

# THE TENNIS PARENT'S BIBLE

2nd Edition



**Frank Giampaolo**

Author of the Bestseller *Championship Tennis*

Greetings Fellow USPTA Professionals,

Unifying the player, parent and coach relationship holds many benefits, not only for the young athlete, but for you, the tennis industry professionals. Coaches must think like a parent. Would you rather have your children in a program that encourages parental involvement or in a program that supports the motto “No parents allowed.” As you’ll see, the no parents allowed policy is an archaic approach to athletic development.

Improved Player, Parent and Coach Synergy will:

- Help build/maintain a healthy club bottom line.
- Support a thriving junior development program.
- Reinforce the teaching professional’s lesson schedule.
- Assist in developing team synergy/family harmony.
- Organize parental accountability with actual job descriptions.
- Reinforce parental committed to your program.

Parents who feel that they're a critical component in their child's success will happily enforce and implement the coach's wishes. Uninformed/scorned parents ultimately undermine and belittle the coaches' efforts as they shift allegiance from program to program.

Please feel free to share this ebook with industry insiders. A nice review on Amazon or other internet book sites would be appreciated if you like the content and support the work.

Please point competitive minded families towards [www.maximizingtennispotential.com](http://www.maximizingtennispotential.com) to purchase their very own copy.

Enjoy the journey!

Frank Giampaolo

[FGSA@earthlink.net](mailto:FGSA@earthlink.net)

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Second Edition 2016**

**Also Available By Frank Giampaolo**

**Championship Tennis**  
(Human Kinetics Worldwide Publishing)

**The Tennis Parent's Bible First Edition**  
A Comprehensive Survival Guide to  
Becoming a World Class Tennis Parent (or Coach)  
First Edition 2010

**Raising Athletic Royalty:**  
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**Websites:**

<http://www.RaisingAthleticRoyalty.com>  
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## INDUSTRY PROFESSIONAL TESTIMONIALS

“This book is a must read for any parent with a child who's serious about competing in Tennis - or in any individual sport.”

**Jon Wertheim**, Exclusive Editor, Sports Illustrated

“Even if you think you are an ‘expert’ tennis coach or parent, you need to read this book.”

**Johan Kriek**, 2-time Grand Slam Champion Australian Open

“The Tennis Parent’s Bible is filled with invaluable information that any tennis parent or coach will benefit from in their quest to help children reach their full potential.”

**Nick Saviano**, WTA Professional Tennis Coach, Saviano High Performance Tennis

“Frank is quickly becoming one of the games most respected and influential teachers. As the coach of a #1 WTA player, I recommend The Tennis Parent’s Bible to anyone serious about developing a champion.”

**Sam Sumyk**, Former Coach of Victoria Azarenka



“A must have, compelling read. The second edition of *The Tennis Parent's Bible* is a go-to guide to raising world class athletes & young adults. I highly recommend it.”

**Peter Smith**, USC Men's Tennis Coach, 5-Time NCAA Champions

“*The Tennis Parent's Bible* (2nd Edition) brings clarity to the often terrifying journey of raising a champion. If you read only one book this year... This is the one.”

**Dave Fish**, Harvard University Men's Tennis Coach

“*The Tennis Parent's Bible* is a must read for any competitive tennis family. This book should be on each parent's night stand and in every coach's racket bag.

**Craig Tiley**, Tournament Director Australian Open,  
Director of Tennis, Tennis Australia

“There are few people who have earned as much respect in the tennis world. Frank is a positive visionary.”

**Dick Gould**, Stanford University (The most successful coach in college tennis history.)

“This book is excellent. Parents need it. Coaches must have it! Broad topics with one goal: to make athlete successful.”

**Marcin Bieniek**, Tennis Island Poland

“The Triangle between player, coach, and parent is full of speed bumps and sharp curves! Everyone wants to accelerate and speed ahead to the supposed finish line. Too often what should be a fun and rewarding journey gets forgotten. kudos to Frank for providing a roadmap to developing a better young tennis player, and a better relationship with their coaches and parents.....forever.

This is a great resource for every coach who wants to develop great players and most importantly, responsible young adults.”

**Chuck Gill**, President USPTA

“Frank Giampaolo has created a masterpiece for the competitive junior tennis player's parents. *The Tennis Parent Bible*, in its' second edition, clearly spells out what tennis parents need to know and understand about how to navigate their tennis playing children through this maze of highly competitive and performance driven tennis. Don't think about this one! Just read it!”

**Lane Evans**, USPTA Elite Professional, iTPA Master Tennis Performance Specialist

“Frank is one of the most knowledgeable tennis coaches in the country. He has written, in my professional opinion, the best and most comprehensive tennis book for parents that I've read in my 55 –year tennis career.”

**Desmond Oon, Ph.D.**, Former Davis Cup Coach (Republic of Singapore), Author, Master Pro USPTA

“A first-class book from a first-class coach. Frank is an encyclopedia of tennis knowledge, has extraordinary talents to share and is a model of professionalism. When all of these components come together, an excellent book such as *The Tennis Parents Bible* appears.

By educating yourself, your children will have better results. This book is a must read for parents to understand how to educate themselves and to appreciate the extensive process they, their children and their coaches are undergoing while their children are developing their tennis skills.”

**Shaul Zohar**, Manager, Kiryat Shmona Israel Tennis Center

“*The Tennis Parents Bible* should be mandatory reading (with an annual rotating online quiz) that’s required for ALL PARENTS for their children to play in USTA events! Seriously. If parent training was required, it could change this sport in a powerful way for generations!”

**Joe Dinoffer**, President, Oncourt Offcourt, Ltd., USPTA and PTR Master Professional, Dallas, Tx.

“Reading *The Tennis Parents Bible* is like having a delicious conversation with a tennis guru who is generously sharing all of his knowledge, results and lessons learned. As a former tennis coach I've recommended this to hundreds of tennis families who come back to me within days overjoyed and excited. They feel like they finally can put all the pieces of the puzzle together. Quite simply it's your go to guide that is already a classic must-read for every coach and tennis parent.”

**Ian Bishop**, CEO of Coachseek, New Zealand

“If you're a parent who thinks you already know all there is to know...hold on, because you're in for a bumpy ride. This book is like turning a light on in a darkened room. I highly recommend it to any parent or coach serious about maximizing player potential.”

**Angel Lopez**, USPTA Master Professional, PTR Certified,  
Angel Lopez Tennis Academy

“I have been involved with tennis for 60 years and I have witnessed the development of the modern game. Frank has put together the most complete manual for Parents, coaches and players. I learned a lot from this book. It's a must for every Parent and Coach who want to make the least amount of mistakes.”

**Carlos A. Kirmayr**, Centro De Treinamento Kirmayr, Brazil

“My favorite thing about Frank Giampaolo is his willingness to tell it like it is, no sugar-coating. We parents are sometimes treated too delicately by our child's tennis coach for fear of upsetting the status quo. I know I can always rely on Frank to be brutally honest in our interviews and conversations which helps ParentingAces readers do a much better job of navigating the Junior Tennis Journey.”

**Lisa Stone**, ParentingAces.com

“Frank is a skilled lecturer & a top teacher. Now as an author, Frank has written one of the most important developmental books I've seen in my 60 years of teaching. This should be required reading for every inspiring parent, player or coach!”

**The Late Vic Braden's** Review of the First Edition of 'The Tennis Parent's Bible

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## FOREWORD

By 2 Time ATP Grand Slam Champion: Johan Kriek

Many may hear the name Johan Kriek and recognize me as a top ranking tennis professional. What they may not realize is the hard work and dedication achieving ATP Tour level status required. I earned an ATP ranking of top 7 and won 2 Grand Slam titles during my approximately twenty five years of competing in high level professional tennis, amongst the likes of Connors, Borg and McEnroe, but my incredible career came with great sacrifice and heartache. Firsthand knowledge of the benefits of supportive tennis parents makes me a perfect fit to foreword Frank Giampaolo's second edition of The Tennis Parent's Bible.

As a kid growing up in a rural community in South Africa, my mom, Ria, drove me to all my junior tournaments, while my dad and siblings stayed home on the farm. My parent's played recreational tennis and understood a little about the game but never in their wildest dreams could they have known what was to come. My mom was always positive and constantly reinforcing belief. She did a lot of things right without even knowing it ... But looking back that was not enough.

I have been in the junior tennis development business for a number of years now and I have pretty much seen it all. Parenting is difficult enough in this modern age but parenting AND having a budding tennis star is altogether a tougher challenge. Frank is spot on with bringing to light the extreme importance of the parent's role in the tennis journey. More often than I would like to admit, parents uneducated about the developmental process unknowingly cause "train wrecks" in their budding tennis players.



Parental education with respect to junior tennis development is a vital component to future success, whether it be college education or shooting for the pros. It is a tough journey with many more “downs than ups” as losing is a huge part of the development of a tennis junior. It is vitally important, in my humble opinion; that parents “arm” themselves with the knowledge found in “The Tennis Parent's Bible” to better facilitate the growth and happiness of their children. Parent education is quite possibly one of, if not the most neglected part of junior athletic development.

Mastering the game of tennis is a process that demands technical, mental and emotional skills throughout a child's development. The parents need to understand that competency requires in-depth knowledge. The highly competitive individuals that are not trained the appropriate mental and emotional IQ face incredible anguish for which they have no way of dealing.

Many parents hope (pretty much what my mom did) that their children will eventually “grow up and mature.” But this is not the right way to go about it. I was hyper competitive and because I was a type A Plus personality, I flew off the handle a lot. This poor behavior came to bite me hard during my career. Suffice to say I succeeded despite myself. If I had better training as a youngster on how to deal with my emotions in a better way, I would have been a much better and happier competitor.

Frank Giampaolo is a rare guy to have addressed these issues by writing a number of books on developing athletes. I highly recommend this second edition of The Tennis Parent's Bible to any tennis coach or parent. Believe me, even if you think you are an “expert” tennis coach or parent, you need to read this book.

I commend Frank on his incredibly forward thinking in compiling an in-depth collection of much needed knowledge pushing the tennis industry forward.

Good luck!

**Johan Kriek**

2-Time ATP Grand Slam Champion

[www.johankriektennis.com](http://www.johankriektennis.com)

Johan Kriek Tennis Academy

Twitter: @johankriek @johankriekTA

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

First of all, I'd like to acknowledge the tennis parents whose minds were open and their hearts were broken enough to search out my books. They truly are the "OZ" behind the curtain.

Secondly, I wish to personally express my gratitude to the many National and International Tennis leaders, coaches, and athletes who responded so positively to the 1st Edition of 'The Tennis Parent's Bible. Five years ago, I had no idea that 'The Tennis Parent's Bible would reach several bestsellers lists and have such a personal impact on so many.

Lastly, I wish to thank my wife, for her uncanny ability to research my hunches and clarify my thoughts. As my intuitive, perceiver personality chased deeper insights and new solution for this two year project, Linda's sensate, judger personality profile brought order as she meticulously organized the chaos. Without her, you wouldn't be reading this.

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

Due to the over-whelming response to the 2010, bestselling first edition of *The Tennis Parent's Bible*, I've been traveling the world conducting coaching seminars, tennis parent workshops and working with private families of passionate athletes. Throughout my travels, I continued my quest to go deeper into the process of raising athletic royalty. In the past five years, I've increased my knowledge tenfold and I want to share these discoveries with you.

I was compelled to write the first edition of *The Tennis Parent's Bible* for two very important reasons:

First and foremost, I found that the old system of raising elite athletes lacked player, parent and coach synergy. Secondly, a practical developmental guide to support parents in developing athletic royalty had not been established.

After years of coaching and working with players, parents, coaches and researchers, I have developed a more proficient way of improving player growth by organizing the tennis player's team. I am obviously an "outside the box" style of thinker... I always have been. It's my genetic predisposition. I found that educating the athlete's parents about the nuances of the tennis developmental process to be a revolutionary way to achieve greater family harmony while maximizing player potential at a quicker rate.

After all, winning in tennis and in the game of life requires the customization of training to stimulate our children to think on their feet and improve the status quo.

***"The modern epidemic of mediocrity, stemming from the 1950's and the assembly line mentality, is ineffective in athletic development."***

Customization is essential. To support my philosophy, let's take a peek into a few of the reasons player growth should be individualized. I know 6 year olds that are more coordinated and athletically mature than 12 year olds and 17 year olds more emotionally immature than 10 year olds. Some athletes thrive in shorter sessions, some in longer sessions. Some enjoy training in groups of peers, some prefer private sessions. Growth development schedules are diverse. Different personality profiles require different approaches to their development.

The intent of *The Tennis Parent's Bible* is to break the old fashion standardizations of the "one size fits all" approach to development. Beginning with the role of the tennis parent in the developmental process.

Invested selfless parents deeply want to be involved in their children's lives and be a part of the team. Telling the primary care givers to "butt out", which is sadly the industry norm, isn't in anyone's best interest. Tennis parent education has been the most ignored and mysterious topic in the industry and I intend to continue my quest in changing this direction.

Regardless of the stage of development, *The Tennis Parent's Bible* will assist you, the tennis parent, in maximizing your child's tennis potential at the quickest rate. The evolutionary state of tennis demands parents be more involved and informed. The competition is bigger, faster and stronger. Around the globe, the competition is training more efficiently. The days of raising a talented athlete while being a passive parent are long gone. *The Tennis Parent's Bible* is essential reading for those interested in developing confident, self-reliant and accomplished children.

## INTRODUCTION

*The Tennis Parent's Bible* is a comprehensive reference guide. It unites the partnership between the player, parent and coaches. The reader will find it an inspirational book containing many different styles of instructional writing, including narration, tales of profound wisdom and motivational stories full of deep insight. Though *The Tennis Parent's Bible* addresses the importance of fundamental stroke production, nutrition, physiology, proper equipment and off-court training, it is not intended to be a manual for such topics. For those of you seeking the above information, see my best seller *Championship Tennis* with Human Kinetic Publishing.

*The Tennis Parent's Bible* is designed to be read in any order by parents and coaches, in many different settings and independently of each other. This stand out, organizational manual is designed to assist parents and coaches through the mental and emotional complexities of raising a world class young adult through the game of tennis. Included are athletic parenting essentials, tennis parent job descriptions, parental and player accountability, match day protocols, navigating the entourage, blunders and cures, common and not so common questions and answers and difficult problems and their solutions.

Also included are educational tennis tools needed to help identify a player's strengths and weakness, such as a sample weekly planner, pop quizzes, match charts, match logs and daily focus journals. As a bonus, a customized player evaluation (blue-print) is included. The book concludes with industry interviews and a list of invaluable tennis resources.

In the past 30 years, I've estimated spending approximately 48,000 hours on court with ranked juniors, fed roughly 34 million tennis balls, missed 6100 family dinners, 926 family

weekend events and 208 holidays due to tennis events. Why? I love what I do and I'm just getting started!

Most parents spend 100 percent of their time, money and energy on developing their child's fundamental strokes. Yet, in competitive match play, athletes blame their lack of results on mental and emotional issues. I have never heard a top ranked junior walk off the court and cry "If I only had followed through higher I would have beat that guy!" What we do hear day in and day out is "I can't stand playing retrievers!" or "I was hooked out of the match!" or "I was up again 5-2 and choked!" or "I'm sooo bad!"... Sound familiar?

It is estimated that approximately 70% of the talented athletes that enter the game...leave the game. Though the reasons may vary, in my experience, many athletes leave the game due to the lack of a customized developmental plan. They all have the dreams but no real blue-print.

A world class competitor requires the proper development of strokes, athleticism, emotional and mental strengths.

Unfortunately, many parents fail to consider the individual growth developmental schedules. Great primary strokes and solid athleticism is a terrific start but without the development of the critical mental and emotional skill sets the athlete will not thrive in the elite levels.

*A great analogy is the home computer. A fully functioning computer system is dependent on its hardware and its software. One without the other is useless to the home user. The same holds true with your junior athlete. The athlete's hardware includes their physical strokes and movement and their software includes their mental and emotional components. Systematically developing your child's hardware and software will produce more confident, self-reliant and skilled competitors as well as young adults.*

The aim of this book is to provide the deeper insights into the developmental process needed by parents and coaches to help the athlete progress in such a challenging individual sport.

Throughout the book, you will notice repetition of some of the most important mental and emotional factors. In my opinion, this is just as important as stroke repetition. It is my intent to hit the reader with these little pearls of wisdom often enough to guarantee that they sink in.

The mission of *The Tennis Parent's Bible* is to assist parents and coaches in developing world class young adults on and off the tennis court.



## DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to those coaches who started this journey because they were passionate about inspiring people and making a difference in their lives.

Life isn't about finding yourself ... It's about creating yourself. The failures of my generation are the opportunities of yours... if you choose.

Unfortunately, educating the parents regarding the process of raising athletic royalty didn't exist in my day, but it surely will in yours. I challenge you to go deeper and you'll surely find a better you.

Enjoy the Ride,  
Frank Giampaolo

## TENNIS COACHES INTRODUCTION:

### Welcome to the New Teaching Revolution

The goal of the second edition of *The Tennis Parent's Bible* is to maximize player potential at the quickest rate by providing unification for the entire entourage- player, parents and coaches. Without the synergy of an educated tennis parent and the guidance of a high IQ primary coach, the deliberate, customized developmental plan cannot be implemented effectively.

***“Whether your athlete’s goal are to be a hobbyist or a world class player, this book will help you maximize your athlete’s potential at the quickest rate.”***

A new, communicative alliance among the player, parent and coach is here. It is up to us, the forward thinking tennis industry professionals, to lead the way toward a more harmonious environment.

You the tennis coach must strive to a purpose greater than simply feeding another thousand balls. An aspiring athlete deserves a high IQ tennis coach that is committed to their customized plan.

An athlete’s rate of growth, as well as a coach’s business reputation depends on a diversity of talents. This book is written to urge you, my fellow teachers, as well as the parents to rethink the diversification of your abilities. This is where followers will most likely stop reading... and the “future thinking” industry leaders will read on!

***“The failures of the past are not the solutions of the future.”***

The best way I can convey the importance of reforming the tennis parent alliance among athletes, tennis parents and tennis coaches is to let you in a conversation.

*A few years ago I was a featured speaker at the Australian Open's International Coaches Conference. While having dinner with the attendees, the conversation drifted to the usual topic: Where should we look to find the next crop of champions? When a coach from South Africa offered up, "First place I'd look is an orphanage!" The coaches broke into hysterical laughter. (Note: Orphans don't have parents...get it?)*

*Throughout my travels, working with elite athletes, parents and coaches, I am consistently amazed at the sheer number of organizations that instill a "NO PARENT ALLOWED" policy. Their reasons ranged from: "The athlete's parents' are a nuisance that cause more harm than good..." to "Dealing with athlete's parents is a negative experience and a waste of time..." to the worst, "Parents think they can help but they only hurt our process..."*

### **My opinion is polar opposite.**

As I sat in yet another hotel room, this time in Tel Aviv, Israel, I realized that we are approaching a climate shift in the education of the athletes, coaches and their parents. Parents deeply want to be involved and they're rumbling about a better way. Together, we coaches can develop proactive relationships with tennis parents.

Educating the parents about the tennis developmental process is a revolutionary way to achieve greater family peace and happiness, maximize potential at a quicker rate, enjoy harmony versus misery, radically decrease the dropout rate, and dramatically increase each family's commitment.

### ***Educating the parents is the missing link.***

Tennis educated parents have so much to contribute to the team's success. Athletes will maximize their potential at a much faster rate with the unity of the entourage. Coaches, please realize that scorned parents ultimately undermine and belittle your efforts. Parents who feel that they are a critical component of their child's success will happily enforce and implement the coach's wishes. The parent's words and actions will either instill critical trust in the coaches or destroy all trust. Parents hold the ultimate power in the success of their children because they have the most influence- as they should.

Parental modeling is leading by example. A parent "on the team" demonstrates the essential teamwork needed to maximize potential. If a parent reinforces the coaches/trainers regimens, the child is more likely to comply and believe. Here is a great example:

*Johnny loses his match. A team parent may relay the following message after the loss, "Johnny, I emailed coach Stevens your match chart and he wants to start tomorrow's session early to go over the match chart and video with you. By the way he was impressed with your backhand winners!" A parent uninvited to be on their child's team may demonstrate unhealthy team busting behavior, such as, "Johnny, you lost but it's not your fault. Your coach is an idiot! Maybe we should try the Academy down the street?"*

***"Educated tennis parents are the ships motors...  
Un-educated tennis parents are the ships anchors."***

Detailing the nuances of the tennis developmental process reinforces accountability and commitment of the player, parent and coach. The following list identifies five reasons

that it benefits the coaches and clubs to educate the tennis parents about the developmental process.

*NOTE:* The term “educated tennis parent” refers to being educated about the tennis developmental process.

**1) Educated tennis parents will help build and maintain a winning program, which directly benefits the athlete.**

Uneducated parents shift alliances blindly from academy to academy and coach to coach. These parents can damage the cohesiveness of the winning environment that a successful developmental program offers.

**2) Educated tennis parents will assist in developing team synergy and family harmony resulting in a more optimistic and supportive understanding of the process, which directly benefits the athlete.**

Uneducated tennis parents can sabotage and confuse a coaches efforts.

**3) Educated tennis parents will be accountable and facilitate success, which directly benefits the athlete.**

Uneducated tennis parents don't understand the job descriptions of the entourage and may unknowingly create havoc.

**4) Educated and involved tennis parents (team members) stay committed for the long haul, which directly benefits the athlete.**

An uninvolved parent is quick to blame the coaches and switch from program to program after a loss or two. Which often obstructs both proper developmental and reaching maximum potential.

### **5) Educated tennis parents understand the parental commitments, which directly benefits the athlete.**

This includes the financial budgeting, logistics, and organizational requirements. The uneducated tennis parent lacks a plan- which wastes time, energy and money.

To the tennis teaching professionals, academy directors, summer camp directors and/or high school coaches, let's talk about you. For those of you who have kept current with behavioral sports science you will find this book an excellent reference. For tennis industry individuals who have yet to incorporate tennis parent organization and behavioral science into their teaching, this book will provide a wealth of new insights into teaching strategies. For coaches of beginning recreational players to advanced tournament players, this book will prove an invaluable developmental tennis guide. For those coaches currently in the trenches with junior competitors, this book will help you critique, re-evaluate and direct your athlete's tennis team.

Parents and coaches, I'll say it again, if you want to maximize potential at a quicker rate and foster a harmonious environment, encourage tennis developmental education- It's the missing link.

Coaches and parents, if you're interested in partnering for a Tennis Parent Workshop Contact me at:  
[FGSA@earthlink.net](mailto:FGSA@earthlink.net)

## **SECTION I**

### **WORLD CLASS TENNIS PARENTING AND COACHING**

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## YOUR ATHLETE'S ORGANIZATIONAL BLUEPRINT

Regardless of your child's long term tennis goals, improving their chances of maximizing their potential begins with efficiency. A customized blueprint reduces stress, wasted time and, most importantly, money spend unwisely. In today's era, even the most talented athlete has very little hope of reaching elite status without being properly organized.



## NURTURING A DELIBERATE CUSTOMIZED PLAN

***“Junior tennis champions are born from great sacrifice.  
They are never the result of selfish parents.”***

Outstanding parents are outstanding teachers. The parent is the most important adult figure that will define and shape a child. An experienced coach may assist in developing technical tools such as a topspin backhand. A trainer may assist in developing core strength. But, please never underestimate the power of your child's greatest teacher...you!

The job description of a tennis parent is to provide a safe and loving environment. A tennis parent nurtures the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual growth of the child. A gifted athlete with the desire, work ethic and character of a champion will never achieve his or her full potential without the loving support of a tennis parent/manager.

***“A junior competitor without a tennis educated parent  
is like a ship without a rudder.”***

Terrific children, wonderful adults and tennis champions aren't born, they are developed. It's not simply heredity. It's an organized plan. No one becomes extraordinary on their own. “It takes a Village” is the age old saying. As you raise athletic royalty, your village will be your entourage of coaches, hitters, mental/emotional trainers, off-court tennis specific experts, physical therapists and sports medicine doctors.

The Williams sisters are an actual example of a parent with a vision. The story goes: Richard Williams planned to have more children for the sole purpose of developing them into professional tennis players. Wayne Bryan also had a plan with

his twin boys, the Bryan brothers. Without an actual plan, you'll never know your child's true potential.

**Preparing an organizational blue print will save you thousands of dollars annually. It will also save your child thousands of wasted, unproductive hours, sweat and tears.**

Your child was born with a unique genetic predisposition and is pre-wired with a specific brain and body type. Consider it carefully as you and your athlete's coaches (your entourage) nurture your child's talent and identify their genetic predisposition. Individual brain and body type play a very influential role at all levels of the game (not to mention the lifelong benefits as well.) Let's have some fun right off the bat and jump into applying personality profiling.

So, what's the key to maximizing success in the shortest period of time? Is it to purchase the latest equipment? Maybe it's hiring a great local pro? What if I said... neither.

***“The first and most important tool you will ever apply is discovering your child's personality and brain design.”***

Let's look at the typical old school tennis teaching scenario. The local pro Jose Gonzales came to the United States from Chile. He was a terrific collegiate player earning a full scholarship to Virginia Commonwealth. Jose even played a few ATP pro challenger events. He found success by being extremely patient. He had a natural gift with his quick feet and he enjoyed running. He took delight in being a steady counter puncher 15 feet behind the baseline. Jose's shot tolerance was a 20-ball rally!

As a teaching professional, he demands that each of his students abide by his playing style, disciplines and logic. Your thinking, boy that guy sounds pretty experienced, let's hire him as our child's coach. So, is this the right mentor for your child?

The answer is, not likely. Why? Because Jose demands that each student plays his style. The style of tennis that your child needs in order to thrive is based on his or hers own unique design. (AKA: brain and body type.)

***“Asking your child to play tennis in a style that opposes their skill sets, beliefs and temperament is a recipe for disaster. This is especially true at the beginning levels of player development and is a major factor as to why so many of them leave this great game.”***

One of the quickest ways to ensure that your child will quit the sport is to demand that they play a style that opposes their brain and body type. Understanding brain and body types is one of the first steps to becoming a world class parent and/or coach. Hold on tight because I am about to rock your world.

## PERSONALITY PROFILING: MENTAL AND PHYSICAL PREDISPOSITIONS

What if I told you that you think you know your athlete, but you don't?

What if I shared a tool to assist you in understanding why your son, daughter or student acts the way they do? What if I explained why different personalities are better suited for different sports, styles and/or positions? What if I said, to accelerate growth, it is essential that you get into your child's world instead of forcing them into your world? What if I explained how motivating within their genetic guidelines will maximize their potential at a much quicker rate?

The old school teaching/coaching methodology demands the student get into the coach and/or parent's training philosophy with total disregard to the student's unique brain and body design. (Remember our friend Jose in the previous section?) More often than not, this archaic approach produces average athletes at best. At its worst, it quickly causes gifted athletes to leave the game.

Let's begin by recognizing and respecting your child's inborn characteristics.

### ***Personality Profiling***

Because the most universal personality type indicator is the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), I chose to use it to help you understand athletic/personality profiling. It must be noted that although profiling brain and body types is not a hard science and I am not a neuroscientist or clinical psychologist, I am qualified to maximize athletic potential.

Also worth noting, the founders of the MBTI, Katherine Briggs and Isabel Myers, were not licensed psychologists. They were students passionate about the findings of Carl Jung, the "father" of analytical psychology, and nurtured their

love for their chosen field as they designed the now famous MBTI questionnaire.

The MBTI is grouped into four categories with 16 different possible configurations of personality profiles. The four categories list opposing brain types. Each person is assigned a four letter acronym to best describe their primary tendencies. While each of us exhibit multiple sides of our personality, we possess a genetically dominate trait. For example, we all exhibit extraversion and introversion to some degree, but most of us tend have an overall preference for one over the other.

Listed below are the four MBTI categories with their opposing personality profiles. To help identify your athlete's personality profile, it may be in your best interest to first categorize yourself. Simply read through the four groupings listed below and choose your dominant brain function.

### ***Introvert versus Extrovert***

Introverts (I) are comfortable lying back then retaliating. They need alone time to recharge their batteries and they prefer to be inside their inner world. Extroverts (E) make things happen as they prefer to initiate action. They gain their energy by bringing people together.

### ***Sensate versus Intuitive***

Sensates (S) prefer to collect data and facts before making their decisions. Facts trump opinions. Intuitives (N) trust their gut instincts and are better quick decision makers with 2 seconds left on the clock. They like to "do" first, analyze second.

### ***Thinker versus Feeler***

Thinkers (T) make decisions through objective logic and impersonalize the situation. They enjoy the technical components and choose truthful over tactful. Feelers (F) are in tune to the emotional climate of the event and others

actions. Harmony is paramount and they are affected when it is missing.

### ***Judger versus Perceiver***

Judgers (J) prefer structure. They like things settled, orderly and precise. They like to make lists to organize their thoughts and prefer to work before play. Perceivers (P) are adaptable and flexible. Their thoughts are often found in the future and they enjoy experiencing new ideas and methods versus organizing and agonizing over every boring detail.

Now, write down your four letter acronym. For example, if you believe you're an extrovert, intuitive, feeler, perceiver, then you are an ENFP. Next, Google 'personality profile ENFP' and explore to confirm your assumption. After getting acquainted with the basic personality identification procedure, it is time to brain type your young athlete.

A word of caution: Often certain young people will misdiagnose their own true personality profile as they swap out their true genetic predisposition for what they believe to be a more popular choice.

### ***Body Typing***

Now that we have introduced you to brain typing, let me review how body types affect motor skills and athletic potential.

The two opposing body types are called fine motor skilled dominant and gross motor skilled dominant. Individuals have a genetic predisposition to have a motor skill preference. Motor skills are signals sent from the brain through the nervous system into the different muscle groups.

Fine motor skilled athletes excel from the muscles found from the elbows through the hands and fingers. A common complement given to a fine motor skilled athlete is, "They've got good hands."

Gross motor skilled athletes prefer the use of the larger muscle groups found in the torso, legs and feet. Gross motor skilled athletes are known for their superior core balance and elegant body coordination.

Raising athletic royalty requires matching the demands of your child's sport, style of play and/or position with your child's preferred brain type and body type design.

Here is an example of motor skill dominance in American football: a wide receiver's primary job description is to catch the ball. It may prove beneficial if that particular athlete playing that particular position be fine motored skilled dominant (Good hands). However, the field goal kicker in the very same sport, on the very same football team has a very different job description. His primary job is to simply kick the ball. In this athlete's role, it may prove beneficial that his genetic predisposition be gross motor skills dominant (core and leg drive). While it is essential to develop a well-rounded competitor, it's important to note that all athletes possess a dominant body type which will naturally excels in the ideal environment position and/or sport.

***“Raising a champion requires the development of a well-rounded athlete. For example, if your child is fine motor skilled dominate, plan on spending more time and energy developing their gross motor skills or vice versa.”***

Knowing your child's genetic makeup is critical. It helps to avoid the needless frustrations found in athletic development and in life. Being aware of your athlete's natural strengths and weaknesses will better prepare you to assist your child and their coaches in their sport, style of play and/or position that they would most naturally excel.

The above section is courtesy of my book: ***Raising Athletic Royalty***. If this topic is of interest to you I recommend Googling: Braintypes.com

*Jon Niednagel coined the term “Brain Type” and holds the registered trademark. Jon’s brain typing system (The Brain Type Institute) was developed by applying a combination of sciences to estimate athletic ability. Though his work stemmed from the teaching of psychiatrist Carl Jung and the later work of Katharine Cook Briggs and Isabel Briggs Myers, his innovative approach may become the most accurate science of human understanding on earth.*



## IDENTIFYING THE PARENTAL OBJECTIVE

After reviewing the deep implications of personality profiling, let's have some fun and peek into why you've chosen to encourage your athlete to pursue tennis as your child's primary sport. I asked several clients with juniors of all levels why they picked tennis? I found the reasons hilarious yet interesting.

### ***Here are the Parental Responses:***

"Recreational activity, to have fun and get in shape..."

"Family bonding. We love tennis..."

"To develop athletic skills..."

"To amplify my son's competitive nature..."

"Because Kelly would look darling in a little tennis dress..."

"I needed a hobby for my wife..."

"To give my child the opportunity that I never had..."

"To one-up my brother-in-law and his all-star kid..."

"To help them get into a great college..."

"My son tried the real sports, you know football and basketball. He wasn't so good, so we're down to tennis..."

"I want my son to experience playing a high school varsity sport..."

"To be with the smart crowd..."

"To keep my daughter active and busy throughout her teenage years, so she's less likely to get into trouble..."

"To attract a full college scholarship..."

“My goal is to have my daughter playing on the WTA pro tour by the age of 17...”

“I wanted my son to be involved in the sport that gave me so much...”

“To one up my neighbors...power baby!”

So, how important are these issues to you? What are your reasons for pursuing the sport? Have you considered your child's reasons? It may be a good time to ask them!

## DEVELOPING A FAMILY PHILOSOPHY

At the competitive level, being a tennis parent is one of the most incredibly rewarding, yet most challenging adventures you will ever undertake. Tennis parents with a clear understanding of their own family's unique "life philosophy" are more likely to avoid drama, stress and misunderstandings.

Asking your child to be emotionally stable under adverse conditions, if you, the parent cannot control your own anxiety, destroys the positive messages you are trying to deliver. Tennis builds character on a daily basis. I encourage you, the parents, to reinforce the same positive character traits developed through sports. This is critical in solidifying these powerful life lessons.

***"The family's philosophy is their basic beliefs, attitudes and moral compass."***

Let's look at a former client and take a peek into his family philosophy.

*Medviv Terkenova's daughter, Anna was a student of mine for a short while. My coaching and life philosophy didn't quite gel with Medviv's family philosophy.*

*Medviv Terkenova came from Novosibirsk City, Siberia with his 10 year old little girl. He heard about a Russian girl named Maria Sharapova and had been following her endorsement contracts. In 2009, it rose above the \$200 million dollar mark.*

*Medviv's philosophy was simple. He'll do anything to provide for his daughter Anna. Medviv left his wife Anka and two children, Provic and Zoron back in Siberia in their 800 square foot apartment. He hadn't seen them in over a year.*

*Medviv changed his daughter Anna's birth date from October 1998 to 2000 on her passport because he wanted to give her an edge in the U.S. tournament rankings. Medviv stood 5 '6" and wanted his daughter to be taller. So he had his daughter injected with experimental growth hormones to ensure that she reach a competitive height.*

*Medviv washed dishes and performed menial labor at his daughter's academy in exchange for tuition. Medviv was a dictator-style parent and could be heard at every practice session screaming advice through the chain link fence. In Anna's matches, Medviv would often applaud the opponent's errors and quietly smirk as Anna cheated at the right times. His philosophy is that "nothing will stand in my way."*

Is this family philosophy right for you? I hope not!

It may be tempting for some to employ unethical tactics at the lower levels of competition to gain an advantage, but those tactics are unavailable at the higher levels. National finals, collegiate finals and/or most main draw Pro Tour events have linesman and umpires.

***"Cheating only creates a false sense of security."***

Those who have relied on manipulating, cheating and gamesmanship as their primary weapons in junior tennis match play lack the essential self-confidence needed at higher level tennis. Developing your own philosophy will help you, your spouse and children to avoid unnecessary pressures. Having pre-set guidelines will assist you in the development of your child's personal philosophy. It will also aid you in acquiring the right coaches through the different stages of your child's development. (To learn more about gamesmanship see: Section IV Common Questions and Solutions: Competitive Dramas.)

## CULTIVATING LIFE LESSONS THROUGH TENNIS

Choosing to embark on this journey has lifelong benefits. It is widely known that the participation in the game of tennis cultivates life lessons. Tennis is an individual, elite sport that breed leaders.

***“Congratulations for developing leadership qualities in your child.”***

Communicating the important life lessons gained through tennis is a critical part of the tennis parent’s job description.

### ***The Game of Tennis Inspires the Following Leadership Skills:***

1. Time management
2. Adaptability and flexibility skills
3. Ability to handle adversity
4. Ability to handle stress
5. Courage
6. Positive work ethic
7. Perseverance
8. Setting priorities
9. Goal setting
10. Sticking to commitments
11. Determination
12. Problem solving skills

13. Spotting patterns and tendencies
14. Discipline
15. Understanding of fair play and sportsmanship
16. Development of focus
17. Persistence
18. Preparation skills
19. Dedication and self-control
20. Positive self-image

Without these important character skills, success on and off the court, simply won't happen. You see, achieving results requires thousands of hours of deliberate customized practice. Without the above life skills, a deliberate developmental plan doesn't happen.

***Life skills → Process → Results***

My favorite life lesson of the top 20 is persistence. As a coach, to see a talented player without persistence or the willingness to sacrifice and work hard is my worst nightmare! That is why at the junior levels it is often the slightly less talented who are willing to pay the price with smart work that earn all the trophies.

***“Nothing is more common than unsuccessful tennis players with tons of physical talent.”***

Finding a way through a tough opponent even though you're having a bad day is persistence. Staying in the correct side of

your brain even when things are clearly not going well is persistence. Staying engaged until the very last point is persistence. Now you know my favorite life lesson. What's yours?

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## LISTENING

***“Listening is the missing link of communication.”***

The ability to listen is yet another crucial tennis parental skill. It's in the best interest of the tennis parent to create a positive, supportive and communicative environment to maintain healthy parent/child/coach relationships. To illustrate this point, I have included a letter that was written by a teenage girl to her father.

*Dear Dad,*

*What I'm about to say is hard for me. So hard I can't seem to look you in the eyes and say what I want to say. I guess I'm afraid.*

*Maybe it's best this way. Maybe you'll listen with your eyes since you haven't been hearing me. Maybe you just want to see what you want to see. That's the champion you've been forcing me to be.*

*Dad, are you listening?*

*I know you want what's best for me. I know you believe all the messages you're sending will make me a better player. Dad, communication isn't just sending messages, it's also receiving them.*

*Dad, are you listening?*

*Look at my face, there is no joy. I'm angry all the time. I still continue to play week after week, tournament after tournament. I'm sad. No I'm miserable. Why can't you see that? Do you notice any of this? I utter how I hate competing. I protest*



*every single practice and yet you push me to try harder. You demand, "Be tougher Sasha, you have to aim to be perfect!" Well Dad, I'm not perfect. I just want to be normal.*

*Dad, are you listening?*

*I'm depressed and confused and feel that this life is your life, not mine! I love you. I don't want to hurt you. I'm sorry. Please forgive me but I don't think I want to play tennis any more.*

*Dad, are you listening?*

*Love, Sasha*

Receiving this letter was a major blow to Sasha's father Stan. Because Sasha and Stan were my clients, Stan immediately came to me with his drama. He wanted know if he should just back off? He couldn't believe she wanted to quit after all her success and the time she had invested into the sport.

Would gently pushing your child through a difficult stage in their career/development be the right thing to do? You bet! There isn't a single champion who didn't have a parent or paid authority figure pushing them past their comfort zone or carrying them when they couldn't go on.

I asked Stan to ask Sasha this question, "Would it be alright to take a one month sabbatical?" Then, take her rackets away and hide them. Don't even mention the word tennis to her. If she never again brings up the subject, then she is done. That means you have a normal, healthy child. Go on vacations, enjoy weekends and appreciate your family.

If the game begins to pull her back, then she'll be engaged for all the right reasons. It's about choices. Giving her some time to see for herself that being an average teen, playing video games, texting nonsense to her friends and hanging out at the same mall every weekend isn't all that it's cracked up to be.

She needs to see for herself that the grass isn't always greener. She's a great kid. She's smart. Trust me, just let this play out.

*By the tenth night of Sasha's sabbatical, she was bored to tears. She came into her parent's room and asked if they can hit a few balls tomorrow -with a new sense of purpose. Sasha went on a tear. She won two national titles in the following months.*

## PLAYER-COACH: INITIAL INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Most often, coaches begins their relationship with feeding balls and correcting fundamentals. I encourage coaches to begin their relationship by asking questions and truly listening to their students. Maximizing player potential starts by uncovering the athlete's personality, feelings, attitude and tennis IQ. This will aid in customizing the training regiments. Similar personality's shares common efficiency and deficiencies. Knowing the athlete's personality profile will save hundreds of wasted hours in the developmental process. Encourage your athlete's coach to engage in this type of information exchange. It will surely sets the tone for a positive relationship. Remember, all behavior is communicative so be aware of the nonverbal clues.

### ***Nonverbal Clues Checklist:***

- ☐ Facial Expression
- ☐ Body Language/Posture
- ☐ Volume/Intonation
- ☐ Choice of Words
- ☐ Length of Thought Process
- ☐ Length of Answers
- ☐ Exact/Approximate Answers
- ☐ Hand Gestures
- ☐ Lower Body/Core Movement
- ☐ Length of Focus

### ***20 Assessment Questions:***

1. What level/division are you playing?
2. Do you have a club, section, National or ITF ranking?
3. Tell me about your athletic history?

4. What are your short and long-term tennis goals?
5. Tell me about your tennis entourage (parents/coaches)?
6. What's your current weekly training regimen?
7. What's your primary and secondary styles of play?
8. Tell me about your pre-match preparation?
9. What style of opponent do you hate to play the most?
10. Are you patient or impatient on court?
11. What's your shot tolerance level (comfortable length of point)?
12. Do you respond after reasoning or before reasoning?
13. Do you allow the opponent to self-destruct or do you preferred to strike bold winners?
14. How well do you deal with intimidation, confrontation/gamesmanship?
15. Do you enjoy surprises or avoid surprises?
16. Are you comfortable being spontaneous/unscripted or deliberate/regimented?
17. Are you inspired by the real/practical or imaginative/what could be?
18. Do your thoughts wander between the past, present and the future?
19. What's your focus tolerance level (how long can you focus on a singular topic)?
20. Do you think you're getting the results you deserve?

Throughout this book, you will hear that it is the job of the parents and coaches to get into the athlete's world as opposed to forcing the athlete into our world. Understanding why

your athlete thinks the way they think and do what they do is  
a function of their genetic predisposition.

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## NURTURING ATHLETIC ROYALTY

Parents, let's take a moment and focus now on you. One of the most critical parental failures committed while raising athletic royalty is the way in which some parents choose to navigate their world.

***“Kids tend to copy your actions and ignore your wishes.”***

This is called modeling. The way you handle situations speaks volumes to your children. Your attitude, thoughts and daily moral code is being imprinted into your child's psyche every hour of every day.

While on a recent coaching trip to the Island of Tobago, for an International Tennis Federation event, I had the opportunity to meet two fathers with opposing personality profiles; Mr. Vincent Lorenzo and Mr. Olson White. Both fathers had kids competing in the tournament, they were both in their mid-40's, slightly balding and carrying a few extra pounds. Ironically, they both resided in New Jersey.

Like South Florida, tropical rain fall came like clockwork in Tobago. During the daily rain delays we spoke for hours on end under the tournament tent. I found that while the sons of Mr. Lorenzo and Mr. White had similar training environments, their inner sanctuary proved to be polar opposites.

***The following are my observations after spending three days with the two east coast dads:***

*Mr Lorenzo fosters trust and belief in people. His New Jersey neighbor, Mr. White rolls his eyes and doubts everything and everyone. Mr. Lorenzo thinks things through, decides on an action plan and acts. Mr. White freezes, hesitates, over thinks about every possible failure and then fails to act in a timely manner. Mr. Lorenzo focuses on the solution to a problem while Mr. White only complains about the same problem for hours and hours on end.*

*Mr Lorenzo prepares protocols to handle difficult situations beforehand. Mr. White has prepared dozens of excuses. Mr. Lorenzo is fine with working and earning his way through the world. Mr. White wishes and hopes he'll win the lottery. While others talk, Mr. Lorenzo listens and retains pertinent information that may prove meaningful in the future, while Mr. White rolls his eyes, believing he already knows it all, and doesn't bother to listen because he is too busy thinking of a way to one-up the others.*

*Mr. Lorenzo plans and visualizes success and Mr. White obsesses and complains about how nothing ever seems to work out for him.*

Now, put yourself in the shoes of a NCAA coach with scholarship funds left to give away. Without ever meeting their boys, would you pick young Tony Lorenzo or young Stanley White?

Top coaches try to interview and spend time with the parents and junior coaches of their prospects to understand what's being nurtured into the athlete. After all, the coach will have to deal with the baggage that comes along with the recruits.

***“Great athletes are nurtured differently than good athletes.”***

Parents, remember that an experienced coach can teach the technical nuances of a sport. A dedicated trainer can assist in building strong muscles and stamina. But you are your child's life skills master teacher. Pay attention to your attitude, thoughts and actions because great athletes are nurtured differently than good athletes.

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## IDENTIFYING THE LEVELS OF COMPETITIVE TENNIS

Recreational tennis is enjoyed around the world. The emphasis is on exercise, fundamental athletic skills, tons of fun, wearing the outfits, participation by all and social interactions. As skills are developed the recreational and social game is replaced by a new game called competitive tennis.

Different United States Tennis Association (USTA) sections proudly offer their unique versions of junior social competition in the forms of junior leagues, club junior teams and high school junior varsity levels. As players progress, they graduate to sectional competition in the forms of satellite tournaments, novice tournaments, open level tournaments, high school varsity, invitational or designated events. Players reaching the higher levels of their sectional events graduate to the national 1, 2 and 3 level events.

(Please visit [USTA.com](http://USTA.com) to familiarize yourself with the current eligibility rules and regulations of your section.)

Another “league” to consider is the International Tennis Federation (ITF) group of events. This international tour is becoming a popular path for families seeking to experience great competition while seeing the world. This junior league series consists of levels ranging from 5 (the lowest) to 1 (the highest). Athletes at the top of the standings are eligible to participate in the prestigious Grand Slam junior events.

In both the USTA and the ITF leagues, at the approximate age of 15, competitive juniors begin to shift their focus toward college tennis. On rare occasions, the world’s best youngsters begin to try their luck at the minor league levels of the professional game.

*Juniors winning national titles or establishing a high ITF ranking earn the right to be offered the elusive wild card entries into Pro events. Contact your local sectional offices for information on eligibility for wildcards as well as their wildcard request forms.*

## CONSIDERING THE ECONOMICS OF TENNIS

The economics vary from level-to-level and city-to-city, taking account the families established living expectations. Recreational tennis at a city park is basically free.

***“The beauty of the sport is that it is accessible to everyone.”***

Competitive tennis is a different animal. If you're reading this book, my bet is that your child has progressed nicely into the competitive levels. As we peek into the economics of the game, it's important to keep in mind that only by risking going too far, can you find out how far your child can go.

Chasing dreams comes with a price tag... To illustrate this point, I have included the actual finances of a client of mine. This young man is 16 years old with a USTA national ranking in the top 40. He works hard on his game an average of 20 hours a week. He is committed and works his tail off.

### ***Actual Tennis Related Expenses:***

The bottom line for this unique individual is that it breaks down to roughly \$150.00 a day, which is \$10,560 a quarter or \$54,750.00 annually. The following is an estimated detailed quarterly expense report for this top nationally ranked junior in Southern California:

Driving to & from tennis: \$720.00

Meals on the road: \$1,200.00

Airline tickets: \$ 2000.00

Hotel rooms: \$ 600.00

Tennis academies or clinics: \$1,440.00

Off-court training: \$1,500.00

Private tennis lessons: \$3,700.00

Sports related physical therapy: \$530.00

Equipment strings and grips only: \$600.00

Clothes 3 outfits / 1 pair of tennis shoes: \$350.00

Tournament registration: \$550.00

Nights in a hotel: \$500.00

***Quarterly Estimated Total:*** \$10,560.00

*(Most full time/ boarding academy attendees' expenses are far greater.)*

### ***Cost versus Benefits:***

Please weigh the factors when shopping your tennis related expenses. Sometimes “money saving” programs equate to “time wasting” programs. Remember cheaper isn’t always better. An organized plan will provide guidance and means to evaluate an individual’s developmental process.

### ***Fundraising:***

A few ways to help with the costs of chasing the dream include:

- 1) Solicit family and friends as sponsors.
- 2) Seek out business or corporate sponsorships in exchange for positive press in the local paper.
- 3) Contact your local USTA or ITF section for information regarding sectional grants or scholarship availability.

4) Make a Facebook page and personal website. Include a PayPal “Donate” button. Post the travel schedule, achievements, rankings and results.

5) Fundraising events at the local club. Encourage product donations to be raffled off. Seek out local celebrities and/or teaching professionals to participate in a social mixed doubles Pro-Am event. Charge a fee for members and guests to participate. Advertise in the local newspaper, at surrounding tennis clubs and through the internet.

### ***2010 Estimated Annual Expenses of Other National Level Sports***

The bottom line is that to develop any world class level athlete takes serious money. Be grateful, it could be worse. Here is a 2010 example of the estimated costs (found on Google) of individual national level junior sports and their estimated average annual price tag.

Cycling and Paintball: \$18,000 - \$40,000

Dance and Cheer: \$50,000 - \$70,000

Golf and Tennis: \$40,000 - \$80,000

Gymnastics and Figure Skating: \$70,000 - \$100,000

Equestrian, Yachting and Motocross: \$80,000 - \$150,000

And you thought you had it bad...

## ESTABLISHING EXPECTATIONS AND GUIDELINES

***“Being coachable is when the eagerness to improve over-rides the fear of change.”***

Parents and coaches, plan on communicating your expectations to your athlete and entourage of coaches and trainers to develop an important alliance with the team. Defining the behaviors you expect from your athlete's during both practice as well as in match play will pave the road for excellence in tennis and in life. This is especially important in the beginner and intermediate levels of the game.

### ***My Top Twenty Tennis Coaching/Parental Expectations:***

- 1) Place effort and improvement over having to win the match, social game or live ball drill.
- 2) On the court be grateful, enthusiastic and polite.
- 3) Arrive 10 minutes before your scheduled practice session to prepare.
- 4) Arrive on court dressed and ready to compete.
- 5) Avoid complaining or criticizing others.
- 6) Give the coach your best efforts and your undivided attention.
- 7) When the coach is talking, hold the balls. Stop, look him/her in the eyes and listen.
- 8) No cell phones allowed on court.
- 9) Move quickly between drills and during ball pick up – yes, the student helps pick up balls!
- 10) Hustle and give 100% effort.

- 11) Avoid negative tones, body language and facial expressions.
- 12) Avoid using profanity.
- 13) Admit mistakes and understand the cause of the error.
- 14) Come to practice with a pre-set game plan and an eagerness to learn.
- 15) Be open to constructive criticism.
- 16) Be willing to develop your weaknesses.
- 17) Stay fully committed and focused for the entire training session.
- 18) Rehearse staying focused and in a positive frame of mind for the entire training session.
- 19) Be aware of mistake management and unforced error accountability.
- 20) Practice in the manner you are expected to perform.

***“Choosing to train below their capability  
breeds mediocrity.”***

Athletes training without their deliberate, customized developmental plan in mind may be putting in high quantity, low quality work. This stunts their growth and tremendously minimizes any chance at performing at full potential.

## THE COLLEGE SEARCH PROCESS

As a tennis parent, the long term development and direction of your athlete is a natural concern. The serious tennis players will likely set their sights on playing college ball. So it is not surprising that week in and week out, one of the most frequent question parents ask me, is how to go about obtaining a college sports scholarship for their child?

First of all, college sports are not recreational activities to dabble in while attending college. College athletics is a business and the school expects their college team to win.

There's a major difference between participating in your preferred sport as a hobbyist versus training for college athletics (pursuing a college scholarship). The question athletes should ask themselves is, "Do I want to be a hobbyist athlete or do I want to be an elite athlete?" The truth of the matter is...you'll have to pick one, because you can't be both.

***"Top college recruits are former National or ITF Junior standouts."***

Serious competitors are nurtured differently than social competitors. College athletics requires more than seasonal participation in high school ball. The following list three pillars that separate the college scholarship players from the hobbyist:

***1) Junior champions are born into inspiring and supportive environments.***

Parental support is essential for athletic excellence. Becoming educated in the process is your job. Great coaches and trainers are there to assist you in your mission to raise a



champion. Examples of extremely lucky athletes who were born into the right FAMILY environment include: McIlroy, Woods, Phelps, Evert, Agassi, Chang, Sampras, Hingis, Roddick, Williams, Murray, Nadal, Federer, Sharapova, Wosniacki, Djokovic and Bryans just to name a few.

***2) The love for the game is encouraged and nurtured early and consistently.***

Athletic royalty becomes royalty with the help of loving and supportive parents and coaches that guide and oversee their athlete's passion from an early age. Achieving greatness comes with great sacrifice from parents, coaches and the athlete. As they all laugh and learn throughout the incredible journey.

***3) Champions strive to improve.***

Elite athletes continually improve each essential component. There are other athletes in every corner of the globe training harder and smarter each day. Champions know they cannot be complacent with their game. Weekly improvement is part of the champions' mindset. Congratulations! By purchasing this book, it is obvious that you are taking the right steps toward improvement.

***College Athletics:***

If college athletics is your child's goal, it is in your best interest to begin preparing early. Putting off serious training until your child is in high school is most often too late.

***“The ultimate goal for a high school age athlete is to be in the “Buyer’s Market.”***

## **The Buyers' Market versus the Sellers' Market:**

The buyers' market means your child has focused on developing their skills and achieving athletic royalty (Top National or ITF ranking) and the top college coaches are not only aware of them, they are heavily recruit them in a bidding war.

It is important to understand that if you and your child have waited to get serious about their sport until high school age, you will most likely be in the "Seller's Market." In essence, as a parent, your job will be to "sell" your child's possible value to the coach. Your child is now one of thousands of talented but unproven athletes vying for the leftover scraps of scholarship funds. If you think the task of "selling" your child's skills is tough, wait until you have to write those dreaded big checks for their education. If you build a champion the coaches will come to you!

***"Get ahead of the crowd early by applying a deliberate, customized development plan. Successful college athletic careers are preceded by years and years of successful preparation."***

*Preparing for college early will not only brings the college scholarship offers to you, it may even help you open a door that may have otherwise been closed. For example, Ivy League schools do not offer athletic scholarships but your child's tennis may give them the admittance edge over other students with similar or even higher academic profiles.*

For more details regarding the college search process, please visit my dedicated eBook: ***How to Attract a College Athletic Scholarship***. It has everything you didn't even know...you needed to know!  
[www.maximizingtennispotential.com](http://www.maximizingtennispotential.com)

## THE TENNIS PARENT'S JOB DESCRIPTION

It's our job as parents and coaches not to simply educate our children by providing facts for them to memorize but to assist them in the application of the information they have learned. A major disconnect in our educational system is the lack of practical application. Whether in academia or athletics, application is key to success.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE TENNIS PARENT'S JOB DESCRIPTION

***“The parent is the architect of their child's tennis career.”***

Experts agree that there is a great need for an organizational blue-print for tennis parents, as well as parents of athlete's in every chosen sport. Until now, the role of the tennis parent has been controversial and mysterious. The ultimate quest of the *The Tennis Parent's Bible's* is to empower the tennis parent by defining their role. In my experience, a large percentage of the parents that I have worked with were optimistic and willing to learn about the tennis developmental process; while a small percentage of the tennis parents were perfectionists, pessimistic and unwilling to consider the possibility that their methods were counterproductive toward the athletic growth of their child.

***“If you're a bit of a perfectionist, this book is aimed at making you a “Recovering Perfectionists.”***

Serious harmful consequences result from well-intended perfectionists' imposing their beliefs and actions on their children, which ultimately poisons their children with negativity and an unwillingness to accept change which stunts their growth.

Listed below are the three types of tennis parents. The first group probably wouldn't even pick up a book like this because their ego wouldn't allow them to possibly be proven wrong – of course they already know all there is to know. The second and third type of tennis parent shares my interest

in raising athletic royalty. Let's take a peek at the three types of tennis parent to see where you fit in.

### **Three Types of Tennis Parent's**

#### ***1) The Under Involved Parent:***

- The only sports they are passionate about is their own.
- 100% sure that they already know it all and aren't interested in learning more.
- Unaware of the life lessons learned through sports.
- Seek zero accountability for their child's growth.
- Oblivious towards their children's personal desires.
- Unable to attend weekend tournaments due to their heavy social calendar.
- Unwilling to spend money on their child's tennis.
- Views their child's sports as an inconvenience and a waste of time.

#### ***2) The CEO Facilitator Parent:***

- Educated about the process of raising athletic royalty.
- Realizes that commitment demands long, mid and short term goal setting.
- Understands the positive emotional demands of the parent and athlete.
- Understands the logistical organizational demands of the parents/player/encourage.
- Understands the lesson, clinics, sparring and tournament scheduling demands.
- Understands the invaluable life lessons learned through participating in sports.

### ***3) The Over Involved Parent:***

- Places too much emphasis on winning every drill, practice set and match.
- Attempts to coach the athlete with no real coaching background.
- Overly negative, pessimistic and critical.
- Seeks a return on their financial investment.
- Over-reacts to errors and losses.
- Live vicariously through their child's success.
- Obsessed with the game and how it benefits their personal "agenda."

A family's moral code and developmental climate has a lifelong effect on the athlete, whether the parents know it or not. Because parents and coaches are so influential in shaping their young athletes, I urge you to take an optimistic approach to raising athletic royalty. It is my hopes that by reading this book you'll fall into the CEO facilitator role of a world class tennis parent.

### ***The Tennis Parent Mission Statement:***

***"I vow to create a positive experience for my child by providing optimistic emotional guidance, logistical, organizational & financial support as I oversee my child's entourage of coaches."***

## THE THREE PHASES OF ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT

Once you've discovered which type of tennis parent you want to be, the next step is to identify which phase of development best categorizes your child's current level. All too often, parents have an unrealistic view of their child's current phase of development. This is a result of the parent's lack of awareness into the developmental process.

Due to personality profiles, growth development schedules and maturity levels, I don't like to pigeon-hole athletes based on their age. At each level, customization is encouraged. It is very common to find mature 9 year olds in phase 3 and immature 17 year olds in phase 1. Customization is the Key:

### ***The Introductory Phase:***

In this stage of the game, children are sampling many sports. The primary objective is enjoyment while developing sound fundamentals.

Special Note: I'm a firm believer that proper motor programming is essential. Allowing a child to groove poor mechanics only to spend thousands of wasted dollars, hours and tears fixing them later doesn't make sense. You can still laugh and have fun while developing world class strokes.

### ***The Developmental Phase:***

Also known as the intermediate phase. In this stage, tennis is the main hobby. Social clinics are the norm. Specialized training has begun and juniors are experiencing sectional tournament play.

Special Note: This is when the parents, uneducated in the process unintentionally push talented athletes away from the sport by allowing them to train like a hobbyist and then expect the child to be getting championship results.

### ***The Break-Through Phase:***

In this stage, athletes are dedicated to the sport and are engaged in full time training. Each component of the game is developed as the athlete begins to invest in the future. Players begin to look towards National level or ITF level events to secure a college tennis scholarship at a major university.

Special Note: This is when a shift from hardware development (strokes and athleticism) to software development (mental and emotional) is most often needed.



## POSITIVE VERSUS NEGATIVE PSYCHOLOGY

***“Guidance from a coach or parent with a negative mindset is extremely toxic to a child.”***

Exposing and destroying pessimistic beliefs and attitudes is an integral part of my daily mission, both personally and professionally. It's your job as the tennis parent to eliminate these poisons from your athlete's world.

Sadly, it's often a parent, sibling, friend or coach that's feeding the negative beliefs and pessimistic attitudes. It is in your best interest to remedy this issue or remove the negative source(s) from the child's tennis entourage.

Parents, just as it is your duty to remove negative psychology, it is your responsibility to teach positive psychology. Teach belief and confidence, find their motivational buttons, develop their desire and hunger for mastering the game and teach them to embrace the challenge. These positive life lessons are part of raising athletic royalty. If you teach the love of the game and the benefits of commitment, your athlete will progress seamlessly through the losses, technical difficulties, injuries and bad luck that come with athletics.

Allow the tennis teachers to teach, the coaches to coach and the trainers to train because as you know now, the tennis parent's job description is far too comprehensive to micro manage each entourage's role.

### ***Mind Sets: Fixed versus Growth***

Similar to the two sides of psychology, there are also two mind sets. Coaches often see student's with either a fixed mind set or a growth mind set. While the athlete's genetic predisposition is undoubtedly present, it's most often the nurtured opinions of their parents, siblings and coaches that set their outlook.

- A person with a debilitating fixed mind set truly believes that they cannot change. They are extremely rigid, view the world as black or white and are uninterested in change. Their unwillingness to accept new challenges often results in remaining average at best.
- A person with a growth mind set believes that their opinions, outlooks, attitudes and abilities can and will change throughout their lives. Growth mind set individuals are more willing and open to accept change in the name of progress/improvement.

***“Raising athletic royalty is a direction, not a destination. What you choose to teach your children now will live on for generations to come.”***

I find that parents who encourage both positive psychology and a growth mind set are developing much more than a future athlete, they are developing future leaders.

## ELITE TENNIS PARENT JOB POST

Before we dig deeper into the more serious components of the tennis parent's role, let's first laugh a bit about what a "Tennis Parent Needed" internet job post would look like...

With "tongue firmly in cheek" I created the below piece for Tennis Magazine which ran last year. The point of detailing this incredibly difficult and sometimes thankless job is to acknowledge the love and dedication that go into developing and nurturing your child's life skills.

### ***Tennis Parent Job Description:***

- Positive team player needed for 168 hour per week position.
- Candidate must possess a universal desire to be screamed at, talked down to and be willing to be hated 5-6 days a week.
- Successful applicant must have an uncanny sense of "Buddha like" calmness in an often psychotic, stressful, chaotic environment.
- Candidate must be willing to work early mornings, late evenings and most weekends.
- Candidate must be willing to forget about their own personal interests, workout routines, sports and hobbies.
- Candidate must not expect to go on vacation due to the year round tournament obligations.
- Successful applicant should plan on missing traditional family holidays due to Thanksgiving Nationals, Winter Super Nationals, Spring Break/Easter Bowl, Labor Day and Memorial Day Events.

### ***Requirements:***

- *H R Skills-* Interviewing, hiring and firing tennis coaches, trainers, hitters and off court specialists...with the enthusiasm of Donald Trump.
- *Accounting / Banking Skills-* Possess an extremely thick check book and be willing and able to max out all of their major credit cards.
- *Designated Driver-* Must be willing to put 100 thousand miles on the family car and enjoy most of your meals behind the wheel.
- *Expect your child to occasionally go "Tennis-Brain Dead"-* Be willing and able to except that your child will occasionally forget everything they were taught during the last \$5000.00 worth of lessons and blow several events a year.
- *Scheduling Manager-* World class juggling skills required to organize the ever changing schedules of booking practice courts, times & logistics, hired hitters practice partners, lessons and events.
- *Booking Agent-* Flexible skills required to book last minute airlines, cars and hotels.
- *VIP/ 24 Hour Courier Service:* Laundry service, racquet re-stringing service, drug store pharmaceuticals pickup and delivery service, bed time psychology sessions.
- *Fashion Coordinator/ Personal Shopper-* Purchasing only the latest and greatest shoes and matching clothes.
- *Maintenance Knowledge-* General Maintenance of equipment such as racquet re-gripping, clothing malfunctions, shoe lace replacement...
- *Parental Intuition-* Must have the uncanny ability to become expendable and invisible in a seconds notice and/or appear bright eyed/ happy to help two minutes later.

- *Match Performance Review*- Must be willing to evaluate a crummy performance by first pointing out fifty positive observations but NEVER share negative feedback without starting WVIII.

***Wages and Expenses:***

- There is no pay for this position.
- All the work and travel related expenses will not be reimbursed.

## THE FORMULA FOR ACHIEVING RESULTS

All too often, competitive parents and athletes have dreams they mistake for goals. The disconnect starts with confusing dreams with goals. A dream is only a goal if it has an organized plan. For example, when I ask naturally talented athletes about their goals, they most often answer with uncontrollable outcome dreams. Such as: being ranked top in the nation, winning the state championship, receiving a NCAA D-1 athletic scholarship or playing pro ball.

These are nice dreams but remember:

***“A goal without a deliberate customized developmental plan is actually a dream in disguise.”***

Although elite athletes may also have the above dreams, the difference is that they realize their success is a result of quantifiable performance orientated process goals. It isn't always the most naturally gifted athletes that are successful, it is the athletes with strong work ethics, resiliency and a plan. Below are seven insights that parents should apply while navigating their child's pathway to greatness.

***“Championship results are achieved by focusing on the process and the process starts with a plan.”***

## ***Achieving Results: Seven Insights***

***Insight 1:*** Establish an outcome goal but then let it go because it isn't in your athlete's immediate control. What is? The process. The plan is everything.

The process starts and ends with the constant development of character. Daily focus on character building will shape your child's life - on and off the playing fields. Character building develops your athlete's inner voice through optimistic self-coaching. One of the most important jobs of a parent is to focus on character building through life skills.

***Insight 2:*** Assist your athlete in developing calm, positive, proactive "self-talk." This inner belief in themselves is the basis of the exact mental toughness they need at crunch time.

Your athlete's inner voice is nurtured to either build them up to think clearly under duress or to tear them down and hinder their efforts at the most inopportune times. Often when things go south in competition, junior athletes allow their mind to drift away from the present process at hand (performance goals) and into past or future thoughts (outcome oriented thoughts). This is commonly followed by negative inner-chatter. Character building provides the optimistic scripts used to turn a possible disaster into another win.

***Insight 3:*** Character building starts with the parents and coaches leading the way by letting go of the outcome results and reinforcing the process. How can we expect an adolescent to be performance oriented when their "guiding lights" are obsessed with only winning?

Great parents and coaches educate the process of maintained discipline through chaos. Think about the last time your athlete was in competition. Remember feeling stressed for

your athlete? Why? What were your thoughts that caused your pressure and anxiety? Was it past, present or future scenarios? Most likely the actual stress was caused by the long list of “What if’s?” What if they lose to this toad ... What if they beat this top seed? What will they’re ranking move to? What will the coaches say? Will they get a Nike deal?

***Insight 4:*** Focus on controlling the controllables versus focusing on the uncontrollables. In the competitive moment, is your athlete able to change past issues or forecast future issues? No, during competition, your athlete is only able to control the controllable – which is the present task at hand.

Parental focus should be on the effort and let go of results. Excellent physical, mental and emotional effort for the duration should be the entourage’s mission.

***“Remember, there is a significant difference between excellence and perfection. Excellent effort is controllable. Perfection is a lie.”***

***Insight 5:*** Seek to educate your children to strive for excellence not perfection. The effort is in the process which will obtain winning results -not perfect results.

Your child's success begins with preparing their character for the process of improvement. Only by achieving continuous improvement will your athlete be prepared when opportunity knocks. Unfortunately, many juniors get great opportunities but fail to capitalize, not because their lucky shorts were in the wash, but because they simply weren't prepared.



**Insight 6:** Ask your athlete to complete a daily focus journal to assist them in self-coaching. Which of their components are weakest? Why? What would they suggest they could do differently to improve this weaknesses? The process of improvement needs a plan.

What drives your athlete to actually document their successes in their daily focus journal? What motivates them to wake up and put in the hard work? The answer is their moral compass, also known as their character. It's their honest relationship and dialog with themselves that allows them to achieve their goals.

**Insight 7:** Character skills are life skills that parents can focus on daily. They include personal performance enhancers such as effort, dedication, time management, perseverance, resilience and optimism. They also include personal ethics such as honesty, appreciation, loyalty, trustworthiness, kindness, unselfishness and respect. Parental coaching starts here.

Let's review. The formula for parents to assist in skyrocketing their athlete's chances of achieving championship results is to begin with the character skills needed to implement their deliberate, customized developmental plan. An organized plan will be the foundation of the athletes accelerated growth. This is how you maximize your child's potential as the quickest rate.

## THE TENNIS PARENT'S ACTUALS: JOB DESCRIPTIONS

The Tennis Parent Job description can be divided into five separate components. The optimal parental push is influenced by many different moving factors. These include the age, gender, growth development schedule, personality profile of the player, siblings, coaches and parents. The phase of development should also be considered in order to maximize potential at the quickest rate. It should be clear that the one-size-fits-all approach to raising athletic royalty is obsolete. Use the below checklists as you organize your athletes very own world class support system.

### ***Positive Emotional Support Checklist***

- ☐ Provide unconditional love and support regardless of the events outcome.
- ☐ Promote optimism as a choice as well as a positive approach to life.
- ☐ Establish a clear philosophy and vision which includes weekly, quarterly & annual goals.
- ☐ Flip negative pessimistic words and attitudes to positive.
- ☐ De-emphasize winning and emphasize effort and improvement.
- ☐ Let go of perfection and encourage excellence.
- ☐ Provide positive match day preparation, match analysis and post-match support.
- ☐ Motivate through the periodization cycles of practice and competition.
- ☐ Focus on their strengths way more than their weaknesses.

- ☐ Apply humor to lighten the journey.
- ☐ Model pro-active and positive actions for them to emulate.
- ☐ Emphasize the education and importance of life skills.
- ☐ De-stress each event to reduce their internal pressure.
- ☐ Demand appropriate behavior and hold them accountable for inappropriate behavior.
- ☐ Keep the sport in perspective by not allowing tennis to turn into an obsession.
- ☐ Teach good sportsmanship and demand fair play from your children.
- ☐ No matter the outcome, congratulate the opponent and his parents after each match.
- ☐ Teach your child to respect and thank the tournament officials at each event.
- ☐ Assist your children in understanding problem-solving skills which will help them close out matches.
- ☐ Promote independent thinking versus keeping your child dependent on you.
- ☐ Stay calm and in control of your emotions during their matches.
- ☐ Assist in formulating the standards of behavior that will last a life time.
- ☐ Discuss the laundry list of life lessons exposed and taught through the game of tennis.
- ☐ Keep your child on track with their weekly schedule, developmental plans and commitments.
- ☐ Intervene when your child behaves inappropriately on and off the court.
- ☐ Keep success and failures in perspective and treat both results the same.

- ☐ Continue to encourage your child to take on more responsibilities as they mature.

### ***Logistical Commitment Checklist***

Provide transportation to and from practice sessions, technical lessons, mental and emotional sessions, off-court tennis specific athletic training, sparring sessions, physical therapy sessions, sports medicine doctors, round robins, and tournaments.

- ☐ Organize and book hotel reservations, airline tickets and rental cars.
- ☐ Organize equipment, racquet stringing services and apparel.
- ☐ Study to gain knowledge of general maintenance of equipment such as racquet re-gripping.
- ☐ Seek tennis opportunities to spark growth.
- ☐ Develop an understanding of the four main components of the game technical strokes (primary and secondary), mental (strategies and tactics), emotional (performance anxieties), fitness (speed, agility, strength).

***“If a parent is unwilling to be a world class tennis parent, they can’t expect their child to become a world class athlete.”***

### ***Scheduling/Organizational Requirement Checklist***

Realize that a private coach hired to teach your child the nuances of proper fundamental stroke production for two hours a week- is not going to teach your child the below essential protocols found in this book.

- ☐ Organize your own personal/work schedule which will allow you to be present alongside your child's tennis journey.
- ☐ Prepare to make personal scheduling sacrifices so your child has a chance to succeed.
- ☐ Schedule non-tennis activities including: important family time, family meals, homework, tutoring and fun social activities in your child's weekly calendar.
- ☐ When traveling to out of state and/or to non-local tournaments, organize fun activities "indigenous to the region" to help de-stress the event.
- ☐ Understand your child's current developmental stage, age and maturity level as you organize their weekly planner.
- ☐ Schedule weekly practice courts, technical tennis lessons, mental and emotional training sessions, hitting sessions, practice partners, tennis specific trainers, physical therapists, sports medicine doctor appointments, and nutritional hydration specialists.(Of course based on your child's needs.)
- ☐ Educate your child regarding the importance of proper preparation and organization.
- ☐ Schedule monthly meetings with the entire entourage.
- ☐ Schedule time to discuss with your child the mental and emotional protocols (Found in this book).
- ☐ Schedule time to dig deep into personality profiling / brain and body typing.
- ☐ Assist your child in organizing their nutrition/ hydration and sleep cycle needs.

*At this point you may be feeling over-whelmed by the process, but in actuality, the majority of the above job descriptions are the basic requirements of any committed and supportive parent.*

### ***Managing the Entourage of Coaches Checklist***

Raising athletic royalty will eventually require technical teachers, mental and emotional experts, off-court tennis specific trainers, hitting pros, sparring partners, physical therapists and sports medicine doctors etc. The individual goals of the player will determine the depth of your player's entourage and the level of coaching proficiency.

- ☐ HR skills: including the interviewing, observing in action, hiring and firing your child's entourage.
- ☐ Together with your child's team of experts, define each coach's job description, roles and responsibilities. *(Trust your team of coaches. They often have more experience in the process than you do.)*
- ☐ Hold monthly one-on-one meetings with each coach/trainer and also organize a monthly meeting with the entire entourage to keep everybody working towards the same goals. (Please remember to pay the professionals for their time.)
- ☐ Provide match analysis via match charts or match video to the coaches (Unless you're paying the coach to attend the events). This maintains positive 2-way communications with the entourage and keeps them on script -tailoring their sessions to the match performance facts.
- ☐ Build trust, honesty and openness with the coaches by asking for feedback and open communication.
- ☐ Help the coaches by being available to assist other newbie parents long their tennis journey.

### ***Providing Financial Support Checklist (As needed)***

Defining a workable family budget is essential for parent, player and entourage synergy and harmony. Maximizing a player's potential requires a commitment to the process. The following components should be considered and budgeted for weekly/monthly/yearly:

- ☐ Soft goods- including tennis shoes, clothes...etc.
- ☐ Hard goods- including racquets and travel bags, coolers, strings, racquets, dampeners, tennis towels, first aid-kit, sun block ... etc.
- ☐ Local transportation expenses.
- ☐ National transportation expenses (airfares, rental cars and hotels)
- ☐ Private stroke lessons, mental-emotional training sessions, group training (academies), off court specific trainers (speed/agility/core/upper body gym work), physical therapy appointments, sports medicine doctor appointments as well as nutrition and hydration specialists.
- ☐ Indoor court fees, club membership fees and other facilities guest fees.
- ☐ Team event fees/registration fees.
- ☐ Video analysis equipment.
- ☐ Sport psychology (mental/emotional developmental books.)

***As the CEO of your child's tennis development, hopefully you have hired the entourage that is best suited to your athlete, so you can comfortably focus your efforts on the above tennis parent's job description.***

## PARENT/PLAYER HARMONY

***“The parent coach relationship is a true partnership.”***

One of the most important duties of a parent is to instill harmony along the journey. Through a parent’s unconditional love and support, the ultimate outcome of the athletic journey should be to create a well-balanced, world class adult.

### ***Behaviors that Foster Parent-Player Harmony Checklist:***

- ☐ Leave notes under their pillow reminding them how proud you are of their efforts.
- ☐ After a loss, give your child time and space.
- ☐ On a daily basis, be effort orientated versus outcome orientated.
- ☐ Understand the parents’ job descriptions.
- ☐ Abide by the tennis parent match day guidelines.
- ☐ Put visions and goals in writing to keep the team on same page.
- ☐ Remember that your actions speak louder than your words.

***“A parent should hold the athlete accountable for poor behavior. Instilling manors and good sportsmanship is part of the balanced approach.”***

### ***Parent Entourage Synergy***

The player, parent and coach synergy is the foundation of raising athletic royalty. Just as the player-parent relationship lasts a life time, so do the positive life lessons taught by a quality tennis coach.



***“Choose wisely as you assemble your child's team. Your cast of coaches and trainers will shape and define your child.”***

While an experienced coach will often guide the team, the parent is the CEO of the organization. It is the parent's job to facilitate and assist the entourage. Begin managing your entourage by assessing their personality profiles. Like you, they have preferred learning styles that will influence their teaching methods. Clarify their understanding of brain typing and body typing. This is an essential component in maximizing your child's potential at the quickest rate.

Positive interactions between parents and coaches should be a consistent 2-way information exchange. Remember, the positive or negative energy you give to the coaches and trainers will be transferred directly to their athletes. So, if you want them to be optimistic, be optimistic.

Unfortunately, many parents are in the dark when it comes to raising athletic royalty. They leave so many critical components unaccounted for and under developed because they either don't even know it exists or they're assuming that the coach will cover it.

Please keep in mind that your child's hired guns are placed in an awkward position of serving two servants. They often have to juggle doing what's right for the student and doing what the parent (who is paying the bills) believes is right.

Parents influence a coach's progress in many ways. Some of the more common positive and negative parental influences are listed below.

***Positive Entourage Management Behaviors Checklist:***

- ☐ Gratitude. Make time weekly to thank your staff of coaches, hitters and trainers.
- ☐ Allow them to do their job by not micro-managing them while still keeping them accountable.
- ☐ Together, help organize each coach's job descriptions, schedules and priorities.
- ☐ Assist coaches and trainers by overseeing the athlete's tennis related homework assignments.
- ☐ Guide coaches and trainers by providing match charts and match videos for them to customize the weeks training curriculum.
- ☐ Provide positive emotional support to the coaches and trainers. Instill a positive attitude.
- ☐ Unify the entourage in the organization of the athlete's weekly/monthly planner.
- ☐ Assist the coaches by preparing the student properly with daily nutrition/ hydration and equipment needs.

***Negative Entourage Management Behaviors Checklist:***

- ☐ Lengthy, inappropriate pre-match and post-match dialogue with the coaches.
- ☐ Poisoning the relationship by blaming the coach for the child's loss.
- ☐ Making the coach teach obsolete methods or irrelevant, unnecessary tasks.
- ☐ Calling coaches at inappropriate times for pointless, lengthy conversations.
- ☐ Distracting and undermining coaches during training sessions.
- ☐ Interfering and crippling the athlete's practice sessions by coaching.
- ☐ Pushing excessively and never be satisfied with their child's performance.

- ☐ Providing a daily negative “List” of all their child’s failures to the coaches.
- ☐ Choosing to constantly discuss other player’s ranking, successes and failures.
- ☐ Being obsessive and losing perspective in regards to the sport.

***“When the parent undermines and disrespects the coach in front of the athlete, the trust is lost and the relationship is soon over.”***

## NEGATIVE PARENTAL BEHAVIORS TO AVOID

Listed below are common negative behaviors of an athlete's parent.

### ***Problem Tennis Parent Attributes Checklist:***

- ☐ Unrealistic assessment of their child's level.
- ☐ Unrealistic expectations.
- ☐ Over emphasizing winning and rankings.
- ☐ Coaching their children without coaching credentials.
- ☐ Coddling and pampering the child too much.
- ☐ Pushing the children into playing tennis.
- ☐ Frequently discusses the financial burden of tennis in front of the athlete.
- ☐ Assisting the coach in coaching during their child's lessons.
- ☐ Placing their needs and motives above their child.
- ☐ Allowing their mood to mirror their child's outcome.
- ☐ Refusing to allow the athlete to make any decisions.
- ☐ Neglecting to apply the periodization training method.
- ☐ Becoming negative or violent when success is not achieved.
- ☐ Unrealistic scheduling.
- ☐ Critiquing and or blaming the coach after their child's loss.
- ☐ Failing to follow a deliberate customized developmental plan.
- ☐ Expecting their part time coach to handle all the child's full time needs.

- ☐ Criticizing the child's performance and skills in front of the child.
- ☐ Neglecting to observe new coaches in action before hiring them.
- ☐ Unaware of the importance of brain typing or body typing in their child's development.
- ☐ Living vicariously through their child's success.

If you're not sure whether your tennis parenting attitude is positive or a bit too negative simply ask your athlete. They'll have a pretty darn good clue.

## PLANNING THE TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE

***“We don’t improve quickly enough by chance, we improve by organized change.”***

As you read this book, I recommend planning a tournament schedule broken down into quarters. When organizing the schedule, be sure to consider your child’s short and long term goals. Plan to evaluate your player’s progress throughout the year and adjust their schedule accordingly.

Long term and short term goals will dictate your child’s training and tournament schedule. If your child’s goal is to be ranked in the boys 10’s and possibly play high school tennis, their training and tournament schedule will be very different than a child that has a long term goal to play NCAA Division I Tennis. Goals may change along the developmental journey and a change in goals will require a change in training and scheduling.

### ***Important Factors to Consider When Planning An Optimal Competitive Schedule Include:***

#### **Your Child’s Age:**

Check with your specific USTA section or country organization for age eligibility requirements. Be sure to also check the limits on the number of events a junior can participate in each age division. Customize your child’s stay in each division to maximize rankings and exposure to prospective college recruiters.

*A general guideline to follow: if your child is winning approximately 25% of their matches, consider entering lower level and current level tournaments; if they are winning approximately 40 – 60% of their matches, remain at their current level; if they are winning approximately 75-90% of their matches, move up to the next division.*

### **Your Child's Tournament Level and Type:**

When scheduling, plan on including lower level, current level and higher level events into the tournament schedule. Nothing breeds confidence like winning trophies. Playing up is not always in the best interest of the athlete. Be sure to also schedule doubles events. The game of doubles requires a different set of skills- both in tennis and personal skills.

### **Your Child's Peer Pressure Dramas:**

If your child plays terrific in practice sets but shows symptoms of extreme performance anxiety against their peers year in and year out, it may be wise to break the “psychological barrier” and choose to play in a different setting.

### **Your Child's Rest and Rejuvenation Schedule:**

I recommend two weeks on and one week off: This is a very workable formula for most athletes who are still developing. It allows for competitive play as well as down time to fix flaws, build weapons, re-charge batteries and heal injuries. Note: Occasionally, travel expenses dictate that your child stay on the tournament trail longer.

### **Your Family's Economics:**

Here in the US, hospitality options are rare. In Europe, there is a host family waiting with room and board for the player and coach at each event. I recommend calling the tournament director to inquire about it. Parents need to factor in the expenses of tournament play.

### **Your Child's Educational Commitments:**

Consider your child's school commitments. Factor in final tests and exams. National events and exams all seem to fall around holiday breaks.

### **Your Child's Fitness Level:**

Remember the ever ready battery "takes a licking and keeps on ticking." Well, that may or may not be your child. Having the physical, mental or emotional batteries to play two matches a day for weeks on end may be a bit much to ask of your player. Even the top professionals are not competing two singles matches a day for three weeks straight!

### **Your Child's Tolerance Levels:**

Emotional tolerance and frustration tolerance is worth looking into. Keep in mind that every round your child marches through the draw, half the players lose. Pressure and stress can often double or triple. What is your child's stress tolerance level?

### **Your Child's Ranking Goals:**

Here's a formula to increase your child's national ranking. Year in and year out, certain level 2 national events draw the top field of 64 players in your child's current division. Occasionally 58 out of the 64 players are ranked higher and are presumably stronger than your child. What are the actual chances of getting deep into the draw and collecting those precious national points? Often, during the same week, another level 2 national event (same points available) is being held in a less desirable city. By checking the internet, you'll notice that historically some tournaments draw a lower level field. By playing the ranking game your child's confidence and national ranking will begin to sky-rocket.



## SAMPLE WEEKLY TRAINING SCHEDULE

Just as a player's tournament schedule will vary based on their short and long term goals, a player's training schedule must also be customized. Your youngster's requirements will dramatically vary from age divisions, maturity levels, and how well they digest information.

Training regiments also vary depending on the upcoming tournament schedule (called periodization). Obviously a player in the semi-finals of a big event would train radically different than a player four weeks away from their next tournament/team match.

Time management skill will prepare your athlete for life on and off the courts. It's important to remember the estimated success formula to becoming world class: Approximately twenty hours a week of applying a deliberate customized developmental plan for about ten years.

The following is a sample week of one of my top nationally ranked U.S. Juniors. His long term goal was to play division 1 college tennis and then progress to the pro tours.

<b><i>SAMPLE Training Week</i></b>	
<b><i>Training Component</i></b>	<b><i>Time Per Week</i></b>
<b><i>Practice Sets/Tournament Matches:</i></b> <i>He schedules different styles and different ability levels of opponents.</i>	4 Hours
<b><i>Technical/Mechanical Stroke Lessons:</i></b> <i>He corrects flaws in their primary strokes and builds upon his secondary strokes.</i>	2 Hours
<b><i>Mental Training:</i></b> <i>He focuses on pattern repetition. Being sure to practice his Top 7 patterns and the patterns to run to beat retrievers.</i>	4 Hours
<b><i>Emotional Training:</i></b> <i>He focuses on applying his between point rituals as well as his protocols to overcome performance anxieties.</i>	4 Hours
<b><i>Video Analysis:</i></b> <i>After videotaping a tournament match, we analyzed patterns, lapses in focus and opponent profiling.</i>	1 Hours
<b><i>Off-Court Gym</i></b> <i>He hits the gym to improve explosive speed and power, and to prevent injuries.</i>	3 Hours
<b><i>Off-Court Cardio</i></b> <i>He cross trains with a random directional approach to clean up foot speed and brain speed (hesitation).</i>	4 Hours
<b><i>Watching Tennis on TV:</i></b> <i>He charts the pros, spot styles of play, analyze footwork, and decipher patterns.</i>	2 Hours
<b><i>Total Weekly Training:</i></b> <i>(Non-Tournament Schedule)</i>	24 Hours

For more information, investigate how a successful athlete's family got them there. Invite them out to lunch. Ask process oriented questions. Take notes about their developmental plan, scheduling and obstacles. Parents who have been through the wars are often eager to help.

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## PERIODIZATION TRAINING

When preparing for an upcoming tournament, inexperienced coaches and parents sabotage their athlete's chances of reaching their peak performance level (at match time) due to a lack of periodization training. This systematic approach to training cycles the athlete on and off through various training aspects. A similar analogy would be to compare off-season, pre-season, in-season, and post-season phases as in other sports to match competition training.

*Jason was a past student of mine. After applying his deliberate, customized developmental plan for 4 months he was ecstatic to qualify for the prestigious Clay Court Super National Tournament. Jason's father, Manny was so motivated that he quickly registered Jason for the clay court warm up event in St. Louis. Manny called me and said: "Frank, we're cancelling Jason's lessons for the next two weeks. I want him to have the best possible chance at doing well in the supers."*

*Manny, with the best intentions; went one step further. As he and Jason arrived in St. Louis, Manny booked a two hour private lesson with the local pro. The teaching pro proceeded to change Jason's serving grip the day before the St. Louis event. Needless to say, due to poor periodization training, disaster struck.*

*As you know, it takes 4-6 weeks for a new motor program to override an old one. Well, Jason didn't have his old serve any longer...and he didn't have his new one down yet. So, he went down in flames in the first round. With his confidence shot and serve in shambles, Jason lost first round in the Super Nationals singles and doubles.*

The following are examples of both poor and intelligent pre-match preparations through periodization.

### ***Poor Pre-Match Preparation:***

***Changing fundamental grips or strokes.*** Changing fundamental grips or strokes just before an event often leads to not having the old stroke any longer and not having the new stroke ready for match play.

***Cramming for the event by overloading the practice schedule.*** This behavior often leads to drained, low batteries on match day.

***Overdoing the off-court training.*** Overdoing the off-court training the days just before an event, often leads to soreness, fatigue and injuries come match day.

***Adding unfamiliar components to routines.*** Adding unfamiliar components (such as exercises, practice routines, stroke preparation, meals, etc.) could lead to physical, mental and emotional confusion.

***Seeking out only “Up” practice matches.*** Seeking out only “Up” practice matches breeds low self-esteem and zero confidence.

***Warming up past the point of diminishing returns.*** Warming up the same strokes too long often leads to your mind playing tricks on you. A seemingly solid stroke may appear to be flawed by over analysis.

***Exception to the Rule:*** *Often players and/or parents do not want to get off the tournament trail due to the ranking race. In this situation, changes must be made to improve while on the tournament trail. Players/parents will have to accept the fact that losing a battle or two may be in order to win the war. In other words a player may have to lose a minor tournament or two in order to improve enough to be able to win major tournaments in the future.*

### ***Intelligent Pre-Match Preparation:***

***Train repetition of primary and secondary strokes.*** This grooves the athlete's timing and increases their confidence in every tool in their tool belt.

***Train repetition of proactive patterns.*** This leads to fast cognitive processing speed, no hesitation and faith in one's patterns.

***Perform tennis specific off-court training.*** This leads to the reduction of injuries and increased strength and stamina.

***Preset mental protocols.*** Pre-planning how to beat the different styles of opponents leads to confidence and dependable problem-solving skills.

***Preset emotional protocols.*** Pre-planning how to conquer performance anxieties leads to self-assurance and trust under stress.

## THE TOURNAMENT PLAYER'S CYCLE

Periodization training requires factoring in these 10 essential phases to insure growth as well as optimal performance during competition. Educated coaches and parents not only know what to focus on, but even more importantly; when to focus on them.

To customize your athlete's formula for success, be sure to apply these 10 very different phases to your tournament player's cycle.

### ***The 10 Essential Phases of Tournament Play***

**Phase 1:** Post tournament recovery -Insist they completely detach from the sport. Allow them to recover and heal their physical body, emotional wounds and the pressure of cognitive processing under stress.

**Phase 2:** Slowly restart the fitness component - re-introduce the athlete's endurance, speed, agility and stretching requirements.

**Phase 3:** Begin match chart reviews and essential Match Play video analysis.

*Topics include: Performance assessments, opponent profiling- styles of play/ shifts in styles, favorite go-to patterns ( top 7), movement strengths & weaknesses, focus issues/ lapses in concentration, anger/ emotional management, athletes problem solving skills, between point and changeover rituals, fundamental and secondary stroke efficiencies and deficiencies.*

**Phase 4:** Devise an agreed upon action plan based on phase 3's findings. This included on-court as well as off court physical, mental or emotional development. Seek weekly improvement versus the need to always win. Focus on improving aka -fixing weaknesses.

**Phase 5:** Re-introduce on-court basic stroke production with dead ball- grooving/ motor programming of the new, improved strokes. Add fundamental on-court movement, spacing and footwork essentials.

**Phase 6:** Drill with negative scoring to re-introduce the essential emotional/ focus component. (Deduct a point for each error.) Error awareness in practice is a missing link in the art of developing the emotional muscle.

**Phase 7:** Introduce secondary strokes and the athlete's customized offense, neutral, defensive patterns of play. These shot sequencing patterns are strokes with purpose and are essential pre-set protocols.

**Phase 8:** Begin practicing in the manner they're expected to perform. Introduce live ball serve games, return games, rally games and approach shot versus passing shot games.

**Phase 9:** Introduce the essential multi-tasking requirements required in match play. Begin playing sets starting at 2-2. This adaptation allows the competitors to arrive at the important pressure packed, "money", part of each set faster and more frequently.

**Phase 10:** Ask the athletes to play set-Tie Breakers (first to 7) and Championship Tie Breakers (first to 10) to insure the athlete is comfortable with the process. Before each breaker, remind the athletes to mentally revisit the set. Apply match charting to organize your game plan and opponent profiling to assess their probable strategic options.



## **SECTION II**

### **MAXIMIZING POTENTIAL AT THE QUICKEST RATE**

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## THE SCIENCE OF MATCH DAY PREPARATION

The expression, “success is found when proper preparation meets opportunity” would seem to have been written for tennis players. Sadly, most unsuccessful junior competitors are ill-prepared to compete, yet blame their poor results on bad luck. Truth be told, growth and success on court, is a result of months of deliberate customized training and systematic game day routines and rituals. Success on and off the court doesn’t happen by chance...it happens by choice.

There is often a very fine line between competitive success and failure. A poor start, an initial lack of focus or a bout of wavering confidence can cause a seemingly winnable match to quickly slip away. The will to properly prepare for competition usually makes the difference. For players to achieve consistent positive match results, their preparation must include ritualistic, inflexible routines. A player who is ready to compete creates an impenetrable wall that keeps the human elements of fear at bay.

***“Spectacular achievements are preceded by spectacular preparation.”***

Players who disregard pre-match rituals often unknowingly start a downward spiral that inevitably results in a loss. Their lack of self-discipline leads to self-doubt, a condition that fuels nervousness and then causes a lack of confidence and low self-esteem. These negative forces have a way of fostering a lack of self-control on match day.

***“Although not preparing properly for competition may provide short-term fun, it comes with long-term consequences.”***

Getting geared up for a match involves a type of self-hypnosis. Top players use a series of internal processes to spur a metamorphosis in preparation for competition. This involves putting on their “game face” as they prepare their physical, mental, and emotional components for competition. Confidence is high and all energy is devoted to the task at hand. This section of the book contains information to help players of all levels find the state of readiness that enables players to transform from a normal person into a tennis warrior.

Morphing into a warrior isn’t reserved for athletes. Game day transformation is done by every world-class performer. Preparing physically, mentally and emotionally for their role is a mandatory learned behavior. To demonstrate this point, let’s look at an elite professional Broadway actor’s pre-show preparation.

### ***Broadway Actor’s Pre-Show Preparation:***

*On a nightly basis, the actors transition through a metamorphosis. They go from being a normal person with their own issues, emotions and agendas to morphing into the characters they play on Broadway. Real life issues (car problems, relationship issues, dog ran away...) must be dismissed and their mindset must shift into character they play on stage. The actual metamorphosis is specific to each actor, but generally the actors will review their lines, quietly mediate, rehearse their movements, etc. Once on stage, the curtain rises and great actors transform into their character- making the audience believe.*

Socializing prior to matches often pulls competitors away from their pre-match routines and rituals. Remember, a transformation should take place before each match. Your athlete simply cannot transform from a normal person into a warrior if they are hanging out with friends or bantering with friends over texts.

***“Physical, mental and emotional readiness is a skill set your athlete must master.”***

## EQUIPMENT PREPARATION

The day before the match, review their Match Day Equipment Essentials List with your athlete. In case you need to run to the store to pick up an essential item or if their lucky shorts aren't washed. Remind them that they may also want to pack their perishable Match Day Essentials the night before and keep them refrigerated and/or frozen and ready to go- ice, food, drinks etc.

***“Waiting until the last minute is a common blunder and adds un-needed stress that can steal everyone’s emotional energy before even getting to the tournament.”***

### ***Match Day Equipment Essentials: (For Competitive Athletes)***

- Three- four rackets freshly strung and re-gripped.
- Extra sets of strings (your brand and gauge) and extra vibration dampeners.
- A first aid kit composed of Band-Aids, athletic tape, elastic bandages, appropriate pain reliever, plastic bags for ice, sun screen, liquid Band-Aid, hair ties etc.
- Extra shoelaces, socks, shirts and a fresh towel(s). (You may need an extra towel to soak in ice water to cool you down in very hot temperatures.)
- Water, sports drinks, electrolyte powders, easily digested fruit (banana), and energy bars/gels to be used as quick energy and/or to bridge between meals.
- Performance goals and match notes. (Reminders) Examples include: how to beat moon-ball/pushers, opponent notes, match performance goals, etc.

## OPPONENT PROFILING

Top competitors are continually seeking an advantage. One of the best strategic (mental) and calming (emotional) advantages comes from scouting an upcoming opponent. Casually observing is one thing, but profiling the opponent is a skill set. Each playing style has an inherent group of strengths and weaknesses. Opponent awareness is an important part of match day preparation. Player profiling involves looking past strokes.

NOTE: Whenever possible, as I coach players from the 12's to the ATP/WTA pros, I apply the below profiling topics.

### ***Opponent Profiling Scouting:***

- Primary style of play.
- Preferred serve patterns (especially on mega points).
- Preferred return of serve position and shot selection on both first and second serve returns.
- Favorite go-to rally pattern.
- Dominant short-ball option.
- Preferred net rushing pattern.
- Stroke strengths and weaknesses (Advanced players should also consider the strengths and limitations of strike zones.)
- Movement, agility and stamina efficiencies and deficiencies.
- Frustration tolerance, focus, and emotional stability.

Opponent profiling should continue from the pre-match phase, all the way through the actual match and into the post-match. Intelligent athletes even jot down notes regarding the opponent's game on their post-match match logs. This is used as a reminder for the next time the two meet.

### ***Looking Past Strokes:***

During the warm up, the uneducated player/parents/coaches often think Player A has the match in the bag. But what they do not realize is that Player B often wins because of their ability to identify and execute a game plan exposing their opponent's weakness. Player A may have great looking fundamental strokes but "hidden" flawed mental and/or emotional components. Player B may have average looking strokes, but an incredible proficiency in their mental game. Hence, giving player B the edge due to his ability to isolate weaknesses or exert emotional intelligence at crunch time.

## MATCH DAY STRETCHING

Preparing the body for the upcoming competition should be a major priority. Serious players seeking peak performance and injury prevention should incorporate a customized stretching routine.

***“Current sports science research suggest that elevating the core body temperature is recommended before dynamic stretching begins.”***

### ***Pre-Match Stretching Routines***

Customizing their routines is a great way to assist your athlete in being accountable. If your player does not have a fitness trainer, I suggest asking them to formulate their very own dynamic stretching routine by using Google: YouTube dynamic tennis warm up routines.

Pre-match warm-up routines will be an important part of your athlete's match day stretching regiment. Dynamic stretches help warm-up and elevate core body temperature.

Pick two lower body dynamic, mobile stretching routines. (These are tennis-specific movements aimed to prepare your lower body for the actual demands of match play.)

Pick two upper body dynamic stretching routines. (These prepare your shoulders arms and core for the demands of a high performance match.)

### ***Post-Match Stretching Routines***

Post-match static stretching routines are used during the cool-down phase. While standing or sitting still, elongate muscles and hold the position. This allows the muscles to be



stretched farther in order to increase range of motion. Once again, assist your athlete in being accountable. I suggest asking them to customize their very own static stretching routine by using Google: YouTube static tennis warm up routines.

Pick two lower body static stretching routines. (These are tennis-specific rituals aimed to cool down their lower body after the actual demands of match play.)

Pick two upper body static stretching routines. (These cool down their shoulders, arms and core after the demands of a high performance match.)

### ***Benefits of Stretching:***

- Improves range of motion
- Reduces the risk of injuries
- Reduces post-match soreness
- Reduces fatigue
- Increases power

***“Part of an elite players entourage is an off court tennis specific trainer. Consult a certified trainer to customize your athletes stretching routines and rituals.”***

## PRE-MATCH WARM-UP RITUALS

Before each PGA tournament round, Tiger Woods warms up every club in his golf bag, just in case he needs it. In the high performance tennis world, players who routinely warm up both their primary and secondary strokes have a major advantage in tightly contested matches. Grooving fundamentals before a match is important, but let's go deeper.

A first-set tiebreak can often come down to a player executing a winning secondary stroke such as a swing volley or topspin lob. Confidently perform secondary shots at crunch time, without hesitation, stems from properly warming them up before the match. Players who neglect their secondary strokes have a very different mind-set when faced with the same exact situation. Instead of instinctively moving forward to hit the swing volley to take the tiebreaker, they hesitate and are caught thinking, "I don't remember the last time I hit one of these? Can I make it? Should I go for it?" Now guess who misses the easy shot, gets upset and blows another breaker?

Obviously, any stroke has to be developed on the practice court long before tournament competition begins. Once developed properly, it should be placed into your match day tool belt and warmed up before competition.

***"A smart tennis player has developed and then systematically warms up every secondary stroke before competition."***

If your athlete is still holding on to the "old school" fundamental stroke warm up routine, I highly suggest keeping it for comfort sake but also begin to warm up in the manner

that they are expected to perform. This includes, whenever possible, taking extra time to warm up the below list.

***6 Different Forehands and Backhands:***

- 1) Primary Drive Ground Strokes
- 2) High and Heavy Ground Strokes
- 3) Short Angle Ground Strokes
- 4) Defensive Slice
- 5) Drop Shots
- 6) Defensive Lobs

***3 Different Serves:***

- 1) Flat Serve
- 2) Slice Serve
- 3) Kick Serve

***3 Different Volleys:***

- 1) The Swing Volley
- 2) The Drop Volley
- 3) The Transition Mid Court Volley

***2 Different Overheads:***

- 1) Stationary, Service Box Overheads
- 2) The Turn and Run, Overhead with Movement

***The 2 Different Approach Shots:***

- 1) Traditional Approach to Volley
- 2) Spot a Vulnerable Opponent and Steal the Volley

NOTE: Customize the warm up whenever possible. For example: If your athlete's next opponent is a Moonball/Retriever, it might be wise to warm up their swing volleys, side doors and drop shots.

***“Often, what separates two talented players is the time and energy put into properly preparing for battle.”***

## PRE-MATCH VISUALIZATION AND IMAGERY

Warming up doesn't stop at the physical. Players need to build up their "wall of defenses" in preparation for the continuous onslaught of mental and emotional challenges that competitive tennis encompasses. What we think about often dictates what we create.

A mental, emotional no-no is to obsess about the next opponent's past success, ranking or seeding. Winning tough matches begins with a winning mind set.

***"A winning mind set is a performance based plan."***

In the nights leading up to a big event, a great way to preset a positive mindset is to re-live a past peak performance experiences. Set aside 15 minutes a night for three nights in a row to allow your athlete to re-experience the feelings of coming through under pressure. This is known to calm nervousness and quiet fears. It also has been linked to motor programming the skills of applying the appropriate responses with little or no cognitive processing. It has been proven to improve the player's physical, mental and emotional performance on game day.

Positive visualization includes the athlete imagining their strokes working to perfection, their tactics and strategies working like clockwork and their emotional state of mind calm and relaxed.

Pre-match visualization topics are unlimited, but some of the best visualization exercises include the following:

- 1) Perfectly executed primary and secondary strokes.
- 2) Top seven favorite perfectly executed patterns.
- 3) The three pillars of between-point rituals.
- 4) Successful patterns of play against the three main styles of opponents.
- 5) Preset protocols for common emotional issues.  
(Gamesmanship)

Ask your athlete to begin their pre-match visualization by arriving on site early enough to set aside 20 minutes to mentally rehearse the performance goals they've been rehearsing on the practice court.

Start this self-hypnosis by seeking out a quiet area away from other competitors and distractions- with closed eyes, ask them to take several deep relaxing breaths. Then create a vivid mental image of numerous tasks being performed successfully. Let's call this your positive movie.

To build confidence and reduce pre-match stress, ask them to mentally re-run the "movie" several times to reinforce the positive thoughts.

***"Positive constructive visualization actually trains a player to perform the skills imagined calmly, without hesitation."***

## THE VALUE OF A PRE-MATCH JOG

On match days, it's normal for you and your athlete to experience a wave of apprehension and nervousness. This fear triggers an overflow of adrenaline throughout your body. When you feel this sensation, you and your athlete can burn off that excess performance anxiety by going for a short run after checking in at the tournament desk. Often, the athlete prefers to run alone as they collect their thoughts and ready themselves for battle.

Their pre-match run should be customized to their fitness level, current emotional stability and the amount of time available. Raising their body's core temperature warms up the muscle groups and relaxes the tension as it burns off the excess adrenaline, calms the mind and helps them begin the match in a peak performance state. As I mentioned earlier, upon arriving at the tournament, substitute chatting with friends with going for a short run before walking on court for battle.

***“Great preparation must become a habit before winning becomes a habit.”***

Match day preparation is made possible by parent and coach awareness. Sadly, all too often, peak performance is killed before the match begins by an uneducated entourage. To positively support your athlete's best chances at playing at their peak performance level, read on...

## MATCH DAY ENTOURAGE SUPPORT

***“Parents, stressing your child out before their match about the outcome leaves them temporarily blind to the actual performance goals needed to play in their peak performance state.”***

This section of the book is dedicated to those players who feel that their parents, family members or team mates often increase match day stress.

*A coach must realize that educating doesn't stop with the player. The coach is the catalyst for developing unity within the player's entire entourage. Seasoned coaches know that an uneducated tennis parent can easily derail the countless hours spent preparing a student to reach peak performance on match day.*

***“It's your job as parents and coaches to psyche them up... not to psyche them out.”***

Ill-chosen words from a player's entourage can instantly crush a player's self-esteem while increasing her/his nervousness and self-doubt. Communication occurs not just through words, but through actions as well. A player can detect a stressed-out parent, coach or team mate, which compounds the tension of an already anxious situation. An unrealistic, unhealthy parental philosophy often pulls the athlete into an outcome-oriented frame of mind rather than the desired mind-set of being focused on the process of hitting their performance goals.

***“An optimum performance starts with optimistic beginnings.”***

Here is a true story to illustrate the point. (The names have been changes to protect the guilty.)

*Meet the Kolouski's. They are a wonderful family from San Francisco. Martha and Mark have a solid 13 year old tennis player named Kelly. I still recall my initial conversation with Mark on the phone. "Frank, my daughter's incredible. Her coaches say she's the best player in their Academy. On the practice court, she kills even the 16 year olds but in the real tournaments she starts so slow and scared. Frank, she always loses. Kelly plays so meek. It's like...I don't know, like she's so nervous and fearful she can't even hit the ball. Can we bring her to you for a few sessions? My wife and I are worried that she can't handle the pressure of competing."*

*So, they fly down to Orange County's John Wayne Airport for two days of mental, emotional training. As I run Kelly through some "stress buster" live ball simulation drills her folks go across the street to Starbucks for a coffee. "Don't forget my Mocha Frap!" yells Kelly.*

*During our sessions, I discover that Kelly is a "Feeler" personality profile. She needs harmony and a positive environment to enable her to find her optimal performance frame of mind. During our sessions, Kelly is performing free and happy. Even in the most stressful simulations....Kelly performs with no fear. From my experience, I conclude that maybe the stressors aren't coming from deep within her but from outside forces.*

*I ask the Kolouski's if we can try to go a bit deeper into Kelly's pre match preparation. After an honest family classroom session here's what we uncovered.*

*As Martha drives Kelly to her Saturday morning event, it isn't Kelly but its Martha who's panicking because she's so nervous about Kelly's upcoming match. Martha's so tightly wound that her heart races and her hands shake. Martha's upset about Kelly's choice of outfits, peeved about Kelly's chewing at breakfast, mad at the poor directions to the site, annoyed at every red light and the older gentleman driving too slowly. Martha's at the end of her rope and Kelly's match is still 20 minutes*



*away. After being subjected to a few hours of this unintentional negative, pessimistic atmosphere, Kelly walks on the court stressed to the max and goes down in flames. After the match, guess who get all the blame for the loss? ...yup, poor Kelly!*

***“Kids pick up every negative word, condescending tone of voice, upset facial expressions and defensive body language.”***

*Next week rolls around and Mark is taking Kelly to her event. Here's a sample of Marks pre-match prep talk: “Ok Kelly, she's ranked 98 spots ahead of us. This will be a big win...if you don't blow it! Get in every serve and don't miss your ground strokes. Our ranking will skyrocket into the top 50, this is the most important match of the year so today's the day to be perfect! Oh and remember, we spent \$2000 this month on your tennis and we can't keep forking over that kind of money if you don't win.”*

*After another freaked out first round loss guess who gets all the blame again? ...you guessed it, Kelly!*

*The Kolouski's learned a powerful lesson about their unintentional pre-match sabotage. Since applying de-stressing techniques, Kelly's ranking has jumped into the top 20.*

***“The parents’ primary role is to DE-STRESS  
their athlete.”***

***The Negative Effect of a “Stressed Out” Athlete:***

- 1) Increased Muscle Contractions
- 2) Decreased Fluid Movement
- 3) Impaired Judgment
- 4) Reduced Problem Solving Skills

***“The athlete perform best in a calm relaxed  
mental state.”***

## PRE-MATCH ENTOURAGE COMMUNICATION

Successful coaches and perceptive parents know that nonverbal communication is the single most powerful form of communication. People don't need to say anything for their stress, nervousness, and anxiety to be felt and adopted by others.

Before matches, smart players are trying to morph into their competitive "performance goal" state of mind. Parents, if you feel that a spouse or coach is unknowingly sabotaging your child's pre-match positive mind set, ask them to please read this section with you. The following section lists appropriate and inappropriate match-day topics for both coaches and parents.

### ***Appropriate Communication:***

*Positive:* Preparing equipment and adhering to nutrition and hydration requirements.

*Positive:* Applying warm-up routines (Primary and secondary strokes.)

*Positive:* Discussing both the player's and opponent's A, and possible B game plans, favorite go-to patterns, stroke strengths and weaknesses, movement issues, and emotional or focus issues.

*Positive:* Practicing visualization and imagery routines.

*Positive:* Listing the top three performance goals to accomplish.

*Positive:* Focusing on the process of endurance and competitive fight.

*Positive:* Referring to match notes if losing.

*Positive:* Providing positive memories of past performances.

*Positive:* Suggesting a short run before going onto the court.

*Positive:* Reminding them to simply try their best to execute the correct shot that the moment demands.

*Positive:* Reminding them to smile, laugh and enjoy the day.  
(Remind yourself too!)

### ***Inappropriate Communication:***

*Negative:* Discussing the need for a perfect performance.

*Negative:* Explaining why today's match is the most important of your career.

*Negative:* Describing the consequences of the outcome, such as the player's spot in the team's lineup, the team's position in the overall league rankings, or the individual's position in the overall rankings.

*Negative:* Detailing how much time or money has been spent on their career.

*Negative:* Informing your child that "the opponents ranked 98 spots ahead of us."

*Negative:* Informing your child that "She's top 3 in the nation and just won the Super Nationals and is essentially unbeatable.

*Negative:* Reminding them that today's match will be a huge win for us.

*Negative:* Listing all the good players the opponent has already beaten.

*Negative:* Talking about what others will say "if you win or if you lose."

*Negative:* Hinting that "If you win your ranking will skyrocket into the top 20 . . . if you don't blow it."

*Negative:* Giving last-minute negative advice such as reminding your athlete about all their weaknesses that still needs to be corrected.

***“Negative thoughts only go away once they’re replaced by positive thoughts.”***

*Parents and coaches, I’d like to offer this reminder once again, please don’t tell your junior athlete to suppress a harmful thought, such as reminding them not to double fault. The human brain doesn’t work that way. The more they try to block it out, the larger it looms. Instead, ask them to simply replace the negative thought with a useful, positive proactive thought and the negative thought dies out quietly. Such as “Here we go, toss to my spot and here comes a huge big kick serve.”*

### ***Parental Competitive Match Day Protocols***

Competition is a stressful event- especially for new tennis parents and players. If a player has been trained properly, the parents will only need to reinforce a good coaches messages. Parents, if you’re not paying a qualified tennis teacher to provide match day guidance, you are responsible for preparing your child for battle. Parents, if you want to sound knowledgeable and actually help, here are 6 topics to openly discuss with your athlete. (Remember, mental and emotional readiness is just as important as warming up strokes.)

#### ***Adapt and Problem Solve***

Worthy opponents change their losing game plans. Remind them that when losing, their opponents may switch from using their plan “A” to their plan “B”. Intermediate players fail to spot the tactical change and fail to adapt and problem solve.

### ***Spot and Control the Mega and Mini Mega Points***

Remember, intermediates have to take the match from a champion. Top ranked opponents didn't earn their ranking success by handing over winnable matches to lesser players. Expecting them to fall apart and quit when it gets tough won't likely happen. Spotting and controlling the "big" points is a critical factor.

### ***Perform Their Between Point Rituals***

Remind them to control the tempo of the match, their heart rate and mistake & anger management. Problem solving takes place in-between points. Often against intermediate players your athlete doesn't bother doing their between point and changeover rituals. So, later when they come up against a real competitor, they're not familiar with applying their rituals and problem solving strategies and so they fail to apply them as needed.

### ***Apply the Laws of Offensive, Neutral and Defensive Shot Selection***

Some players tend to go for glamorous offensive shots when they are in a neutral "building" situation. Others tend to get scared and fall back to simply hitting neutral shots when they have an offensive situation. Remind them that selecting the appropriate shot at the right time is a pre-set protocol found in the mental component of the game.

### ***Second Match Warm-Up Routines***

Before the second match of the day intermediates often don't bother to re-start their pre match rituals. They don't bother with a short warm up or visualization with your next opponent's game in mind. Heck, they don't even go for a run before checking in. They're sluggish, unfocused, and often never reach their peak performance level of play. Remind them (if applicable) to re-morph into an athletic warrior.

### ***Read Your Notes***

If your athlete is being out played and can't find an answer to get into the match, they should have their patterns and plans in print and easily accessible. Remind them to read their notes. Being solution oriented is a one of the first signs that your athlete is progressing into the higher levels of the game.

Remind your athlete that all you seek is effort and the confidence to trust their training. Remember my motto:

***“Practice in the manner you’re expected to perform...then perform in the manner you’ve practiced.”***

## POST-MATCH ENTOURAGE COMMUNICATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

After a match, coaches and parents should consider their own personal frustration and maturity level before discussing the match details with your athlete. A few minutes after they win a title or suffer a heartbreaking loss may not be the best time for performance analysis.

However, sometimes the next match may be within an hour and time is a factor and you may need to regroup and refocus the athlete. In this case, it is best to quickly let go of the last match and restart your pre-match routines and rituals.

### ***Player Post Match Responsibilities***

Champions understand the deep need for continued improvement. It is in your athlete's best interest to let go of the need to always "win" and focus their attention on improving. Listen to the top pro's in any post-match interview- they continually speak about improving and hitting performance goals. They don't say, "I have to win!" They most often speak of the desire to improve.

### ***Parental Post Match Job Descriptions***

- Assist your athlete in their static stretching, nutrition/hydration requirements.
- Wait an appropriate amount of time before discussing the match.
- Begin match reviews with a glaring over view of the athlete's strengths.
- Later, remind the athlete to complete their match logs to assist the coaches in future lesson topics.



- If you weren't present, replace asking "Did you win?" with "Did you have fun?", "Did you execute your game plan?"
- Organize your match charts and/or videos to be distributed to your athlete's entourage of coaches.

### ***Match Logs Quantify Performances***

Parents, let me fill you in on a typical junior-coach, post-match conversation. While it's nice to assume that there is post-match analysis going on, it honestly sounds something like this:

**Coach:** "So, how was the tournament last weekend Joey?"

You're child: "Sucked"

**Coach:** "Why? Tell me about it"

You're Child: "I lost..."

**Coach:** "Did you hit your performance goals?"

You're Child: "I don't know?"

**Coach:** "Well, did you enjoy competing?"

You're Child: "NO... I lost remember..."

Match logs are simply organizational tools used to assist your youngster in understanding and critiquing their match performance. Match logs are designed to be completed by the player. Self-assessment is important. The athlete often has a very different view of their performance than the parent watching the very same match.

Coaches want to know how the child felt about their performance and "the devils in the details!" Future improvement relies on detailed match analysis. These match logs are great conversation starters for the player-coach post-match training sessions. Begin by asking your child to complete a personalized assessment of their performance

after each match. Use the match log found in Section VII Customized Player Evaluation section as a sample blue print to customize your very own.

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## MATCH CHARTING AND TYPES OF CHARTS

Charting matches will allow you, the parents to systematically evaluate your athlete's performance. Maximizing potential at the quickest rate comes from actually providing your entourage of coach's quantifiable data. Without regular tournament performance assessments, your child's coaches are simply "winging" the lesson...and that isn't very efficient, is it?

Unless you're paying a high IQ coach to observe and chart your child's matches, it falls into your match day job description. So why is charting valuable in raising athletic royalty?

Charting discovers your child's efficiencies and deficiencies. Not only will they assist the coaches in correcting the actual cause of your athlete's losses, it is also a great stress buster for you as you sit and watch the matches. Charting also provides facts versus opinions. Charting will help you spot what I call "Reoccurring Nightmares." These issues tend to show up week after week. The below true story illustrates facts versus opinions.

*A few years ago I was hired to assist a fourteen year old, #1 player in Florida. We pre-set three performance goals before the match versus the older, bigger, stronger opponent. One was to isolate his backhand and serve about 75-80% to that weaker backhand side to control the court.*

*As I charted the boys 16's tournament match, an interesting observation kept reoccurring. My student had a decent service motion, nice speed and spin but kept getting broken. As I charted his serve, I tracked his percentage of serves to the opponent's terrific forehand versus pitiful backhand. Ironically, this top Floridian kept "feeding the opponents forehand." In the 3-6, 3-6 semi-final loss, he served 81% to the opponent's forehand!*

*After the match, we went for a smoothy to relax a bit. When he was ready to discuss the match, I asked "How did you do with isolating his backhand?" "Good" was his reply. Then I asked. "What do you estimate your serving percentages were serving to his backhand versus his forehand?" "Um...I think I served about 80% to his backhand" was his reply. Case and point- athletes often have a very different view of their performance.*

### ***Nine Different Types of Charts***

There are very different types of charts used to identify different issues. You can get as detailed or as basic as you like depending on maturity and ability level.... (And I'm talking about the parent's...maturity and ability level...haha.) Below are nine different charts that I have designed to spot strengths and weakness.

#### ***1) Unforced Error versus Winner Chart***

Focus: Is your athlete committing about 6 unforced errors to making 10 winners every set like the current National Champions?

#### ***2) Serving Percentage Charts***

Focus: Is your athletes first serve percentage around 65%? How often are they serving to the opponent's strengths or weaknesses?

#### ***3) Type of Error Chart***

Focus: Where do their errors come from: offensive, neutral or defensive? Does your child choose offense when they should be hitting a neutral shot?

#### ***4) Cause of Error Charts***

Focus: Knowing the cause of the error is the first step in error correction. What was the cause of the error? (Stroke mechanics, shot selection, movement, emotional/focus)

### ***5) Court Positioning Chart***

Focus: Where were they standing when their points were won and lost? (Player positioned behind the court versus playing inside the court.)

### ***6) Mega Point Chart***

Focus: Spotting the critical game points and then executing the proper pattern is a key to winning those close matches. Does your child spot and control the tipping points?

### ***7) Length of Point Chart***

Focus: What's your child's frustration tolerance level? How many points last 3 balls or less versus points lasting 4 balls or more? Do they win more long or short points?

### ***8) Depth of Groundstroke Chart***

Focus: What percentage of your athlete's ground strokes land inside the service boxes versus the back court? Do they know why "Heavy and high...makes em cry?"

### ***9) Between Point Ritual Chart***

Focus: Most of the time spent in a match is in-between points. How often does your athlete apply critical between point internal and external rituals?

Special Note: Many parents get stuck in a rut of utilizing the exact same chart (paper or app.) I highly recommend utilizing all 9 charts to quantify data.

For those new to charting matches, many parents have found it successful to utilize one chart a month and focus on their athlete's ability to simply improve a singular performance goal. Be aware that charts will be slightly different depending on the style of opponent your child is facing.

If charting data during your child's matches isn't something you are comfortable doing, I suggest hiring an experienced coach to act as your athlete's tournament traveling coach.

To purchase a PDF copy of the eBook: The Match Chart Collection visit: [www.maximizingtennispotential.com](http://www.maximizingtennispotential.com) (A PDF copy makes it easier to print copies of each chart.)

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## MATCH DAY VIDEO ANALYSIS

Experts agree that visual learning is the most common learning style. Professional athletes in every field get a leg up on their competition by analyzing their performance through video replay. Match day video analysis quantifies performance and reinforces future quality instruction.

More often than not, tournament champions have developed skills that go far beyond good strokes. Often it is the underdeveloped, hidden components that separate the early losers from the champions. Video analysis of match day performances can provide proof of actual tennis performance versus perceived tennis performance.

Often, parents and coaches see the same re-occurring performance nightmares match after match but guess who's never actually seen the event from a clear perspective? The Athlete.

During the heat of battle, over analyzing the performance is not advisable. It is highly recommended to persuade players, along with their coaches, to self-diagnose match day issues via video after the event. Parents if you are not providing your child's coaches with match day videos, you're not doing your job.

***“After each tournament, hire an experienced coach to analyze match day performance alongside your child. This is a non-hitting classroom session.”***

Parents, keep in mind that it is often meaningful to video the pre-match routines and rituals, the actual match and the post-match routines and rituals. Flaws in any of the three phases may lead to poor performances and serious lack of results.

Note: Below are twenty five essential issues that often separate the early round losers from the champions. It may be beneficial to break out the video camera for proof and/or clarity. Hire a trained eye to assist in spotting those hidden match day flaws and give your child a real chance at performing at peak potential. (Video recording can be done with a smart phone or with a mounted video camera.)

### ***Pre-Match Routines:***

- Equipment preparation
- De-stressing versus over stressing environment
- Managing the overflow of adrenaline
- Opponent profiling
- Proper nutrition and hydration
- Use of dynamic stretching
- Essential warm up routines
- Quiet time visualization

### ***Match Performance:***

- Proper use of between point rituals and changeover rituals
- Strokes: efficiencies and deficiencies
- Patterns and plays: strengths and weaknesses
- Identifying the actual cause of the errors
- Opponent dissecting/match awareness
- Score management and real time problem solving
- Emotional performance state
- Universal movement flaws (Footwork)
- Cognitive processing speed (Hesitation)
- Correctly spotting and playing positive and negative “Mega” points
- Length of peak performing
- Controlling the “energy-flow” of the match



### ***Post-Match Rituals and Routines:***

- Recovery
- Static stretching
- Nutrition and hydration
- Opponent scouting
- Match logs

*As I conduct high performance player assessments around the world it is amazing that even top ITF players and their coaches have never even heard of quantifying their performances in such detail.*

*As parents, it is up to you to organize video analysis and review sessions. As coaches, it is up to you to suggest video analysis and review sessions to be initiated. And it is up to you, the player, to be willing to “allow” video analysis and review sessions.*

Match day analysis is a staple for NCAA college athletes and professional tennis players and their entourages. Evaluating performance is essential for growth. I recommend two important steps prior to beginning the process of match day video analysis:

***1) Purchase a High-Speed Video Camera.*** It is often essential to utilize slow motion play back to actually catch the hundreds of issues not seen by the human eye. Parents reading this may ask “Isn’t it expensive to purchase high speed cameras and play back equipment?” The answer is ...no, if you have a smart phone, it’s as easy as purchasing the “Coaches Eye” App. It costs under \$10.00 in most countries. It is a great product.

***2) Hire a Well-Trained Teacher.*** A high tennis IQ coach is essential to quantified data. A well trained eye can spot dozens of issues that simply pass right by 95% of the parents and players watching the exact same film.

*Most coaches do practice court “static” stroke mechanic’s video analysis. Coaches, please take it one step further and begin to apply match play video analysis. It often dispels the confusion over what players believe they are doing and the reality of their performances. It will assist the entourage in discovering a whole new world of improvement opportunities.*

## NAVIGATING THE ATHLETE'S PATHWAYS

Regardless of the stage of development, parents should seek coaches and trainers with high tennis IQ's and optimistic attitudes- which will stimulates growth and happiness. Hire great educators to join your elite team and they will take your child beyond your wildest dreams.

## IDENTIFYING AND MOTIVATING TALENT

So, you've got a promising young talent, that's a great start. Now how do you manage that talent, their entourage of coaches, academies and teams?

Let's look deeper into the facts and myths of talent. There are a lot of myths surrounding the word "Talent." If sheer natural talent was gifted to an individual, then the naturally talented would drift to the top without effort. Unfortunately, by the time a junior reaches the competitive stages of the game; their sheer physical talent isn't enough. Why? Because at the high performance level, most of their competitors are also solid athletes, but with great work ethic, deep desire and a deliberate, customized developmental plan.

I know... many of you reading this may be thinking:

***"Yeah but...My kid was endowed by my superior gene pool; they inherited my awesomeness ...so they are obviously destined for greatness."***

While that may be true, success at the higher level demands a bit more than genes. It takes years and years of applying a customized deliberate developmental plan.

Talent is considered by most to be a genetic predisposition, a sense of natural ability handed down through the family gene pool. Expert educators in various fields agree that every decade one truly gifted individual walks through their doors. Does this mean that most truly successful people aren't genuinely talented or does it mean that talent is more than merely good genes?

***“Junior talent is only a foreshadowing of future greatness.”***

Talent is a kid with potential. No, it's even more than that. It's a kid with potential with parents who were deeply involved in the development of skills and the stimulation of passion. So, what does this new definition of talent mean for the rest of us mere mortals? It means that if a child has parents who are determined and passionate about the game and extremely patient and persistent, they've got a real shot at greatness!

In every field talent is a learned behavior. What do Wayne Gretsky, Yo-Yo Ma, Bill Gates, Bobby Fischer, Tiger Woods, Mozart, Miley Cyrus, Bruno Mars and Michelangelo have in common with tennis greats? They were all children who developed a remarkable talent from an early age. A spark became a flame as they persistently developed their talent. What seems now like a god given natural gift is actually a deliberate, customized learned behavior.

In my opinion, most of the ATP and WTA professionals you watch on television did not demonstrate early phenomenal promise. You can YouTube most of today's stars playing tennis at the earliest stages. Guess what you'll see? A bunch of average looking kids enjoying the process of learning. They simply were solid athletes, with potential who were nurtured the love for the game.

***“Talent is determination, passion and persistence.”***

A question often asked during my tennis parent workshops is, “How do we motivate our athlete?” When it comes to instigating the hunger, it may prove wise to understand what “buttons” to push as you encourage your special athlete.

There are two very powerful psychological forces, extrinsic and intrinsic that parents and coaches should identify when motivating their athletes.

***Extrinsic Motivation:*** Implies being motivated by outside forces. Examples include: Praise- and lots of it! Belief in their abilities by the entourage, trophies, awards, playing for a D-1 NCAA squad, ensuring a better future, money, and/or fame.

***Intrinsic Motivation:*** Implies being motivated by inner forces. Examples include: a love for the mastery of the game, the need to win or the hatred of losing, keeping up with a successful siblings, seeing someone just like them succeed so they believe they can also succeed, finding the journey challenging and enjoyable.

## KEYS TO ACCELERATING LEARNING

How do you take a kid with potential and develop them into a proven champion? What predetermines their success? How do you convince them that they're special? What factors build passion? How does a parent and coach develop a consistent winner?

*Let's use my step- daughter Sarah Fansler as a quantifiable example of gauging the development of a kid's potential. Most would agree that Sarah had a flair for the game. She was ranked top in the nation. Sarah won multiple gold, silver and bronze balls. She won a total of 10 U.S. National titles. She's played the junior U.S. Open twice and the adult U.S. Open once before the age of 16. She was honored as the NCAA College Freshman of the year while at USC.*

*Now, let's uncover her underlying story and take a deeper look at Sarah's training regimen. As a junior player, Sarah had spent six years training full time. That's about 20 hours a week or a thousand hours a year practicing in the manner in which she was expected to perform. Sarah only followed a deliberate, customized developmental plan.*

*Sarah did a private lesson with me from 6:30am -7:30am before getting ready for school. Sarah's after-school regimen included playing full matches against paid college players and/or off-court training at a specialized gym called "Get Fit", a Vert system off-court training center. After dinner Sarah and I drilled for an additional hour and a half. On weekends, Sarah played tournaments.*

*Sarah followed my Customized Player Evaluation (Found in section VII) - a formula for deep accelerated learning. Her training regimen was more intense than the typical training program of an average high performance player. The hidden factor to her tennis success was her hard work on and off the court each week. The accelerated learning process catapulted Sarah above her rivals.*

***“You can’t simply place your athlete in with the group...  
if you actually want them to get ahead of the group!”***

So, was Sarah’s success due to her natural gifts or was it earned through a planned process? My answer is that approximately 20 percent of Sarah’s junior success was due to her natural talents, 80 percent was due to her learned behaviors. The development of life lessons was a major factor.

So talent is actually measured by the preparation before the performance. Often professionals say “I didn’t just win this event today...I won it through the last three months of customized preparation.”

So, my question to the parents and coaches is: What’s your deliberate, customized developmental plan for your athlete?



## MANAGING ACCELERATED LEARNING

It's our job as tennis coaches and parents to organize accelerated learning.

***“Accelerated learning is the art and science of applying quality over quantity.”***

Accelerated learning starts with you, the parent. The first step in managing the process is digesting the information presented in *The Tennis Parent's Bible*. Once you have immersed yourself into the process of athletic development, you are better equipped to assist your coaches in prioritizing and accelerating your athlete's learning curve.

A marvelous example of applying accelerated learning is recognizing when the athlete should stop focusing solely on block learning repetition and shift to the multi-tasking harmony of integrating each component together. Accelerated learning starts with managing the development of consistent skill sets through flexible skills training.

***Consistent skill set*** training is simply focusing on developing one component of the athlete's game in isolation. Examples include:

- A motor programming sequences that needs to be followed to ensure a sound fundamental stroke.
- A specific mental strategic-shot sequencing pattern designed to beat a retriever.
- An emotional protocol rehearsed to help close out a 5-2 lead.
- An athletic component such as agility around the tennis court.

***Flexible skill set*** training is integrating the “games approach” to learning. High level tennis players have been taught to quickly quantify game situations, make multiple pre-set situational decisions and execute the correct responses. Cognitive processing skills need to be integrated early.

***“A common mistake I witness around the globe is the obsession of focusing solely on acquiring perfect fundamental strokes in a block learning environment.”***

I recommend introducing multi-tasking drills and problem solving situations as soon as possible. This is a form of stimuli overload. Examples include: Adding a stress related emotional element to a stroke production drill. Combine on-court quickness with a specific sequence of patterns. By overloading the athlete’s stimuli in practice, the uncomfortable becomes more comfortable. Being okay with feeling uncomfortable prepares the player for the integrated approach needed in match play.

*Different sports require different brain functions and development. A world class figure skater or gymnast simply focuses on recreating the exact sequence. Their performance goal is to match their exact pre-determined routine. In their performance they only recreate, they don’t create. So, would they train with flexible-skill sets? Not likely.*

*Should a tennis player train flexible-skill sets? You bet! Playing sports like basketball, hockey, soccer or tennis requires random split second decisions making skills. It’s about adaptation, creativity, spotting options and aborting missions. Flexibility and millisecond decision making “on the fly” are critical functions in flexible skill set dominate sports.*

## FINDING THE RIGHT TEACHING PROFESSIONAL

***“When selecting a pro, you're not just paying for the hour on court...but hopefully you're paying for the thousands of hours of experience the coach has acquired solving similar issues.”***

Initial instructors are usually chosen by proximity, cost and availability. Once your youngster moves into the competitive stage, it's time to identify the styles and personalities of coaches that fit your child's needs. Yes, it is perfectly acceptable to have more than one coach. In this day and age, top players have an entourage of technical teachers, hitters, mental and emotional experts, off-court athleticism experts and physical therapists. The key to success is unity among the entourage.

*A great example is ATP star Sam Querrey. When I worked with Sam in his early teens we focused on the mental/emotional side of his development. His parents Chris and Mike always employed a terrific team of hitters, coaches and clinics to provide world class instruction for their son.*

Profiling a coach before a relationship begins is recommended. Most confident coaches will welcome you to simply sit and observe their lessons before committing to lessons. There are many factors to consider when seeking a new coach. The first is what personality and style best suites your athlete? Listed below are eight types of coaches that you may be employing along your journey.

### ***Coaching Styles:***

The Detailed, Analyzer

The Off Court Fitness Expert

The Kind and Fun Loving Coach

The Hitter

The Emotional, Psychological Coach

The Strategizer

The Academy Recruiter

The Drill Sergeant

### ***Facts to Consider When Selecting a Pro***

Finding a Pro is easy. Finding the right Pro will require more thought and leg work. You may be using different types of Pros for different reasons. Below are a few insider tips to help you hire your entourage of coaches:

- In every region, only a very small percentage of pros actually teach the top players. (There are very big differences between teachers and recruiters.)
- Look for a coach who's enjoying what they do, it's contagious.
- Seek out a Pro that is so busy, that they don't need you.
- The 10,000 hour rule applies! Being a master coach is a learned experience.
- Seek out a Pro who understands your child's unique Brain and Body Type (Genetic Predisposition).
- Make sure the coach is asking questions, customizing and targeting their lessons.
- Ask every player that beats your kid, "Great match...who is your coach? Where do you train?"

- Ask a prospective coach, “We’ve heard great things about you, may we come and observe a few of your lessons?”
- Pay the coach to chart a match and devise his game plan for improvement. Meet regarding his observations and suggestions.
- Ask for a resume and who they trained under. (As a teacher- not as a player.)
- Look for a coach that encourages independent thinking versus dependent thinking.
- While there are exceptions, a former ATP/WTA challenger player does not always translate into a great teacher. The most successful tennis coaches were not the most successful tour players.
- Be wary of a Pro that discourages you from hitting with other Pro’s, hitters or trainers!

SPECIAL NOTE: To avoid confusion, employ one coach per job at any given time. Two different coaches employed to fix a serve may prove to be extremely confusing for your child. Conflicting information and battling egos spells trouble!

***“It often proves beneficial to secretly observe a coach or academies without the coaching staff knowing you are a future client. This experience will provide you with an honest assessment of their program.”***

## SIGNS OF A HIGH IQ TENNIS COACH

Here are a few insights to remember when seeking a new coach. Great tennis coaches offer the necessary hands on involvement with as little coddling as possible.

***“Great coaches don’t need you or your athlete...you need them.”***

They deeply understand the depth of the science behind the strokes while considering the athletes personal flair. A great coach offers structure with the freedom to explore. Lastly, a great coach is a team player who always puts their students’ needs above their own.

### ***Characteristics of an Elite Tennis Coach:***

- Optimistic.
- Encourages observation of his/her lessons.
- Listens to you and your child.
- Combines fun and laughter with serious learning.
- Doesn’t use a one size fits all approach to development.
- Understands personality profiling, brain typing & body typing.
- Organizes a deliberate customize blueprint for your child’s development.
- Eager to view your match charts and match video analysis (during scheduled lesson times.)
- Help define parental roles and responsibilities.
- Knowledgeable of the essential components of a high performance tennis player.
- Understands the importance of positive parental behaviors.

- Assist in organizing an entourage of mental/emotional trainers, off-court fitness experts and physical therapists- as needed.
- Assist in the logistics of raising athletic royalty.
- Available for monthly entourage team meetings.
- Welcomes parent's emails and progressive dialogue.
- Helps organize the player's weekly developmental schedule.
- Assist in organizing the player's tournament schedule.
- Encourage parents to use tools such as: Reading Raising Athletic Royalty.
- Conducts parental workshops.
- Recommend that the parents educate themselves through seminars, workshops and educational materials.
- Teach life lessons through the sport of tennis.
- Willing and able to be a mediator between the child and the parent.

Parents, world class coaches are very hard to find. Finding one with free time in their busy schedule is even tougher.

***“Plan on compensating your elite coach for their time on court and off court. If you find one with the above characteristics, hold onto them for dear life.”***

## THE “PROS AND CONS” OF HIGH SCHOOL TENNIS

Playing high school ball is a rite of passage issue for the high performance athlete. The benefits of high school tennis lean towards life experiences rather than excelled tennis growth. There are exceptions to any rule, so let's take a deeper look at this interesting question.

The answer is a bit complicated. It greatly depends on your child's level, needs and goals. It also depends greatly on the level of the possible teammates and coaching staff at your child's high school. Some high school teams I work with are better than most college teams.

### ***Is High School ball right for your athlete?***

Mark is a student of mine. He is a SCTA sectionally ranked player in the top 20. His national ranking is around 60. He is diligent about his tennis and spends about 20 hours training extremely hard every week. He has reached the semis of three national events and his long term goals are to play for Peter Smith at his dream school USC.

His dad is a former player and they are certain he will play a minimum of two years on the ATP futures and challenger tours after college. At his high school, there is one other fairly serious player on the team. The high school coach is a super nice guy. He is the biology teacher. He is coaching because he used to play high school ball and enjoys the game. The coach runs an “optional” fee based 6 week pre-season training camp. Of course, paying and attending greatly increases an athlete's chances of playing varsity for the team. Now let's review the positive and negative sides of high school ball for Mark and his family:



## ***POSITIVE Side to Playing High School Tennis:***

### ***Plenty of Court Time!***

On non-match days, they hit about 2 hours a day, grooving strokes, running through tennis drills and exercising. On match days they play matches and watch team-mates play matches.

### ***Wonderful Team Atmosphere***

Although tennis is an individual sport, playing high school tennis provides the players with the benefits of team sports. Such as camaraderie, cooperation and social interaction skills.

### ***Fun Peer Group Socialization***

Team tennis encourages players to be more sociable in different environments. They have to deal with different people, who may or may not be their friends. The van trips alone, to and from matches are a blast.

### ***Big Fish in a Small Pond Experience***

Mark feels average participating in nationals at his ranking level. At high school he is the king! Even the cheer leaders know him.

### ***Low Cost***

Mark's parents wrote a check for \$650.00 to the booster club for the whole 4 month!

### ***Less Driving To Lessons and Tournaments***

Mark's parents don't have to worry about driving him anywhere.

## ***NEGATIVE Side to Playing High School Tennis:***

### ***Developing Bad Habits***

After spending four months on court with less devoted “hobbyists”, Mark develops bad work ethic issues, poor shot selection and poor mental toughness.

### ***Quantity versus Quality Practice Time***

Most often Mark is goofing off with intermediate teammates or even assisting them with their games. While on the court, he’s even texting friends and making plans for Friday’s party.

### ***Quality of Match Level***

Mark wins 8 out of 10 matches 6-0. Winning most matches easily may be great for his ego but not for his long term development. Mark needs a competitive environment to continue to grow and improve.

### ***College Scholarship Factor***

According to top Division 1 coaches speaking at my seminars, Coaches look at national rankings and ITF rankings. They don’t consider high school ball as a High Performance Level.

### ***The Success Formula***

Remember that the success formula is spending approximately 20 hours of serious training every week for approximately 10 years. Is playing high school tennis for 4 consecutive months 4 years in a row in Mark’s developmental plan?

### ***Rebuilding the Level***

It actually takes an additional 2 months of serious physical, mental and emotional training after the high school season ends to re-establish the high level Mark was playing before the season. Now, factor in a six month loss in training time.

As Mark chose to de-stress and have fun playing high school ball for 4 months. His rivals who have chosen to skip high school tennis have continued to improve their games as well as their rankings.

### ***Bottom Line: Playing High School Tennis***

It is important to reiterate that most high school age players are not as devoted as Mark. Others may be just as serious but need to de-compress and simply play social tennis for a season or two. If so, I recommend playing their freshman year to get a little famous at their new school and then again their senior year after they have signed their letter of intent to play for their college.

I encourage taking some time to consider all these variables. If your child is more of a “hobbyist”, high school ball is one of the best experiences available. However, if your child is a phenom, a compromise may be in order. It may be best to have a meeting with the coach and/or athletic director and organize a win-win schedule. Often top players and their parents can negotiate a workable schedule with the high school coach.

For elite players considering high school tennis, the following three topics should be addressed (negotiated) prior to committing to the high school season:

- 1) Skipping most practice session in lieu of their private sessions.
- 2) Scheduling to only play the tougher rival matches.
- 3) Playing enough matches in order to qualify for the season ending state championships.

## THE “PROS AND CONS” OF TENNIS ACADEMIES

This is a touchy subject. Some of my best friends and lifelong business partners run successful academies. I am often presented business plans to open a full time academy, but I am convinced that a new blueprint is needed to ensure that each student is receiving the customized attention he/she deserves. My opinion regarding academies is a result of my years of professional experience- from my successful Mental/Emotional Tennis Workshops to opening and directing clubs and academies since the mid 1980's in the toughest USTA section- Southern California. These include Vic Braden Tennis Colleges, the Rancho San Clemente Tennis Club and the Sherwood Country Club- some of Southern California's most prestigious clubs. Academies are a very familiar territory.

***“Just as tennis players can be placed into a beginner, intermediate and advanced categories, so can instructors and academies.”***

The below pros and cons are examples of the typical “intermediate” academy found around the world.

### ***Attending an Academy Pros:***

- Academies provide a terrific social environment for the young athletes. The players can hang out with their peers of both genders.
- Players can experience the bonding of a team versus the individualism the sport requires.
- Lucky players receive free t-shirts with the academies logo.

- Players get to travel in the Academy van to and from events.
- Academies provide a convenient one-stop shop for parents. In essence, the parents can rely on others to organize and develop their child's career.
- Most academies provide plenty of free hitting, off-court training options and match play for the "motivated" individuals.
- Academies provide live ball repetition. Players grow from the daily battle.
- Players experience many different coaches and coaching styles.

#### ***Attending an Academy Cons:***

- Intermediate academies often recruit their top players AFTER a quality teacher has developed the student's skills.
- The paying customer should receive instruction equal to that given to the elite superstars, whom often attend for FREE. Unfortunately, in some cases, their best coaches are busy working privately with the non-paying super stars and NOT with your child.
- In order to maximize potential at the quickest rate, detailed customization of the lesson plans are required. For example, if a player has holes in their transition game, sending them down to court #6 to get in line with the rest of the group and hit forehands and backhands may not be in the student's best interest.
- Paying customers do not progress at the quickest rate.

- Often they have to win to move up into the “higher” level courts. This forces the junior to choose outcome goals over performance goals. This means they avoid building their new weapons as they choose to use their old comfortable “flawed strokes” to try to win. This behavior stalls the exact progression you seek.
- A great young talent positioned in an unsupervised setting will often learn how to goof off, throw their racquet, waste time, go for low percentage shots, over hit, and give half effort.
- Often inexperienced, overworked introductory coaches are employed to oversee the paying customers.

The truth is that most juniors are not truly interested in putting the hard work required to be a National Champion. They are hobbyist. In that situation, intermediate academies could be the right choice. Remember, tennis is a terrific hobby for most players. If your athlete is serious and holds a higher ranking than most players in the academy, you may be able to negotiate attending for FREE in exchange for attracting lower ranked, paying customers to the program. Also, it's important to note that some academies give every attendee a price break thus giving everyone a partial scholarship. That is, if you pay up front! Folks, that's marketing 101.

It is not uncommon for a young, promising athlete to be approached numerous times per tournament by different academy recruiters. Please don't confuse a smooth “tournament” academy recruiter with a skilled tennis teacher.

Once again, I highly recommend secretly observing all future teams, coaches and academies before taking part in the action. Find out the day and times of their operation and quietly watch without them knowing you are there. This takes

away the “dog & pony” show as you get a realistic perspective of their capabilities.

In the last few decades, most park & rec’s, high school courts, apartment complexes, college courts, country clubs and city facilities have changed the name of their after school junior tennis program to an academy. It sounds more official, doesn’t it?

## **SECTION III**

### **THE MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL TENNIS COMPONENTS**

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## THE MENTAL COMPONENT: STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

High performance athletics demands strong mental skills. Top competitors regularly train their customized mental game components which are their personal best patterns, strategies and tactics. Well-rehearsed patterns make for a mentally fit competitor.

## STRATEGY MADE EASY

Strategy can be so easy yet so complicated. Strategy is changing, adapting and yet ritualistic. It is science and art. It is psychological yet physiological. It can be beautiful and oh so ugly. Strategy applied correctly allows your child to meet the opponent under advantageous conditions. Applying strategy keeps your child focused and in the correct optimal performance state of mind.

Let's look at strategy in a simple but effective format. Below are three categories of on-court strategy that elite players must understand and master: generic, stylistic and customized.

### ***Generic Strategy***

Generic strategy is simply applying the player's core strengths with pre-planned patterns and strategies. The goal is to expose a player's natural strengths and force their opponent to respond to those strengths. Generic strategy consist of your child's optimal serving patterns, return patterns, rally patterns, short ball options and net rushing patterns. These tactics are identified and practiced prior to match play and will be used January through December, from the first round through the finals, in Miami or Moscow, on clay or on hard courts. The Generic strategy is your child's everyday "nuts and bolts" game plan. Learning to apply one's genetic tactical assault, will lead to your athlete hitting the same old "boring" winners match after match.

If your athlete's generic (day-in-day-out) strategy is working, there is no need for change. In fact, juniors who change a winning strategy usually suffer the consequences. If it is not working, then it's simply time to shift into the second phase of strategy called stylistic strategy.

### ***Stylistic Strategy***

Stylistic strategy is your child's ability to adapt tactics depending on the current style of the opponent. Remind your child not to change their winning tactical system just because the opponent changes game styles. A change is only made if the opponent starts to win and the momentum switches to the opponent's favor. Styles include retriever, hard hitting baseliner and all court players. It is imperative that high performance tennis players develop and rehearse patterns used to beat each style of opponent.

If your athlete has spotted the opponent's style of play and is still struggling, I recommend shifting focus to the third tier called custom strategy.

*A smart competitor will change a losing style of play (shift to plan B). Has your child developed rock solid B and C game plans? The players who are winning national titles also have solid B and C game plans. Please remind your athletes to rehearse all three styles of play.*

*Encourage your child to play lesser players in practice sets. This will allow them to rehearse their B and C game plans- often your child's A plan (hard hitting baseliners-style) is exactly what the opponent enjoys and playing that system is a losing proposition. Shifting to plan B (steady retriever- style) may be ugly but is the exact system the opponent hates playing against and an extremely difficult match becomes another routine win.*

### ***Custom Strategy***

Custom strategy is your child's ability to adapt to the day. Your child has to customize to different environmental elements (wind, heat, and shadows), court speeds, brand of ball, elevation as well as the particular strengths and weaknesses of the current opponent (See Opponent Profiling later in this section.)

A common word in the custom strategy phase is tendencies.

*To borrow from the boxing world, your child needs to spot what is causing the opponent to “bleed” and then do it more. It is just as important for your child to spot what is causing their own “bleeding” and systematically stop the bleeding.*

### ***When to Modify versus Change:***

If your child is competing well in every game and often has the winning shot on his/her racquet, it is in their best interest to modify their tactics slightly while keeping the current strategic style of play. If they are losing and are not even in the points or games, a much larger shift of complete game styles may be in order. (For example: Take a bathroom break then change from a hard hitting baseliner to a steady retriever style of play.)

### ***Strategy Basics:***

- 1) Get 66% of your first serves in and preferably into the opponent's weaker side.
- 2) Simply return deep balls high, heavy and deep.
- 3) Attack any ball landing inside your short ball range.
- 4) Apply the laws of offense, neutral and defensive shot selection.

## A NEW WAY TO LOOK AT STRATEGY

To understand on-court control dramas, take a minute and think of a tennis match as a control contest. Each player is attempting to pull their opponent into their style of play to gain command of the match.

### ***Three Control Dramas Seen in High Level Tennis:***

- 1) The Power Contest
- 2) The Speed Contest
- 3) The Patience Contest

To simplify the process, the goal of competition is to choose the contest your athlete performs best. Then formulate a plan to PULL their opponent out of their own world and into your athlete's world. Let's look a little deeper, yet keep it simple:

*I have a top 300 WTA player training with me. We have customized her game plan to hide her weaknesses and expose her strengths. Her body type and brain type play a major role in customizing her success.*

### ***Weaknesses***

Ann is light in stature. Her opponents are generally much bigger and stronger. We checked off and excluded the "Power Contest" from her A game plan. This is not to say that she might use power as a B or C game plan. Ann also has focus issues. We checked off the "Patience Contest" and excluded it as her A game plan.

### ***Strengths***

Ann possesses great speed and anticipatory skills. We chose the “Speed Contest” as her A game plan. Ann is extremely intuitive. She can sense when the opponent is vulnerable and knows “How” and “When” to move in and take away the opponents recovery and decision making time.

When Ann chooses to play her “Speed Contest”, she most often is able to move the bigger girls enough to force errors. She can also pull the retrievers off the court to open up winning angles. When Ann chooses to get into a “boomball-power” contest with bigger, stronger girls, she loses. When she chooses to out moonball a “World Class” moonballer she loses!

As I mentioned earlier, this section should be a conversation opener with your athlete and their entourage. Knowing who you are is an important step in formulating your most successful game plans.

## TEN ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF THE MENTALLY TOUGH COMPETITOR

Because the mental-emotional components are so often misdiagnosed, let's begin by describing the difference between the mental and emotional components. Mental toughness is the knowledge of the analytical functions of competition- the X's and O's of strategy and tactics. Emotional toughness is the ability to control feelings and emotions during competition- courage through confrontation, focus for the duration, controlling nerves, fear and self-doubt, which are categorized as performance anxieties. Keep in mind that the mental-emotional components are often intertwined. Ask your child's coaches to meet regarding these important elements. My bet is that they'll have terrific insight to assist your athlete in their quest for mental toughness.

### ***Ten Essential Components of the Mental/Emotional Tough Competitor:***

#### ***1) Dedicate physically, mentally and emotionally to the process of becoming mentally tough.***

Without full commitment, it is unlikely mental toughness will be achieved. Mental/emotional toughness can only be mastered by someone who is ready to dig deeper into the strategic, stubborn protocols of winning and the psychology of defeating their own demons. (Known as performance anxieties.)

#### ***2) Acknowledge that being mentally/emotionally tough isn't reserved for the gifted few.***

Mental/emotional toughness as well as mental/emotional weakness is a learned-earned behavior.

People around the world from the passive Buddhist monks to the aggressive Navy Seals spend each day developing their

mental/emotional toughness skills. Some juniors have unknowingly invented their own negative mental/emotional weakness protocols because they are not versed in the process of pre-set protocols. So they return to their negative behaviors under stress. Such as racquet cracking, language outburst, etc.

***3) Decide to stay the course and confront hardship instead of bailing out at the first sign of confrontation.***

Psychologists call it the fight or flight syndrome. Choosing to persevere through difficult circumstances leads to improved confidence. Getting in superb physical shape is a great place to start. Begin the journey by fighting through exhaustion, pain and discomfort.

***4) On a daily basis, multi-task and build the mental/emotional muscles along with stroke production.***

Closing out every single drill develops mental/emotional toughness. Apply negative scoring during each physical drill on court to rehearse overcoming hardships. (Drill to 10 - subtracting 1 for each error.)

***5) Commit to a deliberate customized training regimen. Confidence, belief and self-trust are learned and earned.***

Choosing to do what the moment demands within a millisecond requires preset protocol training. This is deliberate, customized repetition that incorporates how, when and why pre-set solutions are applied.

***6) Accept that becoming mentally tough requires sacrifice. You must choose to be a normal “kid” or a champion. You have to pick one...because you can't be both.***

Mental toughness requires you prioritize your time- putting everyday normal “kid stuff” aside, most of the time, as you becomes athletic royalty.



***7) Develop the ability to employ the art of intimidation and to raise the adrenaline level at crunch time.***

Raising positive energy at crunch time inflates the athlete's performance, while systematically deflates the opponent's performance. Intimidation begins pre-game as the athlete morphs into a "warrior." Staying in that 'warrior' mind-set or on-script throughout the competition is essential.

***8) Choose to be a courageous competitor - playing to win versus playing not to lose.***

Applying the strategically correct system the moment demands under pressure, without fear or hesitation, no matter the situation is essential.

***9) Master the ability to handle adversity – such as poor start times, adverse elements, occasional sickness, minor injuries, and/or gamesmanship.***

Choosing to see disadvantages as challenges versus obstacles too difficult to overcome is mental/emotional toughness.

***10) Persevere and be willing and able to remain on course and stay on-script longer...***

Most good athletes are able to perform like a 'Pro' occasionally. Greatness stems from an athlete's ability to perform good after good. Consistently remaining in the peak performance state is essential in the higher echelons of sports.

## HOW TO BUILD MENTAL TOUGHNESS

Players who are confident have a mentally tough aura about them. They are extremely intimidating because their confidence is obvious to all. It's evident in their body language and facial expressions. So, how can your athlete develop radiant confidence?

First of all, your athlete starts by reading about it. Then they earn it on the practice court. Mentally tough competitors earn this impenetrable wall of confidence by preparing properly. Mentally tough players are actually much more than just mentally tough. They are mechanically sound, emotionally unflappable and physically fit enough to thrive in third set warfare. Yes, they're actually mechanically tough, emotionally tough and physically tough.

Below is a checklist of components that need to be developed by your child's coaches. Remember, it is your job as the CEO to assist the coaches in raising athletic royalty.

### ***Developing Mental Toughness Checklist:***

#### ***Stroke Mechanics:***

- ☐ Develop reliable fundamental (primary) strokes.
- ☐ Develop a tool belt of secondary strokes.

#### ***Mental:***

- ☐ Organize & rehearse your child's top 7 patterns of play. (Generic Strategies)
- ☐ Rehearse patterns of play used to pull different styles of opponents out of their game. (Stylistic Strategies)

#### ***Emotional:***

- ☐ Organize their between point rituals & changeover rituals (both internal & external.)
- ☐ Pre-set protocols to handle performance anxieties.

***Athleticism:***

- ☐ Build the speed, agility and cardiovascular requirements needed to endure two separate three set matches a day.
- ☐ Build the strength and stamina required to close out 6 matches in a 3-5 day (64 player draw) event.

*My students have won close to 100 National titles to date. Each one had a parent and an entourage of great coaches who were very involved organizing and implementing their developmental plan. Most often, these champs worked their deliberate, customized organizational plan for 2-3 months before becoming National Champions.*

**Special Note to Parents:** A partially committed parent is simply a hobbyist. That's fine - tennis is an incredible hobby that teaches many life lessons. However, a hobbyist parent should be satisfied with raising a hobbyist tennis player and not expect champion results. In today's game, it's unfair to expect your child to become a champion without parental commitment.

## DEVELOPING YOUR ATHLETE'S TOP 7 PATTERNS

*Over a decade ago I conducted an on-court developmental case study with a group of similar age and ability level, top ranked Southern California players. For eight weeks, I trained a group of six athletes with the familiar old school, common academy methods. You've seen it a million times. It's basically playing catch, back and forth, grooving to each other all day. I called them the Red Group.*

*The other group, called the Blue Group was trained very different. We customized each athlete's Top 7 Patterns of play and religiously ran those patterns every single training session. These players focused on offense, neutral and defensive situational protocols and were not allowed to rally back and forth to the opponent. They played keep away for two months...never catch.*

***“Winning matches is a game of keep away... not a game of catch.”***

*After the two month period, the Blue Group beat the Red Group handily for five consecutive team matches. I then decided to permanently switch my training philosophy. My students started racking up national title after national title.*

It's time to work with your athlete's coach in designing your child's very own Top 7 Patterns. Reactive tennis is played at the intermediate levels of the game. It is simply reacting to the moment without any real plan. Proactive tennis is having a pre-set plan for every point. Proactive tennis forces the opponent to react to your strengths. These strengths come in the form of strokes and patterns. Most points in junior tennis are almost over when the server walks up to the line to serve, meaning ...points are typically short. That's why this section focuses on starting each point with a specific plan.

***“It is estimated that the average point played on the WTA/ATP professional tour is under 4 hits. This is why starting points with a plan is essential.”***

Remember, spectacular performances are preceded by spectacular preparation. It's time for your athlete to begin to prepare spectacularly.

Proactive competitors control the tight matches because they control the big points by routinely running their Top 7 Patterns. This means that on game points, mentally tough players run their very best patterns. This awareness, tips the odds in their favor.

I urge players to design and rehearse their Top 7 Patterns and begin to run these patterns religiously with their coaches through pattern repetitions. They then apply their Top 7 Patterns in practice matches and of course in real tournament competition.

### ***The “Top 7” Pattern Categories:***

- 1) Top Serving Pattern to the Deuce Side (2 Ball Sequence.)
- 2) Top Serving Pattern on the Ad Side (2 Ball Sequence.)
- 3) Favorite Return Pattern/Position versus a Big First Serve.
- 4) Favorite Pattern/Position versus a Weaker Second Serve.
- 5) Favorite Rally Pattern.
- 6) Favorite Short Ball Option.
- 7) Favorite Approach Shot Pattern.

*Lesson Learned: I brought some junior athletes to the Indian Wells Tennis Garden BNP Paribas Open with the purpose of dissecting the patterns used by the professional. Their mission was to chart the professional's Top7 Patterns.*

*During that chilly night in the California desert, Rafael Nadal ran his same old, boring winning service pattern on the ad side 82% of the time versus Ryan Harrison. Rafa hit a mid-tempo slice serve out wide to Ryan's backhand...ran around the return and "Abh-Hay" Rafa yells as he hit his inside out forehand into the opposing corner.  
Result: Rafa won routinely while conserving energy for future rounds.*

Assist your child's coaches by encouraging them to take your athlete's practice sessions up a few levels and replace simply grooving back and forth with grooving your athlete's customized Top 7 Patterns.

Later in this mental section we will look into the flip side of developing your athlete's Top 7 Patterns. In the opponent profiling section, we will uncover how and why it is also critical to develop the skills required to spot and defuse the opponent's Top 7 Patterns of play. This is an analytical function. Controlling the critical tipping points begins with anticipation.

## TIPPING POINT TENDENCIES

Experienced champions have developed seemingly hidden skill sets I call, Tipping Point Tendencies. To the untrained eye, as the athletes warm up, opponents may appear to be equally matched with similar physical abilities. It is during match play that tipping point tendencies become apparent. The game is on and “playing catch” is over and playing “keep away” begins. These pre-developed skill sets are the critical factors that tip a close match in ones favor.

The tipping points are those hidden moments in each match when an emotional energy shift is about to happen.

***“In close tennis matches, positive and negative energy and attitudes flows back and forth.”***

Most intermediate athletes and their parents don’t even realize that this critical struggle for power is taking place. That is... until now! Mental readiness is required to control the positive energy.

Think back to the last few times your athlete lost tight matches. Chances are you blamed the losses on bad luck, or the opponent cheated, or your kid just did not have the “feel” that day, or for you superstitious types... you went to Quiznoz’s instead of Subway. Those re-occurring close defeats are most likely due to your child’s incomplete training and not lunch meat. Tipping point tendencies are essential learned behaviors that athletic royalty must master.

An athlete that shifts focus to the following tipping point tendencies, accelerates the learning process and a competitive warrior is born. Close matches are often decided by a handful of points. Let’s look a little deeper at ten of the top “hidden” tipping point tendencies that can help tip your athlete’s

matches in their favor. Once again, these are terrific conversation starters for your athlete and their coaches.

### ***Top Ten Tipping Point Tendencies:***

1) Pay attention to the energy flow throughout the match. Who's cranky and negative, who's eager, hungry and positive? If you're negative, apply your triggers and steal the energy back.

2) Monitor your state of mind. Is your mental and emotional state in the under arousal state of mind, in the optimal peak performance state of mind or in the over arousal state of mind?

3) Learn to spot the mental and emotional signs of choking (over-thinking) and panicking (under-thinking).

4) Manage the score to manage your adrenaline. Different points have different psychological values. Pay attention and get pumped up before big points.

5) Note that tennis scoring isn't numerically fair: You can win more points than the opponent in the match and still lose the match. Winning requires spotting tipping points.

6) Spot the mega points (game winning points) and run the appropriate pattern that you've trained to death versus going rogue.



7) Spot mini-mega points. A 30-15 lead isn't the correct time to relax. Winning that crucial point earns you a 40-15 advantage, lose it and you're staring at a 30-30 tie.

8) Spot mini-mega games. These games in a set hold crucial building blocks. A 4-2 lead isn't time to relax. Winning that mini-mega game earns you a 5-2 lead. Lose it and the sets a 4-3 dog fight.

9) Opponent profiling is crucial. It's the flip side to running your Top 7 Patterns. Competitors who pay attention not only spot the opponents preferred patterns but actually shut them down on these big occasions.

10) Self-chart both sides of the net. Witness where errors and winners stem from and problem solve accordingly.

*In regards to higher learning, I'm amazed at how often very young intermediate athletes understand this type of mental and emotional training. It is not reserved for the older advanced group. Parents and coaches, please remember, their world isn't remotely like ours at their age. With Google on their smart phones, they are accustomed to collecting and quantifying data at lightning speeds.*

*Have you ever witnessed your child on their phone with one friend, doing their homework, skyping another friend, snap-chatting, while eating and watching TV? Children can multi-task. Asking an intermediate tennis player to improve their mechanical stroke components while improving their mental components is a piece of cake!*

Mastering the tipping point tendencies is the art of winning under stress. Those seemingly "little things" are actually the extremely "big things" that make all the difference in tipping the odds in your favor.

## OPPONENT PROFILING

At the advanced levels, every player has efficient strokes. In tournament competition what often separates the champion from the field is their mental and emotional skill sets. This includes paying attention to why points are won and lost. They manage the score, their strategies and their performance anxieties as well as their focus control. Winners enjoy adapting to the ever changing challenges of closing out sets and matches. Winners maintain their poise under stress because they are one step ahead of the opponent by opponent profiling. I encourage both the parents and the coaches to begin to develop each athlete's mental and emotional "muscles" at an early stage.

***"In any sport, experts don't simply see where the action is... they can see where the action is going to be in the very near future."***

Opponent profiling is essentially paying attention to the opponent's patterns and tactics and applying the appropriate counter tactics.

### ***Benefits of Opponent Profiling:***

- Controlling the tipping points and energy of the match.
- Shutting down the opponents preferred play. Forcing them to shift to their less comfortable patterns at crunch time.
- Gaining the critical mental/ emotional edge in tiebreakers.
- Inflating their own confidence while systematically deflating the opponents.

- Intimidating the opponent by out-thinking them by staying on top of their preferred patterns.

Just as I urged players earlier in this mental chapter to design and rehearse their Top 7 Patterns (2 ball shot sequence), I also have high hopes that your athletes will progress one step further and apply the art of spotting the opponents favorite shot sequences.

### ***Identifying the Opponent's Top 7 Patterns:***

- 1) Top Serving Pattern to the Deuce Side: 2 Ball Sequence
- 2) Top Serving Pattern on the Ad Side: 2 Ball Sequence
- 3) Favorite Return Pattern/Position versus a Big First Serve
- 4) Favorite Pattern/Position versus a Weaker Second Serve
- 5) Favorite Rally Pattern
- 6) Favorite Short Ball Option
- 7) Favorite Approach Shot Pattern

***“Forcing talented opponents out of their comfort zone requires your athlete to identify and systematically shut down the opponent’s favorite strategies and tactics.”***

### ***Opponent Profiling Checklist (“Paying Attention”)***

(The following checklist is designed for the coach/parent to review with the athlete.)

- ☐ ***Paying attention to the opponent’s current style of play.***

A top player won’t stick to a losing game for long. They’ll often shift to a different style of play known as their pre-

developed plan B. They may lose the first set with plan A but win the match with plan B or C.

- ❑ ***Paying attention to the opponent's stroke strengths and weaknesses.***

Don't stop attacking the weaknesses until they have proven repeatedly that they have solved the problem. Stick with the same old boring winners.

- ❑ ***Paying attention to the opponent's movement and spacing likes and dislikes.***

Some opponents are terrific from behind the baseline yet pitiful when pulled forward into the forecourt.

- ❑ ***Paying attention to patterns of play (theirs and yours).***

If a particular serve pattern of yours works like a charm, revisit it on game points. If the opponent is killing you with a particular pattern, expect it on big points and shut it down early.

- ❑ ***Paying attention to the opponent's negative emotional cues.***

Remember, not all forms of communication are verbal. Watch between points for the opponent's negative facial expressions and body language. Whatever caused their negative reaction, plan on repeating it.

- ❑ ***Paying attention to where the ball is landing on both sides of the court.***

The court zone in which the ball lands dictates shot selection. For example, if you hit a short ball, weak into their service box, that ball has landed in their attack zone. Preparing your defensive skill sets early is court awareness.

- ❑ ***Paying attention to the opponent's court position and strike zone at contact.***

For example, an opponent who is drifting back 15 feet beyond the baseline and meeting the ball at a head level strike zone, is most likely in a defensive position. You should be moving inside the court preparing to execute an offensive reply.

- ❑ ***Paying attention to the ball you are giving to the opponent.***

“Think like a baseball pitcher versus a baseball batter.” Yes, you are hitting a ball but your stroke is their incoming pitch. Are you throwing the same 67 mph fastball, 2 feet over the net directly into their wheelhouse over and over again? You then walk away from the match saying, “They were too good! I had no chance!” The reality is you made them look good.

- ❑ ***Paying attention to the speed of play.***

This includes ball speed as well as between point and changeover playing speed. If the opponent prefers an aggressive, quick pace of play, slow it down. Controlling the pace of the match is called rhythm disruption and it is very much a part of high performance tennis.

- ❑ ***Apply proper changeover rituals.***

Use the allocated 90 seconds to design or modify the next two game's plan of attack instead of simply getting a Gatorade stain on your new shirt while watching the players over on court #6.

□ *Apply proper between point rituals.*

The proper between point rituals are just as important as change-over rituals in implementing a successful plan of attack. Defeating a top ranked opponent is a complicated affair. It may require a bit of mental warfare to outsmart a seasoned champion.

*A top NCAA award winning coach told me that he doesn't teach strokes...he teaches "**paying attention.**" The art of winning requires opponent profiling under stress. This is part of the essential mental component applied in high performance tennis.*

## THE ART OF CONSISTENCY

The battle cry heard daily on every teaching court around the world is, “You need to be more consistent!” Makes sense right? It sounds simple, but how? If your child has an issue with consistency the information applied below will surely push them into a higher level. These mental training tips should be revisited often by your entourage of intelligent coaches.

*Being consistent holds different meanings for different levels of players and is dependent on their individual growth development schedule. To some readers, playing at ones peak performance level for three shots in a row is successful consistency. For others it may require playing solid for three points in a row, or three games in a row. Followed by performing at a high level for three sets in a row, or even three matches in a row...dare I say, consistently playing well for three tournaments in a row?*

***Incorporate the following solutions into your athlete’s developmental plan to help your athletes become more consistent.***

### ***Expose Strengths***

Practice in the manner in which you’re expecting to perform. Design patterns and positions to expose your strengths and hide your weaknesses. Winning two tough matches a day for 5 days straight is the criteria for winning a national title. Winners expose their efficiencies and hide their deficiencies on a daily basis.

### ***Rehearse Shot Selection***

The most common type of error in the higher levels of junior tennis stems from low percentage shot selection. Abiding by the laws of offence, neutral and defensive is a factor.

Consistently focus on choosing to hit the appropriate shot the moment demands.

### ***Focus on Depth***

On-court depth is a goal while seeking consistency. Lack of depth opens up the opponent's on-court angles which translates to your athlete playing defense. The "window" their ball travels above the net is crucial in the development of depth. This is called "air zones." Consistent height and depth is a key to consistent wins.

### ***Simply Match the Speed of the Incoming Ball***

Champions are comfortable matching the ball speed. Fighting the compulsion to always increase the ball speed is a sure fire way to be more consistent. When you don't have the feel in a match, shift to this plan. This is also a super warm up routine. It shows the opponent you are stable versus crazy.

### ***Hit the Appropriate Side of the Ball***

Beginner and intermediate players are happy simply hitting any part of the ball. If they're getting a tan, they're happy! Top players understand that to hit secondary shots such as short angles, topspin lobs and slice shots, it requires more skill. The part of the ball your athlete strikes dictates its outgoing spins and angles.

### ***Spacing***

Proper movement and positioning around the strike zone is called spacing. Using adjustment steps to align each stroke is an underlying factor in the ability to actually use good form. A common cause of errors is spacing.

### ***Proper Form***

Form includes grips, backswings, strike zones and follow-throughs. Core strength and balance is required to keep the head still throughout the strike zone phase of the stroke.



Cleaning up flawed strokes often involves “trimming the fat” versus adding more to the player’s stroke.

### ***Master Spin***

In high level tennis, spin is simply used as a consistency tool. The key ingredient in hitting the ball hard and in is... spin. Also, as the ball speed increases in a rally, a player then must slow down the ball with spin (usually under spin) to re-gain a positioning advantage. Controlling the point consistently is done with spin.

### ***Avoid Repainting the Line***

It is not the player’s job to paint the lines. Risky competitors who gun for the lines typically become early spectators. Hitting the lines also allows a cheater easy access to hook. Gunning for the lines increase frustration and complicate even the easiest of matches.

### ***Increase Your Fitness***

Being fit has wonderful benefits. It increases your overall confidence, allows you to stay in points longer, think clearer, problem solving better, accelerate and decelerate quicker, use cleaner strokes, calm the breathing and heart rate, recover faster after long points, recover after long matches and prevent injuries.

### ***Increase Your Focus Ability***

A common issue with inconsistency is playing solid, winning tennis three games in a row; then getting bored or unfocused and giving three games right back. Staying in the moment and focusing on your next point’s performance goals is “key.” This is done by mastering an inner game. Focus on simply winning three points in a row when you are bored or feel you are losing focus.

***“Being great once and awhile means your good...  
not great.”***

Coaches and players should make time in their developmental plans to visit the above solutions proven to help the art of consistency.

### ***Common Inconsistency Situations***

Below are six “oh-yeah” stumbling blocks that require your athlete’s attention. Remember, they can’t fix a problem if they’re not even aware it exists. Please ask your athlete’s coach to discuss the below “everyday blunders.”

### ***Common Match Play Stumbling Blocks***

- 1)*** After hitting a great winner, players commonly give the next point away by committing an unfocused-unforced error.
- 2)*** After missing a sitter, players don’t re-group and commit another unforced error.
- 3)*** Players commonly lose their own serve right after breaking the opponent’s serve.
- 4)*** Players often double fault after hitting an ace.
- 5)*** After winning a tight first set, players commonly play loose and find themselves down at the start of the second set.
- 6)*** In tournament play, players scoring an upset victory over a higher ranked player often lose to a lesser player the very next round.

***“If you are persistent, you’ve got a great shot at being consistent.”***

## HOW TO BEAT MOONBALL/RETRIEVERS

No matter what you call them...retrievers, defensive baseliners, counter punchers, moonballers or pushers, they have one common distinction at almost every level of the game-they have all the trophies!

In my workshops, I seek out competitors re-occurring nightmares- problems that happen over and over again. I then systematically destroy the nightmare by offering self-destruction solutions. One nightmare that seems to be on the top of almost everyone's tennis list, around the world, is "How to Beat a Moonball/Retriever." Let's look at some common key characteristics that separate most of "us" from them.

### ***Retrievers versus the Rest of Us:***

- Patient versus Impatient
- Satisfied to let the opponent self-destruct versus Having to hit bold winners to win
- Energy conserving versus Energy expending
- Responds after reasoning versus Responds before reasoning
- Inspired by the real/practical versus Inspired by the imaginative
- Found in the present versus Found in the future
- Concerned with the task versus Concerned with the outcome and how other will view the outcome?
- Organized in their plans versus "Uh...we'll see what happens."
- Avoids surprises versus Enjoys surprises

As you can see, the psychological profile of a retriever may be a little different than your athlete. Tactically, retrievers prefer to retaliate instead of instigate the action. Armed with the

knowledge of the actual unforced errors to winners ratio in the sport, this tactic is actually quite intelligent. Lucky for us, having a firm understanding of a retriever's brain has allowed us to organize a wonderful plan of attack!

Please keep in mind that your child loses to retrievers because your child is not fully developed. There are most likely holes in one or more of the four major components of your athlete's game. Below I've re-listed those four components and their corresponding success principles. Ask your child's coach to develop these and your athlete will routinely defeat these pesky opponents.

### ***Four Major Tennis Components:***

#### ***1) Technical Strokes***

Your child must develop world class "secondary" strokes. Patterns used to pull a retriever out of their comfort zone consist of secondary strokes such as: drop shots, short angle swing volleys...Etc.

Your child may have better "primary" strokes, but unfortunately they are little use against a pusher. It is important to understand that often good primary strokes will only work in the pusher's favor! A tool belt full of great secondary strokes needs to be developed.

Often your child's losses are caused by their lack of secondary strokes. Each primary stroke has secondary stroke "relatives" that also need to be mastered. For example: A primary volley is the traditional punch volley. Secondary volleys are swing volleys, drop volleys and half volleys. These secondary volleys are needed in order to beat a retriever.

## **2) Tactics and Strategies**

While the game continues to evolve, the foundation of strategy has not changed much over the past 100 years.

*Jack Kramer taught this theory to Vic Braden, Vic Braden taught this to me and I am passing it on to you. "If your strengths are greater than your opponent's strengths, then simply stick to your strengths. If your strengths are not as great, you must have well-rehearsed B and C plans to win the match!"*

Example: If your child can out "steady" a world class moon ball pusher...simply pack a lunch for them and plan on a 3 hour "push-fest." If your child can hit so hard that they simply blow the ball past retrievers ...simply instruct them to hit a winners every point. If not, it may be in your youngster's best interest to develop the secondary strokes and patterns used to take a retriever out of their game. Below are three patterns that work beautifully against pushers.

### **Best Patterns to Beat Retriever's:**

- A. Moonball approach to a swing volley.
- B. Short angle building shot to drive winner.
- C. Drop shot to dipping passing shots or lobs.

***"Often the weakest ball a crafty retriever will give your athlete is their serve. I encourage your athlete to focus on the above three patterns while returning the retriever's weak serve."***

### ***3) Movement, Fitness and Strength***

While lateral movement is important, the key to beating pushers lies in the forward and back directions. Here are two rhymes to help you attack moonball retrievers:

***“When the ball is high (defensive moonball...Fly!”***

Go (Fly) into the court for a swing volley.

***“When the ball is slow (defensive slice)...Go!”***

Run (Go) through the volley

Speed is broken down into anticipatory speed and foot speed. Combine cognitive processing speed with foot speed drills to maximize court coverage. What is anticipatory speed?

#### ***Anticipatory Speed***

Anticipation is the action of expecting or predicting, which is a required skill at the higher levels of the game. Once anticipatory skills are developed, athletes begin to cover the court like a pro.

#### ***Foot Speed***

Acceleration speed, deceleration speed, recovery speed, changing of directional speed and cardio fitness obviously play a critical role in a 3 hour moon ball match. Often in a national event, your child may have to play two retrievers back to back in the same day.

#### ***Core and Upper Body Strength***

Upper Body Strength is required in the war against retrievers because your child must be able to hit balls above their primary stroke zone. The head level strike zones requires tremendous upper body conditioning and strength.

#### ***4) Emotional/Focus***

So as you can see, emotional breakdowns and lack of focus issues stem from a variety of key areas. Players often fall apart because they honestly are not preparing properly. Lacking in just one of the four major tennis components/categories is enough to lose to a retriever. I have discover that some talented athletes are lacking in all four areas.

***“Emotional resilience is needed versus pushers.”***

For both the parent and the athlete, it isn't so painful to experience a beating by a superior competitor. The agony of defeat stems from self-destruction. The next section will uncover 10 unique self-destruction techniques that, when applied, will bail your athlete out when they're losing to a toad.

## TEN SECRETS TO STOP SELF DESTRUCTION

*“Hi Frank, This is Mr. Patton. I’d like to talk to you about helping my daughter. Another tournament is over and once again we’ve witnessed the unthinkable. Samantha lost again to a weaker, lower level player. This happens all the time! Maybe she’s just not cut out for competition? I send her to an Academy. She hits almost every day. Why isn’t she winning? Is there anything my wife and I can do as parents to help? Please call me back. My number is .....”*

If your athlete suffers from losing to lesser players, relax there is a solution. As a matter of fact, there are ten solutions! This is a major factor in the mental skills department. Begin by reviewing the below list of self-destruction solutions with your player and entourage of coaches. Ask your athlete to circle their top 3 favorite solutions. Along with their coaches, schedule time to rehearse the repetition of the solutions.

### ***Self-Destruction Solutions:***

- 1) When you are donating points with first or second strike errors, simply focus on hitting three balls clean straight down the center of the court. You’ll go from handing the opponent the trophy to making them earn a seven ball rally. Trust me, this really works!
- 2) While being too eager to see your beautiful shot, you sneak a peek early, pull out of the strike zone and shank balls off the frame. A great tip is to simply say “plant” when the incoming ball lands on your court and “turn” as you begin to uncoil the kinetic chain into the ball. Trick yourself into thinking that you can see the ball “hit” the strings of your racket. Wa-la! No more shanks!



3) Future thoughts are a common enemy of high quality tennis. Thinking ahead to the award presentation, their new ranking or what their friends are going to say when they beat this seed is a sure fire path to “Loserville.” Focus on the present execution of your performance patterns versus the post-match outcome drama.

4) Mistakes often lead to anger. Anger leads to increased ball speed. Increasing ball speed leads to more errors. To steady up, sometimes match the opponents ball speed until you get your game back to a controllable level. Yes, champions often simply match the ball speed.

5) Use the tactics found in applying the proper air zones and court zones. Understanding zonal tennis will greatly reduce the sheer numbers of unforced errors.

6) Another critical function of reducing the “avoidable” error is the proper use of offense, neutral and defensive choices. Pro tour studies show that professionals hit on average 60% neutral, 20% offence, 20% defense. Match play video analysis of intermediate juniors show an average of 80% offence, 15% neutral, 5% defense. Hum...no wonder the unforced error count is through the roof!

7) Most juniors use changeovers to watch the other matches, check out that cute chic or guy over by the fence, watch cars go by or even spot the American airlines jet overhead. Proper internal changeover rituals would be to simply think two games back, fix flaws and design proactive plans, then organize how they will be using the information during the next two games.

8) If you're self-destructing and want to respond to adversity like a champ, copy Serena. She reads her notes during matches to relax and stay focused. She's earned a few bucks playing this game and seems to have a future. Haha! You should have your notes prepared and actually choose to pull them out and read them if needed.

9) As the "deer in the head light" spaced out look comes across your face, remind yourself that you can break free of all this panicking by taking a few "swoosh" shadow swings. Be aware that one of the first fundamentals to shut down are your quick little steps. Move your feet and use verbal and physical triggers to re-gain composure.

10) On a parental note, often a large portion of the stress that inhibits your child's peak performance is unknowing caused by you. Stress causes poor brain function and tight muscle contractions. Are you successfully de-stressing your athlete on game day?

Training how to handle ADVERSITY is a major contributor to a champion's success. I often remind intermediate athletes that they have to be comfortable...being uncomfortable. Spending a couple hours each week for the next month focusing on a few of their solutions may be the exact protocol your athlete needs to salvage a routine match that has gone south.

## THE EMOTIONAL COMPONENT: PERFORMANCE ANXIETIES

*“Juniors need to understand that during matches, negative emotions come and go like flights landing and taking off from an airport. They can choose to hop on the looney flight or simply let it take off without them.”*

During match play, negative emotions reveal fear and insecurity, while positive emotions reveal confidence and control. The ability to control one's emotions is a critical high performance skill. Emotional intelligence is a learned behavior.

## PERFORMANCE ANXIETY SYMPTOMS AND CAUSES

Performance anxieties appear in a broad spectrum. Some athletes seem to fear nothing...some fear everything. Most have their personal anxiety triggers that should be discovered and examined. If you suspect that your child is experiencing excessive performance anxiety, it's time to look at the common signs. If your athlete's lack of personal belief is over-riding their actual ability then they're battling performance anxiety which is part of the emotional development of the game.

***“Emotional Development is just as important as stroke development.”***

Below, I've listed four categories of common performance anxiety symptoms. If you suspect that your child's fear of competition, confrontation or adversity is affecting their performance, it may be time to gather the coaches for an emotional training session. Ask your child to check any below symptoms that they feel describes them on match day. Design a new action plan to overcome each issue.

### **Match Day Symptoms**

#### ***Physical Symptoms:***

- ☐ Shallow, fast breathing
- ☐ Increased muscle tension throughout the body
- ☐ Increased perspiration
- ☐ Feeling dizzy and weak in the knees
- ☐ Feeling that your body is on the court but your mind is somewhere else

### ***Mental Symptoms:***

- ☐ Inability to focus one point at a time
- ☐ Over thinking (choking)
- ☐ Under thinking (panicking)
- ☐ Reoccurring thoughts of failure
- ☐ Worrying about others opinions of their performance
- ☐ Obsessing about others rankings & successes

### ***Emotional Symptoms:***

- ☐ Self-doubt in strokes as seen in “pushing”
- ☐ Self-doubt in stamina & strength as seen in reckless shot selection (to end points prematurely)
- ☐ Nervousness, hesitation & fearful performance
- ☐ Stressing about uncontrollable variables
- ☐ Not taking the time to enjoy the moment

### ***Behavioral Symptoms:***

- ☐ Not performing match day routines & rituals
- ☐ Hurrying & fast pace walking
- ☐ Having mini tantrums, racket cracking or mindless fast walking/play
- ☐ Forgetting the basic ball striking functions
- ☐ Allowing the opponent or situation to control your playing speeds

### ***Solutions and Cures***

Individual personalities come with unique frustration tolerance levels. So it's safe to say that symptoms and cures are often remarkably different. Listed below are the anxiety reducing strategies that I teach my students to handle pressure. Set aside time to discuss the below 6 performance anxiety busters with your team.

1) Pre-match preparation is essential. Prepare all strokes, patterns, one's physical body and one's state of mind properly before each match. Top professionals have a specific routine before and after every match.

2) Keep your self-destruction notes handy. The mental section provided you with a list of ten "Self-Destruction Solutions."

3) To avoid choking and panicking requires understanding the under arousal, ideal performance and the over arousal state of minds.

4) Emotional toughness is being bigger than the moment. This state of mind requires three months of practicing in the manner in which you are expected to perform versus simply hitting tons of balls back and forth.

5) Remember the acronym for WIN- W: What's; I: Important; N: Now. Dummy up and only focus on what's important now, from pre-match rituals, through each point of the match, to post-match rituals.

6) Be prepared in every possible way- technical, physical, emotional and mental.

**Technical Preparation:** The "tool belt" of primary & secondary strokes are all pre-developed and wired for tournament play.

**Physical Preparation:** Aerobic and anaerobic capacities are ready to handle the long standing suffering of winning six matches in a row.

**Emotional/Focus Preparation:** Pre-set protocols/solutions have been discussed and developed to handle any crisis.

**Mental/Strategy and Tactics:** Pre-set patterns to successfully pull all four different styles of opponents out of their comfortable system of play.

***“The very best way to destroy performance anxiety is through growth.”***

### ***Confidence Is Nurtured by Positive Self Talk***

Encourage your athlete to think positively, such as, I deserve my success, I have trained for it, I am a problem solver, I am resilient, I will do my best and/or I can. A positive attitude is a critical first step when tackling performance anxiety issues. Sadly, I've found that many athletes are actually nurtured pessimism. This happens when players are raised by parents or trained by coaches that see the negatives in every situation- which is actually programing pessimism unknowingly to their children. Ironically, the very same parents and coaches often report, “My kids are so negative!”

If the family environment is becoming a bit too negative, a fun game to play for the entire family is an old psychology exercise called the “Flip It” game. Trust me, it could change your lives.

*Hold a family meeting and introduce a one week exercise. Everyone is encouraged to say “Flip It” whenever they witness another family member saying something pessimistic or acting negative. Athlete example, “I don’t want to eat this healthy stuff.”- FLIP IT, “I hate this drill”- FLIP IT, “It’s too early...I don’t want to go for a run before school.” FLIP IT! Parental example “Yea, he won 6-2, 6-4 but he should of won 0-0”, -FLIP IT! This exercise spotlights the negative behavior. It makes the negatron aware of his/her reoccurring pessimism and encourages optimism in a light hearted, non-threatening way.*

***“Learning to spot and flip pessimism and replace it with optimism is presenting the moral code needed to champion tennis and life.”***

### ***Control the Controllables***

Another anxiety reducing emotional protocol is to encourage your athlete to focus on simply controlling that which is truly under their control and to ignore everything that is out of their control. Understand that champions trim the fat and focus only on what they have control over versus outcome issues out of their control. Most performance anxieties stem from focusing on contaminating issues that have no place inside the head of an athlete during competition.

***“The player’s performance anxieties lessen greatly when parents stop obsessing about the outcome and rankings and encourage belief, effort and improvement.”***

Ask your child to forget about the outcome of matches for a while. Instead, ask them to focus on being better than they were yesterday. A long term goal to strive for is to be twice as good this year as you were last year.



## CURING PERFORMANCE ANXIETY

Overcoming performance anxiety is a very common developmental issue. As you have probably witnessed, this component is most often ignored by intermediate players and coaches.

If physical or emotional danger is perceived, the fear pathways short circuit rational processing and basic motor programming is lost. Meaning even if perfect form is seen on the practice court, stress can often de-rail it.

So how can parents and coaches spot performance anxiety?

Many parents report that their athlete's extreme competitive anxieties are masked with pre-match physical illnesses, fake injuries and/or preset excuses before each important match. Yet their player avoids any talk of solutions to remedy their anxiety issues.

***“Even on the playground, young children who fear competition fake an injury as an easy way out.”***

Intermediate competitors often choose to avoid these topics, which is the worst thing they can do. Avoidance only magnifies their anxiety and keeps competition scary and uncomfortable. This growing fear fuels the player's lingering self-doubt. Fear of confrontation is extremely typical in the world of junior tennis. Conquering that fear is actually quite simple.

***“The best way to alleviate performance anxieties is through exposure not avoidance.”***

Psychologists report that the central nervous system decreases its arousal state with extended exposure to the same stimuli. In other words, if one's nervous system is exposed to the same arousal stimuli... the feelings of excessive performance anxiety are reduced.

*It is worth noting that every athlete experiences some degree of anxiety and nervousness in the competitive arena, but excessive uncontrollable anxiety destroys athletic performance.*

To ease a player's fear of competition, the player needs to devise protocols that will deflate their arousal state during competition. By dodging and evading their fears, the player is actually increasing their anxieties. Every time a player side-steps their issues, the thoughts of possible failure multiply into an unreasonable lack of confidence and self-esteem, which is later magnified during competition.

Apprehension to compete will actually increase until the player agrees to stop avoiding their fears.

***“The familiar becomes commonplace, both positive and negative. This is human nature.”***

***If extreme performance anxieties exist, protocols to implement before important competition may include:***

- Arrive at the tournament site days early to get comfortable in the environment.
- Drill and play practice sets with other competitors on site to get comfortable in the environment.
- Meet, mingle and hit with as many “new” people as possible to get comfortable with varying ball speeds and trajectories.

- Stay on-site and profile the top seeds after your match is complete to take the mystique out of the top seeds.
- Ask your athlete to chart the competitor's cause of errors. Documenting opponent's cause of errors will prove to your "stressed out" player that their opponents are beatable.

***Plan on networking/mix and mingle with other teaching pros, parents and players. Why?***

- Finding better quality doubles partners.
- Getting acquainted with higher level coaches.
- Discovering new academies, programs or tournaments.
- Meeting the current crop of USTA coaches- which hold the wild card power.
- Increase personal communication skills- essential life lessons.

***“Avoiding competition magnifies ignorance and multiplies fear, nervousness, uncertainty, distress and disorganization. Although confronting performance anxieties is difficult, it’s the exposure to these fears that brings empowerment and reduces performance anxiety.”***

## IMPROVING CONFIDENCE AND LOW SELF ESTEEM

Regardless of the reason, athletes who begin to doubt their true capabilities need to flip their negative outlook before their negative beliefs ruin their practices and performances.

***“A positive outlook is a prerequisite to positive performances.”***

A lack of confidence can stem from a singular reasons or a combination of reasons. As always, solutions are dictated by their cause.

Typical Causes of Low Confidence:

- 1) Athlete has slacked off in their weekly training regiments...
- 2) Athlete has not trained efficiently (quantity not quality)...
- 3) Athlete is injured, sick or are returning to the game after an injury or sickness...
- 4) Athlete's pessimistic attitude is getting the best of them...
- 5) Athlete has under-performed in recent competition and lost a few close matches to players they believe they should beat...

Rekindling confidence starts with a rebuilding of the belief systems.

***“Confidence is a progressive spiral of numerous positive inputs which leads to a positive attitude...which in turn leads to new positive actions that leads to positive results.”***

Let's first look deeper into common stepping stones that will help rekindle an athlete's confidence:

### ***Re-Commit to Getting Fit***

Start with being the best athlete they can be. Hit the gym and hit the track – gain strength and improve your stamina, speed, agility.

### ***Clear the Mind: Re-Focus on Tennis***

Teens can get derailed by numerous factors including: school, parties, peer pressure, other sports, hobbies, shopping, etc. Re-organize your weekly planner.

### ***Customize the Instruction***

Practice in the manner in which you are expected to perform. Build a game plan around exposing strengths while hiding weaknesses. Customize the athlete's style to their brain and body type. Develop and rehearse the critical Top 7 Patterns of play.

### ***Promote and Educate Independence***

Independent problem solving promotes confidence on and off the court. Even though some parents think they are helping, it may be wise to slowly stop doing everything for your little Phenom. (See: "Are You a Helicopter Parent"- found in Section IV Common Questions and Solutions: Parental Accountability)

### ***Surround Them with Supportive People***

Positive coaches, trainers and friends with good character are key. Is his new girlfriend pulling his focus in a new direction? Do her new friends at school want to party and shop all the time? Is her coach pessimistic?

### ***Help Others***

Ask your athlete to teach the under privileged kids for free at the park and rec or assist the local food bank once a month and feed the homeless. Seeing the positive attitude of someone less fortunate reminds them how fortunate they truly are...

### ***Avoid Negative Comments***

Derogatory comments, a negative tone of voice, offensive, threatening body language or even facial expressions can tear down a sensitive player's confidence. Cut out the negative influences in their life. Pessimism is contagious and very toxic.

### ***Perfectionists Set the Bar Too High***

Unrealistic expectations kill confidence. Parents, just because your son won last week's tournament, don't expect him to win every one from now on. Players, a sure fire way to disable your confidence is to expect perfection. Even if you're in the zone for a while, it's a borrowed experience. No one owns the zone. No one stays in the zone and lives there year around.

***“Parents and coaches, it's important to communicate to your athlete that they can't go back and rewrite a better past...but they can start today and write a better future.”***

## BETWEEN POINT RITUALS AND CHANGE-OVER RITUALS

Most intermediates think, “What’s the big deal with these between point rituals? The balls not even in play!”

Unfortunately, this is a result of not properly educating our youngsters about the importance of rituals- early and often. Athletes that neglect to implement rituals are missing an important opportunity to dissect the opponent, relax and recover, and organize future patterns. Their mind is too caught up with contaminating thoughts regarding the ramifications of the future outcome, whose winning on court #6, or any of their invented performance anxieties that have been keeping them from getting the results they deserve.

*It’s estimated that during a match, the athletes are actually playing in-the-point approximately 20-30 percent of the time that they are on the court. Seventy-eighty percent of the time they’re in between points. That’s a staggering amount of time. Wouldn’t it be wise if they learned how to put that time to good use?*

In the 25 seconds allotted in between points, it’s advisable to create a customized 3-part routine that the athlete is comfortable performing each and every point. There are two forms of these rituals that are performed simultaneously:

**1) Internal Rituals:** I refer to internal rituals as the mental/emotional doorways a player must pass through. I have categorized them into 3 phases: Getting over the last point, planning the next point’s pattern and applying a relaxation ritual.

**2) External Rituals:** These rituals are the routines outsiders see. They commonly consist of taking the racquet out of the dominant hand to relax it, time management routines such as taking extra time to prepare, toweling off, or looking at their strings to relax the eyes.

Once an athlete buys into, understands and develops these rituals they're on their way to a higher level.

*Parents, along with your child's coach, schedule time for practice sets with the mandatory between point and change over rituals firmly in place.*

The second most important "down time" in match play is during the 90 seconds allotted for changeovers. While this is a physical rest-break, it is not a total mental/emotional detachment from the task at hand.

During changeovers, there are, once again external rituals like toweling off and hydrating. It is during this phase of the of the match cycle that important internal routines should be executed. I recommend beginning by briefly thinking only about the previous two games. Assess what went right-what went wrong in the previous serving game as well as the return of serve game. Make a strategic plan to repeat what's working and to re-vamp what isn't. After the athlete performs their external routines, they go internally once again and review.

Experienced competitors visualize both their upcoming service game as well as their upcoming return of serve game. They choose to plan on running the same past successful patterns and avoid past failures. Applying this change over rituals will keep your athletes attention in the present-task oriented, peak performance state of mind.

*Remember the boxing analogy, "Stop the bleeding"- Shut down their winning patterns and "Cause more bleeding"- Keep pounding away at their weaknesses.*



## LOSING VERSUS GETTING BEAT

For every 64 talented juniors that enter a six round tournament draw- all 64 have the same outcome goal: “I want to win!” Unfortunately 63 of those players go home losers. Although the nature of the draw format dictates only one champion, not all 63 lose- some of them get beat. There's a big difference between getting beat and losing a match. Being defeated should be viewed from a new perspective.

***“Attempting to never make a bad shot stops your athlete’s flow of great shots. Great winners and correct errors come from the same relaxed, free zone.”***

### ***Let’s look deeper into the cause of the loss:***

In my book, being outplayed by someone is getting beat. It is absolutely fine to get beat by someone who is:

- Executing their best style of play.
- Performing their best strategies & tactics.
- Working harder.
- Controlling the mega points.
- Choosing to utilize the rituals they’ve developed.

In the above situation, the opponent may actually deserved the victory. On the other side of getting beat, is losing. It is much more painful to lose a match when:

- Your child is more talented but their opponent is a harder worker.
- Your child chooses not to employ their best style of play or falls into their opponent's style of play.
- Your child makes too many reckless, unforced errors.

- Your child is too passive to compete at crunch time.
- Your child doesn't bother to spot and attack the opponent's weaknesses.

Making your opponent beat you while applying your best style of play is actually a win-win situation. It's what I call a mental and emotional commitment. When your player is confident and committed to playing their patterns and tactics, they often beat even the top seeds. But even if they don't win the match, they'll have no regrets. They will have attempted their best systems and that is all that can be expected.

Parents, please promote that learning to win or getting beat by confidently playing their best style of play is learning to "compete" correctly.

***"There is a difference between missing the actual shot the moment demands and missing random, reckless shots."***

*"Parents and coaches must acknowledge that by taking the risk to compete, your child will likely lose in almost every high level tennis tournament. Parents must reinforce that losing the correct way, playing the game systems they have been trained, is their best shot at beating the best players."*

## HOW TO CLOSE OUT A MATCH

*Imagine that it's a hot summer day, 102 in the shade. Every electrical device is on to capacity inside your house. There's so much stress on the electrical system that it blows a fuse. "Click" ... lights out, AC's off... everything shuts down.*

*Under extremely stressful conditions, uneducated junior tennis players do the same. When a junior tennis player over stresses their emotional system, the same total shut down occurs. Stress plays havoc on their psyche.*

As contaminants jumble the brain, simple motor programs are lost in the inner chatter. Basic functions like "move your feet" and "just breathe" begin to cease because the brain is cluttered with dozens of irrelevant thoughts. Well-rehearsed performance patterns and plans are nowhere to be found. Heck, some players are so unknowingly stressed they can't even remember their name.

Below are three real life scenarios and their solutions to help your child identify why they're not closing out matches.

### ***Scenario Number One:***

Molly is a strong starter. She routinely performs her aggressive baseline style of play as she opens the set with a 4-1 lead. Once a lead is established, the trouble sinks in. Molly gains the lead by keeping her foot firmly on the gas pedal with a "play to win" attitude. As she begins to see the finish line, she takes her foot off the gas and unknowingly slips into a "play not to lose" mentality. Her amazing ground strokes dramatically change from 80 mph with extreme depth to 50 mph balls landing mid court in the perfect strikes zone for her opponent!

Her thoughts race from “Ok, you got the lead. Now just don’t give it back.” to “The last 5 times I had a 4-1 lead I choked ....so, just be safe and don’t choke another one away.” Molly unknowingly gets tight, begins to push and once again, blows the lead and hands the seed the match.

***Solution One:***

The system of “playing to win” with Molly's foot heavy on the gas was working brilliantly. She was winning 66% of the points and controlling the match. Taking her foot off the gas and playing it safe actually changes the exact winning style that earned her the lead. The answer for Molly is learning not to be afraid to lose with her “A” game plan. If her “A” game plan is winning 2 out 3 points- it is a winner!

*Sadly, by slipping into her “now be safe...don’t blow it” mode, Molly is elongating the actual drama she is trying so desperately to avoid. Her probable victory turns into a probable slow torturous death. I strongly suggest that when you gain a lead, have the guts to take the match with the same gusto that was used to build the comfortable lead.*

Playing to win for the entire match would earn Molly approximately 70% of her sets. But she doesn't. Why? Because, Molly doesn't deeply trust her attacking style of play. Instead she chooses to repeat her reoccurring nightmare - which is switching to playing it safe after gaining a lead. With this mentality, she is earning a 30% winning record. Molly has to have the guts to play to win.

So why does she play so safe? In the younger age divisions, Molly could push and retrieve her way to victory as the under developed opponents simply self-destructed. However, at the higher levels, top seeds have not earned their high ranking by choking against a lesser player. Molly needs to believe in her game and play to win - essentially wrestle the trophy away

from the top seed. It would serve Molly well to “over cook” under stress versus “under cook” with her shots.

***“Molly should play practice sets starting at 2-2 and rehearse over cooking in the later stages of each game and set.”***

### ***Scenario Number Two:***

Steve is a super talented junior. He has not one but two pro level weapons: A 120 mph serve and a killer forehand. When Steve sticks to his “A” plan of crushing serves and hunting forehands, as often as possible, he is unstoppable. His tactical plan mirrors an old student of mine Sam Querrey.

Steve’s issues lie in the fact that his natural physical talent is light years above his mental and emotional skill sets. After gaining a comfortable 4-1 lead, Steve often loses focus on the mission at hand and once again begins to change a winning game plan. This time it is for the sake of variation.

His thoughts race to “Yeah but...if I keep on killing winners with my forehand, he’ll get used to it.” So, out comes Steve’s reckless drop shots and thoughtless shot selection. He is now in a 4-4 dog fight and it’s all because of his misuse of variation. Steve’s reckless play has reawakened the opponent’s self-confidence.

***“Steve has successfully deflated his energy while inflated the opponent’s energy.”***

Now his opponent has recognizes he’s playing a “mental midget.” The opponent is now recommitted to winning this match and is 100% focused to do so.

### ***Solution Two:***

Variation isn't always bad. If losing to a better hard hitting baseliner, applying variations is a smart tactical plan. In that situation, mixing the speed, spins and trajectories would pull the opponent out of their comfort zone.

In Steve's situation, he has the match firmly in control and uses variations because he's overthinking himself out of the match. Steve's battle isn't against the opponent, it's with his own wandering mind and lack of concentrated effort. Steve's solution to battle his sloppy play is to ignite a new inner-game.

His mission after building a lead is to play what I call: Mega Tennis: A game in which Steve is to focus his attention on winning 3 points in a row with his same old boring winners. He simply re-challenges himself to replay the game again and again- winning three points in a row. As he is re-focused in the "now," he'll actually stop applying reckless variation and wins the set without even thinking about the set.

Mega tennis assists in not allowing an immature competitor to complicate routine matches. This becomes incredibly meaningful in conserving energy for the tougher rounds later in the event.

### ***Scenario Number Three:***

Mr. Johnson sends me another 4 page text Saturday afternoon. Essentially claiming that his little Kristin, the best athlete in the tournament, has choked away another match... She was up 5-1 and missed two shots and went off! "She was killing her opponent and then... I don't know?"

Here is how he described his daughter's mindless play: fast anger walking, choking, then more choking, racquet cracking, hitting harder and harder and then screaming at herself game after game as the opponent is handed the set 7-5. He writes, "Kristin didn't even sit during changeovers!"

### ***Solution Three:***

First, let's review choking versus panicking because it is confusing. It's important to recognize that choking is caused by over-thinking. Dozens of irrelevant contaminants jumble the brain. These include outcome thoughts like: "Who will I play next?", "What's my ranking going to jump to?" and "I wonder if I'll qualify for the Easter bowl after I beat this seed?"

Choking is entertaining irrelevant thoughts during the match instead of the task at hand. What Mr. Johnson described wasn't over thinking (choking), it's choking's evil twin-panicking.

Panicking is the opposite of choking. It's under thinking. As Kristin's frustration tolerance level reached its peak, she didn't think at all. She rushed mindlessly through the rough patch hoping that the quicker she played the quicker she would get out of this bad situation. Unfortunately, the opposite holds true.

*An analogy to panicking is attempting to get off an iced over road as quick as possible. The faster you move, the more you fall. Slowing down is required...the same goes for panicking in a tennis match.*

In this panicked state of mind, slowing down to a crawl is the answer. It would serve Kristin to develop pre-set protocols to slow down play and establish her very own between point rituals and changeover rituals. After all, the negative behavior Mr. Johnson described was happening in-between points.

Panicking is an easy fix if Kristin is willing to re-focus her attention on the practice court.

If your child occasionally goes brain dead and panics in matches, I suggest meeting with their coach and organizing practice sets where your child's only focus is on their between point rituals and changeover rituals.

The art of closing out matches requires players to stop avoiding head to head competition on the practice court. Closing out sets and matches is a learned behavior. It requires dedicated practice. Remember the old saying "Practice doesn't make perfect...practice makes permanent." So, if you want your youngster to be permanently excellent at closing out matches- customize their training accordingly.



## **SECTION IV**

### **COMMON QUESTIONS & SOLUTIONS**

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## PRACTICE SESSION DRAMAS

Please don't mistake busy work with progression. If your child seeks athletic royalty status, it's the parent's responsibility to be aware who is actually on their child's practice court training them (head coach vs rookie assistant), what the daily focus is (stroke repetition, movement, mental or emotional training), and how their athlete is being trained (large group setting, semi-private) day-in and day-out.

***“The practice court is where dreams are either dreamt or actually developed.”***

**QUESTION:** Why does our coach inject laughter into training? I'm old school, I want my child working...not laughing.

**Frank:** Training with laughter maximizes athletic potential and happiness at a faster rate than the old school drill sergeant delivery system. The old school approach was based on conformity. Its outdated system was to place unique humans in a line, depress creativity, disapprove originality and avoid fun. "Do it my way...because I said so" was their battle cry!

Children are naturally diverse. In previous sections we've touched upon personality profiling. The role of the teacher is to facilitate each individual's unique learning system. A great coach offers structure based on the child's individual learning preference ...with the freedom to laugh and explore. Coaches are hired by you to support, stimulate and engage your athlete and not to stifle them. If you're still not convinced, read on.

***"Neurological studies prove that laughter helps relax muscle tension and calm nerves."***

Which student is more likely to engage or disengage? Is it the repressed individual who is afraid to even smile... or the stimulated individual eager to participate?

The task is to improve. Achieving that task requires acceptance and commitment and most children these days are simply too smart to accept and commit to conforming to that old school culture of education. Modern coaches that include joyful encouragement into their training regimen awaken optimism and curiosity. Once that spark is lit, maximizing potential takes place.

*Laughter decreases stress hormones and triggers endorphins - the body's natural feel good chemicals. Adding humor to stressful events, such as match play, will help the athlete enjoy the process of learning and the tournament battles. Playing in the zone demands a calm and stress free outlook.*

*Added Bonus: Laughing is a terrific abdominal work out. Hello six pack!*

Be aware, if your athlete has an old school drill sergeant coach or parent. They could actually be the anchor that's holding your child back from accelerated growth.

**QUESTION:** Even after a practice set, the first thing my Dad asks is, "Did you win?"

**Frank:** I must say, parents being too outcome oriented is the number one stressor that talented juniors report. This seemingly simple question, did you win, is sure to grow only one thing...the athlete's performance anxieties. From your child's perspective, this is seen as an interrogation. Asking such a question stems from the mindset of uneducated, old schooled tennis parents.

***"Champions are performance oriented,  
not outcome oriented."***

The majority of the very best professionals on the planet only win a handful of tournaments each year. That means that even they go home a loser most weeks. They seek improvement, effort and playing at their optimal performance level over stressing about having to win every day.

In sunny Southern California, a typical girls 14's designated open tournament may have as many as 250 participants. Only one player goes home the winner and two hundred forty nine go home losers. Yes, everyone's primary objective is to win. Parents have to lead the way in focusing on performance goals. The players who can focus on the process are controlling the controllables versus worrying about issues out of their control.

***“Control the controllables and let the uncontrollables go.”***

It's important to note that children aren't born naturally obsessing about the outcome of a tennis match. It's a learned behavior. The parental job is to shift this behavioral focus.

Remember the previous question regarding the old school parent that didn't want their child to smile and laugh? The same performance anxieties are magnified by a parent who only cares about winning. It's the parent's primary role to DE-STRESS their athlete. By injecting worry and fear into every practice session, an ill-informed parent adds stress that ultimately increases muscle contractions, decreases fluid movement, impairs judgment and reduces the athlete's problem solving performance skills. Athletes improve at a quicker rate in a calm relaxed mental state.

***“Neurological studies prove that worrying about the need to always win sabotages any real chance of reaching peak performance.”***

Parents and coaches interested in maximizing potential at a quicker rate and dramatically increasing the family's enjoyment, should flip the question, “Did you win?” with

more constructive statements like: “You inspire me; I wish I could have been able to watch you today.”, “How do you feel you played?”, “Did you hit your performance goals?”, “Did you have fun?”, “Would you like me to go over your match logs with you?”, “Is there anything I can do to help you achieve your tennis goals?”

**QUESTION: Why is avoiding performance anxiety in practice bad?**

**Frank:** Avoiding stress in practice only magnifies a player’s performance anxiety during future competition. This avoidance keeps competition scary and uncomfortable and fuels the athlete’s lingering self-doubt.

***“Players are actually increasing their anxieties by dodging their fears.”***

Every time a player side steps their issues, the thoughts of possible failure multiply into a serious lack of confidence and self-esteem. Their apprehension and fear of competition will actually increase until they agree to stop avoiding their fears.

*Psychologists report that the central nervous system decreases its arousal state with extended exposure to the same stimuli. In other words, if one’s nervous system isn’t overly aroused any more... it stops experiencing excessive performance anxiety.*

*Familiar things get boring. This is human nature. So, the best way for players to alleviate their performance anxieties is through exposure not avoidance.*

If your child has performance anxieties, ask them to review with their coach the below facts regarding avoiding anxiety:

***Five Avoiding Anxiety Consequences:***

- 1) Avoidance eliminates exposure and experiencing the harmless reality of a tennis match.
- 2) Avoidance clutters the mind and steals any real analysis of the facts.
- 3) Avoidance eliminates repetition and the chance to see the event as actually routine.
- 4) Avoidance stops the practice of the actual protocols so there is no mastery of skills.
- 5) Avoidance kills true mastery and mastery is what decreases future failures.

Another way to look at the effects of avoiding anxieties is that it magnifies ignorance and multiplies fear, nervousness, uncertainty, distress and disorganization. Although confronting performance anxieties is difficult, it's the exposure that brings empowerment. So, exposure is the most potent medicine for performance anxiety.

**QUESTION: Why is it hard for some athletes to make changes?**

**Frank:** Let's take another look into personality profiles. People with a sensate judging (SJ) dominate brain type are actually wired to be safe. In their mind, being safe provides a sense of security. For them conformity is comfortable. Standardization is key. To these SJ personalities, change is uncertain and therefore feared.

Others personality types, especially intuitive perceivers (NP), are wired to trust their natural inquisitive instincts and be more risk takers. These NP personalities are future oriented and boldly see the world as something to conquer. It's in their DNA (nature.) These inborn characteristics are called genetic predisposition.

A person's ultimate belief system is a result of both their genetic predisposition (nature) and their life experiences (nurture) -such as upbringing, surroundings and parental views. Humans naturally protect their beliefs, some way more than others.

When confronted by different ideas or opinions a chemical reaction triggers a response. To the SJ personalities, this new idea may be viewed as a threat because it hasn't been analyzed yet, so avoiding it is often normal.

When new techniques are presented to these folks they are often uncomfortable simply because the information is different. The new method clashes with the old comfortable method so the new method is disregarded as wrong.

***“Sometimes the new way is actually the right way...but it feels wrong to the SJ athlete coach and/or parent.”***

In seeking change, consider your athlete's brain type and body type. For example, asking a fine motor skilled dominant body type player to change their foot work, core balance and stability is going to be much more difficult than asking a gross motor skilled dominant player to do the same task.

***“Motivate your athlete to accept change. Although change can be difficult, by refusing to change and grow they will likely be left behind.”***



**QUESTION: What causes my son's game day emotional train wrecks?**

**Frank:** All too often, it's the little preparation failures such as a lack of routines and rituals that cause catastrophic game day failures. To understand preparation failures, let's sneak a peek into my friend John's world:

*John needs to lose weight- but he can't seem to find consistent success. His weight goes up and down and it's a direct result of his of routines and rituals. One week he scheduled morning breakfast at IHOP with a "Grand Slam Breakfast" and then returned home and sat in front of the computer for four hours, then broke for a fast food lunch followed by four more hours of sitting behind a computer and then met friends for dinner...John preset weight loss failure with excessive calories and no physical activity. With those behaviors in place, weight gain was sure to follow.*

*Now let's look at the routines and rituals of a different week. In this week John woke up and drank a green veggie concoction for breakfast, hit the gym and ate a salad for lunch, followed by four hours of training on the tennis court and a healthy dinner. These are weight loss behaviors and these daily mini successes will result in consistent weight loss. It is not rocket science...it is just hard work.*

The same type of scenario plays out with most junior athletes. Unfortunately, many juniors believe they're doing everything right but under closer inspection, they're almost always "way off" target. In sports, match day failures stem from the dozens of smaller preparation failures.

**NOTE:** Keep in mind that losses are not necessarily failures. If a player is performing in the manner in which they have been trained, they may have just been outplayed.

As an example of poor rituals and routines, let's look at a comment from a tennis parent prior to our Customized Evaluation Session with her daughter Jenny. Mrs. Clements complained, "My daughter, Jenny, can't beat a top level retriever. Those pushers drive her crazy!"

Now let's look at what we discovered about Jenny's actual training schedule and developmental plan:

- She only grooves stationary fundamentals.
- She perfects her primary strokes for 10 hours a week.
- She doesn't focus on the development of her secondary strokes.
- She doesn't focus on the aerobic fitness needed to play 15 tough sets in a singular event or a 3 hour moonball battle.
- She doesn't focus on developing the actual patterns needed to take a retriever out of their comfort zone.
- She doesn't focus on patience or the emotional demands required to withstand the emotional trauma that comes with playing someone who doesn't miss.

After Jenny's assessment, it was clear to her and her parents that she needs to re-vamps her deliberate, customized developmental plan. So, parents and coaches, if your talented athlete isn't getting the results they're capable of, it may prove wise to raise their preparation standards.

*Here's a story about my dog Moses. He's a gifted, highly intelligent English White Golden Retriever. He and I have spent hours upon hours in the yard playing catch. He's talented and we've played catch A-LOT for 6 years. So, if talent and repetition makes champion, it's safe to assume that Moses should win every United States Dog Agility Association National Event, right?*

*Well...no. Moses and I don't practice in the manner he's expected to perform. I enjoy the quality of time we spend playing together but we are not spending our time together applying deliberate, customized training.*

**QUESTION: Why is repetition so important in developing athletic royalty?**

**Frank:** Most professional coaches view repetition as the godfather of mastery. Repetition is essentially motor programming.

*Developing a motor program begins with a thought, which is messaged through the nervous system, down the spinal cord and into the muscular system. The more we pre-set the protocols the more it "grooves" the pathways. So, the more familiar the habit, the easier it is to execute the proper protocol during match play.*

Repetition doesn't just involve the physical strokes. It also applies to the athletic, flexible skills movements, the cognitive processing skills and emotional responses. All four of these components need appropriate, deliberate repetition.

***"It doesn't matter if you're actually doing it, imagining it or observing it, you are developing a pathway."***

Neurological-connections are strengthened by repetition. One of the most important keys to repetition is to "practice in the manner in which you're expected to perform." Often, improvements are maximized through manipulating the exercises with variations. Examples include:

***Athleticism-*** Varying the direction, physical reps and/or sets.

***Strokes-*** Varying the strike zones, tempo and/or movement.

***Emotional-*** Varying the performance anxieties and their pre-set solutions.

***Mental-*** Varying the different patterns used to beat the different styles of opponents.

Applying each of the four components under stress effortlessly requires an intuitive process. What appears to be a natural talent is actually a learned behavior through repetition. Mastering each component requires repetition.

It's important to note that repetition isn't always good. Repeating the same old flawed mechanical stroke or repeating the incorrect emotional response to stress is only ingraining that flaw deeper, making it harder to fix later.

**QUESTION: Why does my child play great in practice but horrible in matches?**

**Frank:** Here's the scenario that plays out at every club around the world.

*Friday, the day before a local junior event, John the young hitting pro carefully feeds balls waist level, in Nathan's perfect strike zone. Nathan doesn't even have to move and hits like a champ. The pro is essentially playing "catch" right to little Nathan. On the way home, Nate says, "Man, I'm on fire! Tennis is easy! Forget the open tourney, I'm going pro!"*

*Saturday morning rolls around and little Nate's opponent isn't as nice as the club's assist pro. His opponent's playing "keep away" from*

*him...not catch! His opponent is wisely keeping balls above Nathans shoulders out of his primary strike zone. He's hitting away from Nathan instead of right to him! Nathan goes down in flames. After the match Nate says, "I don't get it, I was on fire yesterday."*

Practicing in the manner in which you are expected to perform is a battle cry heard at my workshops daily. There is a totally different set of skills that provide "competitive" confidence versus simply hitting.

***"The essence of a champion doesn't simply lie in their strokes but in their head and heart."***

No question, developing sound fundamentals is a critical element of success. However to improve your child's ability to perform under stress, it is in their best interest to switch from 100 percent stroke repetition practice to include mental/emotion strategy repetition. Organize a meeting with your athlete's coach and ask him/her to replace some of the fundamental stroke production hours with mental/emotional skill set development.

**QUESTION:** How can we help supersize practice sessions?

**Frank:** Below I have created a checklist of solution to help Super-Charge Practice Sessions.

☐ ***Stop hitting without accountability.***

Hitting without accountability is like spending money with an unlimited bank account. Juniors perceive they hit better in

practice because they are not aware of the sheer number of mistakes they are actually making. They remember the 10 screaming winners they hit, but forget about the 50 unforced errors they committed in the same hour.

❑ ***Change the focus in practice sessions.***

Concentrate on skill sets such as shot selection, patterns, adapting and problem solving, spotting the opponent's tendencies, tactical changes and between point rituals.

❑ ***Quit being a perfectionist!***

Trying 110 percent promotes hesitation, over- thinking and tight muscle contractions. If you must worry about winning, focus on winning about 66 percent of the points. Yes, you can blow some points and allow your opponent a little glory and still win comfortably.

❑ ***Replace some of the hours spent in clinics with actual matches.***

Do you want your child to learn how to play through nervousness and manage their mistakes? Do you want them to get better at closing out those 5-3 leads? Do you want them to actually beat that moonball pusher in the third set?

Players must begin to address their issues in dress rehearsal before they can expect them to win under pressure. Playing great under stress is a learned behavior. Practicing under simulated stress conditions is the solution.

***“The challenge is to get comfortable being uncomfortable.”***

Rehearse doing what you're scared of doing. Take the tougher road less traveled. One of my favorite sayings is “If you want to get ahead of the pack, you can't hang in the pack.”

This goes for parents as well. Obviously dropping your child off at the group lesson then going shopping for shoes is way easier than finding practice matches, charting and/or paying a college hitter to play sets. But ask yourself, is taking the convenient way out stunting your child's growth?

***QUESTION: What is quality practice? You've said quality of practice trumps the quantity of practice. Can you give me an example?***

**Frank:** Is your child getting the results they deserve? If not, they may be on the tennis court a ton, yet not practicing efficiently. I've witness's super athletes wasting their time day after day on the practice court. Why? Sadly, the uneducated parents and intermediate coaches were to blame.

Having terrific fundamental form and winning events are two very different sets of skills. Ask your child and coach to apply these advanced training principles and they'll soon stop wasting precious time, money and tears.

### ***1) Vary Strike Zones***

Exchange having your child's teaching pro feeding balls right to your little darling's perfect strike zone. Instead, ask the pro to mix in different spins, speeds and trajectories to your athletes low, medium and high strike zones. Thus, practicing in the manner they are expected to perform.

### ***2) Hit on the Run***

Replace the hours of rallying back and forth to each other with hitting on the move. Winning isn't a game of catch, it's a game of keep away. Thus, practicing in the manner in which they are expected to perform.

### ***3) Practice Playing Best 2 out of 3 Sets***

Replace rallying for a 20 minutes and then playing one practice set with the rehearsal of actually closing out set after set. Simply start the sets at 2-2 or every game at 30-30. Practice closing out the critical ending stages of each game and set. Thus practicing in the manner in which they are expected to perform.

### ***4) Practice Drilling with Patterns***

Exchange consistent skills training with flexible skills training. Instead of separately hitting 100 forehands, 100 backhands followed by 50 serves, begin to rehearse running actual patterns. Have the athlete hit one serve (kick wide on the ad side for example) followed by two change of direction ground strokes immediately following the serve.

Apply negative scoring to each skill set (Make all 3 balls in the court = 1 point, miss a shot and deduct 1 point from the score. Get to 10 and then move on to another serving pattern). This replicates the flexible skills and stress management needed to win matches. Thus, practicing in the manner in which you are expected to perform.

### ***5) Rehearse Playing Matches***

Split a 2 hour lesson and do live ball play. Ask your coach to assist you in rehearsing spotting the cause of errors. Most juniors focus on perfecting their form day in and day out. The most common errors in high level match play is shot selection followed by movement and spacing errors. Spotting the actual cause of the errors is the first step.

A great saying to motivate your athlete:

***“Let’s not simply GO through your junior tennis career;  
let’s GROW through your junior tennis career.”***



**QUESTION:** *My Mom only wants me to play better players and then always goes psycho when I lose! Is this right?*

**Frank:** Most junior tennis players and their parents fall into the trap of ONLY seeking “up” matches. Playing someone better is a terrific way for your child to rehearse their A game plan. It can provide a major confidence boost to hold your own or even take a set from a higher level player. Playing up can be an effective way to get pushed and stretched to the limit.

However, beware of two pitfalls. One is that your child will lose most of the time and that isn’t always the best way to motivate some brain types. Second, be aware that it may be a false victory! A false victory is achieved when the higher level opponent isn’t trying to win, but is using your child as a sparring partner to rehearse his or her B or C game plans, secondary strokes or weaker patterns. I often ask my players to play lesser players and focus on only applying and strengthening their weaknesses.

*Alexa Glatch was a great Southern California junior player. She is currently ranked approximately 110 on the WTA tours and has played on the U.S. Federation Cup squad. All through her junior career we scheduled sparring matches. She would be absolutely okay with losing most of the practice matches as she rehearsed her weaker proactive patterns or her secondary strokes that she didn’t quite own.*

*The other top 10 nationally ranked juniors wouldn’t dare rehearse their weaker patterns and plays because they were obsessed with having to win on the practice court. Fast forward a few years and each player that beat Alexa on the practice court played Division I college ball, while Alexa still enjoys life traveling the world on the on the WTA pro tour.*

I suggest asking your child to spend an equal amount of time playing weaker players. This will assist in the development of their B and C game plans.

***“Players need to master different styles of play in order to be a contender at the national level.”***

Juniors with a fragile, pessimistic mindset think they’re above playing lower ranked players. But with this negative attitude, when will the critical B & C game plan skill sets be developed and rehearsed?

SPECIAL NOTE: Players that won’t play down practice matches can often blame their parent’s fragile ego.

Uneducated parents unknowingly sabotage their child’s growth by not allowing them to play sets versus different styles and levels of opponents.

***“When seeking quality practice partners, consider their playing style as much as the ranking of the player.”***

At my workshops, we structure practice sets against different styles of opponents, not just different levels. If your child has issues beating a Moonball/Retriever...guess what we focus on? You guessed it, the tools required to beat a Moonball/Retriever. Also, most coaches will gladly assist your player in finding a weekly UP match as long as you allow your child to play a DOWN match as well.

**QUESTION:** In scheduling practice sets, what should my daughter focus on?

**Frank:** Design a plan of action, a focal point for each day's practice session. The missing link I see daily is that most juniors don't focus on improving a weak component. They only try to win. As you know by now, utilizing performance goals is the key to systematic growth.

*Instead of relying on other juniors and their parents, it's often much more efficient to hire a seasoned player and ask them to role play for two complete sets. If your child is in elementary school, hire a high school player and high school players should hire a local college player. (If your athlete has issues beating a retriever, ask the hired gun to be the most annoying pusher for both practice sets). Also, remember that most kids are "One Set Wonders." They meet to play sets but chat for 20 minutes, maybe complete one set then go home. After the tournaments they're known to say..."Geez...I have such bad luck, I never win these three set matches!"*

Below are 8 common topics to focus on during practice sets. (Focus only on one of the below topics at a time.)

***Eight Focal Points Used During Practice Set Rehearsals:***

- 1) How to Beat Retrievers
- 2) How to Beat Hard Hitting Baseliners
- 3) How to Beat All Court/Net Rushers
- 4) Focus Only on Their Top 7 Patterns
- 5) Focus on Spotting and Stopping the Opponent's Top 7 Patterns

6) Focus on Offensive, Neutral and Defensive Shot Selections

7) Focus on Applying Quality Changeover and Between Point Rituals

8) Focus on Spotting Game Points (Mega Points)

The key to quality practice sets is to agree upon a pre-set improvement goal. Focus only on the improvement of that skill set versus focusing on the need to win. You've heard it before but trading in that old fashion grooving back and forth with a deliberate improvement plan is in your athlete's best interest.

**QUESTION: Is the game of doubles really that important anymore?**

**Frank:** If tennis is known as the sport of a life-time, the most popular form of tennis has to be doubles!

Doubles can be found in the 10 and under events all the way up to the 90 and over divisions. Our children will be enjoying the game of doubles way after their competitive career is over. A top women's college coach once told me, "In college tennis, doubles are so important, that I'd rather recruit a top 40 ranked singles player with a top 30 ranking in doubles, than a top 10 singles player that has avoided playing doubles throughout their career." Below I have listed 10 common doubles questions and their solutions.

***Doubles Question 1: What do we look for when picking a partner?***

**Frank:** Here are a few essential elements that make a winning combination:

- Chemistry! Can the doubles team laugh and have fun winning or losing?
- Partners that complement each other's style of play. It is often called: The Hammer & Wedge System. If you are a hammer...seek a wedge.
- Basic knowledge and understanding of the nuances of doubles.
- Pairing with a partner with more experienced-a better player.

I recommend going out to lunch and "talking shop." Be sure the basic personalities of all parties "gel." Some parent/coaches will only allow their child to play one style on all points regardless of the situation. This could prove disastrous. (The pros on tour rotate their formations.) Once a partner is chosen, play at least 2 practice matches together before committing to an event.

***Doubles Question 2: My son is shy. He knows he should communicate with his partner during the match, but doesn't know what to say. What's your advice?***

**Frank:** Proper doubles communication is an essential skill needed to keep the energy high and to develop appropriate game strategies. It is also important that the doubles team be synchronized to work as one.

Below are some very important topics doubles partners should identify and communicate about during match play:

- The opponent's technical strokes, strengths and weaknesses.
- The opponent's favorite tactics and patterns that he has spotted.
- The opponent's system of play and their likes and dislikes.
- Awareness the opponent's focus, intensity or lack of intensity.
- How to expose your team's strengths and hide your weaknesses.
- Address nonverbal communication such as facial expressions, body language or even tone of voice.

SPECIAL NOTE: Between points and during change-over is when constant communication occurs. On the Pro tour, it's estimated that doubles partners communicate an average of 80 times a match.

***Doubles Question 3: My 12 year old daughter is scared of doubles. She says it's confusing. Can you point her in the right direction?***

**Frank:** Promote that playing doubles is a blast! Its team tennis, so she's not out there all alone. Take her to watch a few college matches in your area. As you watch doubles, begin explaining the role of each position in doubles. There are unique job descriptions, patterns, positions, and tactical options in each one. She will need to develop the tactical options for all four of these positions:

- 1) The Server
- 2) The Server's Partner
- 3) The Return of Server
- 4) The Returner's Partner

(Obviously, if the parent has little or no experience, it would be wise to hire an experienced tennis coach.)

***Doubles Question 4: My daughter will not go to the net because she says she just gets lobbed. What is she doing wrong?***

**Frank:** Often in juniors, we see players attack the net and place their easy volley back deep, right to the baseline opponent. This gives the baseline opponent plenty of time to lob.

Here's a question. Which opponent doesn't have reaction time? Is it the opposing net player or the opposing baseliner? The opposing net player is vulnerable and they can't lob effectively from that court position.

NOTE: The basic rule is hit long to long and short to short. That means if your daughter is back, hit to the opposing back court opponent. If your daughter is at the net, juice the opposing net girl! Of course, exceptions apply to every rule!

***Doubles Question 5: My son is on the court working on his strokes five days a week. He practices more than most kids ranked above him at the club. My question is why is the game of doubles so hard for him?***

**Frank:** Winning doubles consist primarily of serving, returning and secondary strokes. In fact, with high school age boys, the doubles points last an average of 3 hits. That is a serve, a return and maybe a volley. Practice in the method in which you are expected to perform. To be great in doubles, spend at least one day a week on serving, return of serve and transition volleys.

***Doubles Question 6: When should a net player look to poach in modern tennis?***

**Frank:** There are 3 basic poaching opportunities. Poaching as well as “fake” poaching is a critical element in keeping the opponents uncomfortable. Emphasize that poaching is tons of fun! Reward your child every time they attempt to poach.

NOTE: Often the poaching player draws errors and wins points without ever touching the ball. Visual distraction is an important element in competitive tennis. If your child needs to poach more, they should look for an opponent who is vulnerable. This could be a vulnerable court position or strike zone at contact.

SPECIAL NOTE: The primary strike zone is waist level. An opponent striking a ball around their shoe laces or leaning back to strike a ball above their shoulders puts them in a vulnerable position. So...poach!

**The Three Most Common Times to Poach**

(For the below example, A=Server; B= Servers Partner; C= Return of Server; D=Return of Server's Partner.)

- 1) A serves to C's backhand= B is poaching.
- 2) A serves & volleys, C returns at the feet of A= D poaches.
- 3) A and C are in a baseline exchange, B or D spots a vulnerable strike zone, body language or court position from the opponent= poach.

***Doubles Question 7: How is doubles different than singles?***

**Frank:** The only true similarity between singles and doubles is that both games are played on the same court (with added dimensions.). Four basic differences between singles and doubles include:



- Different “secondary” technical strokes are called upon more often.
- Different tactical patterns are used in different formation.
- Different movement is required.
- Different communication and anticipatory skills are required.

SPECIAL NOTE: To reach NCAA D-1 All-American status, plan on training doubles and/or playing doubles a minimum of one day a week.

***Doubles Question 8: My daughter doesn't like to volley. Can she still win at doubles?***

**Frank:** You bet...At least up to a certain level. Her first step in playing doubles without attacking the net is to choose a partner that's ok with her tactics. Second, she'll need to choose a system of doubles that exposes her strengths and hides her weaknesses.

The four common doubles systems seen on the WTA pro tour include:

- 1) Both players rush the net
- 2) One player plays up and one back
- 3) Both players play “double back”
- 4) “T” Formation

FUN FACT: The most vulnerable system in doubles is one-up- one-back. The most common system played around the world? One up one back!

***Doubles Question 9: Our high school coach says don't ever look back at your partner's ground strokes, yet I see pro's doing it. Which is right?***

**Frank:** In my opinion, the player that uses their peripheral vision to quickly detect the quality of their partners shot has a huge advantage. Picking up visual and audible clues as soon as possible is a major part of the evolution of the game. Pros make their living by picking up these clues and moving before the opponent even makes contact with their shot. Anticipatory speed is a learned behavior.

**FACT:** Let's say you are at the net, only looking forward. Your partner is in trouble hitting a vulnerable, lunging floater. Well, your partner knows your dead, both opponents know your dead...Guess who does not know you're dead...You!

***Doubles Question 10: My son and his partner serve 120 mph and can rip the ball. They are super aggressive, yet they lose in doubles to less talented players. What are they doing wrong?***

**Frank:** Being aggressive in doubles is critical. Unfortunately, playing only offense is more than just hitting hard. Ask your son to look into the below forms of offense.

***Time Management:***

Taking away time with aggressive court positioning.

***Redirecting the Ball:***

Changing the angle of the ball versus just crushing it.

***Applying Building Shots:***

Building shots are essential in forcing the opponent into vulnerable strike zones and court positions.

In review, ask your son's coach to begin to focus on the art of applying offensive, neutral and defensive shot selections (spins and speeds) at the appropriate times.

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COMPETITIVE DRAMAS:  
INTERNAL STRUGGLES

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**QUESTION:** What does emotional conduct have to do with winning?

**Frank:** Maintaining peak performance is dependent on a player's emotional intelligence. Let's look deeper into where an athlete's focus shifts during competition when they leave their optimal performance state of mind.

Optimal emotional conduct is a performance state of mind which allows a competitor to reach and maintain their peak performance level. It's important to note that even though stroke mechanics are solidified in a non-stressful practice environment, poor emotional control can cause solid fundamentals to faultier under stressful match conditions.

***“Pre-setting appropriate solutions is emotional readiness.”***

Champions in their optimal emotional state of mind report being very happy, confident, dialed into the moment, flowing not forcing, feeling confident, safe and secure, performing on script, being ready and optimistic about the match.

Often the difference between a great competitor and good competitor is the understanding and implementation of their optimal emotional conduct.

***“Average athletes unknowingly drift in and out of their competitive script - floating through their under and over arousal state of mind. This instability allows their performance level to drop significantly.”***

Very few athletes have been taught to be aware of their emotional state of being. An athlete's optimal emotional state

is dependent on their ability to spot their under-arousal and the over-arousal states of mind. Let's dig deeper into these issues.

### ***Under Arousal -Choking***

Players drifting into their under arousal state believe that they are choking. Instead of staying on their pre-set performance scripts and simply controlling the controllables, such as their performance goals, athletes in the under-arousal state of mind begin to choke because they choose to focus on the uncontrollables, such as their anxieties, match outcome or the ranking ramifications.

Because most athletes haven't been taught their optimal emotional conduct, they start fearing that they are going to blow yet another match, so they begin to unknowingly push versus hit. Their anxieties quickly spiral out of control as their new negative self-image takes control- essentially allowing the "inmates to run the asylum."

### ***Under Arousal Solutions -Triggers***

Triggers are both verbal and physical solutions that are used to snap a player back into their optimal emotional code of conduct. Triggers used to stop choking include:

***Verbal triggers:*** -"come on", "let's go", "you got this", "right now", "hit through the ball", "trust your training", "Play to win!"...

***Physical triggers:*** - Moving your feet and pumping up the adrenaline, slapping your leg, fist pumping, taking deep breaths, kangaroo jumps, walking more confidently, walking to the back fence and rebooting the energy, taking a towel break, fixing your hair/hat, changing your racket ...

### ***Over Arousal-Panicking***

Players drifting into the over arousal state of mind report the opposite responses of players choking. This is a sense of panic. Panicking is the opposite of choking because it is under thinking. Panicking players are often seen rushing, applying reckless play, trying to play better than the moment demands, forgetting to apply between point rituals, appearing unattached- with a deer in the headlight look on their face, over hitting, trying to end the point too quickly or playing angry and fearful.

### ***Over-Arousal Solutions-Triggers***

There are sometimes different triggers for different emotional states. The solutions to snapping out of the panicking, over arousal state of mind include:

***Verbal Triggers:*** “slow down”, “deep breaths”, “relax”, “re-start right now”, “3- balls in first”, “steady-high and heavy”

***Physical Triggers:*** A player in an over-arousal state of mind must defuse some adrenaline by taking the full 25- seconds between points, taking the full 90- seconds during changeovers, re-gripping the racket, taking towel breaks, changing your racket, taking a legal bathroom break, taking a legal trainer break.

***“Maximizing talent under stress requires the athlete to perform in their Optimal Performance state of mind.”***

Sport science experts can detect whether an athlete is choking or panicking through psychological and physiological tests by monitoring brain wave patterns, muscle tension, heart rate, and breathing rate. They can also detect when a trained athlete switches “channels” away from or back into their peak performance state of mind.

Emotionally educated performers maintain a reduced level of neurological activity, less muscle tension, a lower heart rate and slower breathing. This saves crucial battery life for the later rounds. Emotions play a key role in competition.

***“A player’s emotional skill sets control the internal climate that allows the athlete to perform comfortably for longer periods of time.”***

### ***Personal Promise***

Performance goal setting often starts with an athlete’s personal promise. This is done before the match in the “morphing into an athletic warrior” phase of the pre-match preparation.

An example of an athlete’s personal promise sounds like:

*“Today I will remain in my peak performance frame of mind. I will stay on script and trust my training. My best chance of success is doing what I’ve been trained to do. Today, I’m going to hit the shot the moment demands. Today is my day. I’m going to enjoy the battle!”*

Often, top warriors have an optimistic phrase called a mantra that represents their personal belief system. They memorize it and repeat it several times before each match as a form of self-hypnosis. So, what is your child’s personal promise to themselves?

**NOTE:** This emotional component is so important and so popular in my workshops that I will be tackling this topic twice from different perspectives in this section- emotional intelligence and emotional readiness.



**QUESTION: What's the difference between emotional and intellectual ability?**

**Frank:** In the junior levels of tournament competition, I see two very different character traits: natural born Warriors and natural born Worriers.

Natural born warriors compete with superior emotional ability and are constantly ready for a threat. They have a high pain threshold and they can switch tasks quickly as they enjoy thinking “on their feet.”

Natural born worriers often come to the party with superior intellectual abilities but inferior emotional abilities. Their fear of making a mistake results in over processing game situations which ultimately leads to a more timid competitor. Worriers are less comfortable with new situations and frequently stress about speculated issues that aren't truly present. They seem to shut down more often under stress. This makes them unable to adapt to the ever changing match scenarios.

Interestingly, many worriers, who have parents and coaches wise enough to focus on the mental and emotional components of the game, actually progress nicely into the higher levels of the sport. They learn to handle the chaos of competition extremely well after years of deliberate, customized emotional training.

**QUESTION: Coaches always say “focus!” But what should my daughter focus on?**

**Frank:** Focus management refers to the skill of focusing on variables in your control. Throughout a match, a player must shift focus accordingly, so the correct statement is “focus on what the moment demands.”

Back in 2000, I brought in Pistol Pete (Sampras) as the Touring Pro at Sherwood Country Club. During one of our member clinics a parent of two ranked juniors asked Pete, “What do you think about when you’re playing Wimbledon, down break point...serving in front of millions of viewers?”

After a long pause, Pete said, “I just toss to my spot.”

After about 10 seconds of uncomfortable silence, a short, balding gentleman suddenly vents “Oy Vey. That’s it ...I paid \$75.00 for your serving clinic and all you say is ...to toss to your spot?”

In Pete’s defense, he focused on controlling the controllables. This skill set was one of the major factors that contributed to Pete’s incredible success. He excelled at focusing on what he did best. Like we covered earlier, the efficiency each junior seeks is based around trimming the fat. This applies to mechanical stroke production as well as the hidden mental and emotional components such as focus. Pete simply trimmed the fat.

Intermediate juniors often fail to focus on controlling the controllables. They sometimes worry about controlling all the factors that are out of their control. Professionals think about a hand full of cue words each match while amateurs think about a thousand irrelevant thoughts per match.

**QUESTION: My child's mind wanders off in matches, how can we fix that?**

**Frank:** Lapses in concentration are so very common.

Focus is a key mental/emotional skill set. Without it, even the most gifted ball strikers are usually early round losers. Focus requires the athlete to understand that their mind is like a muscle that needs to be continually tightened and toned. Remember from the previous section, an un-toned brain can easily slip back and forth between its under-arousal state of mind, to its optimal emotional conduct state of mind to it's over arousal state of mind.

Let's look once again into the thought process of these three different "head spaces."

In the under-arousal state, the athlete often begins to detach and slip into past or future thought scenarios. After the mind wanders off, athletes often report that they choked.

In the ideal performance state, the athlete stays deeply entrenched in their calm, happy, confident script of patterns. This mental, emotional state of readiness lasts throughout the match. The athlete often reports that they're in the zone.

In the over-arousal state of mind, the athlete slips into the over hitting, rushing, and reckless style of play. The athlete often reports that they were trying to play better than they actually needed and simply panicked.

The initial key to solving this issue is to ask the athlete to begin to notice where their thoughts are at certain stages of the match. (This is best done through match play video analysis.)

Remember, triggers are used to get an athlete back into their script of patterns. Triggers are both verbal and physical. Triggers serve the athlete in two very positive ways: it inflates their energy while deflating their opponent's energy and by sending the message that they're in it ... to win it.

**QUESTION: How can we help our son overcome his on-court anger?**

**Frank:** First of all, not all anger is bad. Fire can be used as an analogy. A controlled fire can be used to cook meals and heat homes. An uncontrolled fire can burn down homes. Managing anger and fire requires knowledge and skill. Often it is the good anger that actually propels your child into an upward spiral. This requires being aware of adrenaline. This rush of adrenaline often pushes them into a higher competitive level. Players who know how to “call up” or “quite down” their adrenaline at the appropriate times are managing their emotions.

***“Managing adrenaline is one of the most important emotional skills found at the higher levels of competition.”***

Notice how the top professionals know how and when to pump up their energy with the use of adrenaline. When do you see them applying this emotional skill set? Typically it is during the closing stage of the set.

The concerns most parents and coaches have arises when the player chooses to let their negative emotions control their behavior versus focusing on their pre-set performance goals.

In my opinion, bad anger on the court stems from a lack of emotional intelligence, resources and tools.

Below is a list of mental and emotional components your child should digest in order to begin to manage anger and stress. Talk it through with your athlete and their coaches and have some fun.

### **Developing Mental and Emotional Strength:**

#### ***Say Something Positive***

On the practice court, ask your athlete to rehearse finding something they did well on each point. This will shift their focus from negative to positive. This rule applies to parents as well. Flipping your list of negative comments into positive comments will change your outlook, your relationships and your world!

#### ***Tennis Is Not Fair***

There are so many reasons why the game of tennis is not fair. Understanding these issues will reduce the stress some juniors place on themselves. For instance, luck of the draw, stylistic match ups, court surfaces, availability of referees, match location, elements like weather (wind, sun, etc.), and lucky let courts, not to mention the finances needed to compete at the higher levels. Can you think of a few?

#### ***Managing Stress***

Experience tells us that if you are in a verbal argument, take some time to clear your head. Get away, go for a brisk walk. Talk to your child about time management as it pertains to controlling the pace of the match. Winners often take (legal) bathroom breaks at critical times during match play. I am sure you have seen this control drama play out in both professional and junior level matches. Controlling the energy flow of the match is a super way to control the fire.

### ***Champions Experience Failure***

Discuss how most tennis champions have probably lost way more matches than your child has even played. Ambitious people experience many failures. One of my past students is Sam Querrey (ATP top player). He's been playing full time on the ATP tour for ten years and has won 7 ATP single titles and a handful of double events. That means, most of the time, Sam goes home losing week in and week out. Would you say he's a loser? Not a chance- Sam is top touring professional!

### ***Never Outgrow Fun***

You often see top professionals battle and still smile in the course of a match. Negative thoughts, stress and anger clutter an athlete's thought process and tighten muscle groups, both of which decrease the player's ability to perform. Pessimism affects both an athlete's physiology and psychology. Optimism is a coping skill used to combat the negatives that are found in one-on-one competition. Smile, laugh and enjoy the competition.

### ***Tennis Is a Gift Not a Right***

Discuss how there are millions of natural born athletes that are the same age as your child that will never get the opportunity to compete at a high level. Tennis isn't fair, right?

But has your child thought about how lucky they are to be able to play tennis and have a family that wants to support their passion?

### ***Good Judgment Comes from Experience***

So where does experience come from? The ironic answer is bad judgment. Talk to your child about how it is far less painful to learn from other peoples' failures. After a loss, stay at the tournament site and chart a top seed. Analyze their successes and model them and their pitfalls and learn how to avoid them.

### ***Rehearse Focusing on the Solutions Not the Problems***

Ask the athlete to allow you to video tape a few matches. As the athlete and coach watch the matches, ask them to spot unforced errors and then categorize them into their cause of error chart. Ask them to recognize negative thoughts, loss of concentration or an emotional breakdown on the court. Now, remind the coach not to ask the athlete to think about NOT repeating the problem. That only draws deeper attention to the problem. Instead, discuss the development of the solution to the problem. Then simply focus on the rehearsal of the actual match solution.

### ***A Genius Simplifies the Complex***

In the higher levels, most lessons should be focused on “trimming the fat” off of strokes and/or off of the players thought control. Going from really good to great is not always about adding more. There are often hidden contaminants that bog down gifted athletes.

*Maturing the mental and emotional components is a life skill. Athletes need to manage anger and stress. The old Buddha saying is “Holding on to anger is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die.”*

**QUESTION:** How do we help our daughter re-commit to her tennis?

**Frank:** It sounds like it’s time for you, the CEO, to formulate a fresh, deliberate, customized developmental plan for your athlete. It’s often too painful for a struggling athlete to jump whole heartedly back into the never-ending old cycle of training during a losing streak. When struggling, baby steps

are often required. So I suggest seeking a commitment to try a brand new one month challenge.

I recommend applying The Tennis Parent's Bible's self-evaluation chapter (Section VII CUSTOMIZED PLAYER EVALUATION) to assist your team in assessing your athlete's efficiencies and deficiencies. Use the data to organize a fresh weekly developmental plan. Include all of the essential components found in this book. You and your athlete must make peace with your past then let it go, so it doesn't impair your future.

This new found dedication starts with flipping a non-believer into a believer once again. To rekindle their belief system, ask your child to read and discuss the optimistic challenges listed below. This re-birth begins with shifting back to an optimistic, motivational state of mind.

Challenge your athlete to be fully engaged for a single month. The following common negative behaviors should be prohibited:

- ☐ Blaming Others or Circumstances
- ☐ Inventing Excuses
- ☐ Complaining
- ☐ Initiating Unnecessary Drama
- ☐ Choosing a Pessimistic Attitude

Begin your one month organizational plan by reminding your athlete to:

- ☐ Flip their negative words and thoughts to positives.
- ☐ Take ownership and be accountable.
- ☐ Let go of past failures and be future orientated.
- ☐ Believe in their plan. (The athlete is more likely to believe in a plan if it is their plan.)
- ☐ Commit to daily and weekly planners.



- ☐ Complete a nightly focus journal.
- ☐ Accept that change is uncomfortable...but that's where growth lives.
- ☐ Take away destructive behaviors.
- ☐ Celebrate positive behaviors.
- ☐ Identify proactive behavior and destructive behavior.
- ☐ Choose to chase excellence not perfection.
- ☐ Acknowledge that today's results stem from past choices.

***“Every choice your athlete makes either pushes them closer to their goal or further away from their goal.”***

Encourage your athlete to stretch beyond their comfort zone and try new approaches by:

- ☐ Putting your goals and plans in writing.
- ☐ Acknowledging that the better choice is often the harder choice.
- ☐ Identifying possible negative influences.
- ☐ Cutting out trouble making friends and instigators.
- ☐ Limiting time spent with negative people.
- ☐ Establishing the rules in troubled relationships.
- ☐ Flipping negative talk: “I don't know” or “I don't care” or “I hate...”
- ☐ Letting go of “I can't, I'm terrible, or I am not good enough.”
- ☐ Addressing difficulties as challenges and not defeats.
- ☐ List solutions not problems.

The above proactive behaviors are not necessarily tennis issues, they are life issues. I find that we're all too often

addicted to our old comfortable thoughts. Behavioral changes stem from changing those unproductive negative thoughts.

***“While your athlete can’t go back and change the past ... they surely can start over and create a better future.”***

Your athlete’s tennis re-birth begins as soon as your athlete commits to improving!

**QUESTION: How do we spot tennis burn out?**

**Frank:** Did you know that even the very best in the business don’t stay in their “Optimal Performance State” year around? ATP and WTA tour professionals rarely play more than three events in a row. They need the critical “down” time to re-charge, heal and fix flaws.

It’s not in your child’s best interest to force them to try to stay in their peak performance state 365 days a year. Taking a week off to re-charge the physical, mental and emotional batteries may help your child peak when it counts most. This is part of the periodization cycle. Yes- taking time off may help them to be more committed and focused when their tennis training commences- leading to better results.

**NOTE:** The number one reason junior players’ report that they want to quit tennis is due to overzealous parents unknowingly pushing them past the healthy limits.

While developing high performance athletes, I am constantly on high-alert for the warning signs of burn out. The signs of

burn out can be physical, mental or emotional. Let's look at some typical signs to assist you in knowing when it's time for your athlete to take a break from their tennis quest.

***20 Signs of Tennis Burn Out:***

- 1) Multiple injuries.
- 2) Reduced flexibility in their body.
- 3) Complaining about fatigue.
- 4) Reduced concentration.
- 5) Fear of competition.
- 6) Lack of emotional control.
- 7) Poor judgment.
- 8) Decreased opponent awareness.
- 9) Negative verbal or physical outbursts.
- 10) Pessimism.
- 11) Lack of motivation to practice or to hit the gym.
- 12) Unwillingness to compete in a tournament.
- 13) Poor equipment preparation.
- 14) Appearing slow and heavy with no energy.
- 15) Lack of anticipation and agility.
- 16) Short attention span.
- 17) Inability to concentration.
- 18) Lack of concern about performance goals.
- 19) Low patience.
- 20) A sense of hopelessness.

In my opinion, if your child is showing several of the above negative signs and seems to be in a downward spiral, it may be in their best interest to put down the racquets for a while. A true contender can only stay away for a short time. Parents, allow them to heal. Then slowly re-start a deliberate customized developmental process.

SPECIAL NOTE: During your child's time off court, encourage them to stay in physical shape by enjoying non-tennis cross training.

**QUESTION: My son is in a slump. How can we help him through this stage?**

**Frank:** The best way to achieve improved results is by shifting your son's developmental plan. A new plan will help motivate a new mind set which will intern cultivate new belief, actions and results. Below are ten focal points to address to ignite continued growth and maximum potential.

***1) Focus on Improvement.***

Ask your player and entourage to let go of winning and losing and focus their energy on improvement.

***2) Accept that Rivalries Encourage Growth.***

Understand that your child needs rivals. Begin with local, then regional, then national, and lead into international. Rivalries encourage growth.

***3) Train Adrenaline Management.***

On match day, managing the systematic building and calming of adrenaline is often the deciding factor that often pulls an athlete into the winners circle.

***4) Choose a Supportive Like Minded Entourage.***

Top athletes have an entourage. The entourage provides a "team effect" to an individual sport. Their collaborative efforts help to inflate the athlete's confidence and fight while supporting the athlete when they need to the most.

### ***5) Role Play Against Various Styles of Opponents.***

Parents, I've touched on this topic before, plan on paying slightly older better players to play sets weekly versus your child while role playing. (For instance, "Here's \$25.00, please play 3-sets versus my son ...and be the most annoying pusher possible. My son's going to rehearse the patterns used to pull a crafty retriever out of their comfort zone. Thank you.")

### ***6) Play Practice Matches.***

Remind your athlete as well as their entourage that success in competition requires protocols that simply aren't found in simply hitting back and forth.

### ***7) Reinforce Playing Smart.***

Regarding competition, educate your athlete that having the presence of mind that missing the shot the moment demands is ok. It's those reckless, uncalled for shot selections that will make them early round losers.

### ***8) Learn to Play Through Fear.***

Elite competitors control their fears and ultimately their destiny. Intermediate athletes allow their fears to control their psychology and physiology as it steal any real chance of peak performance at crunch time.

### ***9) Adopt a Warrior Mentality.***

For some people, the competitive fire is innate, they flourish under stress. For others; they wilt under the very same environment. For these athletes, developing their fighting spirit is a learned behavior.

### ***10) Use Competition as a Learning Tool.***

Competition is the best facilitator for improvement. It's the engine that awakens each athlete's hidden reserve of effort which later is seen as "talent."

## COMPETITIVE DRAMAS: HANDLING GAMESMANSHIP

***“A recent survey found 100% of the NCAA players interviewed claimed that illegal gamesmanship is experienced in at least 75% of their matches.”***

The art of winning includes how to handle the gamesmanship of opponents as well as how to quiet the internal battles fought against oneself.”

***“Players who’ve identified and trained their anti-gamesmanship tactics are better armed under siege.”***

These educated athletes are able to focus their attention on their true job description, which of course is to compete in the manner in which they have been trained. All players need to develop strategies to deal with competitive dramas, because even players with well-grooved strokes can become derailed when an opponent is skilled in the art of gamesmanship.

**QUESTION: I see balls out, my son sees them in and so he plays them. What gives?**

**Frank:** My question to you, “Do you think it’s a visual issue or a fear of confrontation issue?” Let’s tackle the visual issue here and later we’ll discuss the fears of confrontation issues later in this section.

Let’s take a quick look at your own vision first. That’s right, your eyes. Studies we conducted back in the 80’s at The Vic Braden Tennis College exposed some interesting statistics. The first of which found that the human eye cannot register a two millisecond event. That means you cannot actually see the ball hit the court or watch it hit your racquet. The eye is greatly affected by two variables: perspective angles and motion blur.

### ***Perspective Angle***

The vision variable from which you’re seeing the ball is called the perspective angle. Try this eye opening exercise at home. My bet is that you’ll laugh as you fail miserably.

*Stand at the back fence on one side of a court. Turn facing the fence so you can’t see the court. Ask a friend to place 4 balls on and just beyond the service line on the opposing side of the net. Then ask them to repeat it with 4 additional balls on the opposing baseline. When the task is complete, walk slowly to your baseline and try to make 8 correct line calls.*

*Which balls are in and which are out? Don’t forget that in match play, the ball is only sitting there for a few milliseconds. Next, walk to the opposing side of the court for an up close view of the balls. As you take a sideline view things change! Now go stand behind the opposing baseline. Things really become clear.*

We find that your child may be cheated an average of 6 times a match, but usually your youngster plays out balls in even more. You see balls landing a half an inch long appear right on the line from the angle behind their own baseline. This means your child may be falling into the common trap of cheating themselves!

### ***Motion Blur***

The second vision variable that may interfere with how a player detects the ball while in motion (running, landing, jumping, etc.) is called motion blur. While in motion, your eyes are actually moving in their sockets and in this state one could be considered “legally blind.” (That's why you can't read the paper as you go for your run!) So the first time your child says, “Are you sure?” your child should be asking themselves not the opponent.

**QUESTION: What forms of gamesmanship should my daughter expect in tournament tennis?**

**Frank:** “Creative Line Callers” or cheaters, unfortunately play a major role in tennis. Back in the 1980's I had several opportunities to chat with the legend: Jack Kramer. He said that in his youth, (in the 1930's) he estimated an average of 6 bad lines calls per competitive match. Remarkably, that number of “creative” line calls remains the same.

***“Experts agree it's most often not the number of 'gamesmanship' issues per match that determine the outcome but the ability or inability to recover after the drama.”***



Gamesmanship is found in every age division, from the 10 and under beginning crew to the national level juniors to the ladies leagues and all the way up to the 90 and up division of competitive play. Cheating does not go away... so parents and coaches would be wise to assist the athletes with the solutions needed to overcome these difficult situations.

***“Counter gamesmanship tactics are learned behaviors.”***

Communicating about possible/probable scenarios and pre-setting your child's correct response (protocols) is a great start. Rehearse the solutions by setting up scenarios whereby the form of gamesmanship is discussed and your child has to verbally rehearse their response sequence. Many parents and players are unaware that counter gamesmanship tactics are a learned behavior. Before we provide solutions, let's review the top cheating antics found in tennis.

***Top 10 Antics to Expect in High Level Tennis:***

- 1) The opponent cheating on line calls (especially on game points.)
- 2) The opponent's excessive stalling between points.
- 3) The opponent changing the score.
- 4) The opponent belittling your child.
- 5) The opponent taking several extended bathroom/trainer breaks.
- 6) The opponent displaying temper tantrums and slamming & breaking racquets.

- 7) The opponent fighting with their parents and/or referees during the match.
- 8) The opponent's entourage heckling/belittling your child.
- 9) The opponent accusing your child of making bad line calls/cheating.
- 10) The opponent receiving coaching from a parent or coach through the fence.

Developing a protocol to handle each of these antics is an important learned behavior (mental and emotional.) Organizing the solutions to these antics is a form of preventative medicine. The reason why each of the above top 10 forms of gamesmanship work so well is that secretly pull your child's focus away from their essential performance goals and into the drama they create.

Cheaters prey on the weak which are those competitors with underdeveloped mental and emotional skills. Inexperienced players fall victim to gamesmanship as they get sucked into the drama and forget about the task at hand.

**QUESTION: What are the solutions to confronting gamesmanship?**

**Frank:** First of all, let's be honest; cheaters do exist. But let's look at the issue from a growth angle. Cheaters will stretch your child beyond their normal frustration tolerance levels and that's emotional toughness. Your athlete needs emotional intelligence as much as a wicked topspin backhand. Handling those "creative line callers" is a necessary stepping stone to becoming a tennis champion. Share with your junior champs

the below ten factors and they will be better equipped to handle the antics of a cheater.

## **Ten Solutions to Conquering Gamesmanship:**

### ***Solution Number 1: Pre-match speculations.***

Preconceived ideas of what ***might*** happen when playing a known cheater often causes so much stress that it can affect the immune system and often results in players actually feeling sick. Many lose sleep the night before the match. Do not let your child's expectations of the possible cheating trauma pull them away from focusing on their performance goals.

***“Worrying won’t stop the cheating...but educating your athlete will.”***

### ***Solution Number 2: Focus on what you can control.***

This psychological protocol is the fundamental principle to your child's mental and emotional approach to competition. Expect about 4-6 bad line calls per match. This is not in your child's control. What is? How about the 40 unforced errors per match they commit? If they limit their unforced errors to 10 per set and they can let their opponent have a few hooks!

***“Focus on executing the shots and patterns of play the moment demands.”***

### ***Solution Number 3: Ignore the drama.***

Emotional toughness requires the athlete to stay on their pre-set script. Understand that focusing on the drama is a psychological trap. Once your child falls for the

gamesmanship, they have left their performance state of mind and trouble is just around the corner.

***“Intermediate juniors are easy marks because they are mentally and emotionally uneducated.”***

***Solution Number 4: Learn from the past but stay in the present.***

The opponent's past dramas may have robbed your child from a crucial point but your child's wandering mind robs them of present and future points. Being emotionally in the past is another cornerstone of why cheaters do often win. Focusing on the past “hook” is a sign of your athlete's emotional weakness.

***“Past or future thoughts interfere with the present task at hand.”***

***Solution Number 5: Project confidence.***

Act like you've seen these antics a thousand times and the opponent is silly to think you're going to fall for such a petty tactic. A player with a powerful presence acts like they own the place. Some players shy away from confrontation. Learning to handle intimidation and confrontation is a necessary protocol at the higher levels of tennis.

***“Be courageous, there's no room for the insecure at the top.”***

***Solution Number 6: Shift focus from how the opponent is cheating, to how the opponent is playing.***

This takes the counterproductive thoughts of their personal assault out of the equation. By applying opponent profiling, your child is able to zero in on the opponent's physical skills or lack thereof and avoid the drama.

***Solution Number 7: Focus on not cheating yourself.***

The truth is that we most often see our own athletes missing calls. That is, not calling out balls out! Remember, the average number of missed calls is six per match. A great way to handle cheating is to begin by asking your player to tighten up their own calls.

***Solution Number 8: Appreciate that cheaters cheat because down deep they know that their skills are no match for yours.***

A serious competitor is profiling the opponent. If they see that their physical game is no match for your child's game, they begin to look for mental or emotional vulnerabilities to exploit. As the athlete's manager, it is your job to organize the development of each and every component.

***Solution Number 9: Try the standard procedure for handling cheaters.***

First question the bad call. Then, of course, get a line judge. If the line judge leaves after a game or two, your athlete has three options: Go find the lines judge again and again ..., be an "enabler" and let the "cheater" steal the match away from them or fight fire with fire. Although I don't approve of retaliation cheating, I also don't approve of being an enabler.

This is a serious life lesson. In the real world, sometimes standing up for yourself when being bullied is the best action.

*A perfect analogy to this situation is the role of the sheep, the wolf and the sheepdog. Athletes should be educated not to be the passive “sheep” accepting abuse or the aggressive “wolf” unethically praying on the “sheep”, but to be the “sheep dog.” The “sheep dog” doesn’t allow the wolves to take what isn’t theirs.*

***Solution Number 10: After a confrontation do not begin play right away.***

I recommend that your child regain their composure first by taking a “legal” bathroom break. Your player will need time to get their head back into their performance script. One of the most important qualities to nurture in your young player is accountability. They’ve got to be accountable for pre-establishing protocols to handle these common and uncomfortable situations.

***“Excuses such as ‘they cheated me out of the match’ is the enemy of accountability.”***

If the opponents’ antics become your athlete’s excuses, your child is not mentally tough enough. Cheaters weed out the weak and make the champions stronger.

**QUESTION: Why does my daughter become irrational when cheated?**

**Frank:** The human brain simply can't stand being treated unfairly. It's that resentment of injustice which triggers the downward spiral. Youngsters feel they deserve a fair chance of any reward being offered and with that taken away ... so goes their rational decision making abilities.

How to handle unjust situations is not a tennis issue, it's a learned life skill. When a tennis opponent is repeatedly cheating and provoking your athlete, a full-blown meltdown is often the result. Biochemical reactions in the brain distort rational reasoning and the fight or flight syndrome overtakes the situation. That is, unless your athlete has been trained to insert the correct protocol- which is the solution to the problem.

Taking back control begins by understanding Channel Capacity- a term neuroscience has assigned to the brain's inability to process multiple forms of important information at one time. A common example of channel capacity is texting and driving.

***“The human brain cannot solve two complicated tasks simultaneously.”***

On-court, the creative line caller systematically pulls your athlete away from the present (performance state of mind) and into the past or future (outcome state of mind.) Understanding this phenomenon is key to salvaging seemingly catastrophic matches.

*So instead of little Zack focusing on his performance goals such as “I’m going to serve to the backhand, hit high and heavy ground-strokes and crush short balls.”, Zack finds himself stuck in the wrong thought process. He is thinking “This guy is such a punk!!! I can’t lose to such a jerk, what will my friends say? I can’t believe I lost the last set, he’s ranked 57 spots below me...” The creative line caller has now got Zack right where he wants him-mentally far away from his performance goals.*

If your athlete has issues playing against cheaters, ignoring the issue and hoping it will go away is not in their best interest. I recommend practicing their pre-set protocol during practice sessions to reinforce their match tough confidence. Arrange a few practice matches each week with the opponent being allowed to call any close ball out. Learning to deal with adversity and staying on the correct side of your brain under duress is a skill set that must be rehearsed.

**QUESTION:** My son wants harmony on the court, so he won’t do anything to stop a cheater. What can we do?

**Frank:** Call a meeting with your son and his coach. Ask the coach to explain to your son that harmony is seldom found in a competitive environment. It’s up to you and your coaching staff to help your son to develop protocols- these are preset solutions to dealing with gamesmanship. Developing protocols to handle cheaters is similar to an actor memorizing a script. Remind him that when he is being bullied, manipulated or cheated out of a match that is rightfully his, there is no harmony.

***“Avoidance breeds fears...action breeds courage.”***



The best way for your child to make friends in the tennis world is by beating his opponents first. Then guess what...they'll all want to be his friend.

**QUESTION: What should my daughter do if her opponent is hooking?**

**Frank:** If the opponent brings unfair play into the match your child must deal with it swiftly and professionally. I recommend confronting every bad call. At the higher levels, cheaters hook in the first few games simply to see if your child is tough enough to confront them or not. If your child does nothing, they are all but guaranteeing that the opponent will hook later in the match at the most important times. Explain to your daughter that the hook in that second set tiebreaker could have been avoided had the protocols been followed earlier in the match.

Remind her that by confronting the gamesmanship head on, she is essentially saying "No, not today, hooking will not be tolerated."

**QUESTION: How can we help our son with his fear of confrontation?**

**Frank:** This is much more common than parents think. Especially with only children or privileged athletes who never had to battle for the last slice of pizza or the remote control. Confronting adversity is a learned behavior. Champions have learned to meet confrontation head on.

***“Progress usually doesn’t happen without confrontation.”***

Confrontation should be seen as negotiation versus a fight. By allowing opponents to hook and avoiding the fight, your son is likely manifesting internal fear. This fear stops the positive, confident attitude essential to playing at the peak performance level. So by allowing the cheater to cheat, your son is essentially accepting their cheating behavior.

Explain to him that standing up to the confrontation and gamesmanship is part of the competitive arena and that he must have pre-set protocols to deal with it. (Dealing with confrontation is a life issue- it is present in all areas of life.)

**QUESTION: My child is scared to call an umpire onto the court. How can we help?**

**Frank:** As I’ve addressed throughout this book, pre-setting the emotional match protocols are as important as developing motor programs for mechanical strokes. The solution to dealing with on-court controversy (such as calling an umpire to the court.) should already be pre-wired before the match begins. Be sure your child is clear about the actual rules and regulations of competitive play. This requires reading the rules and regulations of the game. Once your child is aware of the official protocol of calling an umpire to her court, she will be more confident in her proactive action. Remind her that she works too hard to allow cheaters to steal what is rightfully hers. Calling an umpire onto the court is demanding fair play.

**QUESTION: When should juniors begin to develop counter-gamesmanship skills?**

**Frank:** Develop counter-gamesmanship tactics as early as possible. Pre-setting solutions are like preventative medicine. Deciding when to set aside time for mental and emotional development depends on your child's growth development schedule. Some children are mature enough to understand and implement counter-gamesmanship tactics at age 7, while others are still not mature enough at age 17. However, most players will lose many emotional matches to cheaters, before they are ready to learn counter-gamesmanship tactics.

***“A player can prepare for gamesmanship tactics but they can't prevent gamesmanship tactics.”***

**QUESTION: What can we do if my son doesn't call out balls out? He is essentially cheating himself out of matches.**

**Frank:** Discuss the ramifications of the fear of confrontation. To some avoiding confrontation is a problem at the competitive levels. Juniors who cheat themselves severely complicate games, sets and matches. Explain to your son that elongating and complicating early round matches drains your son's physical, mental and emotional batteries- leaving nothing left for the tougher, later rounds. Remind your son that by not calling out balls out, he is helping his opponent in two ways- giving them free points and building their confidence.

*True Story: My daughter, Sarah, was playing a phenom in a G14 designated tournament. She was beating this phenom 6-0, 2-0... Sarah began to feel sorry for opponent because she was crying hysterically... So Sarah decided to give her a few points and started to call out ball good.*

*As soon as this phenom saw Sarah GIVING her points... she turned on her gamesmanship tactics -of which she was known for... She started stealing points from Sarah. What should have been a routine win, became dramatic 2nd set grudge match- the phenom began cheating like crazy (Score changing, line calls, intimation, the works...) Sarah learned her lesson and never felt sorry for an opponent again- out balls were out!*

**QUESTION: Should athletes employ legal gamesmanship tactics?**

**Frank:** Yes, athletes should employ gamesmanship tactics- but legal gamesmanship tactics ONLY! Winners in all sports routinely apply physical, mental and emotional tactics. It is your athlete's job as a competitor to profile the opponent and spot and attack their vulnerabilities. This is the art of being a competitive warrior. Let's look at the ways top ATP/WTB professionals apply emotional warfare to control the match dynamics.

**“Adaptive gamesmanship is perfectly legal. It requires doing what it takes within the rules that govern the competition. It's an acceptably, healthy use of the competitive fire.”**

### ***Forms of Legal Gamesmanship:***

- Intimidating with an aura of confidence.
- Dominating play by running their top 7 patterns and staying on script.
- Going to the towel (Time Management) before each mega point, after they have committed two unforced errors in row, after a long winded point to lower their heart rate and to cool off an opponent who is on fire.
- Apply between-point and change-over rituals to control the speed and tempo of the match.
- Taking legal bathroom breaks to change the energy of the match.
- Taking legal trainer breaks to attend to minor ailments when the opponent has all the energy.
- Looking to break the opponent's rhythm as they control the tempo of the match.
- Remaining silent and composed. This makes them appear to be unflappable under stressful situations.

Employing an Alpha attitude is an important characteristic in competitive athletics. An Alpha-like confidence comes across in an athlete's composure, demeanor and facial expressions. By mastering the legal forms of intimidation, an athlete controls the competitive situations.

**QUESTION:** What is pre-match gamesmanship and/or intimidation?

**Frank:** Winning matches begins in the pre-match warm up. Controlling the opponent by exhibiting a superior demeanor causes intimidation. It's a perception of power. Let's look at ten legal strategies your athlete can employ to gain a

psychological advantage even before the very first point has been played.

### ***How to Intimidate Legally in the Warm-Up Checklist:***

- ☐ Make the opponent wait for you. This sends a message that you're the person who's going to control today's match.
- ☐ Feed balls directly at their belly button during the warm up to see which stroke they prefer. They'll run around their weaker side, "telling you" their deficiencies.
- ☐ Use your most elegant form on every stroke.
- ☐ Move quickly to get every ball on one bounce.
- ☐ If you don't like their shot, catch the ball and re-start the rally.
- ☐ During baseline rallies, aim your groundstrokes deep at their feet. This serves two purposes, it grooves your depth and only provides them with defensive shot options.
- ☐ When they're at the net, junk balls at their feet versus giving them hard & high confidence building volleys.
- ☐ As you offer lobs for their overhead smashes, re-lob deeper to make them hit off their back foot.
- ☐ When serving, don't let them hit returns yet, try to steal a few returns to get a feel for their serve.
- ☐ Consistency is incredibly intimidating. Be steady by simply matching the ball speed.

By controlling the warm up, your athlete is sending the subliminal message that the opponent is going to have a bad day at the office.

## PARENTAL ACCOUNTABILITY

*The old story goes, back in the day, if a kid lost to a toad, his folks would setup a meeting with the coach and apologize for the child's poor performance and together they would organize solutions. Today, if a kid losses to a toad, the parents set up a meeting with the coach demanding he/she explain how their little super star could possibly lose to such a crummy player...*

It is the role of the parents to teach accountability. Remember, champions are accountable- they've learned life lessons through the natural consequences of their behavior.

## **QUESTION: What is a developmental blue print?**

**Frank:** Becoming a champion starts with a deliberate, customized developmental blue-print. It consist of developing and rehearsing every physical, mental and emotional tool necessary in elite sports. To maximize potential, it is essential to have an individualized plan.

**Step One:** Utilize *The Tennis Parent's Bible's* Customized Player Evaluation (Found in Part VII) to assess your athlete's actual knowledge and ability.

**Step Two:** Organize and implement a weekly plan to begin strengthening weaknesses.

***“Just because they are ‘practicing’ does not mean they are ‘progressing’ ...”***

Progression takes more than on-court stroke repetition. Achieving elite stature in tennis requires the development of the complete package. To help your child and their coaches understand a developmental blue print, a NCAA All-American has agreed to share hers. (Below is an actual 8-week developmental blue print from one of my college students.)

### **Actual 8-Week Developmental Blue Print**

#### ***Improvement in Strokes***

##### ***Serve:***

- Turn and Coil first- toss second.
- Increase power (add 20 mph) with the “long bomb” drill and “smack down” drill.



### ***Return of Serve:***

- Choose the correct position dictated by the quality of the opponent's delivery.
- Choose to match the ball speed & start the rally on 1st serves.
- Apply a new position & manage the aggression with the score on 2nd serves.
- On the 2<sup>nd</sup> serves, monitor the score before deciding on a strategic play.

### ***Forehand:***

- Elbow up on the backswing/loop.
- Elbow up high on the follow-through to activate the larger muscle groups.
- Apply an aggressive hip rotation.
- Apply a stationary platform ("You can't shoot a cannon out of a canoe...")

### ***Backhand:***

- Consistency in slice to keep the ball out of the opponent's primary strike zone.
- Consistency in the high & heavy secondary strokes.

### ***Volleys:***

- Focusing on spotting when the opponent is vulnerable.
- Understanding how, when and why I will be approaching the net.
- Develop the secondary drop volleys and swing/drive volley.

### ***Overhead:***

- Utilize the two-part swing versus a whole service motion.
- Apply a stationary platform.
- Focus on consistency and placement over **power**.

### ***Improvement in Emotional/Focus***

- 1) Maintaining a consistent intensity throughout competition.
- 2) Playing controlled aggression during “tipping points.”
- 3) Stick with controlled aggression after gaining a lead.
- 4) Stop the wandering eyes and mind.
- 5) Apply proper routines & rituals (pre-match, during the match, post-match)
- 6) Manage the score (Spotting positive mega points versus negative mega points.)
- 7) Remaining an impenetrable confident fighter.
- 8) Stop any negative self-talk, negative body language or facial expressions.
- 9) Love the battle.

### ***Improvements in the Mental Factors***

- 1) Monitor errors that are “over cooked” versus “under cooked.”
- 2) Stick to the A game plan if it's working. Being bored is not a valid reason to change.
- 3) Spot the style of opponent & anticipate a shift in style.
- 4) Pre-set your short ball range and relentlessly attack balls that fall in front of it.
- 5) Apply the proper short ball option dictated by the situation.

### ***Improvements in Movement/Physical Fitness***

- 1) Focus on being a world -class athlete instead of a tennis player.
- 2) Increase aerobic capacity.
- 3) Increase anaerobic capacity.
- 4) Beef up the core with medicine ball training.
- 5) Beef up upper body strength with weight training.
- 6) Remember that rest & recovery are part of the equation.
- 7) Apply periodization to peak at the right times throughout the year.
- 8) About 50% of my weekly training should be off-court tennis specific training.
- 9) Regain the proper nutrition & hydration requirements.

Improvement starts with preparation and preparation starts with an action plan. Sadly, many athletes design a deliberate customized developmental plan then a few short weeks later, simply choose to go back to their half-hearted yet easier routines. Proper preparation prevents future poor performances.

***“Your child’s results three months from now will be determined by their actions today.”***

**QUESTION: What does a top player's weekly training schedule look like?**

**Frank:** A player's training schedule is one of the most important aspects of the tennis parent's job description. Managing each component of a player's organizational plan will provide accountability to all members of the player's team. Remember, the tennis parent is the CEO of the organization and ultimately in charge of their child's life development.

I encourage parents to customize the training to their player's needs. The training requirements of younger players will vary dramatically based on their physical, mental and maturity levels. Additional factors to consider include the player's personal growth development schedule and how well they digest information. (An experienced coach can help to identify your child's levels.)

***"There is no one-size-fits-all formula to maximizing potential at the quickest rate."***

Assisting your child in organizing their weekly schedule will help them to develop time-management skills that will prepare them for life on and off the courts. I highly recommend holding a meeting with your athlete's coaches to get updates from them in regards to your child's progress. Their opinions will help you to better manage your player's schedule. It's important to remember that the estimated success formula to becoming world class at any talent is about twenty hours a week for about ten years.

Following is a sample week of one of my top nationally ranked U.S. Juniors. His long term goal is to play Division I college tennis and then progress onto the pro tour. His

weekly schedule shifts between 20 and 30 hours a week depending on his tournament schedule.

## **Sample Training Week**

### ***Practice Sets/Tournament Matches:*** 4 Hours

It's important to schedule different styles and different ability levels of opponents.

### ***Technical Stroke Lessons:*** 4 Hours

Correct flaws in their primary strokes and begin to build their secondary strokes.

### ***Mental & Emotional Training:*** 4 Hours

During live ball sessions, focus on between point rituals as well as proactive patterns to beat the 3 styles of opponents.

### ***Video Analysis:*** 1 Hour

Video tape a tournament match, then have a pro do a video analysis lesson. Chart to spot tendencies. (This will be covered in great depth later in this book.)

### ***Off-Court Gym:*** 3 Hours

Core and upper body strength is more important than ever. Hit the gym to prevent injuries as well as build muscle mass.

### ***Off-Court Cardio:*** 4 Hours

Cross train with short sprints, up hills. Use a random directional approach to clean up hesitation.

### ***Watching Tennis on TV:*** 2 Hours

Chart the pros, spot styles of play, analyze footwork, and decipher patterns and tendencies of players.

### ***Total Training in One Week:*** 22 Hours

**QUESTION:** My Son isn't that serious. Does he still need a plan?

**Frank:** I still highly recommend organizing a weekly schedule. Regardless of a player's long-term aspirations, whether it is to play as a professional or simply play as a hobbyist, an organized blue-print will maximize potential at the quickest rate through discipline.

Completing a weekly planner and being accountable for their time and actions are essential life lessons. A disciplined player may excel and find a passion greater than initially expected or choose to redirect their passion, either way important life skills are nurtured through the discipline of organization.

*For those parents and coaches saying, "What about the child that only wants to be a high school player?" I remind them that I've yet to have a parent come to me and state: "My wife and I want you to train our daughter to be a completely average tennis player!"*

***"An athletes schedule may vary depending on their goals, but their organizational skill sets will become permanent assets."***

**QUESTION:** What are secondary strokes?

**Frank:** Building a solid foundation is vital to your child's success. Although this is not another "Mechanical Stroke Book," a flawed stroke causes unforced errors, produces short vulnerable balls, causes injuries and inhibit your child's growth into the next level of competition. If stroke

production is what you seek, I recommend my bestselling book ***Championship Tennis***. In this book, primary and secondary stroke production is covered in extreme detail.

***“Efficient strokes aren’t always elegant strokes.”***

Just as being tall is a prerequisite to playing in the NBA, efficient strokes are a prerequisite to playing in the highest levels of tennis. But, if just being tall earned you the right to play in the NBA, my cousin Big Vinnie wouldn’t be driving a limo at Kennedy airport. So, though fundamental strokes are important, they are only part of the puzzle.

*Here’s a fun painters analogy. To this day, we can all run to the store and pick up a beginners paint set. These pre-packaged sets come with paper, a paint brush and a strip of a few basic paint colors. As we dabble and enjoy the art of painting one thing becomes evident, if only primary colors are used, the paintings will continue to look “amateur.”*

*Advanced painters have learned that to make a painting jump off the canvas and become “life like” they need to master the skills of applying secondary colors. Now, instead of applying one shade of green, they have multiple versions of green! They essentially have more tools in their painting tool box.*

### ***Secondary Strokes***

As parents and coaches, we have to assist in managing the time needed to develop each athlete’s secondary “colors”. I recommend encouraging, educating and developing both primary and secondary stroke principles. The following are the primary and secondary strokes in an elite tennis player’s tool belt:

***The Six Different Types of Forehands and Backhands:***

- 1) Primary Drive
- 2) High Topspin Arch
- 3) Short Angle
- 4) Defensive Slice
- 5) Drop Shot
- 6) Lob

***The Three Types of Serves:***

- 1) Primary Flat Serve
- 2) Kick Serve
- 3) Slice Serve

***The Five Types of Volleys:***

- 1) Primary Traditional Punch Volley
- 2) Drop Volley
- 3) Swing Volley/Drive Volley
- 4) Half Volley
- 5) Transition Volley

***The Four Types of Lobs:***

- 1) Primary Flat Lob
- 2) Topspin Lobs
- 3) Slice Lob
- 4) Re-Lob (Lobbing off of the opponents over-head smash)

***The Two Types of Overheads:***

- 1) The Primary/Stationary Overhead
- 2) The Turn & Run/Scissor Overhead



### ***The 6 Types of Approach Shots:***

- 1) Serve and Volley
- 2) Chip and Charge
- 3) Drive Approach
- 4) Slice Approach
- 5) Drop Shot Approach
- 6) Moonball Approach

The devil is in the details, they say. Maximizing potential requires the deliberate development of every tool in your child's tool belt.

*I got to know Tiger Woods a bit when I was the tennis director at Sherwood Country Club, in Westlake Village out-side of Las Angeles. We hosted his multimillion dollar charity event at Sherwood annually. Before each round of golf, Tiger practiced every club in his bag. He often, secretly, flew to the site a week or so before the actual event to experience the courses uneven fairways, the speed of the greens, the feel of the sand traps and elements such as the wind.*

***“Winning is persistent, customized preparation.”***

Advanced players have worked to develop their secondary strokes along with their primary strokes. With their complete tool belt of strokes, they apply these tools in shot sequencing patterns used to torture the opponents as they control both sides of the net.

If a deliberate, customized developmental plan is followed, it takes an average of two years to develop these “secondary” tools into reliable pattern-play weapons. If your child is simply grooving primary strokes...well, they'll stop progressing and never actually realize their true potential.

To assist your youngster in controlling the court and the match, meet with their coaches and discuss their opinion regarding shifting focus in practice from only grooving fundamentals to developing a champion's tool belt of strokes.

Like Tiger Woods, remind your athlete to warm up every stroke in their bag before each tournament match. Winning a close tie breaker is often decided on a few points. Making that crucial swing volley in the tie-breaker versus missing it is often a matter of confidence.

**QUESTION: What determines my daughter's best playing style?**

**Frank:** I recommend developing the path of least resistance. The game of tennis is an extension of your child's personality whether you like it or not. Fighting their natural genetic predisposition is a waste of time and money. As is training without considering the athlete's genetics. Simply put, your athlete's best style of play is a reflection of their unique brain type and body type.

**NOTE:** If you haven't done so already, please read the opening section regarding this critical topic.

Start by understanding your athlete's personality profile and body type efficiencies and deficiencies. Below are a few examples that will help clarify the effect of a player's unique brain and body type. (Note: There are exceptions to every rule. On occasion, some player's off-court personality opposes their on-court personality.)

*A prime time example is my Aunt Loretta, a super kind and polite old lady until she got behind the wheel of her Chevy Nova!*

### ***Matching Personality Profile & Body Types with Appropriate Playing Styles:***

- Players that show impatience would be well advised to devise deliberate one-two punch patterns ending in shorter points. Patient players should use their frustration tolerance as a weapon to possible wear down opponents with longer grueling points.
- Players that are flamboyant, with loads of energy, would likely thrive with a fast pace, attacking style of play.
- Players that show restraint and are rather stoic would likely benefit from a safer, counter punching style of play.
- In regards to body type dominance, fine motor skilled athletes (with good hands) may benefit from a net rushing style. Gross motor skilled athletes (who coil and uncoil more efficiently) would likely thrive in a back court style of play.

I worry when parents spend boat loads of time and money without ever acknowledging the athletes likes and dislikes with the player and their hired entourage of coaches. Assessing and organizing the athlete's organizational blueprint is parent accountability 101.

*Caution: A misconception of many parents and junior players, is to copy the style of their favorite ATP or WTA star, who is successful with a particular style. Just because Serena Williams prefers a 4 ball rally with her "all out attacking" style doesn't mean that your child has the brain or body type to flourish within that system. Or just because Novak Djokovic enjoys 10 ball rallies with his "patient counter-attacking" style doesn't mean his style is the best system for your athlete. Customization is key.*

It's the role of the CEO- facilitator parent to make sure that their athlete's coaches are aware of their child's unique brain and body design. Their child's genetic predisposition along with their nurtured environment dictates their ability to maximize potential in the shortest period of time.

**QUESTION:** After a loss, why should athletes go back to the tournament site and watch the other athletes?

**Frank:** Great question. Unfortunately, because of the emotional hit, most parents and players make a bee-line for the car as soon as the athlete loses. In my opinion, this is an incredible waste of a valuable learning opportunity. First of all, the brain mirrors events it recognizes. Viewing the top seeds and/or final rounds creates a mental and emotional picture for the athlete to absorb and become comfortable with... One of the keys to peak performance under stress is to be comfortable...being uncomfortable!

It is very common for up and coming athletes to experience complete performance meltdowns in the final rounds of their first big tournaments. Why? The finals are an unknown entity. We know that the unknown is avoided because it is scary.

Walk with a child through a haunted house during Halloween and you'll witness something interesting. During the first walk through, the child's staying close, their heart rate is elevated, and they're scared to death because they don't know what's coming next. By the third and fourth walk through, the very same child is relaxed, calm and smiling inside the same haunted house. The scenario didn't change, the child's perspective changed. The same need for familiarity is found in the later stages of tennis tournaments.

***“Be comfortable...being uncomfortable.”***

The more the athlete physically, mentally or emotionally gets dialed into a situation, the less uncomfortable the situation becomes and the more comfortable the athlete becomes performing in the manner in which they have trained- regardless of the round.

*From a parental or coach's point of view, there are hundreds of lessons to be learned from other competitors' successes and failures. Pointing out the player's strengths may sound like, “Kelly, look how she took that moonball out of the air for a swing volley instead of running backwards and lobbing it.” And of course, highlighting the player's weaknesses, such as, “See Joey, on most points, the top players don't get 5 balls in. You're that good already!” The goal to take the mystery out of the top player's game.*

NOTE: If your child is attending an academy and suffers an early round loss- encourage them to chart a top seed instead of simply hanging out at the site.

Smart players and parents often go one step deeper and actually have their athlete chart the later rounds so that later they can do a comparison study.

*On a personal note, I remember when my daughter was 14 years old and was #2 in the nation. There were 5-6 video cameras filming her matches. These were placed by parents of her rivals attempting to either learn how to have their child play like her or to organize a game plan in case their child plays her in a future event.*

**QUESTION: Should parents be discouraged or encouraged to watch practice?**

**Frank:** I encourage the parents to be involved in the learning process. There's so much "GOOD" that comes from positive entourage synergy. However, there are two situations in which I will speak privately with the parents and explain to them that their presence during the practice session may be stunting the growth they seek.

The first situation is if the child has told me that their efforts are constantly being overly criticized by their parents or if the parents are so outcome driven, the athlete feels immense added pressure to perform perfectly or else. Athletes and their parents should seek excellence ...not perfection.

***"Stress and fear are not optimal learning environments. Maximizing potential comes with the freedom of making mistakes."***

Players need to experiment and try things "their own way." Junior athletes have often confided in me that when their primary tennis parent is in attendance, they're later bombarded for hours with a laundry list of additional failures that need to be fixed. The player begins to feel hopeless – believing that they will never be good enough.

The second situation in which a parental discussion is in order involves overly protective, mildly obsessed parents. In today's world, they are commonly called "Helicopter" parents. The nickname comes from their neurotic hovering on and around the court every session as they attempt to dominate the coach-athlete relationship. (If you suspect that you or your spouse may be a bit of a helicopter parent, the next question is for you.)

Parents, if your child feels additional stress from your presents, it's in everyone's best interest to take the time to get educated in the process of raising athletic royalty. If you're interested, I have a detailed book on the topic actually called: *Raising Athletic Royalty: Insights to Inspire for a Lifetime*. It's everything you didn't even know...you needed to know.

### **QUESTION: Are you a Helicopter Parent?**

**Frank:** Whether in the trenches coaching on the Pro Challenger Tennis ITF circuit or on the practice court in Southern California, I sadly witness over-protective parents stunting the growth of their junior players. These types of parents have been lovingly nicknamed "Helicopter Parents."

By insulating their athlete, the helicopter parent is developing the exact opposite skill sets needed to advance the critical mental/emotional components of a winner. Controlling helicopter parents often unknowingly promote insecurity and dependency in their young adults. Children need to experience both positive and negative life situations to become confident and independent thinkers. Growth stems from mistakes and lessons learned.

#### ***Characteristics of Helicopter Parenting:***

- Shielding the child from every possible disappointment and any real or imaginary conceivable hardship.
- Choosing to enforce their version of the solution without even considering the child's opinion.

- Failing to promote an open and supportive atmosphere that would encourages the child to volunteer their opinion.
- Seeking to control everyone and everything in an attempt to give their child the upper hand.

### ***Helicopter Tennis Parent Warning Signs:***

- ***Coddling and Pampering Your Athlete***  
This parent treats their athlete like a toddler – incapable of doing anything for themselves. “You rest honey, Mommy will pick up your balls, carry your bag & water cooler, refill your ice, order your lunch, cut up your salad ...etc.”
- ***Being Overly Defensive of Your Athlete's Performance***  
This parent makes excuses for any and everything their athlete does wrong, making it impossible for their athlete to be accountable. “My child is the best out there. Whenever their child loses, the parent offers up a world wind of excuses. Such as, my child got a bad draw, my child had to play too early or the opponent was a cheater...etc.
- ***Nurturing Dependency of Your Athlete***  
This parent convinces their athlete that their success is dependent on them and without their help they are incapable of success. Such as, “I'm the only one she can trust. I've always solved her problems and always will because ... I'm her mother.”

***Suppose the helicopter parent actually allowed the junior athlete to think, act, talk, fail and/or succeed on their own?***

The benefits are startling. The athlete becomes more responsible, independent, self-reliance and confident. And with these skills, the athlete is able to develop their problem



solving/conflict resolution skills. At the higher levels of competitive tennis, resolving issues and overcoming hardships is the essential mental and emotional tennis developmental skill that separates winners from losers. Winners overcome on-court crisis and persevere because they are nurtured to solve their own problems.

***Let's look deeper at the cause and effect of parenting styles on an athlete's mindset:***

***Scenario 1:*** The parent is a perfectionist and does most everything for their child correctly. The athlete experiences no mental/emotional skills growth because the issue is solved for the child by the parent.

***Scenario 2:*** The parent attempts to do everything for the athlete but fails. The athlete experiences no mental/emotional skills growth because there's zero player accountability. Failure wasn't the athlete's fault, it was the parent's fault.

***Scenario 3:*** The parent encourages the athlete to do it themselves and the child actually succeeds. The athlete develops self-reliance, confidence, responsibility, self-esteem, personal belief, and time management skills.

***Scenario 4:*** The parent encourages the athlete to do it themselves and the child temporarily fails. The athlete is taught recovery skills, accountability, problem solving skills, perseverance, and organizational skills.

***Scenario 5:*** The polar opposite of a helicopter parent is the unaccountable parent. This parent refuses to assist the athlete at all- believing the child's sport is their "thing." Elite athletics demands a supportive team. Without parental support, the athlete is limited in their athletic success.

Parents, your role in managing your athlete's developmental pathway is essential. But please remember that winning tennis requires your athlete to have the capability to take an "emotional hit" and recover. This is a learned developmental skill. The inability to problem solve for themselves is the missing link that separates good from great.

**QUESTION: My son says I'm negative. How do I push him nicely?**

**Frank:** Frequently, parents get fixated on what their future "world beater" is doing wrong. Constantly suggesting what their player needs to change, needs to learn or needs to improve. A parental pitfall is becoming preoccupied with only seeing their child's faults. Parental accountability includes realizing that this pessimistic pursuit of perfection is unadvisable. The solution to this topic is to focus on putting a positive spin on your approach as you gently guide your child through the "wars" of junior tennis.

**Four methods to help parents instill an optimistic influence:**

***1) Five Positives to Every 1 Negative***

Make five positive comments for every one negative comment. It is important to acknowledge your child's efforts to improve.

Self-Check Exercise: Here's an eye opening or I should say "ear" opening trick. During your next few tennis discussions, place your smart phone on the digital recorder app and turn it on. Later, review your positive versus negative findings.

## ***2) Celebrate the Positive***

Reinforce the behaviors you want to see more by celebrating the positive behaviors. The following is an example of this rule. Your son's ball toss is still too high on his serve. Instead of saying "Come on Mike...You are still tossing too high...How many stinking times do I have to tell you!" Instead, say, "Hey, this is great, your toss is a lot lower. I knew you could make this easy change! Keep working and you will see your consistency really grow!" This positive approach actually gets results as you keep your relationship from getting negative and jaded.

## ***3) Teach Gratitude***

A more positive attitude will lead to more positive behavior. Assist your child in focusing on the good things about their life. Problems and difficulties will always be present. It is very important for your child to feel grateful about their life's opportunities.

## ***4) Play the "Flip It" Game.***

Anytime anyone in the family says something negative, ask them to "flip it" to a positive version of the topic. Examples: Athlete says before their match: "Man, I hate playing these 8:00 am matches" flip it to, "This is awesome, you'll be finished competing early and have the rest of the day to explore!"

To summarize, replace criticisms with a more positive approach. The journey doesn't have to be so painful. Maximizing potential at the quickest rate stems from optimism not pessimism.

**QUESTION:** What can my wife and I do to prepare our daughter for the onslaught of the mental and emotional demands of the game?

**Frank:** You're very insightful to understand that there's more to winning than meets the eye. It's true that coaches focus on the mechanical “stroke” demands and the trainers focus on the athletic demands. So, who is educating the actual mental and emotional difficulties every athlete faces while competing at the higher levels?

Since it is an individual sport, there are mental and emotional skills that need to be pre-set in order to handle adversities. Following are a sampling of topics that need to be discussed by you or your athlete's entourage:

***Mental/Emotional Discussion Checklist:***

- ☐ Chat about how closing out tight matches require being a self-reliant, problem solver able to handle confrontation, intimidation and overcome adversity all on their own.
- ☐ Talk about learning to control and focus on only a handful of performance goals for the duration of the match-while blocking out the hundreds of uncontrollable contaminants that may creep into their thoughts.
- ☐ Review the gamesmanship tactics that are often employed in match play. There is no “running out the clock” and the momentum in matches can flip-flop as different “Tipping Point” pressures arise.
- ☐ Preview how each performance requires adapting to several moving parts including opponent's size and abilities, styles, ball spins-speeds-and trajectories. As well as the elements, such as light, temperature, wind, sun, shadows and surface speeds.

- ❑ Discuss how chasing the rankings mean that athletes compete over almost every holiday break. There isn't an official off season, so families have to schedule wisely.
- ❑ Examine the fact that winning requires playing at your peak performance level consistently for 15-20 sets in a single week! (In order to win a 64 draw in singles & doubles)

In every match, there are mental and emotional lessons to be learned. Stay alert, stay positive and enjoy the process as your child learns to maximize their potential on and off the court.

**QUESTION: My husband wants it more than my son. Can you talk to him?**

**Frank:** This question stems from a family I worked with a few years back, but the scenario is unfortunately very common.

**To set the scene-** Kathy, the mother of one of my junior athletes called me questioning her son's true commitment to his tennis? A few days after Kathy called me with her concerns, I noticed her husband Steve in the club's gym riding the lifecycle.

*I said, "Steve, can we talk about Jake's tennis?"*

*"Kathy called you, didn't she?" ...*

*"Yes", I said.*

*He wiped the sweat off his brow and said. "Can I meet you in the lounge in a few minutes?"*

*"Sure", I said. I put away my tennis gear and walked to the lounge- Steve was waiting for me in the corner booth with two iced teas.*

*"She's upset by the way I push Jake. I know I ride him pretty hard, but he's got a real shot."*

*"Steve, I agree, but what's fueling you to push him so hard?"*

*Steve said, "What do you mean?"*

*I said, "What's the spark that lit this tennis flame? Why is it such a life mission for you to see Jake at the top?"*

*Steve reaches over, shakes down two sweet-n-lows and looks down. As a coach, I can tell he's not quite sure how deep he's willing to dig. I sit in silence, giving him time and space as he drinks down half his tea.*

*Then he says, "I never had a shot. I was good...real good. Man, I was better than the rich kids who were handed everything. Even back then, the kids that were ranked higher than me had one thing I didn't...parents who were invested. I wasn't born into this kind of life style. I was raised in Bloomington, Indiana. It wasn't exactly the hotbed of the tennis world back in the 70's. If you didn't play football or basketball you got beat up. Besides that, my folks couldn't be bothered. My parents weren't into sports. In fact, they weren't much into anything I did.*

*You see, I loved this sport with a passion. So much that I mowed lawns in the summer and shoveled snow in the winter to buy rackets, strings, and tennis shoes. I paid my own way into any tournament I could get to. At Christmas I would ask for tennis clothes or tennis shoes or even for my folks to take me to an out of town tournament.*

*Hey, do you remember shoe Goo? Man, I had such big holes in the toes of my tennis shoes that I had to reapply that stuff nightly just so I wouldn't tear through all my socks. I would play until my toes bled. Then...my mother yelled at me for wearing holes through my sox.*

*These kids now-a-days have it so easy. See, my folks didn't care. It was all about them. You know how some people are givers and some are takers? Mine were takers. The only thing I remember them giving me consistently was chores!*

*I remember deciding back when I was a teen that when I have kids I was going to be different. I was going to give them every opportunity that I never got.”*

*I grabbed my straw, spun the ice, drank a sip and said, “Steve, I’m sorry you didn’t get your shot, I really am. But the fact is most of us didn’t. Maybe that’s what makes guys like you and me better parents and better coaches.” I looked at him and said, “I read once that scars are there to remind us of the past, there not here to destroy the future.”*

*Steve finished his tea, signaled the waitress for two more and said, “What do you recommend?”*

***“Scars are there to remind us of the past... not here to destroy the future.”***

For the next few hour, Steve and I devised a way for him to share his story with Jake. I thought it was meaningful for Jake to know where is father was coming from. Then I asked Steve to let Jake share his opinion. Allow him to be the leader and to just listen to his son with an open heart.

Then I explained that Jake’s brain type is ENFP (Extrovert, Intuitive, Feeler and Perceiver). The command and control style of military leadership that Steve grew up with doesn’t work for his son’s brain type. I asked Steve to let go of some of the control.

*SPECIAL NOTE: When Steve was talking so openly about his parents, he didn’t have a lot of positive things to say about their parenting skills, yet he adapted his father’s exact parenting style.*

We talked until the club closed about trying more of an inspirational leadership approach versus the drill sergeant approach. Lastly, we agreed that Steve would begin to focus

on nurturing Jake's leadership skills and slowly start to teach Jake self-reliance. Steve agreed that it's time for Jake to begin to play the game for all the right reasons.

*Two weeks later Kathy called me and said "Thank you so much, I don't know what you guys talked about but something clicked. Steve and Jake have a better appreciation for each other. They seem to have the same agenda and now they even laugh and joke around with each other much more! Jake is actually scheduling his own practice sets, taking his own racquets to be strung and going to the gym on his own. Steve is like a different person. He's more optimistic and loving....anyway thank you!"*

### **QUESTION: Is proper nutrition and hydration really that important?**

**Frank:** Year in and year out, I witness the results of players choosing to ignore proper nutrition and hydration- both on the practice court and in tournament play. Nutrition and hydration (healthy lifestyle) are critical components in maximizing athletic performance. An athlete's nutrition and hydration directly influence their physical, mental and emotional game. As parents, we have to insist that our players fuel properly before, during and after battle.

Just because athletes expend so much energy, does not mean junk food calories are okay. Improper nutrition and hydration will guarantee poor decision making skills as a result of low blood sugar levels to the brain, increased fatigue, headaches, nausea, cramping...etc.



***“Poor nutrition and hydration can ruin any real chance of an athlete staying in their optimal performance state.***

***Remember, to win a 64 draw event, a player has to perform at their peak level for approximately 15 sets in 5 days.”***

The following true story illustrates the importance a proper diet.

*It is 7:00 am at the Riviera Tennis Club in Palm Springs, California. The top tennis players from around the country arrived last night for the first round of the prestigious National Championships.*

*Walking through a hall of the west wing of the hotel and I can hear Leslie through their door, “Mom...STOP!!! I’m not hungry. Stop forcing me to eat! I’m too nervous. I don’t feel hungry!” This has been an on-going pre-match battle for Leslie and her mom Carol and this time would prove catastrophic.*

*Trying her best to avoid an emotional battle right before Leslie’s match, Carol gives up on her job of making sure Leslie is prepared for a three hour battle in the blazing Palm Springs heat. “So much for your nutrition and hydration requirements... I give up”, cries Carol.*

*The first match on Court 7 went to three tough sets so Leslie begins her scheduled 9:00 am match around 10:00 am. Leslie, being a top seed and a far superior athlete jumps out to a commanding 6-2 first set lead. Midway through the second set her wheels fall off. Leslie can’t seem to focus; her body feels uncoordinated and shaky. She complains of feeling dizzy, like she’s going to faint. Leslie begins to make unforced errors left and right. She drops the second set 4-6. At the start of the critical third set the time is now 11:30 am. Leslie hasn’t fueled her body since last night’s dinner at 6:30 pm, which was 16 hours ago.*

*Guess who goes down in flames losing the third set 1-6? You got it- Leslie! Her disappointing first round loss was directly related to her stubbornness to fuel her body properly.*

***“Improper nutrition and hydration can destroy proper technical, mental and emotional training.”***

Athletes employing improper nutrition and hydration can expect:

- Lethargic play
- Decreased strength & reaction time
- Low physical, mental & emotional endurance
- Impaired concentration, reduced court awareness & problem solving skills
- Emotional break downs
- Delayed muscle repair and recovery
- Serious risk of dehydration and possible heat stroke (with as little as 1-2% dehydration)

## **Nutrition and the Athlete**

Due to athletes' individualized nutrition and hydration needs, specific individualized recommendations should be prescribed to maximize performance. (For more information visit the USTA/ITF websites or see a qualified sports nutritionist.)

Because I'm not an expert in the field of nutrition, I will highlight the basic nutrition and hydration fundamentals of a competitive athlete: a healthy balanced diet, proper hydration and nutrition timing.

### ***1) A Healthy Balanced Diet and the Athlete***

A healthy balanced diet refers to a diet that includes a variety of whole foods that are naturally high in nutrients. An elite athlete benefits from a diet of healthy carbohydrates, lean proteins and good fats 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. The

competitive athlete must properly fuel their bodies every day and not just during training and competition.

Due to the high demands athletes place on their body, especially during competition, healthy carbohydrates are an athlete's ultimate fuel. (F.Y.I.: High protein low carbohydrate diets are not a beneficial diet for maximizing athletic performance.)

***“Carbohydrates are the preferred source of energy for muscle contraction and brain function.”***

When planning a balanced diet, it is important to differentiate between healthy carbohydrates (fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, low fat dairy...) and unhealthy carbohydrates (highly refined white sugar and white flour products junk foods). While they both provide energy to the body, unhealthy carbohydrates may steal nutrients from the body, damage brain health and add empty calories; whereas healthy carbohydrates add valuable nutrients and fiber to the diet.

It is important to note that during exercise and/or match play when quick energy is needed, simple forms of carbohydrate are best. This is because the body needs sugar quickly and simple carbohydrates are easiest for the body to break down and provide energy (sugar to the blood stream.) Commonly used simple carbohydrates include easily digestible fruits such as dates or bananas, diluted sports beverages, carbohydrate sports gels and some athletes even use small sugar candies or small bites of high simple carbohydrate bars. The preference of many elite athletes are diluted sports drinks and a banana. (Note: Some athletes prefer energy gels- but be sure to try them prior to competition as not all tolerate energy gels well.) Specific optimum nutrition will vary with each individual.

### ***Healthy Daily Diet Components to Include:***

#### ***Healthy Carbohydrates***

Whole grains, beans, legumes, pasta, whole grain cereals, lean dairy (yogurt, shakes, cottage cheese, cheese and milk), fruits and vegetables.

#### ***Healthy Lean Proteins***

Chicken, turkey, seafood, lean meat, beans, legumes, eggs and lean dairy (Note: dairy contains carbohydrates and protein.)

#### ***Healthy Good Fats***

Avocados, nuts, seeds, salmon, olive oil and nut/seed/vegetable oils in small amounts/portion control.

#### ***Fluids***

Water, electrolyte water, sports drinks, diluted sports drinks (or homemade sports drinks), diluted fruit juice, low fat/non-fat milk, low fat fruit smoothies, and lean protein low sugar shakes.

### ***Un-Healthy Daily Diet Components to Avoid:***

#### ***Bad Fats***

Such as Trans fats (Partially hydrogenated oils), junk foods, fast foods, donuts, fried foods, creamers, processed foods and excessive Saturated fats (fatty meats, hot dogs, sausage, full fat cheese, ice cream, shakes etc.)

#### ***Processed Carbohydrates and Refined Foods***

Candy, cookies, cakes, sodas and processed foods made with white sugar, flour and bad fats. (Note: Simple sugar products (not loaded with fats and proteins) may be an appropriate during intense activity.)

#### ***Fluids***

High sugar drinks or full fat and high sugar ice cream shakes, most blended coffee drinks...

## ***2) Proper Hydration and the Athlete***

***“Even mild dehydration (1% dehydration) impairs a number of important aspects of cognitive function such as concentration, alertness, headaches, muscle fatigue and short-term memory. A loss of just over two percent can cause muscle cramping and severe health consequences.”***

Simple plain water is the preferred beverage for most athletes during training. Sports drinks with added electrolytes and carbohydrates may be needed for longer workouts/matches (over approximately 90 minutes of intense activity) or for workouts in extreme weather.

Diluted sports drinks are usually recommended over full strength sports drink. High sugar sports drink may cause cramping during exercise. It is best to experiment with hydration levels and hydration products on the practice court. It is important to hydrate throughout the day, not just during a match.

Note: While it is essential to maintain proper hydration, the athlete must also be cautious not to over- hydrate.

### ***General Hydration Guidelines:***

#### ***Short Workouts of Low to Moderate Intensity***

May simply require staying hydrated- water is usually best.

#### ***Short Intense Workouts***

May require both hydration and carbohydrate replacement- diluted sports drinks work best for most athletes.

### ***Longer Intense Workouts***

May require hydration, carbohydrate replacement and/or electrolyte replenishment. Individual need (exercise intensity/weather) will necessitate the specific type of hydration.

### ***Post Workout Hydration:***

Proper hydration after an intense workout will help the bodies heal and recover more efficiently. The best way to determine the amount needed to replace is by the athlete weighing themselves before and after exercise. For every pound of body weight lost, consume about 3 cups of fluid. Weighing before and after a workout just a few times will give the athlete an idea of their typical water loss during a workout.

Another measure of hydration is checking the athlete's urine color. If their urine is dark yellow in color- it may be a sign of dehydration. The athlete's urine should be relatively clear or pale yellow in color. (Note: If supplements are taken, especially B- vitamins, a false dark yellow urine may be the result of the vitamins and not your hydration level.)

### ***3) Proper Nutrition Timing and the Athlete***

Proper timing of food and fluid intake will enhance performance. Obviously, a lack of proper fuel will impair performance. Match time nutrition is especially important and special attention should be given to food volume, fiber, fats, and proteins – as these may cause abdominal distress during exercise.

Carbohydrates, such as low fat dairy, breads, potatoes, pasta and rice, are the quickest to digest. Meals/snacks should be athlete specific- considering food tolerances, work out intensity and duration.

### ***General Guideline for Nutrition Timing:***

The general guidelines for peak performance are to maintain proper hydration and avoid a full stomach just prior to performance. A delicate balance of food and fluid is based on individual need. Studies have generally found that it doesn't matter whether you get your pre-workout calories from solid food or fluid.

### ***Pre-Workout Meal (several hours before exercise)***

Include easily digestible foods high in complex carbohydrates, such as pasta, yogurt, breads, sandwiches, easily digested fruits and vegetables. Avoid large amounts of fat, protein and fiber the closer to your workout- digestion of fats, fiber and proteins require longer digestion times and may impede performance. (See following question.)

### ***Thirty Minutes Prior***

A small meal or snack just prior to your child's workout will help engage their brain and muscles. Sample small meals or snacks include: yogurt, fruit smoothie, a banana, a low calorie granola bar, peanut butter and whole grain crackers or a small sandwich for a workout lasting approximately 60 or 90 minutes.

### ***During Workout***

The greater the workout intensity, the greater the need for quick energy carbohydrates such as bananas or diluted sports drinks. For most athlete's a few hours of sustained, vigorous activity will deplete their stored carbohydrates, resulting in fatigue. So it's important to eat/drink a small quick acting carbohydrate snack to maintain blood sugar and fuel your muscles and brain.

### ***Post Workout***

Current research suggests that for the best muscle repair and recovery- consume a good source of lean protein and complex carbohydrate within one hour after a long intense

workout in order to replenish and repair muscle tissue. You may choose liquid or solid foods. Liquid food such as a healthy smoothie is often an easy option after a workout. Examples of solid food choices may be yogurt with fruit, turkey and grapes, or a hard-boiled egg and a piece of fruit or a lean protein sandwich.

**QUESTION: Can you clarify the nutritional myths surrounding tennis? I hear other tennis parent's talking about special supplements or high protein diets for their athletes. I'm confused?"**

**Frank:** As a tennis coach, I hear a lot of so called magic formulas or competitive advantage must haves... unfortunately, nothing replaces sound nutrition. Below are a few of the nutritional myths that I continue to hear weekly.

### ***1) Athletes Need Full Sugar Sports Drinks***

Consuming one or more full sugar sports drinks during a short training session or during an easy match is not usually necessary and may be dangerous. Full sugar beverages can cause severe cramping and lethargy. Professional athletes usually dilute sweetened sports beverages and use as needed.

**NOTE:** Many of my students, especially teen age girls trying to lean out or lose weight make the mistake of drinking full sweetened sports drinks during and after workouts- thinking the sports drink are healthy. Unfortunately, most full sweetened sports drinks are too high in calories and actually may contribute to weight gain. Again, it is usually better to



drink water or electrolyte waters or diluted sports drinks as needed.

## ***2) Carbohydrate Loading***

For years and years, many athletes speak about “carb loading” before a big event. Research has found it is not necessary if a balanced diet is followed- including healthy carbohydrates, lean proteins and good fats. A well-balanced diet is optimal for a high performance athlete 24/7- that means eating healthy carbohydrates, lean protein and good fats every day. Again, it is best to experiment on the practice court with pre-workout meals.

## ***3) Athletes Can Eat Whatever They Want***

Many amateur athletes assume they can “get away with” eating more junk because they work out so much. Sports nutrition experts argue that sugars, bad fat and excessive calories have the same destructive effects on the body whether you exercise or not. Note: Many junior athletes think peanut butter full fat and sugar smoothies, blended coffee drinks and frozen yogurt loaded with candy toppings are healthy. Unfortunately, these foods are usually full of excessive sugar, bad fats and calories.

## ***4) High Performance Athletes Need a High Protein Low Carb Diets***

This is one of my favorites- just before the 3<sup>rd</sup> set, the athlete frantically woofs down a high protein low carb bar. Of course, they believe that it will give them the added energy boost they need. High protein fuel (food or drink) takes the body too long to digest. The role of protein is to build and repair –not to provide energy. If an athlete’s carbohydrate storage has been depleted, consuming a 20 gram protein bar

with little or no carbohydrates is not going to provide them the energy they need in the third set. (Carbohydrates provide quick energy.) Note: A snack high in protein is perfect after a workout- to re-build and repair.

### ***5) Dehydration is the Sole Cause of On-Court Cramping***

Although muscle cramping is a sign of dehydration, exercise related muscle cramping is often a result of stress and anxiety. Researchers have found muscle cramps to be a result of neuromuscular fatigue and occur more frequently in athletes who over stress and worry throughout their competition.

### ***6) Supplements are Necessary for Peak Performance***

Nutritional supplements are often marketed to athletes with claims of enhancing performance, but no nutritional supplement (food or pill) has ever been proven to enhance performance significantly without being refuted by other studies showing no benefit. If you want to maximize performance you are better off with a solid training program and healthy diet. Besides, supplements are not regulated by the FDA and as such, you really do not know what exactly is in your supplements- they could contain very harmful ingredients!

### **QUESTION: What are the benefits of physical training?**

**Frank:** Throughout my travels conducting workshops, both nationally and internationally, I ask parents of top ranked players an interesting question: “When was the last time your child competed hard for 15 practice sets in any given week?” The most common Answer: Never!

Parents, is your child fit enough to compete at their peak performance level for fifteen sets in a week? If they’ve never

done it in practice, do you truly expect them to be able to come through under those stressful, demanding tournament conditions?

To insure that they can compete week in and week out under those conditions, serious off-court tennis specific training is mandatory. The successful high performance players train off court an average of 6 hours a week. In most cases, this is done before school.

***The Following is a List of the Benefits of Being Fit:***

- Increased Confidence: A physically fit competitor has stimulated brain chemicals that encourage a calming state of mind.
- Elevated Physical Energy
- Enhanced Endurance
- Reduced Fatigue and Soreness
- Improved Flexible Skills Movement
- Increased Acceleration and Deceleration Levels
- Strong Bones and Strengthened Ligaments, Tendons and Muscles
- Reduced Risk of Injury
- Increased “Intimidation Factor”
- Improved Cardiovascular Fitness: Facilitates proper breathing by increasing lung capacity which aids in improved cardiovascular function.

Now that you understand why tennis specific, off-court training is beneficial. Let’s look into the fitness components found in a skilled athlete who just happens to be a tennis player.

### ***Example of Tennis Specific Skills to Develop:***

- Up and back movement
- Lateral movement
- Aerobic fitness
- Ability to accelerate
- Ability to decelerate
- Speed and agility
- Stamina
- Recovery time (between points)
- Recovery time (between matches)
- Strength (upper body, core, and lower body)
- Body coordination (gross motor skills)
- Eye-hand coordination (fine motor skills)
- Flexibility and stretching
- Anticipatory speed

### ***Signs of an Unfit Athlete***

Being unfit actually affects more than the athletes physical performance. It has serious consequences within the player's mental and emotional state of play. Parents, if you're not sure if you're athlete is fit or not, let me just say that if they aren't training off-court a minimum of 6 hours a week, then they are most likely not fit enough to win whole tournaments at the high levels of junior tennis.

***“The actual cause of a child's emotional breakdown is often lack of fitness.”***

If you have not done so already, consult a fitness expert for evaluation and/or add one to your entourage of coaches. In modern tennis, it's essential that your child is an athlete first

and tennis player second. The top college coaches are looking for experienced gifted athletes that they can mold into champion tennis players.

**QUESTION: How will improved fitness accelerate my child's game?**

**Frank:** First, let me remind you that *The Tennis Parent's Bible* isn't an Off-Court Fitness Manuel, but because fitness is such an integral component to developing athletic royalty, it is critical we cover the basics. Fitness training should begin as soon as an athlete enters the competitive stages of the game. If finances are an issue and weekly sessions with a trainer is not feasible, consider paying a good trainer to devise a detailed plan you and your athlete can follow.

***So how does fitness improve tennis success?***

Fitness training accelerates a player's physical, mental and emotional performance. When an athlete gets fatigued their movement gets sloppy, their technique is off and unforced errors begin to increase. Poor decision making and negative emotions set in.

Unfit players typically do not perform their rituals, they do not spot tendencies and they do not manage their mistakes. Poor physical fitness manifests in mental and emotional breakdowns. For instance, most juniors go for low percentage plays due to the fact that they are too winded to properly execute the appropriate play. So is physical training linked to the mental side of sports? Absolutely!

***"An incredibly fit athlete will most likely be mentally stronger and an emotionally resilient competitor."***

## PLAYER ACCOUNTABILITY

Player accountability stems from a champions mind set- which includes a positive moral compass, core values, and a high standard of behavior. Teach your children that even though the hardest path is often the road less traveled- it is also the quickest way to the top!

## **QUESTION: What are the hidden skill sets of champions?**

**Frank:** Evan Wilson has the Babolat Pure Drive, strung with natural gut on the crosses and polly on the mains... just like the pros. He sports the latest “Nadal” Nike shirts, shorts and shoes. His 12-pack racquet bag even says “TOUR TEAM” on it. Man, he even goes to an \$80,000 a year tennis academy. At first glance, he looks like a sure bet for the pros.

Now let's look at Evan's regiment a little deeper as it pertains to player accountability. Evan loses early almost every event in an implosion of negative behavior. There is nothing more common than young, talented athletes that are weak competitors. This is a prime time example of player accountability. After reading the below Ten Essential Hidden Skills of a Champion ask yourself, are there any similarities between Evan and your little tennis phenom?

### **Ten Essential Hidden Skills of a Champion**

#### ***1) Champions face their fears versus avoiding them.***

If you ask Evan to play a practice set against a younger retriever he has 100 excuses why he can't and won't play.

#### ***2) Champions have swagger which is truly different than fake, empty confidence.***

Evan willingly practices his primary stroke production and then routinely SKIPS his weekly regime of off-court training sessions, rehearsing closing out sets, match play video analysis and his required mental/emotional classroom sessions. His empty confidence shatters under the slightest bit of pressure.

***3) Champions are strong competitor's not just good athletes.***

Set up a great sparring session for Evan and he'll tell you "No thanks...I'm good! ...I already rallied with Kenny today."

***4) Champions do everything to prepare properly.***

Evan often stays out late the night before a big event, leaves no time in the morning for a real breakfast, neglects to organize his tournament bag, hits for 10 minutes before the match and actually believes he is ready to compete.

***5) Champions know that they will lose more than they will win.***

Evan and his parents believe that he should win every match he plays.

***6) Champions develop problem solving skills, confidence, perseverance, determination and work ethic.***

Evan chooses to focus on stationary strokes, week in and week out.

***7) Champions have self-belief and a positive outlook.***

Evan wears his ball cap backwards and twirls his racquet confidently at the start of each tournament, until the umpire yells "2 minutes gentlemen." Then like clockwork, he loses focus and morphs into an "Emotional Basket Case" every weekend. Evan only has one game style- hard hitting baseliner.

***8) Champions develop several game plans, emotional solutions to common problems, agility and brain speed.***

Evan is brain washed into believing that if he perfects his primary strokes every day, he will go pro.



***9) Champions understand that controlling their adrenaline and concentration wins matches.***

Evan believes that he is the one and only gifted, athlete out there and that should be enough to sky rocket him to success. When his opponents begin to challenge his game, he folds emotionally.

***10) Champions spot tendencies and control the energy of the match.***

Evan simply hits the shots that feel good to him versus hitting the shots that feel uncomfortable to the opponent.

In conclusion, it's important to understand that there is nothing more common than extremely athletic individuals with weak competitive skills. This is why, to the untrained eye, it appears that the better “looking” athlete should win. As you all know, it is often not the case.

Although it is essential to develop solid fundamental, once fundamentals are developed, the art of winning stems from developing these hidden skill sets.

**QUESTION: What are some of the hidden roadblocks and myths found in high performance tennis?**

**Frank:** It fascinates me how some junior athletes will hold on to crazy-beliefs. They would rather live in their “altered state of reality” and continue to get poor results than simply be accountable to their deliberate customized developmental plan. Below I have compiled some of the most common myths coming out of the mouths of your kids!

### ***When I Become a Pro ...Then I'll Train like a Pro***

Professionals have to “live the life” for years before they actually win a single match on tour. The typical formula is approximately 20 hours a week for 10 years of customized training to compete on the ATP or WTA level. Quality of training always trumps quantity of court time. Begin by challenging your child to train about 20 hours a week for a month.

### ***I Need More ...More is Better***

In matches, most juniors think about too many things. Their body is off balance at contact as opposing force vectors fly in all directions; their racquet head is rolling through the hitting zone and their running through four segment swings. The key is to simplify. Most often, improving is about “trimming the fat” not adding more.

### ***I Will Just “Wing It” Later***

Planning reduces stress. Often we see players begin to pack their racquets, find a new outfit, clean their water bottles, search for their over grips, print out the directions to the site, look up their opponent record, make breakfast, take a shower, brush their teeth all within the last 10 minutes before they are scheduled to leave. Hum...no wonder they're angry and stressed.

### ***I Played a Set Last Week ...I'm Fine***

To win major events you must be a good finisher. Building a tract record of closing out matches is the key. Exchange playing a set with playing 2 out of 3 sets and finish the match. The most important stage of any set is the end! If time is short, start each set at 2-2 but close out sets. On practice days, professionals routinely close out 2-4 sets a day.

### ***I Can't Control My Anger or my Drifting Mind***

Re-programming these dominant thoughts takes about four to six weeks of serious focused attention. It's often the same program as rebuilding a flawed stroke. Re-tooling your emotions and thoughts on court are learned behaviors.

### ***To be Great, I Have to Play at My Peak Everyday***

Peak level and peak efforts are two different elements. It is too taxing to be physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally ready to battle every day of their lives. After a tournament you should "unplug." That's right, recharge the batteries. In the practice phase strive for peak effort and let go of peak performance.

### ***If You're Laughing, You're not Working Hard Enough***

When you laugh, dance, smile or even hug someone you get biochemical surges of positive energy. Neuroscience studies clearly show that when you smile and laugh you stay in the correct (right) side of your brain. This is where muscles flow effortlessly and great decisions are made quickly. When you're mad, judgmental or over analytical the right side of your brain shuts down and you are toast!

### ***Believing If You're a Better Athlete, Then You'll Win***

Being a better physical athlete is only one third of the battle. If your child is weaker mentally or emotionally they will struggle. Another way to look at this issue is if an opponent looks physically superior to the rest of the field then there is most likely something missing or something broken in their mental or emotional components. If they were superior in all three, they wouldn't be in a local junior draw.

### ***Procrastination***

Big time national titles are won by the champions because they accept the fact that they will be shedding serious blood, sweat and tears months before the event begins.

Procrastinators often do everything else except focus 100 percent on improving. As long as they do not actually give 100 percent on the practice court, they will have a built in excuse... “If I had the time to practice, I could have beat her...etc.”

### ***Thinking that Practicing for One Hour is Good Enough***

Top tournament play often requires that your child compete in two, best of three sets, single matches daily. Since doubles play results count for their overall ranking, throw in a doubles matches as well.

### ***Under Training Off-Court***

If your child “thinks” that they are mostly in shape...they are most likely not in shape. Players that are in great shape “know” they are in great shape. Getting past the third day of a big event is going to be a challenge for every junior who only “thinks” they’re in shape.

***“Solid fundamentals will get them in the draw. Being crazy fit keeps them in the draw. But being mentally and emotionally stable under stress wins titles.”***

### ***Cramming Last Minute for an Event***

Cramming in training days before a national event will lead to your child's “batteries” half full come match time. Also, their millisecond decision making skills won't be sharp. They will likely hesitate with their judgments and often over think under stress. Lastly, last minute cramers usually end up playing sore or injured.

### ***Mistake Management***

It is essential that your child understands the difference between a “good” mistake and a “bad” mistake. Also, did the mistake stem from technical form, inappropriate shot selections or poor movement? Mentally making the appropriate corrections without emotional condemnation is important.

### ***Anger Management***

Poor preparation is the source of the problems that cause the anger. Plans and patterns should be nurtured months before an event. Tools are sharpened and the rust is buffed out.

***“It’s not the opponent that causes the actual anger issues in a match. It’s the fact that the opponent has exposed a weakness that wasn’t fixed before the match began.”***

### ***Blame Management***

Blaming is a common excuse many juniors prefer. Changing string tension, racquets, coaches, and academies is a short-term feel good fix. However, designing a strong personalized developmental program and sticking to it is the solution to their problems.

***“Intermediates spend most of their time working on the strokes they already own. Advanced players also spend time perfecting the strokes and patterns they wish to add to their tool belt.”***

### ***Lack of Pre-Match Routines and Rituals***

Essential routines and rituals are used by professionals and often overlooked by junior competitors. Teens are often too cool to prepare properly. Champions act like champions long before they become champions.

To review, I highly recommend taking a bit of time to communicate the above player accountability issues with your athlete and their entourage of coaches. Plan on organizing solutions to the common road blocks and de-bunking the myths. Again if you, as a parent, are not comfortable with the developmental process, please hire a high IQ tennis professional to oversee not only your child's strokes but their mental and emotional training components.

### **QUESTION: Why do some athletes thrive under extreme pressure and some melt down?**

**Frank:** Here's my understanding of how the brain functions under stress. Nobel Prize winning Neuro-Scientist Julius Axelrod found that some people crack under pressure more than others because they process slower and become overwhelmed in time-sensitive stressful environments.

In the brain, this is seen as an over-flow of dopamine in their prefrontal cortex (Where quick decision making and conflict resolution takes place.) Stress floods the synapses of the prefrontal cortex with too much dopamine. After the flood, the gene called COMT (catechol-O-methyltransferase) is stimulated to come to the rescue...

Scientists have found that this gene actually comes in two types: fast acting and slow acting. Those athletes with fast

acting COMT enzymes clear the excess dopamine quickly allowing the athlete not to overload. Those with slow moving enzymes cause some folks to overload and shut down under stress.

The good news for these natural born worry warts is that if they rehearse being comfortable with the feelings of being uncomfortable their dopamine doesn't overflow the prefrontal cortex. Meaning, performing under pressure isn't felt as such intense pressure any longer. You see, what becomes a habit, isn't as scary. So if your child melts down under stress, ask their team of coaches to add stress simulations to their daily drills and watch your child become "clutch."

### **QUESTION: Why do some juniors see a performance review as character assassination?**

**Frank:** Successfully navigating the world requires continual analysis and review. An effective developmental plan needs to be tweaked and enhanced for continued growth. The art of becoming athletic royalty demands the player, coach and parent communicate about the developmental direction. Players that thrive in the college world have nurtured their communication skills as well as their athletic skills.

Unfortunately, some juniors view, performance reviews as lengthy rants pointing out all of their failures. Of course, in the eyes of an experienced coach or parent, performances are actually seen as information gathering missions- not as life or death or win or lose affairs.

Performance reviews are a beautiful chance to discuss issues (successes and failures) so successes continue to increase and

failures decrease in the future. Ignoring successes or failures and assuming they all happen by chance is delusional.

Juniors who don't bother to learn from their short comings are destined to repeat them. I challenge the coaches/parents to communicate with your child about the event. Dig deeper, learn from the facts and review the stats, charts and video analysis. Juniors, try your best to understand why you're not getting the results you're capable of getting.

### **QUESTION: What is drive time training?**

**Frank:** In Southern California, I'm seeing most top juniors that I train spending upwards to two hours a day driving to coaches, trainers, practice sessions, their academy and/or tournaments. A solution is "Drive Time Training"- the training strategies of educating, strength training, motivating, and visualizing while held hostage in that comfortable passenger seat. Taking advantage of the time spent traveling is a great way to handle the frustrations of downtime spent in the car. Below are a few meaningful exercises your junior player will enjoy in the car.

### **Benefits of Drive Time Training:**

#### ***Educating***

There is a huge variety of tennis CD's and instructional DVD's available on the market. (Visit: [USPTA.org](http://USPTA.org)) Topics include stroke production, tactics and strategies, movement & fitness as well as our favorite the mental/emotional sides of competition. ([www.MaximizingTennisPotential.com](http://www.MaximizingTennisPotential.com) offers a series of junior tennis workbooks.) And of course, YouTube is a wonderful place to seek free advice on almost any topic.



## ***Strength Training***

“How do they strength train in a car?” Most junior players lack upper body strength. Building the upper body will assist them in enjoying more powerful serves, stronger slice backhands and crisper volleys. Remember the old formula for power is:  $Mass \times Acceleration = Power$

More importantly, training the upper body will help prevent injuries. Prevention of injuries is a critical factor in high performance tennis. Consider leaving bands under the passenger seat and/or light dumbbells stored away in the trunk and check with your athlete’s trainer to customize your routines.

## ***Motivating***

Listen to motivational iTunes/YouTube/CD. Some are so powerful they are literally life changing! My favorite motivators include Jack Canfield and Anthony Robbins. Check the Internet and read the reviews.

## ***Visualization Exercises***

Take their head phones off and ask your player to close their eyes and visualize perfect primary and secondary strokes. Then visualize the variety of their flawless patterns used to beat the different styles of opponents. Lastly, visualize walking through changeover and between point rituals. If your child has difficulties beating retrievers here’s a visualization exercise. I call it mental imagery: Ask them to visualize “mock” rallies to 20 with you as you drive. Again, turn off the radio, iPods, video games...etc! The goal is to rehearse focusing on a single topic for a set period of time.

*Try this exercise as you drive to your child’s next tournament. They say hit, they then visualize a slow, high arching stroke leaving their racquet, crossing their service line, crossing the net, crossing the opponents service line, landing deep into the opponents court, bouncing high, pushing the*

*opponent back. Now, the parent says hit and they repeat the visualization of the slow, high arching ball passing the opponents service line, passing the net, passing their own service line, bouncing deep on their child's side. Next, they say hit as the slow moonball rally continues up to twenty. If they can't focus on a pretend moonball rally, cut them some slack. My bet is that you can't either. (You'll laugh because, your mind will wander all over the joint).*

SPECIAL NOTE: If they can't focus intently on a few pretend 20 ball rallies how are they ever going to apply the actual focus skill to do it for a three hour match?

As tennis parents, it is your job to select how and when they program their minds and bodies. Positive programming to and from tennis will lead to increased knowledge, increased power, increased motivation, increased enthusiasm and increased calmness on court. Use drive time training as you enjoy secretly preparing better than all of your child's rivals.

### **QUESTION: Should my son copy Nadal?**

**Frank:** Before I answer this question, let's review some of the facts I love about Rafael Nadal...and you should too.

His Uncle taught him how to play. They've stuck together as a team. That's respectful. At 14, The Spanish Federation invited him to train in Barcelona, essentially, taking over his training. He already had a great team so he declined. That's loyalty.

As a youngster, his emotions were like a volcano, so his uncle made him play with dead balls and inferior gear to teach him how to deal with adversity. That builds character.

Nadal has an entourage: His coaches, trainers, hitters and agent has been with him for the long haul. That's smart!

Nadal has a pre match routine that he uses before every match: He gets to the site a few hours early to warm up on a side court; he showers, eats, then gets taped up; he plays the match in his head (visualization) a half hour before it begins; he puts on his favorite Spanish pop music and then *The Phantom of The Opera* on his iPod; he jogs, jumps in place and builds a sweat while visualizing his performance goals. Great preparation- that's admirable!

Nadal's focus is on the need to improve versus the need to win. Rafa was quoted as saying "To improve you have to make mistakes. That's the problem with improving, you have to accept this." That's intelligent!

In early 2008 at #2 in the world, Uncle Tony decided that Rafa needed to improve his offensive court position to win major hard and grass court events. For months, they worked on positioning on the baseline, taking balls early and stealing volleys. He went from being a retriever to a counter puncher, to an attacker. Rafa's insight, knowing he could still improve, yielded him an Olympic gold, a Wimbledon Championship and the world's #1 ranking. That's brilliant!

Rafa has had more than his share of injuries yet comes back stronger than ever. That's character! (2004- A stress fracture took him off the court for 3 months; 2005- a mysterious foot injury sidelined him for months; 2009- knee tendentious took him out for 2 months... the list goes on.)

Rafa is a well-rounded person who has outside interests and hobbies. He can be found enjoying golf and fishing on his days off. He also champions his own charity foundation called Fundacion Rafa Nadal. That's honorable!

Rafa is disciplined. The next step after motivation is discipline. He does what he has to do when he has to do it. No excuses, no procrastination. That's commitment!

So, should your son copy Rafa? You Bet!

Below are tips your child can implement to attain Champion Skill Sets like Rafa Nadal:

- Hit the gym to gain tennis-specific strength.
- Commit to improving with unrelenting determination.
- Develop the mental side of shot selection to master offense, neutral & defensive skills.
- Schedule time to strengthen their speed, stamina, and agility.
- Revise their between point rituals to enhance their “clear headedness” of shot selection on big points.
- Upgrade their ability to apply spin.
- Cultivate the competitive attitude. Do this by adding simulated stress with every drill. We call them “stress buster drills.”
- Perfect the ability to live in the moment (producing precisely what the moment calls for) by rehearsing closing out sets. Replace the need to win with the love of the battle.
- Reform their calmness under stress, by simulating those intense moments.

FUN FACT: Average ball rotation off Agassi's forehand: 1800 rpm's, Federer's forehand: 2500 rpm, Nadal's forehand: 3200 rpm's

The mental and emotional strength of being a fierce competitor and a respectful human being is a learned behavior and is a factor in player accountability.

SPECIAL NOTE: No one can outperform their self-image. Due to their work ethic, perseverance and consistent discipline, athletes like Rafa, have inner strength and inner excellence. They truly believe in themselves and their abilities because they've earned the belief.

**QUESTION:** My daughter is losing to players she use to beat. Can you help?

**Frank:** The quickest way to break through a rut and go up a level is to challenge your child to focus on improving versus winning. Rekindle your daughter's confidence by adding new tools to her game. Ask your youngster to compete only against herself. This is a sensational way to progress without the stress. To illustrate this point, I'll be using a student of mine from New York. Her name is Kaitlin. She was also in a rut. Below I have listed three of Kaitlin's issues and her customized solution.

***Issue #1: Negative Emotional Outburst***

Challenge: We have asked Kaitlin to focus on reducing the sheer number of negative outburst by 25 % each match for the next month. The parent's role is to chart the number of times the Kaitlin displays the undesired response. If she hits her mark and decreases her negative emotional outburst by 25 percent, she is a winner!

***Issue #2: Serving Second Serves to the Opponent's Forehand***

Challenge: Stop feeding the forehand. Kaitlin serves 80 percent of her second serves to the opponent's strength. Her challenge is to serve 80 percent of her second serves to the opponent's weakness. The parent's role in this case is to chart each serve in match play. If Kaitlin can improve her second serve and place it 80% of the time to the opponent's weaker side, she is a winner!

***Issue #3: Beating a Retriever***

Challenge: To change the way Kaitlin and her dad think about retriever/pushers opponents. The first challenge is to assist them in understanding that they have been misled- thinking

retrievers die out in the 12's! In my experience, retrievers are one of the most prevalent styles in women's college tennis.

The second challenge is to ask Kaitlin and her parent's to switch their focus from grooving fundamental strokes to understanding and developing the patterns used to pull those crafty retrievers out of their comfort zone.

A great place to start when rekindling confidence is to list the four main components of the game. Agree to a radical shift in training. Let go of the old comfortable methods and simply choose one key element in each component to focus on in the next month.

***Kaitlin's Challenges Include:***

***Stroke Mechanics:*** Developing her second serve. (Power, Spin, Placement, Consistency)

***Mental:*** Choosing to hit the shot the moment demands.  
(Shot Selections)

***Emotional:*** Performance anxieties. (Handling Pushers)

***Athleticism:*** Improved fitness. (Speed, Agility, and Stamina)

***“Athletes who practice with a deliberate, customized approach usually produce greater benefits in 2 hours than those who invest 6 hours of mindless hitting.”***

Taking back control requires taking concrete actions.

Replacing past unproductive behaviors with new proactive actions is key to rekindling growth.

**QUESTION:** How can we assist our son in decreasing his unforced errors?

**Frank:** In my opinion, decreasing unforced errors always starts with the identification process. On numerous occasions, I have asked parents and coaches to chart players utilizing The Cause of Error Chart. (Found in Match Chart Collection at Maximizingtennispotential.com). The results were very interesting.

*While the majority of the international coaches solely focused on stroke production year in-year out, the main cause of errors were consistently shot selection and NOT form.*

*Upon analyzing The Cause of Error Charts with high performance athletes, the leading cause of errors were Mental-Shot Selection, followed by Movement-Spacing, a very close third was Emotional-Performance Anxieties...and last on the list Technical-Stroke Mechanics!*

Because poor shot selection is the leading cause of errors at the higher competitive junior levels, let's focus on that aspect. Shot selection starts with understanding that in between each shot in a rally, there are only about 2 milliseconds of actual decision making time. So, how much can you analyze in that small amount of time? The answer is not much.

This means that most shot selection options are learned behaviors acquired on the practice court. That is right. These tools must be wired into a player's game way before the tournament begins. Pre-setting offence, neutral, defensive and directional options is mental training.

***“High Percentage shot selection is mental readiness.”***

To explain the importance of shot selection, we will use two of my students: Jack and Jason (brothers that couldn't be more different). Jason has chosen to focus on the mental/emotional sides of tennis early in his development, while Jack was and still is too cool to listen to this silly stuff. Below are a dozen shot selection scenarios. Let's see how each brother chooses to handle the situations.

### ***The Tale of Jack and Jason***

***Situation #1: It is add-in. Holding serve means a comfortable 5-2 lead.***

Jason: Selects to serve a big kick serve wide to the opponent's weaker side. He runs a boring, successful pattern to close out the game.

Jack: Selects to go for a huge ace down the center (Like the one that he made once in tornado liked conditions back in 2014.) He misses, gets angry and rushes into a double fault.

***Situation #2: Our player just hit an offensive shot and has the opponent on the dead run, stretching and lunging at a low slice backhand.***

Jason: Spots the visual clues like the defensive court position, body language, open racket face and defensive strike zone of the opponent. He moves in, takes away the opponent's recovery time and steals an easy volley winner.

Jack: Didn't bother to learn to spot these clues, so he stands at the baseline and lets the opponent float the ball back and he re-starts the rally. Jack just missed an important opportunity to win the point.



***Situation #3: The opponent hits a deep cross-court ball.***

Jason: Hits a neutral building shot 4 feet over the net and back cross court.

Jack: Tries for a screaming net skimming half volley winner down the line and creams the ball into the bottom of the net.

***Situation #4: The brothers are in a vulnerable position running fifteen feet behind the baseline retrieving the opponents terrific shot.***

Jason: Throws up a deep, high, defensive lob to push the opponent back and gain valuable recovery time.

Jack: Goes for an offensive, down the line pass that lands near the back fence...Then screams...AAAHHHHH!

***Situation #5: Our player gets to the ball late. He is off balance and ends up striking the ball down by his socks.***

Jason: Quickly dials his offensive shot selection down to neutral and elects to simply keep the opponent from taking an offensive position.

Jack: Is still in full flight and goes for a topspin rip off of his shoe laces. The ball rips into the net.

***Situation #6: Our player is winning comfortably 6-3, 4-1.***

Jason: Continues to do the exact same, boring shot selections. He closes out the match in routine fashion. He realizes the importance of saving physical and emotional energy for the next round.

Jack: Gets bored with such a lead. He begins to throw in a bunch of more exciting, yet low percentage new things. In essence, Jack has changed the shot selections that have gained him a comfortable lead. Now the set is 5-5 and Jack is so

angry that he is acting like a Crazy Person; throwing his racquet and yelling, "I Hate Tennis." His situation is a result of his wandering mind.

***Situation #7: Our player is down 1-4 but is actually controlling the court and the points. His hard hitting baseline style is working, but he is simply missing the put away balls by a few inches.***

Jason: Spots that the style is working. He adapts by staying with the hard hitting style of play and chooses to apply more top spin to his shots and simply aim three feet inside the lines.

Jack: Is so upset that he is missing, that he does not spot that fact that he is actually controlling the points with his hard hitting baseline style of play. So, he changes his hard hitting style and stands flat footed and pushes every shot. Jack's slow, short balls are now "Sitting Ducks" and the opponent has a field day hitting winner after winner. After the match, Jack says, "He was too good."

***Situation #8: Our player wins the first set 6-2. Upon the start of 2nd set, the opponent shifts from his hard hitting baseline style into a conservative, retrieving style of play.***

Jason: Spots the change in style and counters by simply adapting to the "New Look." Since he is no longer receiving FREE points, Jason begins to work his selection of patterns.

Jack: Does not spot the shift in style. He begins to get frustrated by the fact that the opponent is not missing the second or third ball anymore. Without even knowing, Jack begins to panic and play faster and hit harder. Jack is trying to force winners left and right. Jack implodes once again and breaks another brand new racquet!

***Situation #9: The Easter Bowl (Palm Springs, Ca.) is famous for its windy conditions. Often, players have to cope with 30-40 miles per hour wind speeds. The result is that most often, cautious, consistent retriever style of play gets rewarded. The elements play a critical role in shot selection.***

Jason: Adapts his offensive baseline style to a safer style of play. He looks for ways to use the wind to his advantage. He applies more spin on the ball and aims four feet inside the court on every shot. He understands that going for winners in these “crazy” conditions is an almost impossible proposition, so he buckles down and uses his “B” plan. This plan consists of letting the opponent “self-destruct.”

Jack: Begins the tournament with the expectation that the conditions are unfair and he cannot play in the wind! He conveniently forgets that he has had many opportunities to practice in the wind in weeks prior to the tournament, but, he cancelled his lessons because he believed it was pointless to practice in windy conditions. (Jack lives in Southern California and Santa Ana winds are present many times a year.) Guess who lost first and first this year at the Easter Bowl?

***Situation #10: The opponent starts off on a hot streak. Within 15 minutes, he is up 4-0.***

Jason: Understands that controlling and managing both sides of the net is a critical factor. Since he spots that he is clearly not in control. He takes a bathroom break. Is this legal? You bet it is! He is looking for two things to happen: One is to take enough time to actually devise a new plan of attack. Two is to act as a “Cooler.” He knows that he has to give the opponent's fire a chance to burn itself out. We call this a shift in momentum.

Jack: Says “I know bathroom/trainer breaks are completely legal ...but they’re for “sissies.” What kind of player takes a legal bathroom break? The answer is... smart ones!

***Situation #11: Our player's opponent is a terrific retriever. He positions himself 10-15 feet behind the baseline and seems to get every deep ball.***

Jason: Considers the opponents preferred style. He monitors both players' court positions and elects to incorporate drop shots and short angle shots to pull the opponent out of his comfort zone.

Jack: Is super talented. He can hit all four short ball options (kill, approach, drop, or short angle), but elects to simply kill every short ball as hard as he can. This plays right into his opponent's spider's web. Frustrated once again, Jack walks off the court in record time, breaking a few more racquets on the way.

***Situation #12: Our last opponent is an old school net rusher. His weapons are power and intimidation. He is coming in and everyone knows it!***

Jason: Understands that simply spinning in his first serve is not as macho, but it serves a critical function: It keeps the net rusher from using the second serve as an approach shot.

Also, Jason does not go for outright passing shot winners from the first pass, he resists and elects to dip the ball soft and low at the on rushing players feet. This makes the player choosing to volley earn the winning shot, while giving Jason a higher percentage shot at actually passing on the second ball.

Jack: You know Jack by now...Jack bombs away at his monster first serve. He hits his typical first serve percentage of 30 percent in. Because of the fragility of his second serve under pressure, he is attacked relentlessly on his second serve.

Like most of us, Jack is uncomfortable being attacked. He feels the pressure and goes for huge passing shots as soon as he sees the opponent begin to come in. Most of his passes land closer to the back fence than in the court. After the match Jack takes his racquet bag and shoves it into the trash can and walks to his car.

The solutions to improving an athlete's shot selection choices are found in live ball sparring sessions. I recommend finding a suitable partner and book two back to back, hour long lessons with a USPTA, USPTR or ITF certified teacher. Both families can pay for an hour as the athletes enjoy two hours of training under observation. As live points are played, the high IQ coach will ask the athletes to identify the cause of the error as well as the best percentage solution. This is a great example of practicing in the manner in which you're expected to perform.

**QUESTION: My daughter watches the tennis channel all day. Is that helping?**

**Frank:** Watching tennis on TV can be truly helpful if your child is watching with a purpose. Below are ten skill sets you can ask your child to focus on while watching tennis on TV.

### **Ten Skill Sets to Spot**

#### ***1) Watch One Player's Feet***

Most Pros take approximately 10-12 steps for every 3-5 steps an intermediate junior takes. Have your child simply watch their shoes.

## ***2) Watch the Professionals' Between Point Rituals***

They apply external rituals (looking at their strings) while they also apply the use of use internal vision (Controlling emotion and spotting tendencies.)

## ***3) Spot Offense-Neutral-Defense Shot Selection***

Way before the incoming ball reaches the net, a pro has chosen the next appropriate shot selection. Call out the correct choice as a pro prepares to strike. If you can spot the appropriate selection along with a pro, your shot selection in match play will improve.

## ***4) Spot this Common Mistake: Change the Angle...Lose the Point***

Changing the angle is encouraged when you are inside the court. It is discouraged when you are behind the baseline on defense. Watch for appropriate angle changing and inappropriate angle changing attempts. Even top pros often miss when they attempt a down the line screamer off a cross court ball from way behind the court!

## ***5) Spot Styles of Play***

Who's the hard hitting baseliner? Who's the counter puncher? Is there an all-court net rusher? Spotting the opponents style is the first step to devising patterns and controlling a match. If your child can spot a pros style of play, my bet is they'll be terrific at spotting their next opponents style of play!

## ***6) Spot Proactive Patterns***

Pros do not simply react. They run one-two punch patterns. Can your child spot them? Ask your athlete to point out serving patterns, return patterns, rally or net rushing shot sequences.

### ***7) Spot Secondary Shots***

Pros do not just have a forehand, a backhand, a serve and a volley. They have a whole “Tool Belt” full of secondary shots and they know when to activate them. Can your child spot a swing volley, a short angle ground stroke or drop shot?

### ***8) Watch for Open versus Closed Stance Ground Strokes***

Call out “open” and “closed” when you spot a pro choosing the appropriate stance. Understanding when and why both stances are needed is an important tool.

### ***9) Chart Errors to Winners***

Understanding where your winners and errors are originating, as well as where your opponent’s winners and errors are originating may prove to be the deciding factor if your next match goes into a tie breaker. Actually charting a pro will lead to comprehending the importance of limiting errors.

### ***10) Court Positioning Chart***

Chart a pro’s winning percentage while they stay behind the baseline versus their winning percentage while playing inside the court. Often, juniors think they are better from behind the baseline. After charting a match, they find their winning percentage is actually better from inside the court.

Watching the drama unfold on TV can be both relaxing as well as a wonderful learning experience. Applying the above Ten Skill Sets will improve player accountability and lead to improving your child’s mental and emotional performance on the court.

**QUESTION:** I believe my son's perfectionism is interfering with his performance. Can you help?

**Frank:** In my opinion, the age old motto of trying to playing 110% in competition is dead wrong. Athletes who constantly attempt to force perfection over press and play tight. Perfectionist should simply be asked to aim for an excellent performance versus a perfect performance. In match play, the athlete should try 90% instead of 110% and learn to accept a few minor errors along the way to victory.

Parents and players who are perfectionists are so stressed about being perfect that it often stunts the actual growth they seek, and leads to misery for everyone around them. The coach should encourage their athlete to seek the courage to let go of unrealistic and damaging beliefs like athletic perfectionism and enjoy the journey.

Assisting a perfectionist's to get the most out of their talent requires designing a new belief system. Perfectionism afflicts some of the most naturally gifted players I've ever seen. In my opinion, needing to be perfect 100 percent of the time has been a major stumbling block for those that have chosen to neglect emotional training.

### **The Top 8 Signs of a Perfectionist:**

***1) Perfectionists believe that there is only one way to do it right.***

After hitting a great shot, a perfectionist may say, "Yah...I hit a winner but didn't you see it? My follow through was 6.5 inches too low! Why can't I do it correctly?"



## ***2) Perfectionists obsess over basics.***

Perfectionist parent's often say "I can run a Fortune 500 company and control 2000 employees but I can't get my daughter to control her #@\*%+... ball toss!"

## ***3) Perfectionists love to share their inflicted disease.***

Perfectionist not only spot their own errors but enjoy spotting yours and everyone else's flaws as well. Then, of course, they love to share it with you.

## ***4) Perfectionists demand perfection in others.***

Perfectionist parent's often say to their children, "Honey, I know you're only 7 years old but you should be able to get more kick on that second serve. Dinner will wait, do another basket."

## ***5) Perfectionists find things to worry about.***

Junior perfectionists often say, "What if it rains, I checked the forecast every 15 minutes last night...I could end up playing Zoe if we both get to the 4th round. She's the world's biggest pusher! What if I play Kelly, everyone knows she cheats. Remember when she cheated me in sectionals? Hey Dad, I heard there's a hurricane off the coast of Florida, do you think the wind will be a factor? ..."

## ***6) Perfectionist's over-think.***

Due to their deep need to always be right, perfectionists often over think in matches. Teaching professionals call it paralysis by analysis. They live in their analytical left brain. This is where constant editing and judging takes place. Unfortunately for them, true "in the zone" tennis is played in the right hemisphere of the brain. The exact over analysis a perfectionist thrives on is what's enabling them from enjoying peak performance in competition.

**7) *Perfectionists constantly second guess themselves.***

Junior perfectionists in a match are often thinking, “Oh, here comes a short ball, I should go in, no maybe not, it's possibly a trick, I better wait and analyze the situation, oh, look at that...too late...”

**8) *Perfectionists often blow 5-2 leads.***

The match is comfortably under control and your little perfectionist misses an easy sitter. Instead of shaking it off, they blow it completely out of proportion and begin to panic. Now, thanks to their perfectionism, their defeated opponent sees their instability and begins to believe that they can beat this crazy person. Once again, that comfortable match is now a 5-5 dog fight.

If your child refuses to accept anything short of perfect, ask them to research Perfectionism via google. This psychological profile offers both positive and negative traits. I'm a huge fan of the positive effects that stem from this personality profile. However, I worry about the players who feel that they're only satisfied by obtaining unobtainable goals. Being satisfied exclusively by achieving unrealistic goals just sets the player up for consistent disappointments. Without intervention, these athletes most often quit the sport.

**QUESTION:** How can my daughter let go of perfectionism?

**Frank:** Begin by discussing how striving for perfection is a demoralizing proposition. Studies show that the obsession of being perfect doesn't lead to any substantial gains. Studies also show that given the same level of intellect and skills-

perfectionists perform under par versus their less stressed out counterparts. The reality is that with a sport like tennis, a calm, relaxed state of mind is essential for peak performance.

Successful tennis players are satisfied winning about 66 percent of the points in each match. That's simply 2 out of 3 points. Doing so allows imperfection. It also allows the opponent a little glory as they lose the match. This provides a critical distressing environment where playing at peak performance is possible. The following is a list of behaviors perfectionist need to address:

### ***Controlled Aggression***

Unfortunately for most perfectionists, the fear of losing is so great that they fall into the trap of "playing not to lose." Pushing and playing safe is often caused by fear. The fear of missing is often the cause miss hits! Champions continue to attempt the shot the moment demands.

### ***Unrealistic Expectations***

Top nationally ranked juniors enter, on average, 30 tough tournaments a year. If they win three of those events, it's a great year. That mean they go home losers 27 weeks a year! Perfectionists, if you are winning 70 percent of your matches, you are ahead of the curve.

### ***Self-Critical Behaviors***

Perfectionists, it's ok to have a Gatorade stain on your untucked shirt. Your hair should be messy. It's ok to shank a few winners. Play slow and decrease ball speed. Give the opponent what they hate versus what you think looks like "good" tennis. Allow yourself to miss some. It doesn't have to always be pretty. Often, perfectionists would rather lose than win ugly.

### ***Focus on Executing Rituals***

Studies show that about 75-80 percent of the time you're on court; you are in between points. Perfectionists would be wise to focus on the process of proper internal change over and between point rituals instead of berating themselves over every mistake.

### ***Self-Trust***

Perfectionists overthink things to the point of confusion. For some, trusting their gut instincts isn't a valid processing system. Decisions come after every factor is overanalyzed to the point of exhaustion.

### ***Attitude***

Understand that you choose your attitude and perfectionism is an attitude. This means that you have the freedom to change it. If your athlete is planning to play tennis in college, this is a major issue. I call it attitude versus aptitude. College coaches are searching for players with an optimistic positive attitude. A team player with a positive attitude is a pleasure to help. A pessimistic perfectionist with a horrible attitude is every college coach's nightmare.

### ***Focus on Getting the Win...Not the Double Bagel***

Define a new, more reasonable goal. In any given round of any given tournament the objective is to get the win and progress to the next round. The purpose isn't a perfect 6-0, 6-0 score without missing a single ball. The purpose is to simply get one thing accomplished and that's the result.

Parents, educate your perfectionist to accept excellence versus perfection. It's a healthier state of mind

## **QUESTION: What are your Champions Pledges I read about?**

**Frank:** If you believe that your child isn't giving his or her full effort, I suggest reviewing the below pledges along with your players. Your athletes will surely think they're goofy at first but with a little time and clarity, they'll understand the importance of centering their belief system.

Tennis has been known to teach real world lessons. Some of these lessons are reiterated in the below Champions' Pledges. After a successful junior career, college career or even after a great run on the pro tour, your child will enter the real world with these tools. These tools are needed to champion their next endeavor.

Read the below Champions Pledge together. Discuss it. Ask them to internalize it. Remind them it may prove meaningful to re-read it every few months. It is easy to look to outside sources to improve your child's results. It is even easier to blame outside sources for their lack of results. But honestly, most answers are already inside our children.

### ***"I Pledge to Express Gratefulness"***

It's a tough and lonely road towards the top. It's paved with unfair stretches of pain and heartbreak. Winning is a false and fleeting friend. My true allies are my parents and my entourage. They'll be here through thick and thin. They'll support me, listen to me and believe in me even when I've lost belief in myself. I'll remember to say thank you every day. I'm grateful for I am one of the lucky ones. Because of them, I'm able to chase my dream. In time, with a little distance and clarity, I'll understand that very few people in this world are as lucky as I am.

### ***“I Pledge to Complete My Daily Focus Journal”***

I'm improving my confidence daily. I understand now that personal joy comes from progress. I'll survey my work each night and gladly document my achievements. Staying on the road to success will be easy with my daily focus journal. What temptations did I resist? What stroke did I get closer to mastering? What did I do today to improve my athleticism? What patterns did I rehearse to beat moonball retrievers? I'm accountable to myself today and every day.

### ***“My Words Will Match My Actions”***

My words use to say “I want to be a National Champion.”  
My actions use to say “I just want to be a Normal Teen.”  
Transforming from a pretender to a contender is a choice.  
Like the others, I sometimes despised the hard workouts and I continually chose the easy path. I vented my frustrations and looked for the negative in each situation. Putting forth half effort became my norm.

I will transform my attitude and my work ethic. The battle is half won when I have a plan for success. I will set goals and work to achieve them. Opportunities and good luck will present themselves and I will be ready.

### ***“I Pledge to Focus My Actions”***

Today's world demands that I master the very best of my ability. Success eludes the ones who scatter their attention, time and efforts whichever way the wind blows. Tennis would be so much easier if I took the efforts and energy I waste on excuses and replaced those same efforts on improving. I'm throwing myself completely into my tennis with enthusiasm. I won't hesitate and I won't procrastinate. The best in every field commit their entire being to their job. My job for now is tennis. I've cheated myself too long. I'm tired of giving less than my best.

### ***“I Pledge to Seek Improvement in Every Loss”***

The fear of failure is like a dark cloud that followed me to every match. This imaginary companion terrorized me way too long. In fact, I wouldn't even play practice matches because of the fear of failure, the fear of a loss. There is no better tool than adversity to improve my performance next time. I need to improve certain things. This is a fact. Adversity and losses show me what to improve therefore my losses are an important part of growth. Like a gem, I cannot be polished without friction. After the brief pain of defeat, I'll begin to erase my flaws and soon I'll be twice player I am today!

## **QUESTION: Should my son use a daily focus journal?**

**Frank:** The Daily Focus Journal is to be used as a consistent documentation of your athlete's efforts. Together with your athlete, draft your own personal Daily Focus Journal. Photo copy 30 blank Daily Focus Journals and ask your child to complete one nightly for a month. To be honest, if your athlete can't be bothered documenting their progress...it's likely, they're not interested in maximizing their potential.

### **Sample Daily Focus:**

**Day:** Monday

**Date:** Sept. 4, 2015

*1) DAILY SUCCESS GOAL*

**Success:** Off-court gym work- 1 hour

**Reason:** Strength/ Stamina

**Further progress/Next action:** Next Wed, 3-4 pm

*2) DAILY SUCCESS GOAL*

**Success:** Top 7 Pattern repetition

**Reason:** Controlling the mega points

**Further progress/Next action:** Groove secondary strokes  
Tues, 4-6 pm

*3) DAILY SUCCESS GOAL*

**Success:** 10 x 10 hill sprints

**Reason:** Stamina, speed and agility

**Further progress/Next action:** Wed 3-4 pm

**Daily Thoughts:** I feel my legs getting stronger. Also, my serving patterns are starting to flow more consistently.



## **SECTION V**

### **PARENT/PLAYER REALITY CHECK**

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## PARENT REALITY CHECKS

The journey of raising athletic royalty doesn't come with one big final exam. It's full of reality checks and pop quizzes. Parents and players need to look deeper into what they are doing and what they are not doing because you're accountable for both. This section looks into the accountability of the entourage.

## WHAT'S YOUR PARENTAL/COACHING STYLE?

It's in your best interest to gain an understanding about the personality style of the entourage. The team leader, who is the primary tennis parent, must cultivate a positive family atmosphere to maximize success. Defining the roles and style of the parents and coach is essential. So what is your primary style?

If you are not sure, or if your ego won't allow you to be pigeon holed, ask your child. They'll laugh as they spot exactly your parental/coaching style. Below are six parental/coaching styles I see weekly.

***The Rocket Scientist:*** These parents/coaches often talk above their child's head, confusing their child more than they help.

***Solution:*** It's not the child's responsibility to get into the parents/coaches "mindset." It's the parents/coaches job to understand how to best get into child's world. Shift focus from away from "what you know"...to what they are able to digest.

***The X- Athlete:*** These parents/coaches believe that because they played a sport decades ago they are experts in the field.

***Solution:*** Understand that sports science has evolved. Often what was correct back then... is most likely outdated now.

***The Drill Sergeant:*** This parent/coach makes all the decisions in dictator fashion. Their battle cry is “Because I said so!”

***Solution:*** Recognize that fear based motivation seldom works in the long term. Fear based instruction also develops dependency which isn’t in a champion’s best interest.

***The Judger:*** Judging and criticizing is what this parent/coach does best and most often. This style can spot 47 things wrong in 30 seconds and they believe they are helping.

***Solution:*** Reintroduce “Channel Capacity.” Parents/coaches often unknowingly sabotage training sessions or events by asking the child to solve two or more complicated tasks simultaneously.

***The Negatron:*** This parent/coach “worrywart” expects the worst in every possible situation.

***Solution:*** Discuss the massive negative effects of adding worry, stress and fear to each situation and explain how debilitating a pessimistic mind set is to an athlete.

***The Jabber Jaw:*** Jabber Jaw parent talk “at” the coach for 45 minutes of the child’s 1 hour lesson and then later complain that there wasn’t any real progress. Ditto for the jabber jaw coach.

***Solution:*** Parents should email concerns to the coach prior to the lesson versus wasting the athlete’s precious lesson time bantering about their child’s flaws (in front of the child) during the lesson time.

*Children will flourish or shut down depending on the parental/coaches style chosen. Respect the player's personality type and teach accordingly. Do any of these parent/coach personalities sound familiar to you?*

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## PARENT/PLAYER COMMUNICATION CHECKLIST

I can assure you, at every level, the parent/player relationship will be emotionally demanding. Although tennis is an individual sport, it takes a supportive team to excel at the competitive level. The parent will often take the “brunt” of the player’s frustrations. As a result, the parent/player relationship will take time, patience, effort, thought, love and creativity.

A preventative measure to avoiding much of the drama of this demanding sport is organizing a monthly entourage (player/parents/primary coaches) meeting. Ideally, the meeting should take place in a positive non-threatening environment. Reminder: The hired coaching staff should be paid for their time assisting you and your child.

Often we are so deep in the trenches that we lose the larger picture of our path or direction. The monthly meeting will bring clarity to your organization. The most critical component to this meeting is you, the parent, taking the time to LISTEN to your athlete and their coaches.

### ***Meeting Topics May Include:***

- ☐ Academics
- ☐ Family relationships/roles
- ☐ Social relationships
- ☐ Relaxing and down time scheduling
- ☐ Periodizational training schedule
- ☐ Tournament scheduling
- ☐ Equipment issues
- ☐ Coaches, trainer and hitter issues
- ☐ Match play emotions, performance anxieties
- ☐ Match play strategies, tactics and shot selections
- ☐ Current injuries and injury prevention

- ☐ Nutrition and hydration issues
- ☐ Playing in the current elements
- ☐ Visualization rituals
- ☐ Primary or secondary stroke issues
- ☐ Accountability and attitude
- ☐ Handling gamesmanship
- ☐ Spotting burn out
- ☐ Common traits of athletic champions
- ☐ Current challenges

***“You can achieve it...only if you believe it.”***

A large part of these monthly team meetings is to nurture your child's ability to care. They have to care about themselves first and foremost. If they truly care about their dreams and goals, it's amazing what they can accomplish.

However, your child also needs to be reminded to care about their family, friends, coaches and trainers. Fostering empathy and concern towards others builds positive character.

Developing and nurturing positive traits result in a player with integrity which is critical because stressful competition reveals what is on the inside- one's true character.

***“Be your child's life long favorite teacher.”***

## ARE YOU A “CRAZY” TENNIS PARENT?

To lighten the mood, I have provided a character behavioral quiz. We know that parents don't intentionally ruin their child's tennis experience. Yet, it's estimated that a large majority of tennis parents do just that...

Who are these culprits that carry inappropriate and unrealistic expectations? It's time to ask the question: Do you facilitate or hinder your child's growth?

Take the quiz below to discover whether or not you are a “crazy” tennis parent.

Scoring: Total your numbers to determine if you have any symptoms of a “crazy” tennis parent. (Grading Scale: 1- No, it never happens; 2- Yes, occasionally; 3- Yes, more often than I'd like to admit; 4- Yes, repeatedly; 5- Sadly, this is me or my husband)

### QUIZ QUESTIONS:

- 1) I sit at my child's lessons and critique the whole session. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 2) This is my dream; my child will learn to love it: (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 3) I believe winning is the only success. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 4) My child should never lose to lower ranked players. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 5) I pamper my phenom because he/she is going to be famous. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 6) I constantly remind my child how much this whole thing costs me. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 7) I'm crazy angry for days every time my kid loses. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 8) When my child wins, it's usually because the opponent was terrible. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)



- 9) When my kid loses, I review with them my list of everything they did wrong the entire drive home! (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 10) No I don't want my kid to play other sports or do "normal" kid stuff. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 11) I don't waste my kid's time practicing doubles. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 12) In matches, I expect my kid to hit winners, all the time, against everyone. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 13) If a crazy parent gets out of hand, I let them know... (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 14) If my child's getting cheated, you bet I get involved. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 15) If an official isn't doing their job, I get in their face. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 16) I put my kid in tournaments every single weekend. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 17) I'm the adult; I make all the decisions in this family. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 18) My kid practices and competes 4- 6 hours a day, but I think they should do more. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 19) I expect my kid to be a top professional tour player by the age of 17. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 20) I'm generally able to bend the rules in the favor of my child. Isn't that being a good parent...? (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 21) I expect my kid to always come home with the trophy. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 22) No, I wasn't educated as a coach but ...I played ... so I can coach. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 23) Yes I punish and yell at my kid when they make stupid tennis mistakes. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 24) After a loss to a lesser player, I'm so disgusted I can't even talk to my kid.(1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 25) At home, we obsessively talk about tennis 24/7. It's our life. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 26) He's going to be famous because he comes from my incredible gene pool.(1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

- 27) Yeah... I love tennis more than my child does ...but she'll thank me later. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 28) At every event, I want my kid's coach to focus 100% on my kid. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 29) I don't care if it's Sunday morning & my child's coach is off work. My kid needs a warm up. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 30) My philosophy is "I'll be happy when she wins the whole event." (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 31) I pay my kids cash when they win & give them chores when they lose. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 32) So what if I bad mouth the coach after my child loses. It's usually his fault! (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 33) Coaches are a dime a dozen... There's always a new one right around the corner. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 34) I know what the coach suggested but I know better. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 35) Before my daughter's matches, I get more nervous, anxious and stressed then her! (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 36) During my son's matches, he says I over react to his ridiculous unforced errors. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 37) I played college ball 30 years ago. I know how my kid should play! (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 38) Before my child's match, I talk about the opponents wins-losses, ranking and seeding. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 39) Before an easy match, I tell my son how much his ranking will drop if he loses to a lower ranked player. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 40) Before a tough match, I tell my daughter how much her ranking will jump... if she doesn't blow it! (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 41) These people aren't our friends ... it's us against them! (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 42) This draws rigged! There's no way it's not rigged! I often believe the draws are rigged. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

- 43) Three top kids are now training (for free) at the XYZ academy so ... we're leaving and going there... (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 44) I know my daughters #87 in the section, but she'll be beating the WTA pros within a year (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 45) My son just turned 11, so we're going to play him up in the 14s ... It'll get him better faster! (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 46) My daughter will dump her coach and join your Academy if you'll guarantee she only plays with better players every day. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 47) I ignore it when my daughter cheats ...Everybody else does cheats too. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 48) I know what the stupid coach says...but he's an idiot, just don't miss! (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 49) Look coach, don't change anything in my son's game unless you run it by me first. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 50) I read all 50 of these and didn't see a problem with any of them. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

**Total Score:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Score Key:**

0-50: I knew it... I'm a saint.

51-100: So what ... I go a bit "psycho" at times.

101-150: Ok, this is unhealthy ... I'm borderline obsessed.

151-200: OMG... I'm one of them!

201-250: Honey... We need to call a psychologist ... STAT!

## PLAYER REALITY CHECK

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## ARE YOU A CONTENDER OR PRETENDER?

Here's a fun quiz. It is time to laugh a little (or cry) depending on how your child scores. Check the self-destructive tendencies that describe your child. If three or more are checked, your child is officially in need of mental and emotional "Life Skills" training - ASAP!

### OFF-COURT:

- ☐ **The Non-Committer:** "Mom stop nagging - I'll do it later."
- ☐ **The Dependent:** "Dad, find me a practice match, re-grip my racquets, find my shoes, carry my bags, etc."
- ☐ **The T-Shirt Collector:** "I got in and got this cool Easter Bowl T- shirt - I'm satisfied!"
- ☐ **The Excuse Expert:** "I know the tournament is tomorrow. But I have a hair appointment; I don't have time to hit!"
- ☐ **The Only-Play-Up Fool:** "I'm not playing a practice set with her. She is ranked 6 spots below me!"
- ☐ **The Finger Pointer:** "It's my parents fault, my coach's fault, my schools fault, my shoes fault, my racquets fault, etc."
- ☐ **The Drama Major:** "If I lose to her, my ranking will drop, my parents will go psycho, my coach will put me in the loser group, and my friends will even think they can beat me, I'll lose my chance at my USC scholarship, I won't get the wildcard - the world will end."
- ☐ **The Sabotager:** "If I truly do everything I'm trained to do and still lose - then I'm not good enough. So I'll half train and half prepare so that if I lose, I'll have an excuse!"

- ❑ **The Walking Fashion Show:** “Maybe if I buy the latest Maria Nike dress or those Nadel shirts no one will notice I have no backhand!”
- ❑ **The Crabzilla:** “I hate this, I hate warming up, I hate eating, I hate the sun, I hate the clouds, I hate that stupid bird, I hate early matches, I hate late matches, I hate, hate, hate etc.”

#### ON-COURT:

- ❑ **The MEGA Point Fool:** “Was that just - ad in? Oh...”
- ❑ **The River Boat Gambler:** “Yea, I do at least one “Tweener” a match. I actually made it once in practice.”
- ❑ **The Roller Coaster:** “I can plug in and play pro level tennis for 3 games, then for some reason I go unplugged and make sloppy unforced errors for 3 games in a row - now it is 3-3!
- ❑ **The Line Painter:** “I go for lines. I'm no wimpy pusher!”
- ❑ **The Walking Wounded:** “I'm too tired, my ankle hurts, I have a blister, my shoulders bugging me, I think I have the flu- is my head warm?”

So, does your athlete possess any of the above traits? Make this year the year your athlete starts to cut out these counterproductive behaviors.

***“What I do now is all that matters in determining my future success. I have the power to change. I am not a slave to my past choices!”***

## DOES YOUR CHILD NEEDS MENTAL/EMOTIONAL TRAINING?

Understand mental/emotional training is the practical application of finding solutions to common pitfalls. We often hear, “My child has trouble closing out a 5-2 lead”, “My child plays terrific in practice but horribly in matches”, “My son can't beat a moonball, pusher”, “My daughter can't handle cheaters!”, “My son has trouble focusing for the whole match!”

Essentially, the mental component consists of the X's and O' of strategy. The emotional component refers to the athlete's ability to navigate through performance anxieties that many athletes see as challenges. Often, these two component are intertwined.

Parents are often hesitant and a bit unclear about the role of mental or emotional training. This type of instruction involves more than simple fundamental stroke production. Developing the “hidden” skill set within your child's game is crucial for peak performance. It is a myth that only children with abnormal behavioral problems need mental or emotional guidance.

***Do we have to change primary coaches to begin working on these issues?***

No, not at all! A mental training coach can assist your primary coach and become a part of the team. In fact, the most intelligent coaches will encourage their players to seek out such training. It's a win-win situation for both the client and the professional.

***Is a lack of Mental/Emotional training holding your child back from getting the results they deserve?***

## TAKE THE QUIZ

The following questions can be used to determine whether your child is in need of mental/emotional training. Good Luck!

- 1) My child plays incredible on the practice court, but often falls apart in matches. Yes/No
- 2) My child avoids playing full practice matches most week. Yes/No
- 3) In matches, my child's focus is only on winning versus actual performance goals. Yes/No
- 4) My child doesn't apply proper change over and between point rituals in matches. Yes/No
- 5) My child is unorganized in planning their weekly training schedules. Yes/No
- 6) My child has not yet developed his/her secondary strokes. Yes/No
- 7) My child has super high expectations and expects to perform perfect every match. Yes/No
- 8) We haven't yet put together our entourage of hitters, teachers and trainers. Yes/No
- 9) My child hasn't developed plans or patterns to beat moonball/pushers. Yes/No
- 10) My child hasn't developed plans or patterns to beat hard hitting baseliners. Yes/No
- 11) My child has problems managing their stress, anger and mistakes. Yes/No
- 12) My child hasn't yet developed their groups of proactive patterns. Yes/No
- 13) We do not understand or utilizes periodization training. Yes/No
- 14) My child has trouble dealing with external and internal distractions. Yes/No



- 15) My child doesn't spot mega points and mini mega points. Yes/No
- 16) My child doesn't know the difference between a positive mega point and a negative mega point. Yes/No
- 17) My child lacks confidence in his/her abilities. Yes/No
- 18) My child has trouble coping with cheaters. Yes/No
- 19) In matches, my child's mind often wanders to the past or the future. Yes/No
- 20) My child's training has primarily focused on stroke mechanics. Yes/No
- 21) My child wants to win so badly it affects his/her performance. Yes/No
- 22) My child freezes under stress and plays "Not to lose" instead of playing "to win." Yes/No
- 23) My child words, "I want to be a pro", don't match his/her actions. Yes/No
- 24) My child's doesn't know how to spot the opponents tendencies in match play. Yes/No
- 25) My child hasn't spent time identifying his/her mental game strengths and weaknesses. Yes/No

ANSWERS: If you or your child checked "Yes" to any of the above questions, you may want to consider mental and emotional training.

*Peak performance under stress is not reserved for the gifted few, it's the "software" that needs to be developed along with the athletic hardware. Simply put, being mentally or emotionally tough under stress is a learned behavior.*

## PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL REALITY CHECK: Requirements to Winning a 64 Draw Tournament

Parents and coaches, here's a reality check for you to share with your athletes. Begin by asking your athlete to imagine that they qualified for a really big event. Now, ask them to imagine that they won both the singles and doubles titles.

Have them write down their imaginary score after each round. (Example: Round of 64: 6-2, 6-4; Round of 32: 4-6, 6-2, 7-6 etc.) Be sure to include both singles and doubles- since they've imagined that they've won both events. Together, total both the imaginary number of singles and doubles sets played in this mock event. Then simply ask your youngster, "When was the last time you played \_\_\_\_\_ sets in one week?"

### **Singles**

Round of 64: \_\_\_\_\_

Round of 32: \_\_\_\_\_

Round of 16: \_\_\_\_\_

Quarter Finals: \_\_\_\_\_

Semi Finals: \_\_\_\_\_

Finals: \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Sets:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Doubles

Round of 32: \_\_\_\_\_

Round of 16: \_\_\_\_\_

Quarter Finals: \_\_\_\_\_

Semi Finals: \_\_\_\_\_

Finals: \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Sets:** \_\_\_\_\_

When was the last time your player honestly played 22 sets or more in one week?

Sadly, most juniors practice set routines aren't even close to the above reality check. Most play a couple of sets a week at best and believe that they're training in the manner that their expected to perform. Remember, practice routines should be tougher than the actual tournaments.

## THE REALITY OF “GOING PRO?”

To answer this question, I have designed another fun “Pop Quiz” as a guide. (Take the quiz and you will formulate your own opinion as to what your child’s chances are of becoming a professional.) Let’s assume that your child wants to play at a top Division 1 University or on the Professional Tour. They already possess keen strokes and a solid physical foundation. Now the issue is: Do your player’s words match their actions?

Simply answer each of the following question Yes or No. (Then total your number of Yes answers and check your child’s score at the end.)

### **Attitude**

- 1.) Does your child possess a genuine love for the game of tennis? Yes/No
- 2.) Is your child being trained to be self-reliant? Yes/No

### **Commitment**

- 1.) Does your child’s training average approximately 20 hours a week? Yes/No
- 2.) Does your child accept that they cannot be a Champion and be a normal teenager? (They have to pick one.) Yes/No

### **Fitness**

- 1.) Does your child work off -court an average of 6 hours per week on their speed, strength, flexibly, and core stability? Yes/No
- 2.) Does your child do exercises designed to prevent common injuries? Yes/No

### **Competitiveness**

- 1.) Does your child work on overcoming performance anxieties such as: How to handle frustration? Yes/No
- 2.) Does your child LOVE the pressure of competitive tennis? Yes/No

### **Confidence**

- 1.) Is your child comfortable in competitive situations? Yes/No
- 2.) Does your child spend time after tournaments discovering and overcoming re-occurring issues? Yes/No

### **Problem Solving**

- 1.) Is your child willing to constantly overcome hardships and adversity? Yes/No
- 2.) Does your child have the resiliency to handle the many unfair barriers of our sport? Yes/No

### **Focus**

- 1.) Does your child use proper pre-match, between points, and changeover rituals? Yes/No
- 2.) Does your child have their protocols to control nervousness and distractions? Yes/No

### **Tactical Knowledge**

- 1.) Does your child have well-rehearsed plans to beat the different styles of opponents? Yes/No
- 2.) Has your child developed two meaningful weapons? Yes/No

### **A Full Time Tennis Parent**

- 1.) Is there a primary tennis parent willing to accept the responsibility, time commitment, and finances of managing the career of a junior tennis champion? Yes/No
- 2.) Do you chart and/or video tape matches then hire a high IQ coach to review them with your child? Yes/No

### **Mental and Emotional Skills**

- 1.) Have you begun to focus on building your child's mental, emotional "Tool Belt" that they will need to compete at the highest levels? Yes/No
- 2.) Do you have a detailed long and short term goal lists and the time management skills required to meet those goals? Yes/No

### **SCORING THE TEST**

- 0-2      Yes Answers: Relax and enjoy your normal kid.
- 3-5      Yes Answers: You will need a Miracle!
- 6-10     Yes Answers: Major changes have to be made.
- 11-14   Yes Answers: Your child has a serious shot at Greatness!
- 15-20   Yes Answers: Pack your bags for Wimbledon!

## **SECTION VI**

### **THE TOP 50 TENNIS PARENT BLUNDERS & HOW TO AVOID THEM**

Repetition is the key to mastery. This section is intended to hit you, the reader, with a review of some my favorite blunders along with their cures.

Just as your athlete's need physical, mental and emotional reminders, so does the tennis parent. Consider this section your very own tennis parent check list.

## NURTURING CHARACTER BLUNDERS

Parents, please be more concerned about your child's character than their rankings because junior success is temporary... character is lifelong.

### **Ignoring Your Child's Personality and Body Type**

I mentioned this blunder several times in this book. Your child has a genetic predisposition to excel at a particular style of tennis. A common parental mistake is assuming that your child is wired like you... It is highly likely they have a different brain type and they see the world and approach tasks differently than you or their coaches.

I've found that by understanding each player's brain type, body type and personality traits, similar obstacles, skills-efficiencies and deficiencies, frustration tolerance levels, styles of play and decision making abilities are evident.

However, a child's preferred learning style is a product of both their genetic (nature) and environmental (nurture) make-up. So just as a player's upbringing plays a role in shaping their future, so too does their desires, actions and results.

*Often, my students win their first national title and skyrocket their rankings after determining their personality profile and training them accordingly. Their training was systematically customized to their unique brain and body design and their rankings greatly improved.*



## **Parents Don't Need Guidance**

Would you expect a talented, beginner athlete to be a world champion without proper coaching? Not likely. As a parent, plan on seeking out assistance and guidance through this journey. In today's world, coaching has moved past the athletic playing fields and into every aspect of life. One of the best kept secrets of the successful junior tennis champion is a primary tennis parent that is knowledgeable about the tennis developmental process.

Parental coaching can be done in-person, by phone, in groups or in private, customized settings. Wonderful skills can be developed through attending seminars, Googling topics of interest on YouTube, accompanying your youngster to college or professional matches or purchasing instructional DVD's and books.

*Serena Williams said her parents learned how to coach her by watching Vic Braden instructional videos. Seek out those who can help you make clearer decisions for your child and your family. Education about the process can accelerate your child's success.*

## **Being an Unaccountable Parent**

Parental accountability is based on the fact that national tournaments are often held over holiday breaks. Parents, do you choose to spend Thanksgiving and Easter breaks at home with your extended family and friends or are you okay spending that time in a hotel out of state? Do you choose to remain home so your child can prepare properly for the winter nationals or do you choose to go skiing the week before the event? Are your summers spent on the beach or on the tournament trail? While breaks are healthy, a hobbyist parent should only expect hobbyist results.

## Underestimating the Success Formula

It's old hat by now. It's called the 10,000 hour rule. For approximately ten years; your child should be spending approximately 20 hours per week in tennis related activities to become a world-class player. Deliberate customization is essential. However, quality is more important than quantity. On a personal note, my daughter went from a 10 year old beginner to playing the U.S. Open in 5 years.

**Interesting NOTE:** *The 10,000 hour rule was first applied as far back as 1899. It is applied to all forms of excellence not just athletics.*

## Avoiding Character Building

Guess who was an angry emotional train wreck as a junior competitor? If you said Andre Agassi, Rafael Nadal, Roger Federer and even the iceman Bjorn Borg, then you're right! Moral excellence is a maturing process. Everyone can compete in a relaxed, happy state, but not everyone chooses to do so. Let's cover that again. Everyone can compete in a relaxed, happy state, but not everyone chooses to do so!

Often negative behavior has been motor programmed into the player's routine. It is a comfortable, dirty, old habit. The development of character lies in the ability to first learn to be uncomfortable competing without the negative act. It's like a stand-up comedian without his props to hide behind. The old props are comfortable.

The insight lies in the understanding that each player has a character choice. Somewhere in their late-teens tennis greats Borg, Federer and Nadal were taught a wiser code of conduct and chose to apply it.

## Encouraging Dependency

A serious blunder is “selling” dependence. I’ve seen numerous parents and teaching pros fall into this category. Often parents and coaches live vicariously through their super stars. Their fear of being abandoned by the champ motivates them to develop dependency. I often hear the player’s point of view as they communicate their feelings during their evaluation session. The players live in fear because a parent or coach has insinuated that they were responsible for their child’s success; “I’m the only one who can save you.” or “I don’t ever want to catch you hitting with another pro because they’ll mess up your game!”

*Successful national champions have developed the physical, mental and emotional tools to solve their own problems. It’s our job to assist them in solving their own problems!*

Here’s what I did as a tennis parent from the time my step daughter was 12 years old attending her first national event.

*“Ok Sarah, this is your event. I’m here to assist you every step of the way. Let’s play the co-pilot game. Sarah, I can’t drive and read the Google map. Can you please find the way to the airport? Great! Now find the parking structure. What’s our airline? Read the signs and lead the way. Terrific.*

*As we de-planed, I would ask Sarah, “Can you follow the signs to baggage claim?” That was easy. Now, were searching for Alamo rental cars, I wonder what kind of car is in slot #26? What’s your guess? Oh no... a P.T. Cruiser...Not again!!! “Sarah, can you read the map and direct us to the hotel?”*

*Lastly, were going to hit for an hour tonight on the tournament courts so you can sleep easy knowing the surroundings. “Can you co-pilot us to the tournament site?”*

Was it easy? Nope. It was like pulling teeth! It would have been a hundred times faster and easier if I had made her dependent on me. Did she learn self-reliance? Did she develop confidence in her abilities with the unknown? Did she become an independent thinker? You bet! By the age of 15, Sarah was flying comfortably, without us, nationally and internationally to compete.

### **Talking Economics Before/After a Match**

Dumping unnecessary loads of pressure on a player before or after a match is one of the most common mistakes. I have often heard parents say “If you lose one more time to someone ranked lower than you, we’re pulling the plug! Do you know how much we spend on your tennis?”

How do you expect them to play in their calm, relaxed peak performance state of mind if you are stressing them out about finances? If you have the money, choose to spend it on the family adventure tennis provides without expecting a return on the financial investment.

### **Thinking Perfect Strokes are Mandatory**

Legendary star Andre Agassi states in his book that he was still learning how to volley when he retired. John McEnroe is quoted as saying “Nobody has perfect strokes; it’s what you do with what you’ve got that counts!” They simply competed with their secret weaknesses. Learn how to expose your strengths and hide your weaknesses.

*Parents, players and coaches who are waiting for every stroke to be perfect before they begin to compete are missing the boat. Every national champion I've ever coached had holes in their game as they held up the gold ball. The trick is learning how to compete with imperfections.*

Even if your child did possess perfect strokes on the practice court, performance anxieties will occasionally cause strokes to break down at stressful stages of an event. Dealing with the reality of imperfect strokes is part of the mental, emotional components of the game.

### **Managing Without a “Hollywood” Script**

Hollywood parents with “wanna be” child stars have the reputation for being a little nuts right? Hollywood parents drag their kids from audition to audition in search of ways to live vicariously through their kids. Though I do not recommend forcing your child into any unwanted activity, I do recommend asking your child to use the system that Hollywood actors use when working on a sit com. Here's their four part system:

- 1) First, the actor gets the script for a new show. (Your child gets a script for how to beat a moonballer. Yes, don't worry the script is in the mental section of this book).
- 2) Second, the Hollywood actor spends hours running through their lines. (Your child will ask a hitting coach to run through the patterns used to beat pesky pushers).
- 3) Third, the Hollywood actor run dress rehearsals. (Your child has to run their patterns on the practice court and in practice sets often for weeks at a time doing dress rehearsals).

4) Fourth, the actors shoot the show in front of a live audience. (Your child plays the actual tournament).

All too often our junior competitors learn wonderful patterns and then choose not to rehearse the patterns in dress in practice and then wonder why they continue to lose to moonballer/ pushers.

Parents and coaches, please use this four part method to develop each component in your child's game.

### **Ignoring Off-Court Training, Proper Nutrition and Hydration**

When your athlete gets fatigued their movement gets sloppy, their stroke spacing is off and unforced errors begin to fly off their racket. Poor decision making and negative emotions set in. Often, the actual cause of a child's emotional breakdown is a lack of fitness. Unfit players do not perform their rituals, they do not spot tendencies and they do not manage their mistake. Poor physical fitness manifests in mental and emotional breakdowns. For instance, most juniors go for low percentage shots due to the fact that they are too tired to grind out the point. So is off-court training linked to the mental side? Absolutely!

Proper hydration and nutrition is also a critical factor in the physical, mental and emotional links of every tennis competitor. As parents, we have to insist that our players fuel up before battle. Dehydration triggers fatigue, dizziness, headaches and nausea. Lack of adequate nutrition affects the blood sugar levels to the brain. Improper nutrition and hydration guarantees poor decision making skills at crunch time.

## MAINTAINING POSITIVE COMMUNICATION BLUNDERS

Parents and coaches, your words can both destroy or heal. The belief that you inspire stems from your delivery, your choice of words, tone of voice, facial expressions, and attitude. Be aware of your communication approach.

### **Not Acknowledging Your Child's Efforts**

Once a month, throughout the course of your youngsters tennis career plan on sitting down and writing a letter stating how proud you are of them. Place it on their bed at night.

It's my bet that most adults could not handle the pressure a serious junior competitor endures day in and day out. Take a few moments to acknowledge how proud you are of their efforts. Thank them for the courage they show as they lay it on the line week after week.

### **Keeping Them on the Tournament Trail during the Process of Fixing a Flawed Stroke**

It takes about four-to-six weeks for a new motor program to override an old one. The success depends greatly on the talent, work ethic, professional advice and daily allotted time spent deprogramming the old stroke while re-wiring the new motor program.

The actual progression works like this. You decide it's best to fix a flawed stroke. So, on week one your child has 90 percent of the old motor program (doing it the old way) and only 10 percent of the new motor program (when they actually feel the new program correctly.)

During week two, the progression slides from still around 70 percent old motor program to 30% new. At three weeks into the new development, your child will perform about 50/50. Now the fun begins. Week four, the new motor program starts to override the old one at only 40 percent old to 60 percent new. By week five, it's at 30 percent old to 70 percent new. By week six, the old motor program is almost eliminated. It shows up about 10 percent of the time as the new improved stroke is programmed to replace it.

Issues arise when you put your child into a competitive situation without giving the new motor program the time it takes to override the old one.

NOTE: Many variables influence the length of time required to successfully change a flawed stroke, such as the athlete's personality profile, hours per week and intensity.

If you put your child into a competitive situation before the six- week replacement phase is complete, you are almost guaranteeing that your child will go back to the old, but flawed "comfortable" stroke. Now guess who just wasted all that money on the lessons to correct the flaw? You!

### **Playing Them Up Too Soon**

In section one, we discussed the different levels of junior competition. Most players should prove themselves in a certain level of competition before jumping to the higher level. I recommend that a child win at least two events in a division before you bump them up to a higher age division. It's a bad idea to bump them up because they can't handle playing their peers. This applies to practice sets as well. Players need to rehearse closing out matches against different styles and levels of players.



*While organizing practice sets, I recommend the Tennis Australia formula: A junior athlete should schedule 30% lower level opponents, 30% equivalent skills, 30% higher level opponents and 10% of their practice matches versus crafty adult players.*

### **Talking at Visual Learners**

Mr. Kolouski says to me, “I’ve explained numerous times to my son, about decreasing the racket face angle approximately 90 degrees. I advised him to rotate his right palm a quarter of a turn. I’ve expounded on the 30 degree lift through the shoulder hinge. I decipher things for hours. I explain everything in great detail, yet my son’s still confused. I feel like I am conversing with a granite wall!”

*Different people have different learning styles or preferences. Getting into your child’s world and understanding how he’s wired is the key. Remember that a parental and coaching blunder is forcing him to enter your world!*

The three preferred learning styles are visual learners, auditory learners and kinesthetic learners. Explaining detail after detail for hours on end to a visual learner is just plain preposterous!

### **Parents Words That Don’t Match Their Actions**

Loving parents with great intentions often sabotage their words of wisdom by saying one thing and doing the other. Asking them to be prepared, timely and organized when you’re not sends mixed messages. Understand that if rules

and laws don't apply to you, don't expect rules and laws to apply to them!

Teaching them not to lie and then lying to your mother-in-law about why you can't make the family Thanksgiving in Cleveland is sending mixed messages. (Ok, I wouldn't necessarily want to spend Thanksgiving in Cleveland either, so you can lie about that one, but not in front of your child.)

### **Ignoring Your Non-Verbal Communication**

In Malcolm Gladwell's book, *Blink*, he shares an interesting insight regarding surgeons who make medical mistakes. The bottom line is that the surgeons with top credentials, but poor bedside manners, are more likely to get sued than are the surgeons with the same credentials, making the same mistake, but with terrific bedside manners.

*A parent or coach with a condescending tone of voice, a disgusted facial expression or even negative body language, is often the trigger that sets your child into a defensive position. Studies show that up to 70 percent of communication is nonverbal.*

We initially believe that we are helping our children by spotting every single problem and bringing it to light. This "tough love" isn't in their best interest. Instead parents, if you want dynamic results, along with a happier child, try adding positive power words to your tennis talks. Examples include: Great attitude; You're so brave; Terrific energy, You're playing fearless; It's so fun watching you perform; You have guts; You motivate me; You look strong out there; I'm so proud of you!

After all, isn't that what you wanted to hear from your folks? Every child needs to hear these positive statements from their parents.

### **Being Arrogant to Lower Ranked Players and Their Parents**

Remember the "wall" the top players had when your child was the newbie? Remember how you felt when the other parents looked right through you?

I challenge you not to make the same mistake they've made. Open your hearts and welcome them. There is a parallel of our attitude towards strangers and our overall happiness. You never know, that new kid just may be your child's doubles partner in a year or two. That new parent may know of a great trainer, coach or academy in the area or information regarding a new tournament. Trust me. The more you give and help others; the more you get back in return.

### **Criticizing Other Players**

I must say, parent's who've never competed in sports are the worst. Come on, you know who you are... Your criticisms of others falsely pumps you up. Yet, in reality, this behavior leaves you ashamed and deflated.

In my opinion, actions speak louder than words. So, what kind of message are you actually sending your child?

***"Promote what you seek versus criticizing others."***

## **Talking about Your Child's Peers**

At tournament sites we often hear parents and inexperienced coaches unknowingly sabotaging their player's upcoming performance by pulling their attention completely away from their performance goals. They do this by talking about the success of their child's peers and opponents.

It's best not to discuss other players lucky draws, their great wins, who's seeded where, other players improved rankings, the past success of the opponent, match outcomes and future ranking speculations. These conversations clutter the players mind with needless distractions and unwanted stress.

## NAVIGATING TOURNAMENT BLUNDERS

At the end of each event, is the beginning of a new period of growth.

***“Junior competition is merely an information gathering mission.”***

### **Being In- Flexible**

One of the most important elements of being a tennis parent lies in your mental and emotional flexibility. Below are a few situational examples:

Example 1: You want your child to be invited into a better clinic but it is filled. Three days later the pro calls and says, “There’s a slot open.”

Example 2: Your child has entered into a local tournament and the start time says 10:00am, you arrive at 9:40am and the tournament director says, “We’re backed up, looks like 11: 30 am or 12:00 pm”

Example 3: A few years later, your child is on an alternate list for a national tournament. Two days before the event, you check the computer and he is in the main draw. Now you have to book your flight and fly to the event by tomorrow.

Example 4: A few months down the road, your daughter wins a Super National Tournament. The USTA calls and offers a wildcard to pro tournament in Florida a few days before the event. You accept the wild card, fly to Florida, prepared for the week and she loses first round... so you fly home that night!

Example 5: Your son is entered into a \$25K pro challenger in Pittsburg playing the qualifying tournament. Only to find out he could have made the main draw into a 50K in Hawaii.

**“If you can’t be flexible, you become irritated ...then irritating!”**

### **Under Valuating the Importance of Life Skills**

Your child needs to develop stroke skills and life skills. Both sets of skills are necessary to progress comfortably through the junior tennis wars.

Chris Langan is best known as the “smartest” man in the United States. My bet is that you’ve never heard of him and you never will. His IQ is off the charts, but you won’t find him impacting the world. Why? It’s because he is so inept and frustrated with his inability to deal with people, he lives a very isolated existence. Is it Chris’s fault? Yes and no. He wasn’t taught social skills as a child. Getting along with people is a tool used to navigate the world. Begin early building your child’s navigational tools on and off the court.

*Start to build relationships with players, families, stringers and tournament directors. Ask your child to write thank you notes to tournament directors after the event. Make friends with the USTA linesmen. You’ll be seeing them year in and year out throughout your child’s junior career.*

### **Neglecting Pre-Match Routines**

Once your child begins to compete in novice events, players should begin to morph into an athletic warrior by prepare their own equipment. This is developing organizational skills such as time management and accountability.

Train them to begin preparing equipment a few days before an event. This includes stringing and re-gripping rackets and

making sure their lucky shorts are in the laundry getting washed.

The night before the event, assist them in packing their racket bags with racquets, towel, grips, extra shoes, shoe laces, a medical kit, water, Gatorade, power bars or fruit, extra socks and shirts, hat or visors, sun block and their tennis bag “reminder” sheet.

### **Refusing To Play Them Down, When It Might Pump Them Up!**

Are you seeking to build your child’s confidence, self-esteem or focus ability? Do you want to provide the crucial experience needed in order to be comfortable playing in tough finals? Playing down to pump them up is a marvelous idea. Winning a title, no matter what size, motivates them more than 20 hours of lessons.

Here’s a wonderful story about how success breeds confidence. I encourage every player, in every level, who is in a rut to apply this approach.

*Vania King is a former junior doubles partner of my step daughter. We had tons of fun working on the art of doubles. Vania is a motivated, persistent and hardworking tennis player. Although Vania failed to win tons of national junior titles growing up; she found tremendous confidence in a far off land. Prior to the summer National Hard Courts, Vania decided to try her luck in the most exotic locations in Asia. Playing the lesser events, she took the road less traveled on the ITF Junior Circuit.*

*Vania found success winning a couple minor ITF events. This sky rocked her self-confidence. It also drew attention from the USTA, which in turn awarded her a hand full of wildcards into major WTA tour events including the U.S. Open. Armed with this new found confidence, Vania won a few rounds in the U.S. Open and by year’s end found*

*herself ranked top 50 in the world on the WTA pro tour. Sometimes playing down can pump them up!*

*Vania King went on to win the 2010 Wimbledon and US Open Women's Doubles titles.*

## **Forgetting You Must Be Present to Win**

***“Only by risking going too far can you find out how far your child can go!”***

“The draws too tough, my Kelly can’t beat those girls!”; “You mean, fly to an event, I hate airports”; “We’d have to stay in a hotel and that costs money”; “We would have to drive for over an hour”; “I’d miss the Neiman Marcus sale”; “The Miami Dolphin game is Sunday!”; “I do a 30 mile bike ride on weekends”...

Champions aren’t born, they are made, remember?

Here’s an actual story, the names have been changed to protect the guilty mom.

*Luke was on the alternate list for the Palm Springs National. His mom says, “There’s no way we’re driving out there. It’s a two hour trek.”*

*I plea, “But Kathy, Luke’s 7 players- out of the main draw and 5 of the other players ahead of him are from back east. They won’t fly out if their player’s not in. Just go! Make a day of it. If he doesn’t get in, watch a few matches, stop at the Cabazon outlet malls; enjoy your family and your time together...”*

*So, they went. Luke got in and he blew through the draw reaching the semifinals. His national ranking jumped 250 points. Luke wasn’t on a national tournament on-site alternate list ever again. From then on, he*



*not only qualifies for all the nationals, but was actually seeded in the lower level events. His confidence shot through the roof. He went on to beat players he had never beaten before. You know the saying, "You must to be present to win!"*

### **Watching Their Matches versus Charting and Video Taping**

Smart training begins with providing valuable feedback to your child's coaches. Charting and videotaping actual matches is one of the best ways to assist your child in progressing at the quickest rate.

Parents keep in mind that the most common learning style is the visual learner. Having your child sit down and review their match performance often provides valuable insight, as well as proof.

Here are a few topics to look for while reviewing the match video: strengths and weaknesses in stroke production, shot selection, dissecting the opponent, movement, emotional and/or lapses in concentration. Trust me, break out the video camera and begin to document one match every tournament and you will be on the road to discovery which leads to improvement.

### **Expecting Your Child to Win Their First Few Big Events**

Remember, back as a kid at Halloween; you and your friends were walking into a haunted house for the first time. (Same analogy from earlier in the book.) You didn't really know what to expect. Your heart was racing, your palms were sweating and you were scared to death, but did your best not to show

it. By the fourth or fifth time running through the same haunted house, it wasn't so scary anymore right?

The same exposure is needed in tournament competition. It's difficult for even the best competitors to compete at their peak performance levels in this heightened state of arousal.

Explain to your child that these first few larger events are just rehearsals. This approach will de-stress your child. As a matter of fact, if your child's young enough, don't even tell them it's a higher level. It only adds unwanted stress.

### **Worrying About Things beyond Your Control**

A sure way to ruin your day and jeopardize your child's success is to worry about issues beyond your control. For instance, complaining about the drive to the event, the lack of quality restaurants around the site, the lack of parking, the draw, the weather, a change in the start time, the official who doesn't pay attention, the "creative line caller", or the other crazy parents. Parental stress unknowingly comes out in their pessimistic pre-match behaviors. This negative vibe influences your child's outlook, attitude and performance.

Agonizing over uncontrollable issues disturbs your peace of mind and torments those around you. Simply put, when a parent is unraveling, the player is sure to follow. Just because you are not talking about your frustrations, your negative energy and anxiety levels can be detected by all those around you. There is a direct link between parental composure and player composure. Your child will look to you for comfort- a freaked out parent is not that comforting!

## OPTIMAL STATE OF MIND BLUNDERS

At crunch time, winners seize the moment by pumping up their adrenaline and inflating their energy. This systematically deflates the opponent's energy. Winning tight matches requires an optimal state of mind.

***“Never outgrow fun.”***

*At all levels of junior competition, matches should be viewed as an information gathering session. The overall objective is improvement. Choosing to focus on match play as “improvement opportunities” rather than “life or death situations” improves the optimal state of mind.*

### **Overlooking Goal Setting**

Goal setting improves the team's state of mind. After an event, plan on setting some goals as you organize their upcoming lessons. Sit down with them to review their completed match logs at an appropriate time. This personal analysis provides their “Blue Print” for the upcoming weeks' worth of lessons and clinics. Being prepared and organized promotes a positive attitude as well as customization of their development.

There are four sides to your youngster's game that needs to be developed. Put in writing the four sides of development and identify a weakness that can be improved upon.

Example:

- 1) Technical: Slice backhand
- 2) Tactical: How to beat a moonball/pusher
- 3) Movement/Fitness: Develop core strength and stability
- 4) Emotional/Focus: Practicing closing out 5-2 leads

## **Outcome Oriented Questions and Negative Remarks**

Asking your child “Did you win?” after each practice match or tournament match is the worst thing you could ask. Champions are performance oriented, not outcome oriented. How can we ask them to focus on simple performance goals, if you are focused only on the outcome?

Focus on saying 5 positive comments for every negative remark. Kids pick up every negative word, condescending tone of voice, upset facial expressions and defensive body language. Try to replace “Did you win?” with “Did you hit your performance goals today?”

## **Focusing Only on Aptitude and Overlooking Attitude**

Think back to the beginning of the book. The two sides that dictate your child’s development is nature (their genetic predisposition or brain type) and nurture. Let’s talk about the nurturing side.

The way you, as parents and coaches, see the world greatly influences your athlete’s view of the world. Positive minded people share a “can do” attitude. Optimism is empowering. Confidence is contagious!

Pessimistic people nurture the blame game. Pessimists often take the victim role. I’ve discovered most negative people don’t see themselves as pessimistic, negative or jaded. They see themselves as being unlucky, or “in reality” and optimistic folks as being “out of touch”.

*Here’s a fun saying: Attitude determines altitude even more so than aptitude. Nurturing optimism is even more important than nurturing strokes. A terrific attitude is enjoyed for a life time, on and off the court.*

## **Assuming Your Teen is Organized and Accountable**

As tennis begins to shift from a recreational sport to the competitive game it's important that all members of the entourage understand their team duties. Drafting an agreement amongst the entourage is a practical way to define each person's responsibilities.

Here is a Sample Agreement:

*Parent agrees to financially support child's tennis career to the amount of X dollars per month, drive them to X number of lessons, clinics, practice sets, tournaments, purchase equipment, provide physical therapy...etc.*

*Child agrees to X numbers of off-court training hours, X-numbers of lessons and clinics, X number of practice sets....etc. If the child doesn't fulfill their requirements, all parties agree chasing the dream is over.*

If your child's actions do not match their words, you may have a normal child. Very few children have what it takes to be an elite national level player.

## **Misunderstanding Choking Under Stress**

From the novice level all the way up to the ATP/WTB professional tour levels there are two opposite emotional failures that often occur under stress: choking and panicking. They are often misdiagnosed by parents, coaches and players.

The first failure that occurs under stress is choking: the process of over thinking. Choking usually begins when the player's mind leaves his or her optimal performance state of mind. Over thinking occurs when your child's brain is entangled in the past or future instead of simply in the present. So how does your child keep their mind from slipping away from their peak performance state of mind?

The answer is employing both between-point and change-over rituals.

Ask your child to play sets and rehearse focusing on exact change-over rituals and between-point rituals. By keeping their brain busy, it can't pull them away from the present task at hand.

### **Misunderstanding Panicking Under Stress**

Panicking is the second most often found emotional breakdown at all levels of the competitive game.

Panicking is the process of not thinking. After a rash of unforced errors a player may slide into an angry emotional state and choose to ignore those very same between point rituals. Their heart rate races and they begin playing fast, reckless, thoughtless tennis. Panicking players miss hit and give away point after point. For more information, refer to Section III, The Mental/Emotional Tennis Components.)

### **Freaking Them Out Before a Final**

Think back to the beginning of this year. Who won the earlier titles? Do you know? Can you remember? Come on, think hard...

Even if your little super star wins this next major event, will anyone remember in a couple of months? Probably not. Will anyone else really care? Not really.

*A common blunder occurs when a child reaches a final. Parents often are to blame for making this one day, this one event, so important. This frequently adds stress and kills any chance of peak performance. I want to remind you that your child performs best when he or she is relaxed. A tennis parent's role is de-stressing their child.*

## **Postponing Happiness**

Good memories are your most valuable possessions.  
Impatience ruins the moment.

Some parents spend their child's whole junior career frustrated, anxious and depressed. You will too, if you dwell only on failures, problems and future concerns. Some parents postpone their happiness, gratitude and love.

I've often heard parents say "I'll smile when she finally wins one!"

## ACCELERATED GROWTH BLUNDERS

Regardless of the comfort level, accelerated growth demands aborting ineffective strokes, strategies or tactics and systematically re-tooling them. Change is a mandatory for growth.

***“Change is the only thing that’s permanent.”***

### **Not Seeing Stumbling Blocks as Stepping Stones**

Here’s a terrific example: a few years back, Molly Scott (former 2006, SCTA #1, Dartmouth College #1 standout) sprained her non-dominant left wrist.

Her initial position was to follow protocol which was no tennis for 4-6 weeks. Molly called saying, “Frank, I have to cancel my training for 4-6 weeks because my left arm is sprained.”

I said, “That’s upsetting, but we needed some time to switch focus anyway. This actually fits into a new developmental plan. We’ll begin to organize your proactive patterns and between point rituals, we’ll develop your one handed slice backhand drop shot and your low, backhand volley. Let’s begin today with a new 4 week crash course on lower body fitness and stamina.” Molly’s voice dropped to this low, quiet depressed tone, “ooohhh....really..aahh...that’s...um....super.”

*Six weeks later Molly beat a top ten player in the nation as she applied her new found slice backhand drop shot to perfection!*



## Perfectionism

Perfectionists are often unwilling to learn and improve because their short comings may be exposed. Their overriding primary concern is to prove that they're always right. They are referred to as "un-coachable." Does this antagonistic defensive behavior hurt their chances of success? You bet, in tennis and in life.

***"Parents and athletes must accept the fact that the road to the top will include failures, painful emotions, obstacles and setbacks, which are inevitable parts of the journey."***

Constructive criticism to a perfectionist isn't seen as a positive step toward a better performance. It threatens to expose their flaws, which is a catastrophic assault on their self-worth. Sadly, they don't want the truth...They want to be correct.

***"The perfectionist will find fault in paradise."***

If you have a perfectionist athlete, spouse or coach, ask them to be open to suggestions, be willing to discuss options and be interested in feedback and teamwork. Maximizing potential at the quickest rate depends on a growth mindset.

***"Success is more of a function of persistence than perfection."***

## **Focusing Only on Strokes**

Here's a statement that should be obvious by now. Knowing how to hit strokes and knowing how to win under stress are different animals.

*The #1 statement I hear daily from concerned tennis parents is "My child's the better player, yet he can't win!"*

The solution lies in the school methodology of teaching. Here's what I mean, throughout every grade students are taught daily to shift their focus from math to science, from English to history, etc. The common blunder in tennis development is only focusing on a singular subject (fundamental stroke production) year after year. The school methodology consistently delivers well rounded young adults. Following that protocol will maximize your child's potential at a quicker rate.

## **Believing Quantity of Court Time is Quality Court Time**

If your child has a reoccurring nightmare of losing to pushers in tournaments, spending 6 hours a day drilling net skimmers back and forth in an academy is not going to help. After tournament matches, it's the parent's responsibility to provide detailed information to the coach. This is done through charting or videotaping of the match. This information exchange customizes the quality of your athlete's lesson and maximizes the quality of each training session.

*It takes an experienced eye to actually spot and analyze your youngsters match tendencies. You will speed up the developmental process by paying a high IQ coach to actually cancel their days' worth of lessons and attend*

*your child's tournament matches. Please don't expect them to work for free. Does the bread winner of your family work for free?*

### **Neglecting the Between Point and Change Over Rituals**

Guess when the critical mental, emotional toughness issues take place? When the ball is going back and forth or between points? Between points.

***“Professionals think about a hand full of thoughts a hundred times in a single match. Juniors think about a hundred different thoughts in a single match!”***

Does your child have a problem with any of the following tennis components? Time management, mistake management, anger management, implementing patterns, dissecting opponents, controlling their heart rate, controlling their emotions, distraction control, quieting their mind, avoiding lapses in concentration, controlling self-condemnation, self-charting and/or controlling nervousness. If you said “yes” to any of these, your child can benefit from rituals. Remember to schedule dress rehearsals. Youngsters have to rehearse these protocols in practice sets before they become comfortable enough to apply them correctly in actual tournament play.

### **Ignoring Their B and C Game Plans**

Spend a few moments to discuss your child's primary and secondary styles of play in matches. Styles include hard hitting baseliners, all court, net rushers and retrievers Set up practice sets for your child against lower level players and ask your

child to rehearse their secondary styles of play. Champions have mastered more than one style.

*My step-daughter, Sarah played her first adult U.S. Open at age 15. In the first round, Sarah's opponent came out with her plan A (hard hitting baseliner). Sarah won the first set 6-4. At the start of the 2nd set, the opponent switched to plan B (net rusher) and Sarah went up 4-1. The opponent then switched to plan C (moonball/retriever), Sarah's least favorite style. Sarah was amazed to see a 30 year old WTA veteran pushed her way to a \$15,000 victory in the 3rd set.*

### **Overlooking the Pain Principle**

Remember the old saying? “If you keep on doing what you’ve always done, you’ll keep on getting what you’ve always got.” Players hit common walls in their development. One of those walls is resisting change.

*If your child view's change, as more painful than losing, they'll continue down the same losing path. It's so painful for some to change a flawed grip, stroke or stance, that they'd rather accept the pain of losing than deal with changing.*

Great things begin to happen when the pain of losing starts to be more powerful than the pain of changing. Once they accept the fact that a change has to be made, they are on their way to the next level. This is where great parenting comes in.

***“For some, a comfortable old – bad habit is less painful than the temporary pain of fixing it.”***

## **Assuming that Tennis Speed is Only Foot Speed**

Tennis specific speed-training requires a combination of foot speed and anticipatory speed.

Heredity plays an important role in your child's muscle type. Parents and coaches can't improve the genetic predisposition of an athlete, but they can nurture both their foot speed and anticipatory speed. The path to better court coverage lies in avoiding hesitation and anticipating situations.

Anticipatory speed is greatly increased by understanding and rehearsing the art of vision control. Here's a sports myth "keep your eye on the ball." I suggest shifting focus from narrow vision (watching an incoming ball) to broad vision. Broad vision is picking up visual clues as the ball travels toward the opponent. (This topic is covered in detail in the Section IV Common Questions and Solution: Parental Accountability.)

## INTELLIGENT TRAINING BLUNDERS

***“If you’ve never faced conflict with your tennis phenom, you’ve never been a great tennis parent.”***

Parents who fully commit to their child’s passion can spend the rest of their life satisfied that they’ve succeeded in the most important job of their lives.

### **Not Having an Entourage**

Youngsters that improve at the quickest rate have a full entourage. This includes private hitters, technical teachers, mental/emotional coaches, off-court trainers and clinics.

Customizing the style of coach to your player is important. Choose wisely because the two leading influences on your athlete are you and the coaches you hire!

### **Being Oblivious to Periodization**

Parents are often so blinded by winning that they unknowingly sabotage their child’s success. This is especially true in the beginner and intermediate levels of competition. Understanding when to train the different elements of your child’s game is called periodization. It’s based on the upcoming tournament schedule.

*Asking your child to bulk up in the gym, run five miles, or to dismantle and fix a flawed stroke a day or two before a big event are samples of poor periodization training. Adding an unfamiliar element the day of a match also falls into this category.*

An essential parental skill is choosing your battles. It is important to understand when to put your foot down and pick a battle. Starting a war right before a scheduled lesson will pull your child into the wrong mental state and surely destroy any hopes of a productive session. It is also a waste of your money. Likewise, choosing to battle the day of a scheduled match is a sure fire way to drain your youngster's emotional batteries and sabotage the actual peak performance you are seeking.

### **Neglecting Smart Work**

Great coaches have the ability to zero in on players weakness long before players or parents even know it exist. High IQ coaches are a bit like a fortune tellers who can read the future. We see mechanical –structural damage the days leading up to an event and we know which components will surely crack under the strains of stressful competition.

If your child has some major holes in their game, please don't continually send them off to competition. The opponent doesn't have to beat your child because they've come to the game broken. That's a little like sending a battleship off to war with structural holes in its hull. That majestic ship's going to sink all by itself.

### **Encouraging “One Set Wonders”**

First of all, I congratulate any juniors that actually play full practice matches. Across the country, most juniors hit for 20 minutes, maybe finish a set and then leave. They become accustom to being “one set wonders!” This is especially true in the intermediate levels of junior tennis.

Winning those tough three set tournament matches require practicing whole matches. Rehearsing the art of closing out full matches versus a single set will improve their mental toughness. If time is of the essence, I recommend that players play 3-sets, starting at 2-2 instead of the typical one set routine. Handling the stress of closing out the set is a big advantage.

***“There is a huge difference between mechanical confidence and competitive confidence.”***

### **Putting Them in the Crowd to Get Ahead of the Crowd?**

In my opinion, group clinics, or academies are terrific for intermediate players seeking repetition, socialization and tons of fun. Although it may be cheaper, large group training isn't always in your athlete's best developmental interest.

I've found that the top players spend about 20 percent of their time in group situations. Top players at an academy usually are sparing or working with a private coach. When is that last time you saw a phenom in a large group standing in line to hit one forehand every five minutes?

***“To get your child ahead of the crowd, why would you put them in the crowd?”***



## **Believing Weekly Lessons are Enough**

I teach two families from Los Angeles. Both families come for 2 hours of private lessons each week. That's where the similarities end.

The parents hold opposing views on how to raise a tennis champion. The Johnsons believe that they need to make their 12 year old Kelli 100 percent self-sufficient. Mrs. Johnson says "It's up to her to do it, I can't force her." As a result, Kelly hits about two hours a week.

Mr. Asari believes that no one gets famous all by themselves. He and his son spend approximately 15 hours on the ball machine, playing practice sets, serving baskets, going for runs, hitting the gym and watching tennis on TV. They both get the same 2 hours' worth of weekly lesson. The critical factor in the formula is not the lesson, but what the parents choose to do weekly around that lesson.

*The parents who see it as their responsibility to actively stay engaged consistently have higher ranked children, all the trophies and all the college scholarship offers.*

## **Going Into Battle Unprepared**

Preparing for a tennis tournament is twofold. First, your child should consistently train properly a month or so before a big event. Secondly, they should have a pre-game set of rituals to assist them in their match preparation.

Hours before a match, Nadal morphs into a different personality. Chris Evert said she wouldn't even call a friend before a match in fear that it may break her concentration. Before each concert, Tom Petty and Taylor Swift say that

they sit quietly alone with his acoustic guitar visualizing and preparing for that night's concert.

Preparing mind, body and soul before a match is a learned behavior. Allowing your son to go wrestle in the grass with the other kids before a big match isn't in his best interest. Allowing your daughter to text 39 friends then fight with her boyfriend leading into a big match isn't in her best interest.

Knowing how and when to turn on the competitor within is critical. Assist your child in finding their own unique game day rituals. After the match is complete, your child can leave it all behind with no regrets.

## SECTION VII

### CUSTOMIZED PLAYER EVALUATION

The Customized Player Evaluation is an in-depth personal assessment of a player's skills and attributes. Many talented athletes leave the game due to a lack of an organized plan and proper mental and emotional development. The aim of this customized evaluation section is to provide the guidance needed to progress in such a challenging individual sport.

The mission of the Customized Player Evaluation is to shine a light on the hidden skill sets required at the competitive levels of the game.

*"Most junior athlete begin their Customized Player Evaluation Package believing they already know all there is to know... After discovery, they realize this evaluation is everything they didn't even realize...they needed to know!"*

## INTRODUCTION: PLAYER EVALUATION FORMS

This custom evaluation is meant to uncover your athlete's strengths, weaknesses and current knowledge of the game. Then, along with your team, use this information to set a plan in motion to discover and destroy weaknesses.

How many tools do you currently carry into a tournament match? Most players list a hand full. After completing this evaluation booklet, you and your player's entourage will uncover hidden tools needed to compete at the higher levels.

### **Step One**

Step one requires the player fill out the following charts and record their personal evaluations by using the number system. The number "1" represents an extreme weakness and the number "10" represents an extreme strength. Simply circle the number that best describes your comfort level. (You may want to make copies of the following charts, logs and /or journals.)

### **Step Two**

Step two requires both the primary parent and the primary coach to circle his or her opinion of your player's confidence and ability level for each topic. We often find that parents, coaches and players have totally different viewpoints when assessing the player's strengths and weaknesses.

### **Step Three**

The third step is to take any topic that either party graded a seven or below and discuss the appropriate path to improvement.

## CULTIVATING LIFE LESSONS

Self-Motivation:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Personal Work Ethic:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Positive Attitude:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Time Management:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Adaptability/Flexibility:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Ability to Handle Adversity:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Ability to Handle Stress:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Courage:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Competitiveness:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Discipline:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Accepting Responsibility:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Self Esteem/Confidence:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Independence:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Perseverance:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Setting Priorities:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Goal Setting:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Sticking to Commitments:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Determination:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Problem Solving Skills:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Discipline:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

List your Top 3 Cultivating Life Lessons issues to solve this year:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Write your Personal Action Plan:

# ORGANIZING YOUR CAREER AND YOUR TEAM

Player/Parent Relationship:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Player/Coach Relationship:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Daily Nutrition/Hydration:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Fun:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Understanding Your Personality:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Understanding Your Body Type:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Organizing Your Game Styles:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Spotting Your Opponent's Style:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Completing Your Daily Planner:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Practice Match Scheduling:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Tournament Scheduling:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Watching Tennis Channel:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

List your Top 3 Organizational issues to focus on this year:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Write your Personal Action Plan:

## OFF COURT TRAINING

Lateral Movement (Side to side):	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Up & Back Movement (Forward & back):	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Aerobic Fitness:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Anaerobic Fitness:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Ability to Accelerate/Decelerate:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Speed/Agility:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Strength (Upper body/core/lower body):	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Body Coordination (Gross motor skills):	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Hand-Eye Coordination (Fine motor skills):	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Flexibility/Stretching:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Anticipatory Speed:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

List your Top 3 Off-Court Training areas to focus on this year:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Write your Personal Action Plan:



# MATCH DAY PREPARATION

Equipment Preparation:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Pre Match Visualization (Quiet Mind):	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Pre Match Stretching (Dynamic):	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Pre Match Warm-Up Routines (Fundamental & secondary shots):	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Pre Match Run:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Pre Match Nutrition/Hydration:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Post-Match Stretching (Static):	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Post-Match Nutrition/Hydration:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Post-Match Logs:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Scouting of Opponent	
<i>Style of Play:</i>	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
<i>Stroke Strengths and Weaknesses:</i>	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
<i>Favorite Patterns:</i>	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
<i>Movement: Strengths and Weaknesses:</i>	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
<i>Frustration Tolerance Level:</i>	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

List your Top 3 Match Day Preparation areas to focus on this year:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Write your Personal Action Plan:

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## ON COURT PHYSICAL (PRIMARY & SECONDARY STROKES)

### Forehands

Topspin Drive:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Topspin Loop/Arch:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Short Angle/Side Door:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Slice:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Lob:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

### Backhands

Topspin Drive:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Topspin Loop/Arch:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Short Angle/Side Door:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Slice:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Lob:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

### Serve

Flat:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Kick:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Slice:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

### Volley

Traditional Punch:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Swing Volley:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Half Volley:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Drop Volley:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## **Lob**

Top Spin Lob: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slice Lob: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Re-Lob: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## **Overhead**

Stationary: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Turn & Run Overhead: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## **Approach Shots**

Serve and Volley: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Chip & Charge: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Drive Approach: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slice Approach: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Drop Approach: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Moonball Approach: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Steal the Volley: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

List your Top 3 On-Court Physical issues to work on this year:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Write your Personal Action Plan:

## ON COURT EMOTIONAL (ISSUES & SOLUTIONS)

Between Point Rituals:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Change Over Rituals:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Mistake Management:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Plan & Implement the Plan:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Designing Proactive Patterns:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Understanding Frustration Tolerance:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Temperament (Emotion Control)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Distraction Control:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Quieting the Mind:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Adapting/Problem Solving:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Controlling Lapses in Concentration:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Controlling Nervousness:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Controlling Self Condemnation:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Controlling “Bad” Anger:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Limiting Unforced Errors:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Handling Cheaters/Gamesmanship:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Mentally Present (Past/Present/Future):	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Mega Point Control:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Mini Mega Point Control:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

List the Top 3 On-Court Mental issues to work on this year:

- 1
- 2.
- 3.

Write your Personal Action Plan:

## ON COURT MENTAL (TACTICS & STRATEGIES)

Stroke Consistency:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Stroke Placement:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Mastering the Spins:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Applying Proper Trajectories:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Harnessing Power:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Utilizing Zonal Tennis (Air and Court):	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Confidence in You're A Game Plan:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Confidence in Your B Game Plan:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Confidence in Your C Game Plan:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Offence/Neutral/Defensive Skills:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Use of Percentage Shot Selection:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
The 4 Short Ball Options:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
The 4 Causes of Errors:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
The 3 Home Bases:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Designing Your Top 7 Patterns:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Implementing Your Top 7 Patterns:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Exposing Strengths:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Hiding Weaknesses:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Self-Charting (Awareness during match):	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Dissecting the Opponent:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Controlling Playing Speeds:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Attacking the One Segment Swing:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Elongating Points: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Beating Hard Hitting Baseliners: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Beating Moonball/Retrievers: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Beating All Court/Net Rushers: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

List your Top 3 On-Court Mental issues to focus on this year:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Write your Personal Action Plan:



## PLAYER RANKING ANALYSIS

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# RANKING GOALS

Ask your athlete to document their (estimated) ranking followed by their future ranking goals. Be sure their future ranking goals are documented in writing. Identifying six month and yearly goals will to help your athlete and their team evaluate and monitor progress.

RANKING GOALS				
Today's Date:				
RANKING GOAL	SECTIONAL	NATIONAL	ITF	ATP/WTB
CURRENT				
6 MONTH				
1 YEAR				

Special Tournaments/Events you wish to qualify for this upcoming year:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

ADVANCED TOURNAMENT MATCH LOG

Event:

Date:

Opponent:

Ranking:

Conditions:

Match Time:

**Pre-Match Preparation:**

For each of the below Pre-Match Preparation Activities, circle the degree of accomplishment: *Didn't Bother*, *Little Effort* or *100% Effort*.

PRE-MATCH PREPARATION ACTIVITIES			
ACTIVITY	DIDN'T BOTHER	LITTLE EFFORT	100% EFFORT
30 Minute Warm Up			
Proper Nutrition			
Hydration			
30 Minute Warm Up			
Stretching			
20 Minute Visualization			
Scouting (Live or Internet)			
Short Run before Check In			

**Pre-Match Performance Goals:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Match Score:**

**Parent/Coach Assistance:**

1. Did your parent and/or coach video the match for video analysis? Yes/No
2. Did your parent and/or coach chart the match? Yes/No
3. Which type of chart was used?
4. Did they de-stress or add stress to your day?

## Post-Match Analysis:

Personally grade your satisfaction of your performance in the following 20 areas: (Worst rated 1 through the best rated 10)

Attitude	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Effort/Fight:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Calmness:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Stroke Mechanics:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Shot Selection:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Focus Control:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Reading Notes (If losing):	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Use of patterns:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Properly Applying Offense, Neutral, Defense:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Limiting unforced Errors:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Spotting Mega Points:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Attaining Performance Goals:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Enjoying the Battle:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Spotting Tendencies (Yours and Theirs):	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Self-Charting:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Between Point Rituals:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Mistake Management:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Anger Management:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Focusing on the Here and Now:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Relaxing Under Stress:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

# Dissecting the Opponent

Identifying your opponent’s strengths, weaknesses and tendencies.

OPPONENT’S SKILL SETS			
SKILL	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESS	TENDENCIES
STROKES			
PATTERNS			
STYLE OF PLAY			
MOVEMENT /FITNESS			
EMOTIONAL FOCUS			

List Top 3 Areas To Improve:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Write your Personal Action Plan:

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**Post-Match Performance (*Player's Perception*)**

These Post-Match Rituals should be completed win or lose- especially if you have won and you are still in the event. Circle the effort that best describes you.

PERFORMANCE			
Scouting Next Opponent:	0% EFFORT	LITTLE EFFORT	100% EFFORT
Proper Nutrition	0% EFFORT	LITTLE EFFORT	100% EFFORT
Hydration	0% EFFORT	LITTLE EFFORT	100% EFFORT
Static Stretching	0% EFFORT	LITTLE EFFORT	100% EFFORT
Attend to Injury (ice/heat)	0% EFFORT	LITTLE EFFORT	100% EFFORT
Access Performance Goals	0% EFFORT	LITTLE EFFORT	100% EFFORT

**Additional Match Notes:**



## INTERMEDIATE TOURNAMENT MATCH LOG

If your athlete isn't quite ready for the Advanced Tournament Match Log, the Intermediate Tournament Match Log provides a simpler version. (Remember, the goal of the below sample match log is to serve as a guide in drafting your athlete's personal match logs.)

***Tournament:***

***Date:***

***Opponent:***

***Ranking:***

SET ONE

Results:

Improvement:

Opponent's Style:

SET TWO

Results:

Improvement:

Opponent's Style:

SET THREE

Results:

Improvement:

Opponent's Style:

List 5 Positive Comments about your performance:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**Additional Notes:**

WEEKLY PLANNER

(Essential Components of World Class Training)

After reading through The Tennis Parent’s Bible, it is evident that a deliberate customized plan consists of every component. Along with your athlete and coach(s) document your athlete’s old weekly plan alongside their new developmental plan.

TRAINING	OLD	NEW
Off Court Gym (Core/ Upper Body)		
Off Court Cardio (Speed/ Stamina)		
Primary Stroke Production		
Secondary Stroke Development		
Pattern Development		
Complete Practice Matches		
Video Analysis		
Hitting with Friends		
Ball Machine		
Serving Basket		
Tournament Play		
Clinic/Academy		
TOTAL		

## TOP SEVEN PATTERNS (PROACTIVE PATTERNS)

List your Top Seven Proactive Patterns (*Favorite Patterns*):

- 1) Top Service Pattern- Deuce Side  
(2 Ball Sequence):

---

---

- 2) Top Service Pattern- Ad Side  
(2 Ball Sequence):

---

---

- 3) Top Service Position & Return Pattern Versus 1st  
Serve:

---

---

- 4) Top Service Return Position & Shot Option Versus  
2<sup>nd</sup> Serve:

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- 5) Top Rally Pattern to Get The Opponent Vulnerable:

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- 6) Top Short Ball Option:

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- 7) Top Net Rushing Pattern:

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## TENNIS BAG “CHEAT SHEET”

The Tennis Bag Cheat Sheet should actually be called a “Reminder Sheet” because it’s perfectly legal to read your pre-match notes during match play.

### HOW TO BEAT: Moonball/Retriever:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### HOW TO BEAT: Hard Hitting Baseliners:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### HOW TO BEAT: Net Rushers:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## **SECTION VIII**

### **TENNIS INDUSTRY INTERVIEWS**

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PROFESSIONAL PLAYER / COACH  
INTERVIEWS

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## **JOHAN KRIEK 2 TIME GRAND SLAM CHAMPION**

ATP 2-Time Grand Slam Champion, Coach and Owner of  
Johan Kriek Tennis Academy

**Frank: You have a very successful tennis academy in Charlotte, North Carolina (USA) - Johan Kriek Tennis Academy. What are the strong points of your academy?**

**Johan:** I am personally on the court every day with my academy coaches and the clients. Each kid sees me every day and that is a rarity in America from someone with my credentials.

I also have created a great team of coaches that are very competent and we work in tandem as not to sow confusion when we coach privately with a kid and when the kid also trains in the academy. We have coaches on our staff from around the world and that gives the academy a very deep tennis base of knowledge to draw from.

Besides our great coaching staff, we fulfill all the necessary needs of each client whether it is coaching, changing a stroke or a grip, fitness needs, nutrition, mental training on court and in a classroom, tournament scheduling and the very important aspect of getting kids ready to apply for a college. Our connections in the college arena are very strong as college tennis is a very important aspect for most of our clients.

**Frank: What would your advice be to parents of a hungry young talent?**

**Johan:** Be supportive but not to the point that the kid feels this is becoming a “job” and their desire starts to disappear. If a kid is under ten years old, let him play other sports as well, soccer comes to mind as a great sport for fitness, endurance



and footwork that complements tennis. Let the kid be a kid, not a tennis professional at age 10!

The more parents have fun with their child and avoids harping on results, at such a young age, the more the kid will want to stay in the game. The nationally ranked kid age 14 trains already perhaps 14 hours minimum a week with goals very different from a much younger child.

As a coach I need to be very aware of the expectations of parents, the child and the pressures that are “at play” in this journey. Unfortunately I see a lot of very good juniors with parents who are completely overbearing and pushing to the point it creates a very bad relationship and conflict rules the day. Even well-meaning parents that are not “sophisticated” enough in the knowledge of the sport and their child's growth can derail a good talent easily...

It is my job to sit with the parents, sometimes many times during a year, especially after tournaments to discuss all the aspects I see that need to be addressed and “educate” the parents about the path forward.

**Frank: What do you feel is the primary role of the tennis parent in today's world?**

**Johan:** The parent or parents have their child 20 hours of the day each day. In the academy I have the child for but a few hours. The role of the parent is vitally important to the tennis success of their child. It is tough enough to just be a parent but to be the parent of a budding tennis star is a whole different level of parenting. A child will always want to please the parents no matter the situation. So the parents must be the child's support system in a very positive nurturing way.

On this subject, “The Tennis Parent's Bible” provides tremendous insight and information on how to deal with so many aspects of this issue. The book should be a must read for any parent or parents out there whether you are just

starting out or have been “in the junior tennis world” for a while now.

**Frank: How important is an “educated” parent in the developmental process?**

**Johan:** This junior tennis journey is a very competitive world. Parents will see things happening on and off the court they never dreamed of seeing... Competition brings out a tremendous amount of joy when a kid wins but remember, there is but only one winner in a tournament! A kid will lose a lot, so get used to it. Disappointment and frustration is an everyday thing so how a parent deals with it and how a kid reacts to losing is where an “educated” parent has a huge impact on the mental well-being of their tennis prodigy.

It is so frustrating for me to see a well-meaning “uneducated” parent interrogate their kid right after they lost a match. The parent delves into the reasons why he or she lost and asking them they why did you not do this or that etc. ...I see it all the time! The poor kid is already devastated from his loss and comes to the parent for support, but the parent makes it ten times worse. Parents should offer a safe haven for the child. There is a time and a place for everything. An educated tennis parent will know based on his or her child's reaction after the loss whether they can talk about the match or whether they should just grab some lunch...

**Frank: What’s your recommendation to coaches around the world regarding the synergy of the player- parent-coach entourage?**

**Johan:** Coaches must understand that the parent is a very important part of this “triangle.” Ignoring this is a recipe for disaster. Without proper communication between the coach, parents and the player, sometimes together, unrealistic expectations may arise and lead to unnecessary conflict and

stress for everybody involved. A smart coach will know parents and their child very well and this is the only way to continue on a healthy path through this rough and tumble world of junior tennis. And this applies to every sport, not just tennis!

Not a week goes by where I do not sit with a set of parents and discuss their child. Sometimes it requires face to face discussions but many times it is a phone call or an email. Communication is KEY!

**Frank: Let's go back to your junior years. What were the motivational forces that propelled you to stardom? Why couldn't you just be another normal kid?**

**Johan:** I guess I was normal or so I thought... Looking back, I was a very gifted athlete and exceptionally competitive by nature- I hated losing more than anything! Down deep I believed I could win. My internal drive to be “the best I could be” propelled me forward...

**Frank: Back in the late 1970's, which developmental components did you or did not focus on?**

**Johan:** I was always a very natural ball striker. The technical components of my game were very sound, but I knew I needed the “exposure” to tougher opponents to expose and improve my weaknesses. So at the age of 17, I went to Austria to improve my match competitiveness. I trained on clay and played set after set and multiple tournaments. Although I got wiped most of the time, I was steadily improving.

**Frank: If you had a “do-over”, what would you have developed differently?**

**Johan:** Looking back, the element most lacking in my game was the mental component. Unfortunately, during my youth developmental phase, the mental components of tennis were not specialized. Most definitely, focusing on the mental application of tennis would be my “do-over” by far!

**Frank: How did being South African effect your breakthrough at the International level?**

**Johan:** Being from South-Africa was not easy. The South African political issues often blocked my participation in tournaments, but fortunately, I persevered and never let politics affect my desire to play tennis. I eventually took American citizenship which cleared my path to play wherever I wanted to play.

**Frank: Can you share some incredible memories from the ATP days?**

**Johan:** I have amazing memories from my days on the ATP tour. Some of the most memorable memories include: the first ATP tournament John McEnroe won was against me in Hartford CT., beating Stefan Edberg in 5 sets at Wimbledon, after being down 2 sets to love; winning my first ATP event in Sarasota Florida...But my most incredibly awesome memories are winning my first major in Australia in 1981 and then again in 1982! It was so farfetched that I still can't believe that I won two Grand Slams back to back!

Even after my Grand Slam wins, unforgettable ATP memories continued. For instance beating John McEnroe, as he held the #1 player in the world ranking, a few weeks after my second Australian Open win was fantastic. My ATP

career has left indelible memories- I could tell stories forever...

**Frank: How did you recover after a tough loss on the ATP tour?**

**Johan:** I once had Borg 2 sets to love in the semis of the '80 US Open and McEnroe 2 sets to 1 in the quarters of “Wimby” and lost ...it happens. I had my share of bad losses but I chose to not let them get me down for long periods of time. I actually took the negatives aspects of the losses and turned them into a positive driving force. This is because I knew I “had” the guy that I lost to and the loss forced me to work harder to beat him the next time.

After about 3 years on the tour, I rarely lost to a guy more than once in a row.

I believe growth comes from losses. One has to learn from losses and figure “stuff out” in order to improve. Once the same “pressure points” or games arrive you're more equipped to handle the situation.

**Frank: How did you take such an emotional hit and recover so well?**

**Johan:** I ended up winning two Aussie Opens after some tough losses. Tournament competition is a grind man... It's not easy but once you have battled through a couple of very “tough” matches, you begin to become more familiar with the experience and learn to develop the proper protocol in handling the experience.

It is still hard, but once you have experienced hard fought matches, for months or years, they become easier to deal with and “accepted” as part of the game.

**Johan Kriek Tennis Academy**

**Website:** [www.johankriektennis.com](http://www.johankriektennis.com)

**Email:** [Johan@johankriektennis.com](mailto:Johan@johankriektennis.com)

**Twitter:** @johankriek

## **NICK SAVIANO WTA PROFESSIONAL COACH**

Current WTA Coach of Sloane Stephens, Owner of Saviano High Performance Tennis and Author

**Frank: What is your philosophy in regards to educating tennis parents?**

**Nick:** First of all, there is no “one size fits all” approach to parenting an athlete or educating the parents. Tennis parent education greatly depends on factors such as age, gender, and travel requirements. There are so many roles of the tennis parent and too many variables to generalize but there are fundamental principles applicable across the board.

**Frank: What do you feel is the primary role of the parents?**

**Nick:** As there are developmental stages for players, there are maturation stages for parents throughout the child's developmental process. The primary role is to use the game of tennis to teach life skills and values.

**Frank: Can you share your thoughts on the parental-coach relationship?**

**Nick:** The parents should plan on taking an active role in their child's development. If you're a tennis parent, there always has to be a healthy dose of skepticism along with trust in your child's coach. The parents should verify the coaches' actions by monitoring what's going on and make sure that the coach is espousing the life principles that are consistent with the parents.

**Frank: How important is the parent in the process?**

**Nick:** In the early stages, besides the athlete, the parents are the most important members of the team. They are the most important people in the world to that child in most normal cases. Therefore they are a critical part of the developmental team. As such, the coach needs to be committed to be working with them for the benefit of the child.

**Frank: What is your recommendation to coaches regarding the synergy of the player-parent-coach entourage?**

**Nick:** A wise coach (unless there's mitigating circumstances) would look to involve the parents so that everyone is on the same page. Parents should instill those fundamental life skills that need to be taught to the player in order for them to achieve the tennis skills at the highest level and at the healthiest levels.

**Frank: What is the major factor in organizing a tennis parent's level of involvement?**

**Nick:** The ideal role of the tennis parent is predicated on the quality of the available coaches. There are so many variables regarding the coach that each individual situation is unique and therefore establishing the optimal developmental team will vary slightly depending on the situation.

**Nick Saviano**

**Email:** [nick@savianotennis.com](mailto:nick@savianotennis.com)

[www.savianotennis.com](http://www.savianotennis.com)

**Academy:** Saviano High Performance Tennis



## **SAM SUMYK WTA PROFESSIONAL COACH**

WTA Professional Coach (Coach of WTA Victoria Azarenka; Eugenie Bouchard and others.)

The following interview with Sam Sumyk was taken while Sam was coaching #1 ranked on the WTA tour Victoria Azarenka.

### **Your Questions Answered by Sam Sumyk**

**Frank: What is the difference between nationally ranked juniors and the challenger level professionals?**

**Sam:** Playing challengers is a step up- a higher level because you are playing in a professional environment. You are competing with players with a pro mentality and pro preparation. It is a very difficult to play through the challenger levels and win consistently.

**Frank: What is the difference between the challenger level professionals and a player in the top 50?**

**Sam:** Almost everything...you now are amongst the elite players that work very hard on and off the court every day. It is their job/career and much more is on the line. A top fifty player is a professional with increased professional demands- all details matter.

**Frank: Do professionals use between point & changeover rituals and routines?**

**Sam:** Yes of course...some rituals or routines are learned some are more unconscious.

**Frank: Are pre-match routines important?**

**Sam:** Yes ...players use pre-match routines to get into their comfort zone before battles.

**Frank: Do you believe playing doubles is an important component to developing a singles career?**

**Sam:** Yes. Begin playing dubs (doubles) at an early age and you'll see the benefit later on in your career...and its fun. It could be more productive to play the game of doubles with all its unique situations that dubs provide rather than just a training routine to work on those exact game situations...and once again more fun and exciting.

**Frank: What do top players do about injuries? Is there anything that top players can do to help prevent injuries?**

**Sam:** The best way is to prevent injuries is to have a very professional approach to your training and health...the best players always remember to take care of their body. Recovery, treatment and nutrition are as important as fitness and work on the tennis court. Taking care of your body is a big part of your training schedule. The best players know that their best sponsor is their body. They also work closely with their physio and fitness trainer on preventing injuries...like correcting body posture or/and movement.

**Frank: Does Vika have A, B and C plans she uses in match play as needed?**

**Sam:** Before a match, Vika and I will always come up with a game plan...at least something to start the match with... If it works then great, otherwise, she'll need to make adjustment. Then it becomes all about adaptations. A good way to transition into those changes during match play without

freaking out is to be sure your training regime develops a large shots selection repertoire ...so when the time comes you can count on all your shots.

**Frank: Do top players get nervous before matches? How best do the professional players work through nervousness?**

**Sam:** Yes, of course they do...after all its human nature and as far as I know they are talented human being. My opinion is the best way to deal with your emotions is to not fear them and not lie to yourself about them...so then it becomes easier for you to take action.

**Frank: How importance is it for players to have a supportive entourage? Coach, hitter, trainer, nutritionist, massage therapist, etc.?**

**Sam:** I think that at the top level, a player can't do it without a team around him/her. A good surrounding is necessary to reach higher levels.

**Frank: Do you try and keep negative influences away from your players during tournament play?**

**Sam:** Not really. My job is to make sure my player is in the best frame of mind they can be...but that doesn't mean I have to be a control freak. I believe that if the player is old enough and responsible enough (especially if the player is ambitious enough) they should be able to figure out what he/she needs to be prepared for competition. The best players know what to do.

**Frank: What is your typical schedule for tournaments play? Do you suggest so many weeks on and so many weeks off?**

**Sam:** Victoria is playing around 19/20 tournaments a year...some are mandatory, so we can't go around them. Usually we try to define her tournaments schedule around her weeks off...and not the other way around. We feel that time off to rest or train is as important as competition weeks. Of course it is not easy to set up an ideal schedule...there are always changes.

**Frank: How many weeks a year are you on the road?**

**Sam:** A lot...through the year, I might spend one to two months at home. This year was even less because of the Olympics.

**Frank: Do you review match videos? Why or why not?**

**Sam:** I personally watch a lot of tennis videos, anything from training, to matches or opponents ...but strangely I don't watch Vika's matches in video...It's rare when I do it. I watch all the other videos because I feel it helps me in my job...it helps me to do a better job. Usually I'm looking for very specific things and I feel the video is great tool to identify details.

**Frank: Do you believe proper nutrition is essential for success?**

**Sam:** Yes nutrition is a very important component to success ...it is as important as your training schedule- it is part of the training schedule. You want to put the right fuel in your engine/body...we all know that a proper nutrition helps performance.

**Frank: Is Vika's tournament nutrition regime the same as her off tournament nutrition regime?**

**Sam:** No, Vika's competition and off competition nutrition differ. For example...during competition she'll eat more carbs. Vika is a professional and I don't have to worry about her off competition nutrition...she's really on top of it.

**Frank: How do you motivate Vika to continue to improve and work as hard as she can?**

**Sam:** My position is easy...I don't need to do anything to keep her motivated. She has plenty of that in her mind and body.

**Frank: Does Vika like you to come on court during match play- when allowed?**

**Sam:** She doesn't use that rule often...maybe once a year. Last time I went on the court was during Miami 2012. We believe that she has to find solutions by herself. That is the best approach to have for mid or long term player development. Also I believe that if I do a good job as a coach, she shouldn't need me during matches.

**Sam Sumyk**

**[Sansumyk@yahoo.com](mailto:Sansumyk@yahoo.com)**

## **STEVIE JOHNSON ATP PROFESSIONAL**

Stevie Johnson was a top US National Junior, 2 Time Singles CIF Champion and 4 Time Team CIF Champion at D-I University of Southern California (USC) and currently a top 30 ATP Pro tour player.

**Frank: What qualities should a parent look for when hiring a coach or academy?**

**Stevie:** The coach has to truly care about the student and sincerely look for what's best for the student in both tennis and life. I feel it's important to seek a positive learning atmosphere where both tennis skills and character skills are continually emphasized.

**Frank: Looking back on your illustrious junior career, what do you attribute your success?**

**Stevie:** Even though I was #1 in the 12's and 14's, that style of game wouldn't take me to the top in college or in the pros. I had to refocus my development in the 16's and 18's. I was a bit lazy with my off-court training early on and relied on my talent and strong competitive nature, but to continue to grow and improve, I had to make fitness a priority. Honestly, I don't even remember my 12 and under trophies.

**Frank: It sounds like focusing on improvement versus tournament wins/rankings is a theme of yours. Why?**

**Stevie:** In the younger divisions you can win with a limited moonball game because the rest of the field isn't fully developed. This winning tactic is not successful in the older

divisions. I really don't see pushers in the pros. The professional athletes attack. I believe it's important for the parents and players to be "ok" losing while developing the whole game. Just being satisfied with a limited game that wins to at the lower levels will limit your career. I recommend seeking weekly improvement versus having to always win.

**Frank: When should parents, players and coaches begin to develop the mental and emotional components of the game?**

**Stevie:** I think it's a maturity level not a certain age. Different people allow their mood to affect their performance more than others. If they struggle with crazy emotional ups and downs, they should focus on improving their emotional stability. The key is to develop and continually improve every component so the player can stay engaged and competitive in every circumstance.

**Frank: What's the primary differences between playing national level juniors and D-1, NCAA ball?**

**Stevie:** If you choose the right college coach and program, there's a heightened level of dedication, developmental structure, and focused off-court training. Coaches, teammates and even the international opponents pushes each other to train harder.

**Frank: What's the primary differences between NCAA tennis and ATP pro ball?**

**Stevie:** It's not so much strokes but the addition of all the seemingly smaller intangibles. The mental and emotional components are better. They include longer-deeper focus and competitiveness. They don't give away any free points and the athletes physical, mental and emotional endurance is stronger day in-day out.

**Frank: I've known you and your folks forever but from your side, what makes your folks such great tennis parents?**

**Stevie:** Balance! On court, my father was the coach. Off-court, he was just my dad. After matches, my dad didn't banter for 30 minutes about the performance. My mom played tennis as well so she added great perspective.

**Frank: Can you share a few words of wisdom for the parents, athletes and coaches reading this book?**

**Stevie:** Have fun with the development of your game. Remember even though it feels like "life or death" at the moment, the wins-losses in the 10's-14 don't mean much. It's a blessing to play so laugh and enjoy the process.



## **SAM QUERREY ATP PROFESSIONAL**

(The following interview was taken in 2010 and presented in the first edition of The Tennis Parent's Bible.)

I coached Sam in his early teens. I've witnessed him play in SCTA Open junior events, Easter Bowls, Orange Bowls, U.S. Open Juniors and now ATP tour success. The Secret weapon of the "Samurai" is his laid back, calmness on court. Experts call this frustration tolerance levels or mental toughness. (Sam was given the nickname the "Samurai" by his fans on the ATP tour)

Sam has a monster serve and a crushing forehand, but so do thousands of other young hopefuls. In my opinion, it's always been Sam's mental/emotional ability to control the same stress that most juniors let control them. In 2006, Sam signed a letter of intent to play college tennis for USC. He played a few pro challengers, found success and decided to give the Pro Tour a try. Once signed with SFX Sports Management, Sam made a major change. For the first time, he viewed tennis as his job. He committed. He changed his work ethic and great things began to happen.

He holds the ATP record for 10 straight aces in a win over James Blake. He won his first major title in 2008 at The Tennis Channel Open in Las Vegas. He has since won numerous titles on the ATP pro tour. In Late December, leading into the Australian Open, Sam spent the day with 10 of my nationally ranked junior players. In my opinion, the most effective learning system for most teenage boys is visual learning. So, I took them to meet Sam at UCLA. The boys watched Sam first hit with Vince Spadea (Ranked much lower than Sam on the ATP tour.)

They warmed up for about 15 minutes, and then played three great sets. Sam then played a fourth set with Chase Buchanan

(USTA boys 18's #1 nationally and an Ohio State standout.)  
Then, he ran the UCLA stadium bleachers for a half an hour.

### **Lessons Learned:**

The First Lesson- Sam warmed up quickly, played four straight sets then ran the bleachers. When was the last time your future champion did that?

The Second Lesson- The ranking and levels of the sparring partners didn't affect the quality of the session. Sam and his parents didn't say "No,no,no, we're not hitting with someone ranked 45 spots below us or with some junior!" The focus was on meeting his performance goals.

Most uneducated juniors and their parents avoid valuable practice sessions because they believe their opponent wasn't worthy of their time. The Samurai is smart and classy. He sparred with a top junior because it was beneficial to both of them. Sam was more than gracious as he answered all the players' questions, hung out with them and then went to lunch with them. It was a very memorial experience for the young players.

### **Frank: What's the major difference between playing in the juniors and the pros?**

**Sam:** In juniors you can lose focus, drop serve but then break back and still win. You can have a bad day and get away with it. In the pros, they put their foot down (play tighter with their lead) and don't let you back in!

### **Frank: What steps did you take to become a Pro?**

**Sam:** I played national level tennis growing up, but I didn't commit to being a pro until I was 18. After I won an ATP

Pro Challenger, I changed everything. I used to mess around a bit until then.

**Frank: What racquet and strings do you use?**

**Sam:** I've been with Prince since I was 14. These are the 03 racquets. They are slightly custom weighted. The string is Luxilon 60 lbs. and Babolat gut at 64lbs.

**Frank: Do you modify tensions?**

**Sam:** Yah! Depending on the elements and court surface. I'll lower or raise the tension accordingly.

**Frank: Tell us about your on-court training sessions?**

**Sam:** I like to play two hours of focused tennis. You don't need to play four hours straight with a slow warm up and messing around. When I'm home I may do two sessions a day, but on tour it depends on court availability and how tough my matches are...

**Frank: How about your off-court training?**

**Sam:** It also depends on if I'm at a tournament or not. I do a lot of running, short sprints, squats, resistive bands, fly's...I don't do a lot of heavy weight lifting. My off- court training is about 1.5 hours per session.

**Frank: What are your eating habits?**

**Sam:** I don't have a strict diet. I don't eat a lot of sugar though. This week, I've been having bagels, waffles and eggs for breakfast, sandwiches for lunch, steak, fish or chicken for

dinner. On match days, I like pasta. During matches I'll eat a banana and I mix Gatorade with water.

**Frank: Are you finicky about sleep and rest?**

**Sam:** I need 8-9 hours a night. If I don't get that much rest I get a sore throat. I'm not a nap guy. Mainly because I wear contacts and I'm too lazy to take them out. At home, I play golf and hang out with friends. On tour, I usually find something to do.

**Frank: Tell us about your pre-match routines?**

**Sam:** After my warm up, I spend time listening to my i-Pod, I re-wrap my racquets and then I ride the bike to get loose. Pre-match routines vary on the tour. The Spanish guys might sprint a mile and then wet down their hair. It's up to you to find your routine.

**Frank: What tournaments do you like to play?**

**Sam:** If there is an event in the U.S., I prefer that one. I get to play on center court. It's a blast! The fans are supporting you. I like hard courts and playing in the altitude. Clay is ok. Most guys don't like grass until they get a bit older. Pete Sampras lost in his first two Wimbledon's first round.

**Frank: Do you have set between point rituals?**

**Sam:** Absolutely! I really focus on slowing down. Everyone's different, but if I'm playing poorly and losing it's because I'm rushing. I try to slow down and focus on structuring the next point. Things like, where I'm going to serve...etc. Playing at my pace is key!

**Frank: How do you deal with common tennis injuries?**

**Sam:** Well, I wear these ankle braces because I sprained my ankle in 2007. The heat sleeve on my arm is because I had tennis elbow. It's preventative. I also go to the trainer when I'm on tour to get stretched and a massaged daily. It's important to get things worked on.

**Frank: In matches, what's your A plan and your B plan?**

**Sam:** My A plan is pretty simple. I bomb the serve and look to jump on a forehand. My B plans varies! Sometimes it's patience, sometimes its change the spin, speed, trajectory, and sometimes its serve & volley. I have multiple B plans. It's really about problem solving and adapting.

**Frank: How do you deal with nervousness?**

**Sam:** Sometimes better than others. In the 08 US Open, I was in the 4th set against Rafael Nadal. I was so nervous, the crowd was going nuts and my body was getting the chills. I had a bunch of break points. I adapted by trying to still hit hard but deep, down the middle. Sometimes it's too difficult to play. You have to fight through it. It's good to be nervous. It means you care. To beat the best guys you have to fight through nervousness.

**Frank: What do you work on during the off season?**

**Sam:** Well, I came off the tour around Oct 25th. I didn't hit serves for almost six weeks. Today was the first time I went all out 100 percent on my serves. The first week back I just hit groundies. I focused on my timing and movement. I've been really focusing on my backhand, building my loop, my short angle and slice. I've also been working on spotting the

short offensive ball. I'm trying to recognize it earlier. Roger Federer's the best at that.

**Frank: How expensive it to travel and play around the world?**

**Sam:** Well in 2008, I play 25-30 weeks with ATP tour events, then Davis cup and exhibitions. My travel and meal expenses were well over \$100,000.00. Luckily, at this level, the ATP tour picks up the hotel bill at events.

I also have my coaching fees and their meals, air travel and hotel expenses. Coaches of top 20 players earn around \$100,000.00. It's not like pro basketball where the franchise pays for the coach. It comes out of the player's pocket.

At the top level, tournaments in the US provide a guarantee of around \$50,000, plus 2 round trip tickets and an extra hotel room for the coach. For overseas travel, I have a travel agent. We collect points for miles and I have my coach fly economy. The tickets to the Australian Open were \$8,000.00!

## COLLEGE COACH INTERVIEWS

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**PETER SMITH MEN'S HEAD COACH**  
**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**

USC Men's Tennis Head Coach and owner of Southern California Tennis Academy.

Peter Smith is the parent of a professional men's Challenger Champion, National Champions, a National Champion himself and the award winning NCAA men's tennis coach at USC. Let's take a glimpse into his words of wisdom.

**Frank: What is your take regarding all your tennis related success?**

**Peter:** I approach tennis differently. I view tennis as a vehicle for life improvement. I would like juniors to view the sport as a life enriching opportunity. It would be optimal for juniors to ask themselves, "How can tennis make my life better... as a person."

I've met many professionals who are unhappy and yet the rest of the world deems them a success. Though I'd love to see one of my players win Wimbledon, I'd rather have my players become great people. Tennis is one of the toughest sports because athletes have to do so much on their own, but as a result, tremendous life lessons are learned through the sport.

**Frank: What do you feel is the role of the tennis parent in the developmental process?**

**Peter:** It is multifunctional. The tennis parent should be a leader but it's difficult when they don't know the path. Being a parent is much harder than being a college coach. Becoming



educated about the tennis developmental process is the primary role of a tennis parent. But the key to successful player parent communication are parents with the right amount of patience.

I've got 29 years of experience working with parents of top athletes. Interestingly, the parents that I have had minimal contact with are the parents of the best players. Steve Johnson Sr. never called me once... I called him all the time and we had the best conversations.

**Frank: What are some of the re-occurring blunders you see parents make?**

**Peter:** The hard part of being a parent is watching their junior fail and allowing them to fail (In the right setting...) Learning through their failures is often the best lesson for the athlete but very tough for a parent.

**Frank: Do you prefer a single coach or an entourage of coaches in developing a player?**

**Peter:** It takes a village to raise a champion. I've got trusted pros who come in and snap my kids back in line.

**Frank: Do you prefer athletes attend home school/independent study or regular school?**

**Peter:** Isolation is just not good. Patrick Rafter is making all the Tennis Australia players go to school. Look who's successful right now Querrey, Johnson, Esner, Sox. They all went to high school. Life starts at 18...so preparing for life is important.

**Frank: What's your recommendation to coaches regarding the synergy with players and parent?**

**Peter:** It's a tough one... Coaches have to make a living and their good decisions aren't often popular. It's a dance sometimes between doing what the parent wants versus doing what the athlete wants. Here's a fact: What wins in the 12's isn't going to necessarily win in the 18's... What wins in college won't necessarily win in the pros...

I believe in teaching every kid the full tool box of strokes. Some kids are naturally passive and like/need to be pushed. Some are natural dare devils. Each player parent relationship is unique and dependent on the player's goals.

**Frank: How will high performance tennis help with their college placement?**

**Peter:** High performance tennis can absolutely open doors for players. Tennis gives athletes access to great universities. None of this year's USC men team would have been accepted into such a prestigious school without tennis. Scholarships are a bonus.

**Frank: Do you agree that it's often better to get a partial or no scholarship at a school with a high IQ coach versus a full ride with a lesser coach?**

**Peter:** Here's what I tell my USC players, treat the tennis experience as a 3 hour a day class minimum. We've all had a teacher who made the class fun. The college coach is the most important part of the decision. It's a marriage.

**Frank: Do you have any special advice for incoming freshmen?**

**Peter:** Ninety percent of the freshman who don't play as a freshman... never get the opportunity to play. So it's important to research the right school.

**Frank: Should the athlete play US Nationals or ITF (International Tennis Federation) events?**

**Peter:** I believe in playing both US and ITF tournaments, but first and foremost, every athlete should focus on their current stage of development. They should look to be successful in their city tournaments, then sectional, then regional, then nationals etc. - a stepping stones approach to development. Of course, there are exceptions to the rule.

**Frank: Organizing a junior's weekly schedule is part of the tennis parent job description. Can you share with the readers your USC weekly schedule?**

**Peter:** At the start of the season, players wake up early for a 7:00 am off-court tennis specific training session, followed by a private lesson, 2 classes, lunch, then a full team practice, dinner, night class or study hall. The goal is to be done by 9:00 p.m. We try to make it enjoyable

**Frank: When do you suggest juniors begin to develop their secondary strokes and their mental or even emotional components of the game?**

**Peter:** As early as possible. Young children are able to absorb a lot of information. They need private lessons. I taught my

children to volley first, knowing that they'll be pounding a million ground strokes later. It's challenging to teach a late teenager how to volley. The best players I have coached at USC came in their freshman year with a complete game.

**Peter Smith- Southern California Tennis Academy**

**Website: [sctennisacademy.com](http://sctennisacademy.com)**

**Phone: (562) 704-2241**

**Email: [brittnie@sctennisacademy.com](mailto:brittnie@sctennisacademy.com)**

**COLIN FOSTER WOMEN'S HEAD COACH  
WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY**

**Frank: What's new and exciting in the world of college tennis?**

**Colin:** The biggest change this year is new leadership at the ITA (Intercollegiate Tennis Association). After a long and distinguished career, David Benjamin retired and new CEO Tim Russell has taken over and brought in a new team. They have ambitious plans not only to help college tennis survive in the uncertain collegiate athletics atmosphere, but to help it thrive on campuses and in communities.

Additionally, the format change that was much debated has been passed. Starting this year all Division 1 matches will begin with three doubles sets (to six), followed by six singles matches (best of three sets). No-Ad scoring will be used for doubles and singles. There were compelling arguments from those in favor of and opposed to this change, but the new leadership team at the ITA, and I agree, feel strongly this change makes our product more fan-friendly and will help create better opportunities for our sport to be most successful going forward.

**Frank: What's your opinion of the current state of US junior tennis versus ITF junior tennis?**

**Colin:** I don't buy into the notion that Americans are doing anything wrong to not churn out professionals at the rate we once did. There are tournaments, facilities, coaches, and opportunities growing all over the world and it's natural that the landscape at the top of the game would reflect that. I certainly see that when I'm recruiting at the junior level.

There are many strong American juniors, young and old, boy and girl, playing some serious ball both at the ITF events and in the USTA events.

With online school becoming so prevalent it's easier for these American juniors to play more internationally and gain that experience of "the grind" that is part of being a professional. It will never be like the glory days of the 80s and 90s but it's unrealistic to expect that and not fair to put that type of pressure on these juniors. There is a lot of excitement over the upcoming batch of young male players just now turning pro. With there being a strong group (at least six) showing serious promise these guys (and some girls that are working their way toward the top of the junior ranks) will be able to share a lot of the pressure and expectations and no one individual will feel "the weight of the (tennis) world" on their shoulders.

**Frank: What are some of the key differences between the men's & ladies scholarship requirements and experiences in regards to NCAA tennis?**

**Colin:** Firstly the biggest difference is that, at the Division 1 level, men have a maximum of 4.5 scholarship (to be split amongst as many players as the coach decides) and the women have a maximum of 8 scholarships, to be given at full scholarships to 8 players (can't be divided amongst more than 8 players.)

On the recruiting side this makes the men's side much more complicated. If a family is shopping around for the biggest scholarship they may find a weaker program where their son can play higher in the lineup, but this might not be the best experience for the player. If they go to a team where they'll start lower in the lineup they may be on less money (at least

initially) but they may have a more rewarding experience on a more competitive team. Good students can also look for academic scholarships to help.

On the women's side it is a bit more straightforward, if a coach offers a player a scholarship that means he/she expects the player to be in their top 8 and compete for lineup spots. Oftentimes players will choose the best (highest ranked) school they can get a scholarship at and sometimes that leads to riding the bench and a disappointing experience. Men's and women's tennis often have the highest transfer rate in NCAA sports, much of this can be attributed to players not being realistic enough about their playing chances at a school and going to a program that is too strong for them...and not doing enough homework about what type of program the coach runs.

**Frank: Can you briefly share your team's weekly practice, training & match schedule as well as your annual schedule?**

**Colin:** In season we are usually off on Monday after competition. Players may see our athletic trainer to treat any injuries/soreness from the weekend. Tuesday/Thursday we usually practice in smaller groups to give players more individual attention (with one of those days often having a heavy doubles emphasis).

On Wednesday we have team practice and use the group to push each other physically and mentally with a lot of consistency drills and competition (often finishing with at least one set). Friday is also a team practice where we'll play some doubles to stay sharp going into the weekend and then tailor the second half of practice to whatever each individual

needs so that they are feeling their best going in to the weekend.

On Saturday and Sunday we usually have matches. Workout-wise, we do some type of on-court fitness and agility almost every day (sprints, footwork ladder, med ball, etc.). We do Pilates once or twice/week and lift once/week during the spring season. In the fall when we aren't competing as often we lift a bit more (twice/week) and do a bit more endurance training, sprint/bike intervals, swimming. We try to vary our workouts to keep the season from becoming monotonous and we listen to our players to see what they like and don't like.

Lastly, injury prevention is always our #1 priority. If a player is uncomfortable with a drill/exercise/etc. from an injury standpoint we are very careful to make sure they are doing the correct technique and if they are still uncomfortable we find a different exercise for them to do.

Annually, we play 4-5 tournaments in the fall. Some are "bracket" style, others are round robin. Ideally our players get 12-15 singles matches (and a similar amount of doubles) in the fall season. In the spring we play 22-25 dual matches, followed by our conference and NCAA tournaments. Most of our competition is regional but we make sure to schedule some trips to different parts of the country as that is an important part of the college experience for our players. We also schedule in such a way to give our team, and individuals on our team, opportunities to get ranked as high as possible.

**Frank: I've found that most juniors spent approximately 90% of their developmental time grooving fundamentals. When do you suggest they begin to add off-court tennis**



**specific training, or begin to look deeper into the development of the mental or emotional components?**

**Colin:** I think it's so important for players to be developed in all areas of their game. I often see players come to college and they have the fighting spirit but they don't truly understand how to compete. They have let-down's or loose moments in "obvious" moments (i.e. up 5-3) or get angry and play 8-10 minutes of poor tennis when it could have been limited to a few points or a game.

Additionally they haven't spent any time on "specialty" shots, the type of shots that come up maybe once or twice a match but can be momentum swing type points. A low bouncing overhead that you need to duck down a bit and abbreviate the motion. When to play (and how to play) effective drop shots...and how to reply against a good drop shot, etc. Likewise, footwork needs to be addressed earlier. Players are coming in at a good fitness level but it's important to be proficient and efficient with their movement and that isn't always the case for players as they progress through juniors.

**Frank: Can you share your recruiting requirements? What are you personally looking for physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually with the athlete, and their parents?**

**Colin:** Obviously I'm looking for players that are strong enough to make an immediate impact in our top 6. We recruit a lot of players both domestically and internationally. After assessing the level we are looking for players that want to get better and want to be a part of a team. Occasionally we have had super-motivated individuals that may not buy into the "team" atmosphere at first, but if we have a team around them that does buy in that that individual also

becomes a better team player and that often takes some pressure of them individually. If a team has too many individuals it can become very fragmented and difficult to build chemistry and cohesiveness.

I make an effort to get to know the player and their family before we make a commitment. Of course it's hard to truly know someone from a few hours on the phone and a few meetings in person, but I mostly just need to trust my instincts when it comes to character. We are fortunate to have a great team that supports each other and families back home that support their daughters without meddling. It allows me to focus on their games rather than having to worry about other issues, which in turn helps our team maximize its potential and our girls enjoy their experience to the fullest.

**Frank: When should a family, ideally, begin their college search process?**

**Colin:** Families should begin the college search in freshman or sophomore year, but they shouldn't feel any pressure to commit early. They can do unofficial visits and start to make a list of programs they are interested in. Then beginning in their junior year they can have more communication with coaches begin to narrow down their search.

**Frank: What “homework” should parents & players do before contacting college coaches?**

**Colin:** As I mentioned earlier, players (and parents) typically aim WAY too high and waste a lot of time contacting schools that are unrealistic. With Universal Tennis and Tennis Recruiting there are tools available to help find a good fit. A

good rule of thumb that I've stolen from another coach is that your tennis recruiting ranking should more or less correspond to the team's national ranking.

If a team has eight players that means two roster spots are turning over each year (on average), and about half of those spots are going to international so on average schools are taking about one American per year. I realize some schools are primarily American and some are primarily international but it's a good rule of thumb and starting point. So if a player is 150+ on Tennis Recruiting it is unrealistic for them to be writing top 75 teams. You want to go to a school where you can play and players and parents need to be realistic about where that is.

**Frank: Where do you find your future prospects?**

**Colin:** Most of our team is international (Europe). We would be happy to take more American players, but we also want to maintain our position as a top 50 national team and the dominant team in our conference (we have won 69 consecutive matches against Missouri Valley teams dating back to 2009).

With that said, we work hard to find players that will not only fit in talent-wise, but that will be great ambassadors of our program and our university. We have succeeded in finding players that are appreciative of the opportunity to study and play here, are happy and willing to give back to the tennis community and to the community as a whole, who do well in school, and add to the diversity of the university and perhaps teach their fellow (American and international) students something about the world.

**Frank: What is the parental role in managing the developmental plan of a future NCAA star?**

**Colin:** Parents play an important role in the tennis and overall development of a player. I realize it must be very hard to strike that balance of manager/supporter without getting too caught up in the wins and losses and/or trying to “coach” their child (unless of course they are the coach). But the parents that strike that balance give their kids the best chance to be prepared and successful at the next level, whatever that next level is...

**Frank: What insights can you share with the readers?**

**Colin:** “Enjoy the journey.” Tennis is a lifetime sport and if you enjoy the journey and process of getting better then you will enjoy the sport forever. If you get too focused on the destination (college tennis) then you may look past the end of your junior career and not enjoy that as much and you may have unrealistically high expectations for your college experience, which can lead to disappointment, burnout or quitting after college. It is such a beautiful sport that you can play for life, if you truly enjoy it and enjoy competing every match and getting better every day then you will enjoy it for the rest of your life, and your life will be better off because of it :)

**Colin Foster**

**Contact Email: [cfoster@goshockers.com](mailto:cfoster@goshockers.com)**

**ROBERT DALLAS WOMEN'S HEAD COACH  
DARTMOUTH COLLEGE**

**Frank: What's new and exciting in the world of college tennis?**

**Robert:** I think the most exciting thing in college tennis was moving to no-ad scoring.

**Frank: What are some of the key differences between the men's & ladies scholarship requirements and experiences in regards to NCAA tennis?**

**Robert:** The big difference is a fully funded women's program has 8 full scholarships. In women's tennis there isn't really a partial scholarship. In men's tennis a fully funded program has 4.5 scholarships that can be split up however the coach would like. Many of the top players in the country might be on a %50 scholarship. I think the renewal process of the scholarship is very different in the two sports. On the women's end most players will have their scholarship renewed. On the men's end the % of the scholarship is going to change each year. The renewal process can be very stressful for both coach and the player.

**Frank: Can you briefly share your team's weekly practice, training & match schedule as well as your annual schedule?**

**Robert:** We always take Monday off. Tuesday-Friday we normally practice and condition from 3-6 or 4-7 pm. On weekends we will practice from 10-1 or 11-2. Our conditioning and strength training is done during that three hour block. We also have the players coming in for at least one individual each week. We normally play four tournaments in the fall. Our fall begins September 7th and we

finish around November 6th. We are home for Christmas break from November 25-January 3. We then start our dual match season January 17th. We are normally going to play 20-22 dual matches between January 17th and May 1st.

**Frank:** I've found that most juniors spent most of their developmental time grooving fundamentals. When do you suggest they begin to add off-court tennis specific training, or begin to look deeper into the development of the mental or emotional components?

**Robert:** I believe from the first day juniors are playing tennis that they should be training/working on the mental/emotional component of tennis. How to think on the tennis court/ how to problem solve is a skill, it is no different than hitting a forehand or a backhand. Being able to reach your zone of optimal performance takes work and practice. Controlling anger and energy levels have to be practiced. In terms of off-court tennis specific conditioning, I think that junior players should worry a little less about that and be more broad based in their conditioning go become a great athlete. The things that end up holding tennis players back is that they don't play other sports/develop their movement/balance by doing other things.

**Frank:** Can you share your recruiting requirements? What are you personally looking for physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually with the athlete and their parents?

**Robert:** Recruiting requirements include: 3.5+ GPA and a score of 1950+ on the SAT. The number #1 thing I am looking at is a player that seems to enjoy being on the court. Enjoys competing, enjoys being around other players and the environment of tennis. I look for moderately involved parents- parents that are generally positive people and have

tennis in a proper perspective. SPORTSMANSHIP is very important what type of teammate are you going to be on your worst day. A positive outlook on life is very important.

**Frank: When should a family, ideally, begin their college search process?**

**Robert:** Know the basics about the school. Where it is, what state, have an idea what the weather is in general at the school. About the team and the coach know how long the coach has been at the school. How the team has done the past couple of years. Know in general what the level of the players who are playing in the lineup. In general coaches aren't looking to recruit another #8-10 player.

**Robert Dallis**

**Contact: [Robert.Dallis@dartmouth.edu](mailto:Robert.Dallis@dartmouth.edu)**

## PARENT INTERVIEW

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## **PARENT/COACH STEVE JOHNSON SR.**

Father/Coach of ATP Star and NCAA Champion Stevie Johnson

### **Steve Johnson Insights**

For those of you in the dark, Steve's son Steve Johnson Jr. (Stevie), has reached a career high of #37 on the ATP Pro Tour. This makes my friend Steve Sr. one of the most successful tennis parents on the planet. Steve shares his knowledge and opinions which will surely assist tennis parents worldwide.

### **Frank: Tell the readers about your background as a tennis parent & full time tennis coach?**

**Steve:** I feel privileged to have a beautiful family and a career that I love. I have been teaching tennis for 33 years throughout Southern California. I am living my dream- I am married to my high school sweetheart, we have two beautiful children and I have made a career out of my love for tennis. My parental goals was simple- to love and enjoy my children!

### **Frank: At what age did Stevie begin to play tennis?**

**Steve:** As a parent, I was constantly playing with Stevie. He was interested in anything that involved a ball. At age two, I put a Mickey Mouse tennis racquet in Stevie's hand and showed him how to hit a beach ball with it. He played beach ball tennis throughout the house all day long.

"Stevie was a natural competitor warrior. He competed at everything."

By the age of 4, Stevie could rally on the tennis court. I would take him with me to local tournaments to watch my

players and he couldn't wait to compete. One day he begged to play a tournament- so I told him if he wanted to compete, he would first have to learn how to keep score (He had to learn to play a real match versus just rallying.) and then I would let him play a tournament. So Stevie took on the challenge and learned how to keep score on the practice court with my wife.

By age of 5, Stevie could keep score and so we entered him into his first event- 10 and Under Satellite Tournament. He lost 6, 0- 6, 1.

By the age of 6, Stevie could win rounds in the Satellite Tournaments- loving to compete.

By the age of 7, Stevie won the local 10 & Under Satellite Tournament. A few weeks after that, we entered him into a local Boys 12's Satellite Event and he won it- at age 7!

**FUN FACT:** Some juniors enter the game for fun and then later develop the competitive fire. Others enter into the sport with their competitive flames fully raging. Some children have to spend many hours learning how to cope with their fear of competition, lack of competitive fire, fear of gamesmanship...

### **Frank: What other sports did Stevie play?**

**Steve:** Stevie played every sport with a ball. He was innately competitive from a very young age. He even needed to compete during his tennis lessons- just rallying back and forth was too boring for him. He wanted to know how he could win. His practice needed to be structured so that he could compete – even if it was against himself.

**Frank: When did the family decide to have Stevie focus exclusively on tennis?**

**Steve:** Stevie was such a natural at the game of tennis and because it was my business, it was easy to focus his efforts at playing tennis. His mother and I never had to bother him to practice- he wanted to play tennis from the time he held his first (Mickey Mouse) racquet. Tennis was his sport.

**Frank: What are your thoughts regarding the 10 & under campaign?**

**Steve:** I teach strokes for a lifetime. I don't teach 10 & Under Tennis. Ideally, it would be great if every 10 year old had their strokes established so their tennis game could be developed.

**Frank: 10's through 14's: What is your primary focus?**

**Steve:** My primary lesson goals for the age groups 10-14 stresses techniques and doubles strategy.

**Techniques:** In my lessons, I focus first on defensive skills because I believe the best ball to hit is based on where the player is on the court. So I teach players both fundamental and secondary shots based on court position. I teach how to hit rollers, slices and transitional shots- such as how to get out of the corners. I also teach girls or boys the same.

**Doubles:** Many tennis parents don't support playing doubles- whether they believe doubles practice takes valuable lesson time away from singles or because doubles requires more time be spent at tournament sites, it is the players that are missing out. Doubles teaches many essential tennis skills, especially for college. I suggest doubles be played before all single events to encourage more players to get involve- especially because the parents can't back out if they have to play doubles before singles.

**Frank: 16's through 18's: What is your primary focus?**

**Steve:** I believe fitness is the most important game component as players reach their late teens. Especially because most college coaches begin making their recruit pick at ages 16 and 17. So it is essential physical training begin by at least age sixteen. The game has changed and fitness is huge! To quote a Division I Level Coach,

“Most junior players cannot even make through the first day of College Tennis practice because they are unfit!”

Stevie's junior tennis success may have even been greater if he had been fitter sooner. His slightly skewed winning Gold Ball ratio of 1 singles title to 10 doubles titles was likely due to his lack of adequate fitness. Stevie lost many matches just before the finals because he was out of energy.

When Stevie was 16, I was told Stevie was very talented but not fit enough. So we (Stevie and his team of coaches and trainers) began including fitness into his tennis training regime. Stevie trained 1 hour off court to 3 hours of on court from the age of 16 ½ on. Even though Stevie had started off court training from the age of 16 ½ - Division I College fitness was a whole different level- Stevie lost 20 pounds the first semester in college.

By age 18, extreme physical fitness is mandatory. Stevie's commitment to fitness in college afforded him huge success at USC. He is still working even harder to get even fitter as a professional- loving it along the way.

Now as a Pro, Stevie trains 1 hour off court, 2 hours on court hitting, lunch, 2 hours hitting and 2 hours training and stretching off court. Of course during tournaments, Stevie's off court training is adjusted (periodization).

**Frank: What would you tell other parents about their child's gamesmanship tolerance/ competitive nature?**

**Steve:** As a coach, I have always been very honest with parents with respect to their child's tennis aptitude. Some players are just not competitive by nature and I tell their parents that the sport is going to be a little more difficult for them. Tennis is as mental and emotional as it is physical.

I coach the players to play the game of tennis and that may require their tennis lessons to include a variety of teaching techniques - such as ball machine drills, playing points with other player etc. Some parents only want see X number of ball baskets emptied during a lesson but that is not what tennis development is ... So to those parents, it is their choice to choose a coach that just wants to feed balls- but that is not how to develop a full game- in my opinion.

**Frank: What would you share with parents about playing their children up, as opposed to keeping them in their own age division?**

**Steve:** The method I used with Stevie is not a blueprint for all players, but I believe tennis teaches responsibility and leadership. It is very important for players to compete against their own age group and to learn to be "The Big Dog" – which is a very different kind of pressure that builds character.

"Playing up before they have won consistently in their own division sends the message that losing is acceptable."

Stevie played in his own division until he reached #1 and then he stayed in that division for 6 months- building character along the way.

**Frank: Do you have a win/loss percentage you recommend players follow before moving up to higher division?**

**Steve:** Ideally a player should have a win /loss record of 3: 1 or 4: 1 before moving up to the next level. (I would recommend at least a 50/50 win/loss record.) A natural progression would be to attain a winning percentage in satellites tournaments, then open tournaments, then designated tournaments and then on to Nationals...As I said previously, encouraging your child to only play up teaches them that losing is ok.

Note: Different USTA divisions may have different names for their tournament levels.

**Frank: Can you share with the reader's insight and/or advice regarding the tennis parent's role?**

**Steve:** Tennis is a full time parental job if you want your child to be good. This means a player that wants to be good should be playing sets, clinics, privates, hitting serve after practice, lessons etc. It is the parent's role to support the child with these activities. In other words:

"Tennis must go on the calendar first and then life goes in later."

**Frank: What is your destressing strategy on match day?**

**Steve:** With regard to the emotional components of tennis, I was always very calm. I tried to make tennis fun so that Stevie would continue to love the game as I did. Before a tournament, I would tell Stevie, "Whether you win or lose your match today, we are not done working on your game. Come Monday, I will take you to school and after school Mom will bring you to the club and we will continue training

your game"... I wanted to take the pressure of winning off of Stevie and keep his focus on improving.

"Parents and coaches make tennis events such a big deal that they often sabotage any real chances of success."

**Frank: What is your opinion on pre-match preparation?**

**Steve:** Let me answer this question as it relates to tournaments, especially tournament travel. This is what I expect a player to do before traveling to a tournament:

- Begin acclimating to the time zone prior to going to the tournament. For example- if you live in California and you are playing a tournament in Florida, wake up at 5:00 am and begin your day for several days before you leave for the event.
- Arrive at the tournament a few days in advance to get use to the weather, courts and accommodations. This may include hitting on all the courts that you will likely play on during the tournament.
- Do not bother going to the tournament if you plan on flying in the night prior to the beginning of the tournament for your morning match. I call this "Confirming the Loss".
- If you want to save money by flying in at the last minute- save all your money and don't go...
- Pre-match preparation before each match is mandatory- stretch, nutrition, stroke warm up, game warm up ...the player should be ready to compete at match time.

**Frank: Why did you decide to train Stevie at home versus the common avenue of shipping him off to an academy?**

**Steve:** Stevie is a real family guy. He loves being with his family. He trusted that I would lead him in the right direction. At about 16, Stevie needed additional coaching to join our team and help take him to the level. We all worked together with the common goal of helping Stevie to continue to improve. In addition, Stevie had decided to attend USC and was committed to play for Peter Smith.

NOTE: Academies are not needed and usually not beneficial if a player already has a team of intelligent coaches, hitters and trainers all working together.

**Frank: Can you detail Stevie's High School career?**

**Steve:** Stevie played High School tennis for three years. His school team was division 5 -which is a relatively low division. Many of the division 5 players did not even have a racquet bag. Stevie would go to practice and games with one or two racquets so he did not stand out.

Even though most of the players could not even return Stevie's serve, I believed playing High School ball was a valuable learning experience. The coach was quite surprised that Stevie was at every practice. I believed that if Stevie was on the team, he should play as a team member and that meant attending practice. Stevie develop a love for team tennis, as seen with Stevie's huge USC success- winning 2 Individual Championships and 4 Team Championships. Stevie now plays Davis Cup for the USA and looks forward to someday playing Davis Cup and Olympics!

To the entire parent's that think their children are too good for high school tennis, I tell them High School tennis will help develop life skills. No one is too good for high school



tennis. Yes, your child's tennis skill set will regress, but they will gain valuable life lessons.

**Frank: Stevie has a distinguished NCAA career at USC with our friend Peter Smith. Tell us about that experience?**

**Steve:** Stevie has an incredible college experience at USC. His coach, Peter Smith had a terrific coaching philosophy, similar to mine, in that his players were playing for something bigger than themselves. Stevie really excelled under Coach Smith- winning 2 Individual titles and 4 Team Championships.

Stevie chose to attend USC because of the coaching style of Peter Smith and because of the coaxing of his good friend and mentor, Kaes Van't Hof, who also played for USC. Stevie was able to play on the tour during the fall of his senior year so he could take advantage of the wild cards offered by the USTA. Stevie's decision to play college first before turning professional was not supported by many- but as it turns out- it was a GREAT decision.

NOTE: When considering a college, think about the coaching style and how his/her style will get the most out of your child.

**Frank: Can you share some insider secrets about Stevie's experience as the United States Top Young ATP Professional?**

**Steve:** The professional tour has been a real roller coaster for Stevie. He jumped into the top 100 in his first year on the tour, but in his second year, the players began to know him and his game- so winning became more difficult. Stevie was not used to losing. He became very mentally and emotionally tired from losing. (I was very concerned how he would

handle losing in the Pro's because he was not used to losing...)

I tried to put it into perspective for Stevie:

You won 2 tournaments lost 24 last year and you won about \$200,000. Tomas Berdych, didn't win any tournaments and lost 24 tournaments, but he lost in the semis or finals and he won over a million.

Stevie knows he must continue to work harder and harder get as fit as possible to make it into the top 10- which is a challenge he is taking on! His dedication to fitness was evident with his first round win in the 2014 Roland Garros Tournament- coming from behind and winning in 5!

**Frank: What would you like to share with struggling tennis parents around the world?**

**Steve:** Keep it fun. If your children are enjoying tennis, keep it up. I always say, "Fun on the court- win in life!"

But if you are asking me, will tennis lessons get my kid a full college scholarship or a ticket into a professional tennis career, I would say find a different form of investment- tennis is a bad investment. The greatest investment a parent could ask for with regards to tennis is developing life lessons.

In regards to parental involvement, I believe it is better for the parent to be a bit less involved than over-involved.

**Frank: What would you like to share with coaches around the world?**

**Steve:** The same message goes for coaches, fun on the court- fun in life. I suggest the coach meet with each player and their parents. Explain to them that tennis development is like a well running wheel- coach, player and parent all doing their part. But if one of the three is not supporting the wheel, a

triangle develops and the wheel will not roll smoothly. And as a coach, if the player or parent chooses not to do their job, then I don't care- I don't have to care.

"In one car ride home after a loss, parents can undue everything positive that I have taught in the past year."

"A parents job is to support, love, nurture and encourage their child and not to coach."

**Steve Johnson**

**Steve Johnson Tennis Academy**

**Web Site: [sjtennis.com](http://sjtennis.com)**

**Email: [sjtennisacademy@aol.com](mailto:sjtennisacademy@aol.com)**

## CONCLUSION

First of all, I'm delighted to see that you have your parental priorities right where they should be, on your children. I'm thrilled to see that there are so many likeminded parents and coaches.

The success I've found in assisting our junior players to win approximately (we lost count!) 100 national singles titles is based on thousands of hours of practical application, as well as the hundreds of research studies conducted by sports educators and scientists around the world. These experts research top performers in a multitude of fields. They study how champions were raised, how often they trained and the methodology of their coaches.

I wish to thank everyone who has passed on their insight along their journey. This also includes the players, parents, the numerous tennis associations, authors, speakers, teachers, coaches, trainers and colleagues whose ideas and techniques we all share.

Remember that life and the game of tennis is always in a state of evolution. Every generation changes it, tweaks it and improves it. The games highest level is meant to be surpassed. Records are meant to be broken. One of your children will be there, breaking records set by the current crop of ATP and WTA tour professional. I'll take my hat off to you, the parent who is really the "OZ" behind the curtain.

It's with great affection that I thank the thousands of junior competitors and their families that I've had the privilege to have worked with. It's your passion that still drives me today. Through the years, many of you have thanked me, but it really should be me thanking you for the opportunity that I had to be in your lives.

Assisting young talent is thrilling. Motivating players to shift out of their comfort zone and into the learning zone is an

incredible process. It's a fun, yet often, painful place for a competitive person. I really admire those willing to pay the price. Be aware, some juniors are so attached to their old ways of thinking, practicing and performing that simply training different can be quite painful in the beginning.

Please pay close attention to your child's progress and read between the lines. Encourage and praise them for their efforts and acknowledge their struggles. Most of all, laugh a ton while enjoying the journey.

*Frank Giampaolo*

## WORKSHOPS WITH FRANK GIAMPAOLO

Bring Frank and The Mental/Emotional Tennis Workshops to your town:

- Tennis Parent Workshops
- Mental/Emotional Tennis Workshops:
- One-on-One Private Sessions
- High School, College Team Workshops
- Camps, Groups & Academy Workshops

**Contact:** Frank Giampaolo

Email: [FGSA@earthlink.net](mailto:FGSA@earthlink.net)

Website: [wwwMaximizingTennisPotential.com](http://www.MaximizingTennisPotential.com)

For More Information Visit:

YouTube: Tennis New Zealand/Frank Giampaolo to see 25 “Live in New Zealand” Seminar videos.

## PARENTAL RESOURCES

FREE USPTA PROFESSIONAL COPY

## RECOMMENDED READING

### ***Championship Tennis***

(Frank Giampaolo (2013 1st Edition) Human Kinetics, ISBN: 10:1450424538)

### ***Raising Athletic Royalty: Insights to Inspire for a Lifetime***

(Frank Giampaolo, 2014)

### ***Coaching Tennis Successfully, 2nd Edition***

(USTA—Human Kinetics, ISBN: 0736048294)

### ***Tennis 2000***

(Vic Braden & Bruns (1998) New York, Little Brown)

### ***World Class Tennis Techniques***

(Paul Roetert, Jack Groppel, Editors, Human Kinetics)

### ***The Inner Game of Tennis***

(W.T. Gallwey (1997, revised Edition) New York Random House)

### ***Applied Sport Science for High Performance Tennis***

(Crespo, Reid, Miley—ITF, ISBN: 1-903013-27-5)



***Total Tennis: The Ultimate Tennis Encyclopedia***

(Collins—Sport Classic Books, ISBN: 0973144343)

***Maximum Tennis: 10 Keys to Releasing Your On-Court Potential***

(Saviano—Human Kinetics, ISBN: 0736042008)

SPORT PSYCHOLOGY BOOKS

***Your Key to Sports Success***

(Jonathon P. Niednagel- 1997)

***In Pursuit of Excellence, 3rd Edition***

(Orlick—Human Kinetics, ISBN: 0736031863)

***Exploring Sports and Exercise Psychology***

(Van Raalte & Brewer (1996) American Psychology Association.)

***Mental Toughness Training for Sports***

(Loehr—Stephen Green Press, ISBN: 0-8289-0574-6)

***Psyching for Sport: Mental Training for Athletes***

(Orlick—Human Kinetics, ISBN: 0880112735)

***Winning Ugly: Mental Warfare in Tennis***

(Gilbert and Jamison—Fireside, ISBN: 067188400X)

***Visual Tennis***

(Yandell—Human Kinetics, ISBN: 0880118032)

***Foundations of Sport and Exercise Psychology***

3rd Edition (Weinberg and Gould—Human Kinetics ISBN: 0736044191)

***Emotions in Sport***

(Hanin—Human Kinetics, ISBN: 0880118792)

**STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING BOOKS**

***Designing Resistance Training Programs***

(Fleck and Kraemer—Human Kinetics, ISBN: 0736042571)

***Power Tennis Training***

(Chu—Human Kinetics, ISBN: 087322616X)

***Core Performance***

(Verstegen—Rodale Books, ISBN: 157954908X)

***Strength Training Anatomy***

(Delavier—Human Kinetics, ISBN: 0-7360-4185-0)

***Strength Training for Young Athletes, 2nd Edition***

(Kraemer—Human Kinetics, ISBN: 0736051031)

***Speed Training for Tennis***

(Grosser/Kraft/Schonborn—ITF, ISBN: 1-84126-030-4)

***The Scientific and Clinical Application of Elastic Resistance***

(Ellenbecker—Human Kinetics, ISBN: 0736036881)

COLLEGE RECRUITING WEB SITE

[www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

The Collegeboard.com site may be of assistance with college matchmaking service.

[www.collegetennisonline.com](http://www.collegetennisonline.com)

College Tennis Online is a great resource to research schools, teams, schedules current rosters, and programs.

[www.NCAA.org](http://www.NCAA.org)

Visit NCAA.org to educate yourself on recruiting rules, course requirements and eligibility. This is also the site to register with the NCAA.

[www.national-letter.org](http://www.national-letter.org)

Visit National-Letter.org to research information regarding the rules and regulations of the letter of intent.

[www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org)

The Eligibility Center.org will provide answers to questions regarding the rules and regulations regarding recruiting. Note: Different sports and divisions of colleges have very different rules and regulations.

[www.CTORecruiting.com](http://www.CTORecruiting.com)

Post your Childs profile for college coaches to review.

[www.NAIA.org](http://www.NAIA.org)

Visit The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for information on smaller athletic programs- intercollegiate athletics, college athletic rules and regulations.

[www.NJCAA.org](http://www.NJCAA.org)

Visit The National Junior College Athletic Association for information on junior college athletic programs, junior college athletic rules and regulations.

## E-NEWSLETTERS

Parents wishing to be added to the mailing list for the USTA Tennis High Performance Coaching e-newsletter or to the ITF e- newsletter should email:

[e-mailsportscience@usta.com](mailto:e-mailsportscience@usta.com).

Sign-up in the e- newsletter section of the High Performance websites.

[www.itftennis.com/coaching](http://www.itftennis.com/coaching)

The ITF (International Tennis Federation) has a free monthly newsletter. You can subscribe by signing up on the ITF Coaching page.

[www.MaximizingTennisPotential.com](http://www.MaximizingTennisPotential.com)

The Maximizing Tennis Potential web site can link you to a free monthly Maximizing Tennis Potential Newsletter as well as free blogs.

[www.RaisingAthleticRoyalty.com](http://www.RaisingAthleticRoyalty.com)

The Raising Athletic Royalty web site can link you to a free monthly newsletter as well as free blogs.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Frank Giampaolo is a 30 year sports education veteran. He was honored as the USPTA Southern California Tennis Director of the Year and received numerous awards as a top teaching professional by Southern California Tennis & Golf Magazine.

Frank is a popular international convention speaker, a sports educator, instructional writer for ITF (International Tennis Federation) Coaching & Sports Science Review, UK Tennis magazine, the USPTA, Tennis Magazine and Tennis View Magazine. He is an author of Championship Tennis (Human Kinetics Publishing), Raising Athletic Royalty, The Tennis Parent's Bible 1<sup>st</sup> Edition and The Mental Emotional Workbook Series (How to Attract a College Scholarship, International Player Evaluation, Match Chart Collection, Match Day Preparation and Blunders and Cures). His television appearances include The NBC Today Show, OCN-World Team Tennis, Fox Sports, Tennis Canada and Tennis Australia.

Frank founded The Tennis Parents Workshops in 1998, conducting workshops across the United States, Mexico, Israel, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and Spain.

Frank's commitment to coaching excellence helped develop approximately 100 National Champions, hundreds of NCAA

athletes, numerous NCAA All-Americans and several professional athletes. His innovative approach has made him a worldwide leader in athletic-parental education. Frank is currently the Vice Chair of the USTA/SCTA Coaches Commission.

### **Contact Information**

**Email:** FGSA@earthlink.net

**Website:** [www.MaximzingTennisPotential.com](http://www.MaximzingTennisPotential.com)

**Website:** [www.RaisingAthleticRoyalty.com](http://www.RaisingAthleticRoyalty.com)

### **Facebook:**

[http://facebook.com/FrankGiampaoloBooks.The Tennis Parent Bible](http://facebook.com/FrankGiampaoloBooks.TheTennisParentBible)

### **Google:**

<http://plus.google.com/u/0/+FrankGiampaolo/posts>

**Twitter:** [http://twitter.com/@Frank Giampaolo](http://twitter.com/@Frank_Giampaolo)