have insight into the personal characteristics that makes them valuable. It is then about determining which qualities or characteristics make a person distinctive from colleagues (Peters, 1997). A coach cannot be specialised in every aspect of the game (NLCoach, 2010) and should therefore make a choice. Hearn (2008) encourages people to distil their top ten qualities into a few outstanding attributes that might help them achieve 'top of mind' status in their target audience. The target audience includes the people one would like to acquire as new customers (e.g. new tennis players for an independent coach). It also applies to people one would like to have in their network and could assist in achieving one's goals.

<b>PRACTICAL</b>
To finish the 'creation' phase it is desirable to end up with a personal tag line or brand statement. For example: I give fun and engaging tennis lessons (value) to children and beginners (target) that make them want to play tennis every day. I am a tennis coach specialised in strength and conditioning (value) and can help professional tennis athletes (target) reach their maximum potential.

### Market the personal brand

Marketing the personal brand should be done both offline and in the virtual world, and has as goal to increase visibility. Finding the right mix of communication tools is hereby essential (Ahmed, 2014).

Positioning one's personal brand occurs through self-presentation, nonverbal cues (appearance, manner), verbal disclosures (information about the self), and actions (performance, citizenship) that shape others' perceptions (Khedher, 2013).

<b>PRACTICAL</b>
To increase offline visibility for your personal brand you could do the following: Attend network events or conferences for (tennis) coaches. Be part of a tournament organisation or give a free clinic. Write articles or discuss in panels. Leveraging digital media channels

The Internet is especially a useful tool in marketing one's personal brand. Although the medium is an important part of managing your career, Ward & Yates (2013) note that developing a footprint on the Internet takes time and focus. With the rapid rise of social media channels in the last decade and a half it is obvious people can and should leverage these channels to market themselves. Digital media channels can be utilised to establish and communicate with one's network. In addition, it is a way to get feedback about one's personal brand and work.

<b>PRACTICAL</b>
This is how you can leverage four popular channels in positioning your personal brand:  LinkedIn: Network for business professionals that can be seen as an interactive online résumé with references. Join discussion groups for tennis coaches or about tennis related subjects. That way you will expand your network, learn new things and stay up-to-date in your field of work.  Facebook: Great way for individual coaches to stay in contact with the people they coach. You have the possibility to share interesting content or just information on training.  Twitter: Use your Twitter page as a way to show others what your interests are. Tweet interesting articles to your followers or share your thoughts on a tennis match. You can also use your profile to communicate with people you coach.  Blog/Website: A blog or website is a good way to express the way you feel about topics that are of interest to you (and thus your personal brand). You can also use it to show people your accomplishments and skills or your goals and dreams. Redirect people to presentations, articles or other material.

### Evaluation and adjustment

As with every process, the personal branding process asks for evaluation after implementation. Putting metrics in up front can help to evaluate a personal brand (Ahmed, 2014). One can ask feedback from customers or employers. One can also set up quantifiable metrics. For example the number of tennis players one coaches, the average results of players one coaches or attaining a higher coaching level.

The evaluation could indicate adjustments that need to be made. Yet as time passes and one's career changes, there is always a requirement for adjusting and evolving one's personal brand.

### CONCLUSION

Personal branding is the process of identifying and managing the image and attributes that make one valuable. The process should be done regardless of age or the business one is in. It gives people the opportunity to differentiate themselves from others and can have a positive effect on people's life and career. Yet as establishing a personal brand takes time and effort, people should start right away with the sequence of self-assessment, creating and marketing the personal brand, and evaluation and adjustment.

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RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ICOACH CONTENT (CLICK BELOW)

**Tennis iCoach**

# The foundations of learning - a fresh perspective on common coaching methodologies

David Wilson (Ireland)

ITF Coaching and Sport Science Review 2015; 65 (23): 12 - 13

## ABSTRACT

*Preparing players for elite competition requires a commitment to ongoing training and competition, both of which are underpinned by the knowledge a player has of the techniques/tactics necessary for success. The manner in which we teach these skills is crucial in determining the likely outcome when a player is tested under competition conditions. "Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication" Leonardo Da Vinci.*

**Key words:** expertise, task, training, cognition, repetition

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## INTRODUCTION

As the volume of data gathered in coaching research grows, so too does the pressure on coaches to implement new methodologies, new strategies and new ways of working with their players. Often however, this focus on finding bigger, better and more innovative ways of coaching can cause us to overlook the basic principles of player development and to therefore build our strategies on unstable foundations.

Critical to the success of long-term development is an understanding that skills learned during the junior years must be robust and deeply ingrained if they are to survive the extreme challenges of the professional stage. Ultimately, our training at junior level aims to develop players who can perform expert skills against significant opponents in extreme conditions and under immense pressure (Wilson, 2014).

To achieve this level of performance, it is vital to question the manner in which we currently conduct our training and practice sessions. While self-reporting from coaches and the content of coaching training manuals would suggest that a wide variety of strategies are employed, attempts to assess this have actually shown the opposite – That coaches tend to employ a very narrow range of coaching styles and that direct instruction remains the most commonly employed method of training tennis skills and strategies (Hewitt & Edwards, 2013).

Preparing players for elite performance however, calls for the use of a number of core coaching fundamentals. While coaches are of course encouraged to be innovative in their approaches and to personalise their coaching strategies towards the specific needs of their own players, the following fundamentals provide an efficient base of effective learning.

## FUNDAMENTALS

### Understanding the task

The cornerstone of long-term learning is an ingrained understanding of a particular technique or skill. Unfortunately it is very difficult for a coach to fully assess how well a player understands the context of what is being taught. Equally, working with young players presents a further difficulty in that very often they will say that they understand something when in fact this is not the case.

In order to overcome these challenges a range of strategies can be employed. Asking the player to explain the content to another player for example, will highlight their own level of understanding. Actively questioning the player about the skill/tactic being trained will also help (in active questioning "yes" or "no" answers are not allowed – the player is required to fully explain their responses), as will an emphasis on regular self-reporting from the player during training.

There is no doubt that it takes time to confirm full understanding and that this may not be possible with groups of club or recreational players. For those aiming for elite status however, it is vital.

### Source of Information

Direct instruction is characterised by the coach passing information to the player, who then trains this under supervision until a level of automation is achieved. While this strategy will tend to work in the short-term, the restrictions of 'explicit' learning are likely to appear when tested under pressure. At that stage the player will often deal with the stressful conditions presented to them by attempting to consciously and logically analyse each of the skills they need to implement. Unfortunately, focusing on the techniques of 'how to' perform a skill is unlikely to improve the stress of competition and will in fact very often detract from performance levels.

Instead, a focus on 'implicit' learning (Farrow, 2012) can protect technical skills from the stresses of elite competition. Implicit skills are learned without direct instruction from a coach and in contrast, are discovered by the player through a careful implementation of coaching strategies. Learning without direct instruction means that during high pressure competitive situations, players are unable to revert to a cognitive analysis of the stroke/strategy (because they don't have the initial instructional information to do that) and instead can focus on the task at hand of dealing with the opponent etc.

Specific approaches for developing implicit learning include "errorless practice" (where we introduce a skill at a very easy level and build up), "guided discovery" (where a series of questions is used to enable the player to uncover the solution themselves), and "modeling" (where the player observes and replicates, without any verbal explanation being provided).

### Cognitive Involvement

Although many of the technical/tactical requirements of elite tennis performance involve several distinct action steps (think for example of the many steps required to execute an attacking mid-court forehand), there is no need for the player themselves to be familiar with each and every one of these. Taking a player through the minute detail of each action he/she is required to learn and subsequently referring to many of these small points in feedback and analysis, points many times to a situation of 'cognitive overload'. This process of thinking through techniques and tactics during competition is inefficient and often buckles under stress (Muller & Abernethy, 2012).

Coaches wishing to provide a more resilient form of learning devise methods of 'chunking' information, so that a series of actions or decisions which the player needs to learn are summarised in one phrase. These 'chunks' can be specific to the individual player and should be based on their playing competence and level of knowledge ("Follow the ball", "Drive up through the serve", etc.).

Chunking frees the mind to focus on first-hand issues, makes learning resilient under stress and allows for fast and effective feedback from coaches.



### Efficiency of Repetition

A critical foundation of efficient learning is the extent and manner through which the skills and strategies learned are embedded through repetition. Again, while self-reporting from coaches suggests that a variety of training methods are used, anecdotal evidence would suggest that coaches tend to possess personal preferences for specific drill/practice methods and that these are used by them far more often than other options.

As one might imagine however, the use of a genuinely wide variety of practice types mirrors the varied and unpredictable nature of competitive tennis to a far greater extent than continuing to favor a small number of options.

To this end, practices should reinforce and test skills in a varied and variable manner using approaches such as game based coaching, basket feeding, closed drills, restricted court points, simulated points, etc. The crucial factor is that for learning to be assessed and reinforced, exclusive use of one or two practice strategies removes the potential gains available from other types. Core learning principles would suggest instead that coaches should implement a variety of practice approaches to stretch, test and challenge players in a difficult, unpredictable and dynamic fashion.

### Learner State

Finally, basic learning fundamentals consistently highlight the need for those attempting to learn motor skills to be in the right frame of mind to do so (Fontana, 1993). Disinterested, demotivated or distracted players are of course far less likely to learn than those who are engaged, enthused and focused. To this end, coaches must always be conscious of the bigger picture when dealing with players.

Sport skill acquisition requires talent and a specific environment, and both need to coincide over a prolonged and purposeful period (Epstein, 2013). The timing of learning is therefore hugely important and coaches would be advised to implement technical/tactical training when distractions are at a minimum and when the player is open to the challenge of learning new skills.

The danger of 'over programming' (where the coach plans a series of weeks or months with very little flexibility for change) must clearly be avoided and instead the learning of new techniques/tactics should as much as possible be led by the player's wish to develop the new skill.

### CONCLUSIONS

At a time when a multitude of information is available to coaches from publications, conferences and online sources, the basic foundations of learning are always worth re-emphasising. Although we may often think that by adding more and more teaching we are helping to improve our players (and indeed we may see evidence of this in practice), the fact remains that coaching has only been truly effective when the player can comfortably execute techniques/tactics in competitive situations.

The core principles of coaching aim to make skill acquisition as easy as possible for the player and to develop techniques and tactics that are robust and capable of withstanding the stress of elite competition.

### Recommendations

- Spend time building and checking full understanding from players.
- Help players find their own solutions. Guide, don't instruct.
- Look for creative solutions. Use chunking to sum up and reinforce complex skills.
- In devising practice: Variety, variety, variety.
- Create the conditions that make learning possible, but motivation and desire should come from the player.

Making learning simple is hard, but the reasons are obvious, the work is engaging and the benefits are significant.

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### RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ICOACH CONTENT (CLICK BELOW)

**Tennis**  **iCoach**

# Review of sport science research specialised on wheelchair tennis

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## ABSTRACT

*This article presents a review of previous research on wheelchair tennis. We have analysed previously published sport science articles that concentrate on wheelchair tennis. Findings indicate that a greater scientific production of wheelchair tennis related research is still necessary with specific areas proposed for those involved in research.*

**Key words:** Research, wheelchair tennis, adapted sport

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## INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Wheelchair tennis is an adapted sport for those with physical/functional disabilities, played exclusively on a wheelchair as long as the wheelchair tennis player meets the minimum required disability recognised for this sport, which prevents the athlete from playing on two feet.

This bibliography review is presented in two levels: The first segment focuses on articles from the Journal Citation Report (JCR) while the second concentrates on specific tennis journals, in two sub-levels; ITF articles, Coaching and Sport Science Review as well as articles from the ITF Wheelchair Tennis Review. The JCR review includes those articles published between January 2001 and December 2011 while the additional journals reviewed incorporate all issues since the beginning of their publication. The ITF CSSR, between April 1993 and April 2012, and the ITF Wheelchair tennis, between October 2000 and August 2008, when it's publication ended.

Wheelchair tennis research from the point of view of sport sciences.

The most relevant and specific research published in JCR magazines:

The research done by Reina, Luis, Sanz, Sabido, García and Moreno (2004) analysed the visual behaviour of wheelchair tennis players in relation to the service return of both right and left handed players. Findings show that the service, depending on the side of the server, impacts on the perceptive processes of the return in tennis and wheelchair tennis in the change of service situation. In the case of left handed players, segments like the arm-racket segment are visible over a longer period of time, so it is possible for a returner to receive more information. Additionally those players with experience of playing left handed opponents, appear to have a greater impact on the perceptive process.

Reina, Moreno and Sanz (2007) conducted research in order to determine the visual behaviour and the motor responses during the return stroke in wheelchair tennis. Results show that expert players focus initially on the head, shoulders and free arm while beginners concentrate on following the launch of the ball to its maximum height. Experienced players provided useful information from the arm-racket segment during the hitting phase and were also faster with their motor response.

Authors like Goosey-Tolfrey and Moss (2005) compared the characteristics of the propulsion speed of the wheelchair with and without a tennis racket. Findings show that when sprinting with the racket, the speed reached over the first three sprints was significantly reduced. Those poor results obtained when carrying the racket maybe due to less efficient pushing that brings about an inefficient application of strength.

Filipic & Filipic (2009) analysed the characteristics of the timing in wheelchair tennis. The data was gathered in 22 singles matches on a hard court with results recorded using an IT software application. The results show that the active part represented 19.68% of the playing time, while the passive part accounted for 80.32%. The average time of an individual movement in each point lasted 4.16 seconds with an average of 2.23 strokes per point.

Barfield, Malone and Coleman (2009) evaluated the capacity of those who suffer from a spinal cord injury (SCI) to reach the training threshold in tennis by using heart rate monitors to measure the heart rate. The authors concluded that the characteristics required to reach the health and fitness thresholds during tennis practice for those individuals with a low SCI are similar to those individuals tested in the control group.

Roy, Menear, Schmid, Hunter and Malone (2006), also studied the physiological responses through heart rate, during the wheelchair tennis competition. They concluded that wheelchair tennis players who compete must include aerobic conditioning as a part of their training programme. This is because the intensity of wheelchair tennis competition is at a level that tests a players cardiovascular system.

Diaper and Goosey-Tolfrey (2009) examined the physiological changes caused by long term coaching for an elite female wheelchair tennis player when preparing for an important tournament. They also described the interventions in the recovery of the tennis player during the 2004 Paralympic Games. They concluded that the broad education programme was responsible for the changes and adaptations as a result of a greater confidence which helped to achieve a better fitness in the Paralympic Games.

Finally, Reid, Elliott and Alderson (2007) analysed the kinetics of the shoulder joint in the service of elite wheelchair tennis players. The information about these wheelchair tennis players was measured by comparing this data with that of 12 top performance players. The findings indicate that wheelchair tennis players are presented with a similar injury risk to their shoulder joints to non-disabled tennis players.

The ITF CSSR articles published include several contributions to the teaching didactics (Bullock, 2010), competition strategies (Bullock, 2006), club programmes (Polic, 2000) and a general vision on the sport (Bullock and Sanz, 2010).

The articles published in the ITF Wheelchair Tennis Review are included in Table 1 which also presents the classification made by Fuentes (2012) and includes varied research of the different areas.

Areas	JCR	CSSR	WHEELCHAIR	TOTAL
Tennis didactics		1	16	17
Sport training	3	1	11	15
Sport biomechanics in tennis	1		8	9
Tactical variables and decision making in tennis			8	8
Control and motor learning in tennis	2		4	6
Sport physiology in tennis	2		2	4

Table 1. Classification of previous reviews.

## CONCLUSION

The main objective of this article is to review some scientific publications concentrating on wheelchair tennis. In order to do so, we have focused on an analysis of the different documentary sources to identify the publications.

Once all the above mentioned journals have been analysed, we believe additional research is required in order to investigate areas related to physiology, control and motor learning, biomechanics (technique required to make the strokes), and tactics (notational analysis), and psychological and sociological aspects. Further research will develop a better understanding of this important modality in tennis.



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## RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ICOACH CONTENT (CLICK BELOW)

**Tennis**  **iCoach**

# Coaching developing players, “a view from the ecological approach”

Mariano Martínez Gómez (Tennis Concept, Spain)

ITF Coaching and Sport Science Review 2015; 65 (23): 16 - 18

## ABSTRACT

*This article discusses a working methodology for tennis players and explains the purpose of this strategy. Starting from the principles of ecology and holism, it is described in a manner that relates to tennis. It also elaborates on those aspects we consider to be significant in enabling a junior tennis player to prosper and develop into to his/her full potential.*

**Key words:** environment, players, integrated coaching

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## INTRODUCTION

Ecology is the science that studies living beings, their environment, distribution and how they are affected by the interaction between organisms and their environment.

The word “holism” comes from the Greek language (all, whole, total) and it is a methodological or epistemological position that states that the systems (either physical, biological, social, economic, etc.) and their properties must be analysed as a whole rather than on an individual basis.

The basic ideas of this approach are:

- Development implies continuous adjustments between the person and the environment: a process lasting a life-time.
- Knowing the environment means knowing how things work... how to better adapt...
- Human development is the progressive adaptation and adjustment between an active being and the setting where he/she works that also considers the relationship between those settings.

If we apply this approach to tennis, the ideas are the following:

- The players must be shaped by the environment, and they must shape their own environment too.
- Learning is supposed to be a reciprocal relationship between the players and the environment.
- The environment provides resources and opportunities for players who get the required information and act in the environment.
- The emphasis is laid on teaching the players as a whole.
- Coaches must be the performance facilitator for players.

The integrated or total approach involves a complete vision of the tennis player. When working one aspect, the others develop simultaneously. For example, when hitting a forehand we work on technique (preparation, taking the racket to the ball, follow through, etc.), there is a tactical component involved as well (cross-court, down-the-line, high, low, hard, slow, etc.), a physical component, since it implies moving the muscles of the body to play the forehand, so coordination is a vital cog of the kinetic chain. There is also a psychological component, since the player must keep his/her attention on the ball, the racket arm while also deciding how to execute the shot (down the line, cross court, etc.) as all these things cannot be isolated. This interrelation is valid both for general and specific work.

The figure of the players and his/her intrinsic motivation are key. It helps to maintain self-confidence, it enhances performance and reduces behaviour problems while challenging decision making.

Considering this new concept in tennis teaching, we must remember that coaches must resort to more open teaching methodologies, with all the changes they entail, partly created by the coaches, the students, the materials, etc...

## What do we know about these models?

We know that there isn't just one particular way of performing a motor skill, the forms of movement and the results are determined by the targets, the context and the individual constraints that are constantly changing.

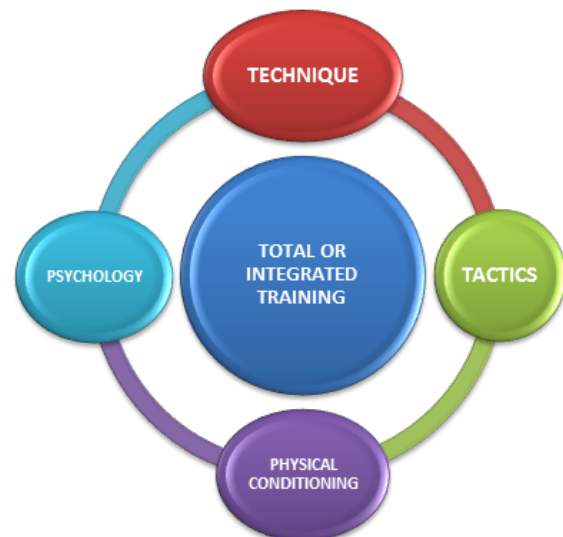


Figure 1. Aspects of integrated or whole coaching.

We base our research on the theory of Martins' Neuro physiological model that states that a child is born with a lot of undeveloped potential (aptitude, capabilities, qualities, etc.). This will depend on genetic factors and on the life experiences during childhood, so the idea is to boost those aspects that are necessary for peak performance once a player is at the developmental stage that will require more specific and detailed coaching.

## How do we work in ITae?

Knowing that performance coaching involves an interrelationship between the technical, tactical, physical and psychological aspects, a coach needs to prioritise and focus on these aspects. Since the same exercise can meet different objectives simultaneously, coaches must highlight the aspect that is more relevant to the player. It is important that when giving direction to a player it is well structured and focused on relevant corrections for the objective to ensure that the player is not over loaded with too much instruction.



## TECHNIQUE

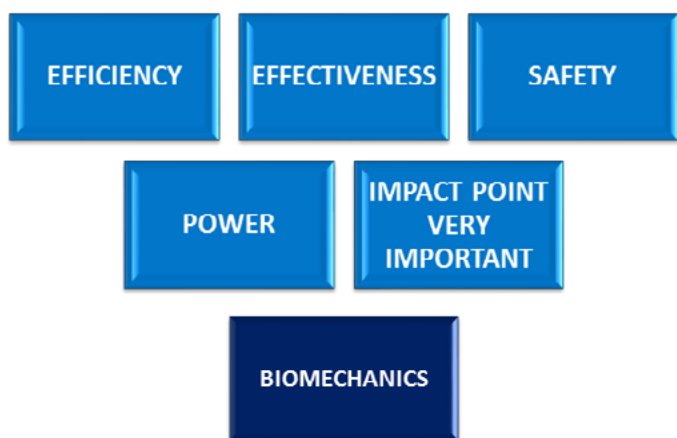


Figure 2. Technical work related aspects.

A vital technical aspect of the stroke is the contact point, therefore coaches spend a significant amount of time on developing a player's optimal contact point. An optimal contact point is one that is efficient, effective, consist and enables a player to produce power. In order to create this we rely on biomechanics. By using modern teaching methodologies, open and based on the biomechanical principle it will enable players in the long run to generate a strong hitting technique.

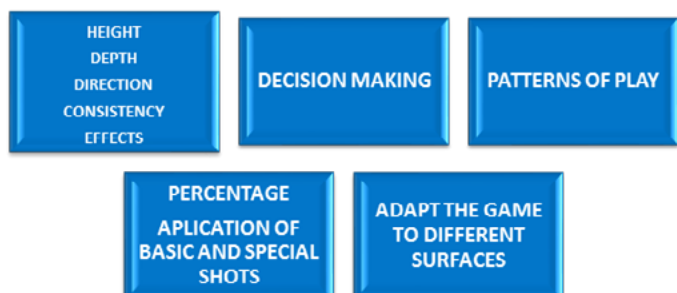


Figure 3. Tactical work related aspects.

The basic items a coach should look to work on daily include: height, depth, consistency, direction and accuracy. An emphasis should also be placed on decision making, a very important aspect which is present in each stroke. This can be developed by combining and working on different playing patterns, the tactical application of the special strokes, the adaptation of the game to the different surfaces and on percentage tennis. All this can be achieved by means of games, exercises with open teaching, and ensuring players are aware of all these aspects and of the importance of entering competition in optimal condition.

## PHYSICAL



Figure 4. Physical work related aspects before the growth peak.



Figure 5. Physical work related aspects after the growth peak.

For physical training coaches have to take into account the maturity level of the player, that is, the chronological and biological age, for which it is important to consider the speed of the peak of growth, a formula that tells us where players stand from the biological point of view.

Before the players reach the growth speed peak, a coach should ideally work on the coordination capabilities with coaches taking responsibility for each player's physical progress and growth. Thus, insisting players form positive habits (warm-up, recovery after competition, nutrition related aspects, having a shower and doing stretching exercises, etc.) at an early age. It is at these early ages that the neuro-motor methods can be introduced and incorporated into training sessions since the nervous system is more adept to creating new interactions between its structures.

Once a player has finished growing, training should focus on:

- Strength, introducing explosive strength
- Endurance (interval work or oxygen maximum consumption level).
- Speed (RSA, capacity to repeat sprints).
- Compensation work (Core Training for gluteus, hip and back, shoulder rotator cuffs, stabilizing muscles of the scapula). Why should coaches work this way? Because it is key to having a good neuromuscular base which doesn't restrict the development of tissue. It is not until the players have surpassed their Peak Growth Velocity that they will have the necessary enzymes to be able to adapt significantly in aerobic components.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL OR BEHAVIOURAL

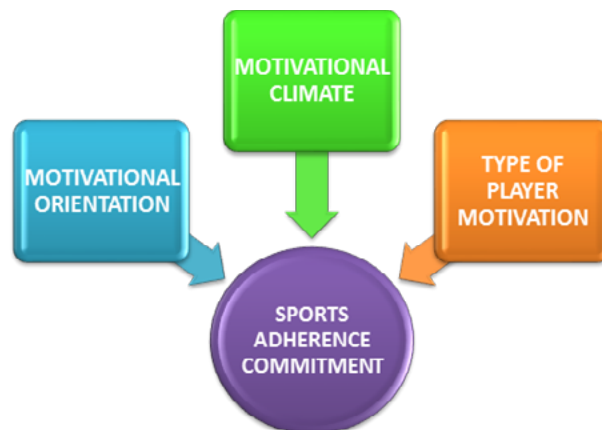


Figure 6. Targets and content of psychological work.

Two of the main objectives installed between coach and player should be: staying in the sport and being committed. We know that staying in the sport and being committed is the direct result of an

appropriate motivation, a good motivational direction, a strong motivational climate and the students themselves being motivated to learn and improve daily. A key reference for including motivational aspects into coaching methods is Deci & Ryan's Self-determination theory. Knowing that the motivational climate is created by coaches, players and parents, all must push in the same direction. Training programs that include a school for parents, can slowly enable all parties to buy into the working philosophy of the program. Additional practices that facilitate peak performance include working on emotional control, visualisation and breathing techniques, routines and rituals during matches, attention, concentration and anxiety control. Coaches can also use pedagogical principles that are used in teaching and in education psychology when preparing their programmes and carrying out training sessions. In order to involve students, coaches should look to work with six dimensions mainly:

- 1-Tasks
- 2-Authority
- 3-Recognition
- 4-Groups
- 5-Evaluation
- 6-Time

These dimensions can be summarized as TARGET.

### SAMPLE EXERCISES

1. This drill's objective is to improve first serve percentage while providing the opportunity to practise returning serve also: The players serve 10 times each. If the server wins the point with the first service, he wins 2 points. If the server wins the point with the second service, he wins 1 point. The receiver will accumulate points by gaining 1 point if he/she wins with the first service, if he/she wins with the second serve, he/she wins 2 points. The winner is the player who wins more points after having served and received. This way, players must be very alert when playing all points.

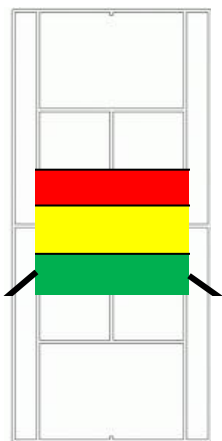


Figure 7. Application of the traffic light theory in exercise 2.

2. To teach the traffic light theory with developing kids, the coach throws the balls to coloured zones. If the ball bounces on the red zone, they must play over the double net. If the ball bounces on the yellow zone, they must play to the rope. If the ball bounces on the green zone, they must play under the double net. The drill progresses until the players can use this theory automatically and almost without thinking.

### CONCLUSION

If we, as coaches, want our players to reach their maximum potential, we must use varied coaching systems that enable them to explore different solutions and we the coaches must help our players when they are unable to find their own solutions or when they make mistakes. This way, our role as a coach changes a bit as regards to more traditional teaching, in which the coach tries to control everything. This way of working implies team work, since each area needs specialised and qualified experts. On the other hand, we must consult scientific research to develop those aspects that can be improved in our players, ourselves as coaches or in the environment. Therefore we are required to be mentally open to new trends and different methods etc.

A vital aspect that must not be overlooked is continued education and training for coaches of all abilities. This must be a continuous and periodical process, in all areas but in particular pedagogy, psychology, communication processes, etc.

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RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ICOACH CONTENT (CLICK BELOW)

Tennis  iCoach

# Sociology of tennis: research on socialisation, participation and retirement of tennis players

Abbie Probert & Miguel Crespo (ITF)  
ITF Coaching and Sport Science Review 2015; 65 (23): 19 - 20

## ABSTRACT

*This article covers some of the most relevant research studies related to tennis sociology. They will be classified in content areas for clarification including topics related to participation, socialisation of players, retirement, gender, social class and structure in tennis.*

**Key words:** socialisation, participation, retirement

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## INTRODUCTION

Sociology of sport can be defined as a field or sub discipline of sociology that studies sport as part of social and cultural life. From this view, culture is seen as the ways of life that people create as they participate in a group or society; and society is understood as a collection of people living in a defined geographic territory and united by a political system and a shared sense of self-identification that distinguishes them from other people (Woods, 2007).

Sport in general and tennis in particular is a field of sociology because they are a sub-culture of society as they are given special meaning by particular people in societies, they are tied to important ideas and beliefs in many cultures and they are connected with major spheres of social life such as the family, religion, education, the economy, politics and the media (Coakley, & Pike, 1998).

Sociology can cover many areas of research and interest as shown in Figure 1.

	THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Tennis Sociology	Participation	Interests, players, spectators, practice levels.
	Organisation	Clubs, federations (national and international), IOC, governance.
	Socialisation	Integration, roles, player careers, retirement.
	Family	Parental involvement, family schedules, participation.
	Ideology	Race, gender (women issues), social class, inclusion of special populations.
	Economics	Expenditure, TV rights, sponsorship, salaries of players, coaches, business markets and marketing.
	Media	Technology, traditional, social, popularity, impact.
	Politics	National pride, ideology, controversies, government policies.
	Education	School, interscholastic, intercollegiate.
	Religion and moral values	Ethics, violence, gambling, doping.
	Health	Habits, environment.

Table 1. Areas of sociological research in tennis.

## SOCIALISATION OF PLAYERS

Socialisation is an active process of learning and social development that occurs as people interact with each other and become acquainted with the social world in which they live in. Socialisation helps individuals to learn and fulfil a certain role in society by combining their personal attributes with significant others in given situations.

The socialisation of elite tennis players in Sweden was studied by Carlson (1988) who concluded that it is not possible to predict who will develop into a world-class tennis player based on individual

talent alone. He found that personal characteristics and early life experiences in combination with social structures, a historical tradition of sport and a positive tennis culture within a community contributed to their success. The local club system and community were found to be positively influential on the players' relationship with their coaches and continuation to play tennis.

The factors that facilitate or hinder the development of healthy tennis clubs in the Netherlands were explored by Pluim et al. (2014) in order to identify suitable interventions that would help clubs to reach 'healthy club' status. Four emerging themes were identified: provision of healthy foods, injury prevention and health services, social health and safety around the club. The main facilitators were found to be support from club management, having appropriate policies in place and having appointed officers. The main barriers were identified as a lack of policy templates, inadequate knowledge of coaches on injury prevention and injury management and fragmented access to relevant information.

The socially relevant oppositions between tennis clubs in two French towns, Nantes and Strasbourg, were highlighted by the studies of Suaud (1989) and Wasser (1989). The interdependency of tennis skill levels with the players' social positions and their positions in the club revealed that tennis is an area of highly diversified practices included in equally different lifestyles.

In the case of socialisation of elite wheelchair tennis players, Roux (2012) found that players were empowered by taking part in wheelchair tennis to facilitate goal attainment and to enhance social integration. Stanescu (2014) considered participation in wheelchair tennis to be an opportunity for social integration for people with disabilities. It created the opportunity whereby players could create a positive self-identity and tennis allowed for the development of life skills.

## PARTICIPATION AND ORGANISATION

Participation in the game and the social role of tennis organisations have gained considerable interest and focus by researchers. When examining how demographic market segments differ based on commitment to tennis, participation frequency and purchase intention, Casper (2007) found significant differences with tennis commitment based on age; participation frequency significantly differed based on ability level; and purchase intention significantly differed based on income and ability level.

The relationship between demographic segments (age, sex, income, and skill level) of community tennis association members and commitment was studied by Casper & Stellino (2008). They found enjoyment to be the strongest predictor of commitment and repetition across all demographic categories and suggested that a marketing campaign focussed on the health benefits rather than the competitive element were more appealing especially to less skilled players.

Participation commitment and skill level was also investigated by Casper & Andrew (2008). They found that collegiate athletes reported significantly higher levels of tennis commitment, involvement opportunities, and social constraints, while reporting lower

tennis enjoyment levels compared to recreational players. When investigating skill level, advanced players reported significantly higher levels of sport commitment than intermediate and beginner players, and beginner players reported significantly lower levels of sport commitment than intermediate players. In addition, advanced players reported significantly lower sport enjoyment and significantly higher involvement opportunities and social constraints than lesser skilled players.

When Coate & Robbins (2001) studied whether top-ranked male tennis professionals were more dedicated or committed to their careers than the top-ranked female professionals, they found no evidence that this was the case between the time period of 1979–1994. In fact, despite substantially lower prize money and earnings, they found that the women pros competed for as many years as did the men and just as intensely in terms of annual number of tournaments played.

## RETIREMENT

There have been several studies on player retirement in tennis. In their research, Allison & Meyer (1988) studied the experiences of elite female tennis professionals and their perceptions of their competitive years and subsequent retirement from tennis. Results showed that the players did not find disengagement from their competitive years traumatic, but rather found it as an opportunity to re-establish more traditional societal roles and lifestyles.

Australian female professional players participated in a study by Young et al. (2006) to describe their feelings about leaving the tour. The main findings of the study suggested that those who planned to leave the tour found the transition process easier, whereas those who did not plan to leave the tour found the process more difficult. Most players did not regret leaving the tour, and, although the remaining players responded that they regretted leaving, none attempted a comeback. Tennis Australia implemented strategies to assist current players on the professional tour based on the results of this study.

When exploring career retirement, role exit and related identity issues among Swedish ex-professional tennis players, Stier (2007) found that a 'role restricted' socialisation, intense media exposure and overemphasis on performance and competition brought in a 'role-identity fusion'. It was concluded that career retirement was a gradual, transitional process of psychological and social adaptation and quest for self-identity. As such it was challenging for the players, but not as dramatic as much scientific literature suggests.

SungHee et al., (2013) explored elite Korean tennis players' career transition experiences, focusing on psychological components such as self-identity and coping strategies as well as socio-cultural influences through the process. Their results provided practical implications for supporting athletes' career transitions for example developing a balanced self-identity and life skill during their athletic careers, providing proactive intervention and future research directions suggesting the examination of athletes' retirement decision-making process.

## CONCLUSION

The active participation in tennis creates a self-identity for the player that stems from socialisation and carries through to their retirement process and decision affecting their enjoyment and participation rates. Whether entering the game for the first time as a beginner or the choice to retire after several years committed to the game, these decisions are influenced by important beliefs and ideas connected to major spheres of social life such as family, education and culture.

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## RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS COACH CONTENT (CLICK BELOW)

**Tennis**  **Coach**



# Changes in mood states during the preparation period of the world's top junior tennis player

Dario Novak (University of Zagreb, Croatia) & Tijana Cirkovic (Serbian Institute of Sport, Serbia)  
ITF Coaching and Sport Science Review 2015; 65 (23): 21 - 23

## ABSTRACT

*Conditioning preparation plays a key role in tennis. However, conditioning is usually marked by a fairly large training volume. Early identification of youth tennis players with serious emotional disorders is critical for avoiding overtraining. In the present study we investigated the changes in mood states during the preparation period of a top junior tennis player. The Brunel Mood Scale, consisting of 6 subscales with a 5-point rating scale to assess levels of mood states was used at 8 PM each night, and then again the following morning (8 AM). It can be concluded that specific mood factors increase and decrease in accordance with alterations in training intensity and period of the day.*

**Key words:** emotions, intensity, training, assessment

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## INTRODUCTION

On-court tennis training and match play involves prolonged, physically demanding activities that push the body to its limits resulting in substantial elevation of physiological and perceptual strain and reduced contractile function. Tennis players are expected to be in optimal condition for a large number of tournaments during the year, and there is no time for the “long” preparation period (Duffield, Murphy, et al., 2014). That’s why all the measurements that provide a quick performance feedback are very beneficial. Early identification of youth tennis players with serious emotional disorders is critical for avoiding overtraining. Emotions are shown to have great influence on an athlete’s performance. Extensive research into the role of anxiety in sport performance has already been conducted. Still, there are a wide range of emotional states that have not been reviewed to the same extent. Mood states are different from specific emotions in that they are more enduring and less intense feeling states, but their effect on sports performance is thought to be substantial (Hagger and Chatzisarantis, 2005). Fewer studies to date have focused on mood states among tennis players. This study therefore investigates the changes in mood states during the preparation period of a top junior tennis player.

## METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The subject in this study is an elite junior female player who was the number one ranked junior in the world at the time this study was conducted (ITF Ranking list, July, 2014). Her parents gave consent in accordance with the requirements of the Declaration of Helsinki. The subject had the following characteristics: age, 17; body mass index, 21.83; body height, 174cm, ranking on the ITF world junior list, 1. The study was performed during her summer off-season (July 14 – Aug 3 2014). The preparation period was marked by a fairly large amount of conditioning trainings (i.e., jogging, endurance, tennis, strength and power trainings) (Table 1).

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3
Technical and tactical training	0 min 0 sessions	500 min 6 sessions	450 min 5 sessions
Neuromuscular training	525 mins 5 sessions	600 min 6 sessions	180 min 2 sessions
Endurance training	315 mins 4 sessions	210 min 4 sessions	180 4 sessions
Number of training sessions	9	16	11
Number of matches	0	2	4

Table 1. The 3-weeks preparation period summary.

The 24 items Brunel Mood Scale, comprise the following six mood subscales: tension, depression, anger, vigor, fatigue and confusion. Each subscale contains four items. A 5-point rating scale to assess levels of mood states was used at 8 PM each night, and then again the following morning (8 AM). Using a response timeframe of “how you feel right now?” respondent indicated whether she experienced such feelings on a 5-point scale (0 = not at all, 1 = a little, 2 = moderately, 3 = quite a bit, 4 = extremely). When responses from the four items in each subscale are summed, a subscale score in the range 0-16 is obtained. Raw scores were converted to standard scores (T-scores) (Terry, 2000).

## RESULTS

The specific mood factors increase and decrease in accordance with alterations in training intensity and period of the day. There are more negative moods recorded towards the end of the preparation period. Trends show that the athlete experiences a more positive mood in the morning while showing tendency to have a more negative mood in the evening. Negative moods with the presence of tension, depression, anger and fatigue are more present at the end of the day which is filled with jogging, strength and power, tennis and endurance sessions than in the morning before all of these activities. Fatigue seems to be very high and constant during the whole preparation period. Interestingly, the effect of a negative mood seems to be more present in the period with the matches (Table 2).

Day	Tension AM	Depression AM	Anger AM	Vigor AM	Fatigue AM	Confusion AM	Tension PM	Depression PM	Anger PM	Vigor PM	Fatigue PM	Confusion PM	Training	Duration	RPE
1	45	48	61	53	57	60	53	48	48	63	54	46	Jogging Strength/Power Endurance	3 105 80	6 6 9
2	48	44	55	53	54	53	53	48	51	58	54	60	Jogging Strength/Power Endurance	30 100 60	6.5 7 5
3	53	56	58	53	47	60	50	48	58	58	50	60	Jogging Strength/Power	30 90	4 7.5
4	53	48	55	58	50	53	48	52	55	53	54	46	Jogging Strength/Power Endurance	30 120 100	6 8 9
5	45	48	55	51	59	50	48	48	55	56	57	53	Jogging Strength/Power Endurance	30 110 75	7 8.5 8.5
6													Day Off		
7	53	44	55	48	54	57	50	48	61	51	62	53	Jogging Strength/Power Tennis Endurance	30 110 80 30	6.5 8.5 6 10
8	48	44	55	48	62	50	50	48	55	51	62	46	Jogging Tennis Strength/Power	25 100 100	7 7 7.5
9	48	48	55	53	54	57	48	52	58	48	57	53	Jogging Endurance Strength/Power Tennis	25 60 100 60	6 9.25 8 7
10	48	48	58	43	62	57	56	63	65	43	64	64	Jogging Strength/Power Tennis	30 100 75	7 7.5 7.5
11	53	44	55	53	50	53	56	63	65	43	64	64	Jogging Strength/Power Tennis Endurance	30 80 80 90	6.5 8 7.5 9.5
12	48	52	55	43	64	57	56	63	65	43	64	64	Jogging Strength/Power Tennis Endurance	25 110 85 30	8 9 9 10
13													Day off		
14	45	44	55	51	54	53	56	60	51	46	57	60	Tennis Endurance	60 20	8 8.5
15	50	52	55	48	52	60	50	48	51	51	54	57	Summer Cup		
16	50	48	58	46	57	50	50	48	51	51	62	53	Summer Cup		
17	50	48	58	42	62	57	56	48	55	46	64	64	Summer Cup		
18	53	48	55	48	52	60	56	63	65	43	64	64	Summer Cup		
19	50	56	58	43	67	57	56	48	55	46	64	64	Summer Cup		

Table 2. Changes in mood states during the 3-weeks preparation period.

## DISCUSSION

The preparation period of a top junior player provided a unique opportunity to evaluate mood changes that occur during prolonged high intensity activities. The objective of this study was to investigate the changes in mood states during the preparation period of a top junior tennis player. As a result, the magnitude of the increased training volume influenced and affected changes in the young tennis player's mood. There are many examples of athletes who perform at optimal levels during training but are unable to repeat those same peak levels of performance when competing. Usually it is said that emotions are something that distinguishes those who are able to show their best when needed and those who can't. Our emotions are always present while we are doing something, so there is no doubt that they can have an effect in sports as well. The literature suggests that there is a significant correlation between mood states and training intensity. It was suggested also that mood changes tracking may be used to indicate those athletes predisposed to the condition long before symptoms of poor performance and prolonged fatigue are observed (Pierce, 2002). Morgan and colleagues have demonstrated the efficacy of monitoring mood state changes in response to training volume as a marker for overtraining among endurance athletes (Morgan, Brown, et al., 1987). Previous research has suggested that sub-scores of Fatigue and Vigor may show changes relatively early during high training volume, while Tension, Depression and Anger seem to respond to chronic high training volume (Morgan, Costill, et al., 1988; O'Connor, Morgan, et al., 1991). Our finding shows that Fatigue changed relatively early during high training volume but Vigor stayed constant. Tension, Depression, and Anger seem to respond to chronic high training volume especially in the evening. Progressive increases in training load are routinely imposed in endurance training programs and are believed to be effective in achieving optimal conditioning among athletes. It is also well documented, however, that the stress of overtraining may lead to the development of "staleness" (Hooper, MacKinnon, et al., 1997; Pierce, 2002). While symptoms may vary across individuals, staleness is generally characterised by a delay in recovery from training sessions as well as decreased performance during training or competition (Ryan, 1983). Recognition of physiological or psychological factors contributing to the development of staleness, therefore, would be of particular value for those administering training routines. This type of mood changes tracking using the Brunel Mood Scale could be very beneficial for fitness and tennis coaches for avoiding symptoms of decreased performance, staleness or overtraining. It is, however, also worth pointing out that sample size in this case study is too small to produce a clear picture but measuring these changes during the preparation period is worthwhile and beneficial.

## CONCLUSION

Tennis today requires a tennis player to have a very high level of readiness. At the same time, one must be aware that the stress of overtraining may lead to the development of "staleness." The Brunel Mood Scale could be a very beneficial tool to track mood states of young players especially during high intensity sessions. Additional studies are needed to identify interventions that can increase performance with the ultimate goal of achieving healthier athletes.

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[RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ICOACH CONTENT \(CLICK BELOW\)](#)

**Tennis*i*Coach**

# The trajectory as the basis of tactics: Basic work on red courts

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ITF Coaching and Sport Science Review 2015; 65 (23): 24 - 25

## ABSTRACT

*This article discusses the great success of the ITF Play and Stay initiative while also reflecting on some technical and methodological issues noticed in its practical application. After defining such issues, potential solutions are suggested in regards to the contents and targets set for this fundamental phase of the game. Finally, ideas and suggestions are provided to further enhance the beginner player's tennis experience.*

**Key words:** strategy, initiation, methodology, progressions

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## INTRODUCTION

Without doubt the success of the introduction of the ITF Play and Stay initiative has surpassed all expectations. Tennis 10s has allowed many children to experience tennis and to continue playing the game. The smaller courts and lighter balls help children to develop their technical skills, allowing children to experience competition during the learning process (Miranda 2007).

However, some issues have arisen following the implementation of the new initiative. Our own personal experiences along with conversations held with other coaches, indicate that problems with the initiative have cropped up, with those reoccurring issues listed below:

1. Lack of clarity in the coaching and equipment resources to be used on the different types of courts.
2. Teaching programmes and objectives in the different stages are unclear for parents and players. The priority becomes “going up”, or progression to the larger court rather than meeting the education and learning objectives of each stage.
3. People typically tend to define the three types of courts (red, orange and green) by age instead of ability level. So, for instance, the red court is only used with those between five and seven years, the orange court for eight and nine year olds and the green court for children aged nine and ten. So what happens to a ten year old who has never played tennis before? It is likely the child will be placed onto a green court even though he/she is very much a beginner.
4. Anxiety to “go up” or to progress to the next court without having completed all the progressions within that stage (Tennant, 2011).
5. Poor use of the orange court because it requires more time to setup. For instance, not marking the side lines and just using a line inside the regular court (Tennant, 2011).
6. Lack of imagination to create different alternatives and combinations of balls, rackets, and court sizes (Elderton, 2010).
7. Lack of emphasis placed on incorporating the parents into the process of a child's education/development (Crespo, 2010; Young, 2011).

## INITIATION OBJECTIVES AND CONTENT

One of the most important things is to have clear objectives and methodology at the early stages when the tennis teaching process begins. What is the first objective?

We all agree we must begin with a playful process for the children to have fun, while competing and learning at the same time. A great number of games have been included as a result of the additional available coaching courses and materials that are now being offered. But, what about learning the game based on the ITF slogan: “Serve, rally and score?” Are we really using it or are we prioritising these new coordination and development drills/tools and therefore forgetting the original focus for children new to tennis? (Barrell, 2007)

This article will be based on the following processes and targets:

### Control of the ball

It is key for the child (or any beginner in general) to have the feeling not only of impacting the ball and developing control as soon as possible, but also of hitting it over the net and into the court consistently. Is there a competition or “game” for this? Absolutely. For example, simply counting the number of shots made over the net and into the court, creating a competition with the other players or a player focusing on improving their own personal best score.

### Consistency

I have witnessed juniors hitting hundreds of balls with no clear objective or goal on numerous occasions. Furthermore the teacher often fails to recognise that the majority of balls are comfortably missing the court. What is this first objective? To make the ball bounce inside the designated court. Something very basic but too often forgotten. Again, is there a competition or game for achieving this objective? Just like above, numbers, percentages, games against themselves, etc.

So, we now have a junior player that is able to hit the ball to the other side of the court. Then, can we start teaching technique? At this point I don't think so. I believe we must make him/her understand how to “manage” the ball better, therefore I propose teaching what will be one of the principles of “Her majesty the trajectory”:

### Depth

How do we do it? It is very easy, just ask a couple of players to start rallying close to the net, maintaining control of the ball (keeping it in play) while moving towards the baseline before returning and almost touching the net with their hands with the ball still in play. Not only will beginner players learn to play at deeper or shorter lengths but they will also discover that they must vary their preparation and follow through to accomplish it. Once again, this can be done in a competitive situation.

Now, having controlled the ball and being able to vary its depth, can we go to the orange court? No, definitely not yet. We still have a long way to go, and many targets to achieve.

### “Her Majesty the trajectory”

There are beginner kids who can already control the ball and have a basic notion of how to vary the length of their shots. We must then help them to realise that their repertoire must include elements like:

### Direction

Move your opponent. This can be accomplished by placing targets on the court for kids to aim at, first to one side and then to the other side of their opponent. In other words, “they must play the ball to where their opponent is not”.

### Height

If the opponent positions themselves deep in the court, the player cannot play the same ball he would have played if his opponent had been near the baseline, or perhaps inside the court, not only should he play the ball deeper, he must hit it higher. The same reasoning, but used in reverse, must be applied if the player is inside the court,



closer to the net and the opponent has played a high ball the child will need to produce a lower, more aggressive shot. It is evident that in this stage of a player's development, competition is a frequent and almost daily (Barrell, 2013). Are there any aspects of the red court stage that can be improved? Of course there are, such as:

#### Speed

It is important that the red player is aware that he/she needs (a key tool) to hit the ball hard to the other side of the court, when the conditions allow, in order to close the point at a reasonable speed and be in a position to play a shorter, slower shot, if he/she so desires.

#### Effect

Appropriate management of the effects will be required to develop the previous aspects.



#### CONCLUSION

What is the most appropriate way of incorporating the concepts that have been discussed in this article?

Of course, we can include them separately, identify each aspect and then work one by one. However, the most appropriate methodology would be to learn these concepts during the matches on the red court (Pestre, 2007) with a teacher who is always ready, with good communication skills and aware of the junior player's capability and therefore can assist the player during matches in utilising these elements (González, 2012).

So it is up to us as coaches to provide dynamic and enjoyable classes that will further enhance a player's development and learning.

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Tennis*i*Coach

# The emotional competencies of the tennis coach

Josep Campos (Catalan Tennis Federation - Ramón Llull University, Spain), [Miguel Crespo](#) (ITF) & Enric Sebastiani (Ramón Llull University, Spain)

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## ABSTRACT

*Professional and personal competencies are valid indicators to evaluate productive and human processes. Competencies are also a reference for the development of individuals, groups and organisations that are developed before and during the professional working commitments. This article discusses the main concepts related to the emotional competencies of a tennis coach and stresses their importance in daily work.*

**Key words:** tennis coach, professional competencies, emotional competencies

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## INTRODUCTION

Gallwey (1974), stated that “a good coach can help the athlete to reach harmony between the body and the mind”, and that a common problem for coaches has been to learn “how to give instructions fostering the natural learning process for the student without interfering in it” (p. 96).

There have been several authors including Zeigler & Bowie (1983) that have proposed a number of skills that must be possessed by the coach in order to be successful at the personal and relational level. These skills are:

- Personal skills: to organise their own work in reference to their professional competence.
- Relational skills: to impact the group of people who are working with them, and to motivate them towards a common target.

Then, Martens, Christina, Harvey & Sharkey (1989) identify three fundamental qualities for a sport coach, combining conceptual, personal and social elements.

- Knowledge of the sport: techniques, rules, strategies.
- Motivation: to enjoy the activities
- Empathy: to be able to understand the feelings, thoughts and emotions of the athletes.

A coach’s empathy is the capacity to understand the athlete; it is considered an element of vital importance (Lorimer, 2013).

## Emotional competencies

Bisquerra & Pérez (2007) have explained that emotional competencies are an important and relevant element among the professional competencies of coaches and have divided the competencies into two categories, socio-personal and technical-professional, as illustrated in Table 1.

Types of competencies	
Socio-personal	Technical- professional
Motivation	Command of basic and specialised knowledge
Self confidence	Command of the tasks and skills required by the profession
Self control	Command of the techniques that are necessary for the profession
Patience	Organisation capability
Auto criticism	Coordination capability
Autonomy	Environment management capability
Stress control	Networking capability
Assertiveness	Adaptation and innovation capability
Responsibility	
Decision making capability	
Empathy	
Conflict prevention and resolution capability	
Team spirit	
Altruism	

Table 1. Types of competencies.

These authors define emotional competencies as “the set of knowledge, capabilities, skills, and attitudes that are necessary to understand, express, and regulate emotional phenomena in an appropriate way. These competencies are important aspects for effective personal and professional development and can help to combat hard times in life in a more successful way. Among those aspects that are favoured by emotional competencies are the learning processes, interpersonal relationships and problem resolution, as well as working properly and keeping the job” (Bisquerra & Pérez 2007).

In his research, Gomila (2014) considers that the emotional dimension is “the auto-perception a person has of his/her emotional status. It goes from extreme sadness, frustration, depression, to excellent enthusiasm, joy, happiness, etc. The blocks of emotional competencies can be seen in Figure 1.

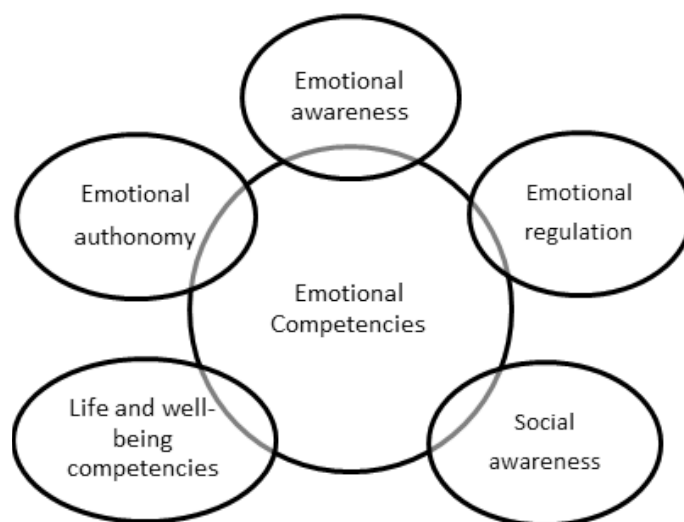


Figure 1. Block of emotional competencies.

Table 2 describes and summarises the different types of emotional competencies.

Blocks of competencies	Description	Competencies
Emotional awareness	Capacity to be aware of your own emotions and the emotions of others, including the skill to capture the emotional climate in a certain context.	Awareness of own emotions Give a name to emotions Understand the emotions of the others.
Emotional regulation	Capacity to manage emotions in an appropriate way. It implies being aware of the relationship between emotion, cognition and behaviour, having good coping strategies, capacity to self generate positive emotions, etc.	To be aware of the interaction between emotion, cognition and behaviour Emotional expression Emotional regulation Coping skills Competency to generate positive emotions
Emotional autonomy	It can be understood as a broad concept that includes a set of characteristics and elements related to personal self management, among which are self esteem, a positive attitude towards life, responsibility, the capacity to analyse social norms critically, the capacity to look for help and resources and emotional self efficacy	Self-esteem Self-motivation Positive attitude Responsibility Emotional self efficacy Critical analysis of social norms Resilience to face negative situations in life
Social competency	Capacity to keep good relationships with other persons. This implies having a command of social skills, a capacity for effective communication, respect, assertiveness, etc	To have a command of basic social skills Respect for the others To practice receptive communication To practice expressive communication To share emotions Pro-social behaviour and cooperation Assertiveness Conflict prevention and resolution Capacity to manage emotional situations
Competencies for life and well-being	Capacity to adopt an appropriate and responsible behaviour to face the daily challenges life has to offer in an effective way, whether private, professional or social, as well as those exceptional situations we come across. They help us to organise our life in a healthier and more balanced way, with satisfactory or well-being experiences	To set adaptable targets Decision making in personal, family, academic, professional, social and free time in daily life To look for help and resources Active, responsible, critical and committed citizenship Subjective well-being Contribute actively to the well-being of the community (family, friends, society).

Table 2. Emotional competencies (Bisquerra & Pérez 2007).



## CONCLUSION

This paper supports Martens' (2002) notion that the role of the coach is much more than just his/her player's record in competition. The author considers that successful coaches help athletes to acquire and maintain skills that allow the player to have a command of new skills and enjoy competing in match play.

Successful coaches are not only responsible for teaching strategies and methodologies on court but also a key responsibility of theirs is to develop and educate their player with the skills that will equip them to prosper in life on and off the tennis court. A coaches' emotional competences play a key role in the teaching-learning process. Continuous improvement of these competencies is essential for a coach to shape and develop a player's character and personality for all aspects of life.

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# Recommended books

## COACHING BEGINNER AND INTERMEDIATE TENNIS PLAYERS – ENTRENAMIENTO DE TENISTAS INICIANTES E INTERMEDIOS

Author: Miguel Crespo and Machar Reid. Language: Spanish. Type: e-book. Level: Beginner to advanced level. Year: 2015.

This e-book (320 pages) forms part of the ITF Coaching Beginner and Intermediate Tennis Players (former Level 1) syllabus. Designed for coaches working with beginner and intermediate players in schools and clubs, the manual is one of the few tennis resources that provides comprehensive information, both practical and scientific, on all elements of the game as related to coaching players of these playing levels. It includes practical and theoretical information on coaching knowledge, applied sport science, tactics and technique, biomechanics and movement, physical conditioning, programmes, plus much more.



## HISTORY OF TENNIS IN ARGENTINA – HISTORIA DEL TENIS EN ARGENTINA

Author: Roberto Andersen and Eduardo Puppo. Language: Spanish. Type: 3 volumes. Level: all levels. Year: 2012.

Three volumes with more than 2100 pages cover the history of tennis in Argentina. Volume 1 describes the antecedents of tennis in the country including its most important dates as well as the biographies of Guillermo Vilas, Felipe Locicero, and José Luis Clerc. Volume 2 covers the biographies of Gabriela Sabatini, Gastón Gaudio, Juan Martín del Potro, David Nalbandián, Guillermo Coria, Enrique Morea, Norma Baylon, as well as men's and women's tennis and rankings in Argentina, the Argentine Tennis Association, and wheelchair tennis. Volume 3 deals with the history of Argentina in Davis Cup and Fed Cup, Olympic, Pan American and Odesur Games.

## HOW TO EDUCATE A GOOD ATHLETE: A COMPETENCE BASED MODEL - ¿CÓMO FORMAR UN BUEN DEPORTISTA?: UN MODELO BASADO EN COMPETENCIAS

Coordinators: Eric M. Sebastiani and Domingo Blázquez. Language: Spanish. Type: 180 page book. Level: all levels. Year: 2012.

This book provides a reflective, renewed and innovative vision of sports teaching and coaching. It provides alternatives on the meaning of sports coaching and what does it mean being a good athlete in the XXI century. It combines the concepts of competency and complexity in a complementary fashion by understanding that in order to be competent it is crucial to be able to solve complex situations. Another important feature of this book is the fact that it includes a new perspective related to the emotional aspect of sports learning and performance and it explains the concept of professional competence as it relates to the coach profile.



## AGE-RELATED TENNIS COACHING – “ALDERSRELATERETTRÆNING I TENNIS”

Coordinators: Rasmus Norby and Line Lauridsen. Language: Danish. Type: 208 page book. Level: all levels. Year: 2014.

This book is an excellent resource to understand the different training concepts and needs as they relate to the stages of player development. Structured in chapters which refer to the physical, tactical, technical and psychological areas of training, each one of them includes specific information on the precise details that should be covered in the 6-10, 11-13, 14-17, 18-21 and +22 year old age groups. It also covers topics such as tennis specialization, Play & Stay, teaching methodology, talent ID, the role of the coach, nutrition, and periodisation and planning.



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