



Issue 86

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Editorial

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Welcome to issue 86 of the ITF Coaching and Sport Science Review, which is the first issue of the year. Tennis activities are gradually returning to normality in many regions worldwide. However, there are regions and countries that are still being affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our thoughts are with all of them as well as with those which are suffering from other disasters including the war in Ukraine.

Since the last edition of the ITF CSSR, the ITF Academy, the educational platform of the ITF has seen a considerable progress. The registered users have increased by 15% to over 47,000 while the anonymous users increased by 10% up to 178,000 users, to reach a total user base of over 226,000. Content is updated regularly to the Library (former iCoach), with more than 1,600 items currently available, currently content from the 2021 ITF World Coaches Conference is added on a weekly basis. A total of 179 online courses are currently published available in 9 languages with Chinese added in February 2022. Since October 2021, over 125 blended learning programmes were scheduled and delivered through the platform by more than 65 nations. The migration to the ITF Tennis ID (Single Sign On) project was completed in February 2022, all users have received instructions to update their accounts. Parent Education Workshops are live and being delivered across all regions for both levels, Player Education for ITF WTT Junior players is in place and available to all iPin users.

Furthermore, the ITF eBooks app continues to offer more than 150 publications in 13 languages. Many of these publications, such as the ITF Advanced Coaches Manual, are available for free in your mobile and tablet for both Android and iOS devices.

As per the ITF Recognition of Coach Education Systems programme, its goal is to assist member nations in becoming self-sufficient in delivering their coach education, by achieving several criteria for quality standards set by the ITF Coaches Commission. There are currently over 60 Nations recognised across the four different levels of White, Bronze, Silver, and Gold. The goal is to have at least 80 Nations recognised at the end of 2022.

The fourth [ITF World Participation Conference](#) will take place virtually from 19-21 July and, as with previous editions, the event will provide the platform for a global conversation about increasing participation in tennis and sport in general. The ITF World Participation Conference provides one of the only opportunities to come together to discuss ways to increase participation in sport globally. The fourth edition of the event



will once again feature a leading line-up of international speakers who will share their expertise and experiences around this year's conference theme: 'Maximising play and enjoyment to drive participation'. Hosted virtually for the second time, the 2022 edition will be open to anyone wishing to attend. Conference attendees will need to be a registered user of the ITF Academy to attend and registration will open in May via the ITF Academy. Once registered, attendees will be able to access content from the previous three ITF World Participation Conferences via the ITF Academy Library.

The Junior Tennis Initiative (JTI) is the ITF's global national junior development programme that introduces children aged 14-and-under to the sport. The JTI is the launch point for many aspiring competitive players across regions, as a platform to introduce talented players to the game. The programme is the foundation for a National Association's player development pathway which is supported by the ITF. It provides children across the world with the opportunity to pick up a racket for the first time and play regularly in competitions. Despite ongoing challenges with Covid-19, activities as part of the JTI continued to increase in 2021 across the 142 active JTI nations. Over 210,000 children were introduced through the programme within over 3,500 primary schools and tennis clubs, and these playing opportunities were provided by over 6,000 schoolteachers and tennis coaches.

The ITF World Tennis Number continues to be embedded around the world with 138 nations now participating, representing 86% of global players. To date, 43 nations have shared their national player and match data, which equates to 2 million player records and 17 million match records being loaded into the platform.

So far, ITF World Tennis Number is publicly available in Great Britain, Ireland, Lithuania and Singapore and on all ITF Junior and Senior player profiles via itftennis.com. Meanwhile, the United States Tennis Association has staged over 50 pilot events for ITF World Tennis Number in readiness to launch in the coming months.

The vision is to create a global digital tennis community for the ITF and its National Associations. Behind the scenes, data quality teams are enhancing automated procedures to match players across multiple databases around the world. This is key to ensuring a player has all their match records and an accurate ITF WTN. To facilitate this, the ITF has introduced a new global Tennis ID, as well as a number of Tennis Open Data Standards. Alongside this, a new Tournament Management System is being developed which will be made available for nations to use later this year. This will complement the integration the ITF has with existing tournament management systems enabling automated data collection and improved data quality. In recognition of this progress, the ITF, alongside Clubspark are delighted to have been nominated for a 2022 Sports Technology Award.

Looking ahead, this Summer National Associations will be able to offer their players the opportunity to register for ITF WTN via worldtennisnumber.com, giving more people direct access

to the tool and its benefits. To support this, the ITF is working closely with National Association's to amplify the promotion of ITF WTN to players.

From May, ITF WTN will be also used as the second acceptance criteria for ITF World Tennis Tour Juniors and ITF World Tennis Masters Tour events and tournaments. Subject to approval by ATP and WTA, future plans also include using ITF WTN as a method of acceptance in World Tennis Tour professional tournaments. ITF Academy offers four interactive educational courses on ITF WTN including information about how the Numbers are calculated.

In this editorial we would like also to mention ITFWorld, which is the official magazine of the ITF. Each edition of ITFWorld is packed with exclusive content, including interviews with the sport's top stars, and a range of other features and articles. The spring 2022 edition of ITFWorld has been published and can be [read here](#). Among other topics, the latest issue includes a tribute of Mark Woodforde to former world No. 1 Ashleigh Barty, after her retirement. Billie Jean King gives a team talk ahead of the Billie Jean King Cup Qualifiers which will determine the line-up for the 2022 Finals. Casper Ruud shares his ambitions for the remainder of 2022, and Angella Okutoyi from Kenya discusses her beginnings.

We would like to encourage new submissions to the ITF CSSR. Full guidelines for acceptance and publication of articles can be found in the most recent issue page on the [ITF Academy](#). Finally, we would like to thank all the authors for their contributions, as well as all of those who sent in proposals. We hope that you enjoy reading the 86th edition of the ITF Coaching and Sport Science Review.

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RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ACADEMY CONTENT (CLICK BELOW)





Salute to a Legend's First Coach

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ABSTRACT

Australia boasts an enviable record of Grand Slam champions. Of these, two are further enshrined in sporting history as having won all four Grand Slam singles titles in a calendar year. Of course, we are referring to Margaret Court and Rod Laver. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, both have written books about their journey to legendary status (Court, 2016; Laver & Writer, 2013). A reading of their stories reveals a number of similarities in relation to their introduction to, and early years in, tennis. In this context, both legends give considerable praise and recognition to their first coach. This paper reviews the recognition Margaret gives to her first coach, Wally Rutter. How important was he and how did he shape her career? Before doing so, let's briefly review Laver's acknowledgment of his first coach, Charlie Hollis, and specifically the approach adopted by this influential coach and mentor.

Key words: biography, coaching, mentoring, methodology.

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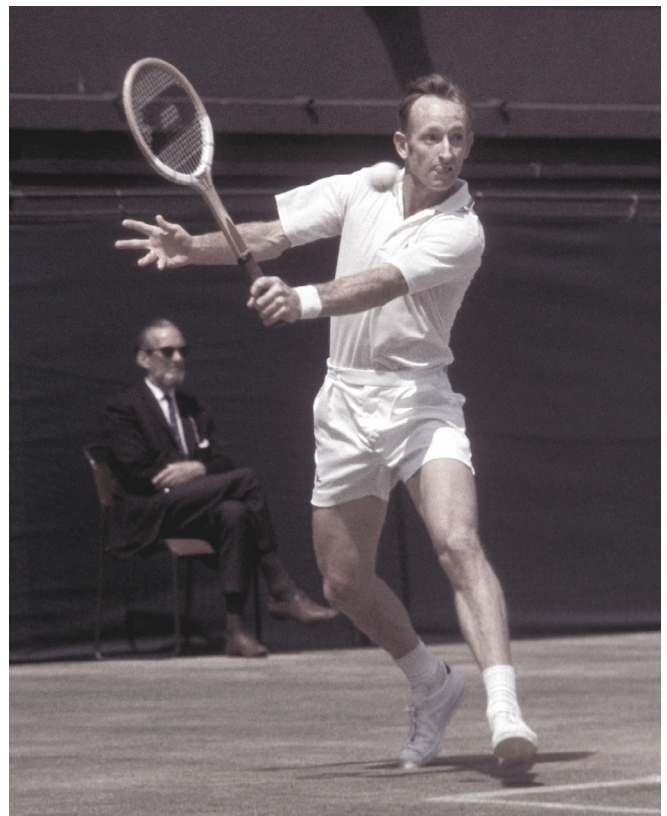
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INTRODUCTION

As Laver's coach from age 10 to 14 years, Hollis was credited with laying strong foundations for his pupil's later successes. According to Laver, Hollis stressed the importance of: solid technique and exceptional physical fitness; the ability to hit every shot as perfectly and accurately as possible; and a 'never give up' mentality. For Hollis, it was not necessarily about winning but rather about learning and good sportsmanship, manners and general demeanour both on-and off-the court.

To these ends, Hollis adopted a variety of fun on-court games, together with endless drills, and also led by his own example as a role model for the personal qualities he wanted Laver to embrace (Young, 2020). Such was Hollis's influence on Laver that the latter acknowledged in his memoir: "*Without Charlie I don't know how my career would have turned out ... my career might not have happened at all*" (Laver & Writer, 2013, pp. 12-13).



Beginnings to tennis and first coach

Margaret provides a wonderful description of her introduction to tennis and, very shortly after, to her first coach, Wally Rutter (she refers to him as Wal in her book [Court, 2016]. We will adopt this approach and refer to Wal versus Wally or Mr Rutter). She recalls that, as a youngster living in the country town of Albury (Australia), she “*discovered tennis on my own when I was eight*” (p. 11). She had found an old fence paling and tennis ball and would hit against the family’s garage wall often wondering what it would be like to play on a real court, with a real racquet. Luck would soon intervene and a friend of her mother gave Margaret her first racquet. It was chipped, cracked, weather beaten without a leather (or any) grip and heavy given it was an adult’s racquet.

Living across from the Albury and Border Tennis Club with its 25 grass courts, Margaret and her other ‘gang’ members (three male friends) at the time would sneak through a hole in the fence to a court that was largely hidden from view from the clubhouse. This is where Margaret learnt her natural and extraordinary volleying skills. She would put herself at the net, hitting to the boys, and trying not to let any balls pass that would have alerted others to their mischievous endeavours.

It was inevitably only a matter of time before the ‘laser vision’ of the club’s curator and coaching professional caught the gang out. This was how Margaret first met Wal, in circumstances somewhat tense at the time! The gang continued to test fate, returning to play on the club’s secluded court after being given a stern warning from Wal. Margaret was later to question Wal’s seemingly fearsome presence, suggesting that “*his gruff exterior concealed a kind heart: why else would he have never repaired the hole in the fence?*” (p. 13).

With an eye for talent and determination, Wal proceeded to invite Margaret to his weekly coaching clinics for local juniors. Margaret jumped at this opportunity but was unsure how her parents would manage the two shillings per session cost. Again, fate soon intervened when Margaret found she herself could ‘do a contra’ by working in the ice-cream and drink kiosk at the club and also by helping Wal with some of the squads. These were the humble beginnings for what was to become an enduring association between player and coach. As described by Margaret, it all started “*as the kid he (Wal) used to hunt from his courts*” (p. 14).

So, how did Wal sow the seeds for Margaret’s incredible journey? Margaret’s descriptions of Wal, himself a competent A-grade player, give us several clues as to his values, principles and approach to his coaching.

Early questioning and respectful inclusion

Shortly after inviting Margaret to his junior coaching clinics, Wal posed three questions to her. Did she like tennis? Did she want to be a tennis player? Was she prepared to work really hard? We are certainly left with the impression that the coaching arrangement would not have proceeded any further had Wal not been satisfied with Margaret’s responses. It was obviously also a pivotal moment for Margaret who recalls, “*I didn’t want to let down Wal ... never wanting to disappoint a man who gave me so much*” (pp. 24-25) and “*When Wal spoke, I listened*” (p. 28).

Not only did Margaret listen to Wal, she cites the valued times when she sat on the kitchen bench in Wal and his wife’s home and simply chatted. This apparently had not been the norm



for Margaret who recalls, “*The Rutters encouraged me to have conversations with them, to ask questions, something that was never allowed at home*” (p. 15). Being inclusive and respectful of others (irrespective of their age or gender) were important values to Wal. He led by his own example.

Encouraged Margaret to dream big

Wal would “*speak of tennis’s Holy Grail, Wimbledon*” (p. 20) and encouraged Margaret to visualise playing there. It was an achievable destination but only if Margaret gave away her other dream to be a champion runner. Margaret credits Wal with guiding her to concentrate on tennis and the pursuit of Wimbledon success. According to Wal, it would require hard work and focused dedication to one, not two, sports. That Margaret did, dedicating herself to being the best she could be. As she describes,

“I took Wal’s every word to heart and when he said, ‘If you want to be Wimbledon champion, you must be prepared to work hard and make sacrifices. I bought into his take-no-prisoners philosophy’” (pp. 26-27).

Holistic coaching approach

As described by Margaret, Wal adopted a holistic approach to developing her talents. Importantly, Wal’s coaching approach centred around his belief that “*it was all about striving to be better*” (p. 26).

Wal sought to perfect Margaret’s technique, improve her footwork and develop a serve-and-volley style of play. In addition, there was an emphasis on sportsmanship and a ‘never-give’ mentality. With respect to sportsmanship, Margaret recalls being told to find herself a new coach if she hurled her racquet in frustration. Equally important to Wal was “*a bloody-minded refusal to give up*” (p. 26). Margaret credits Wal with giving her ‘a killer instinct’; if she could win 6-0 6-0 or win in straight (versus three sets) that should be her plan. Opponents had to win any game they won from Margaret because of their good play, rather than Margaret letting up on them!

CONCLUSIONS

In her book, Margaret concludes that “*Wal Rutter was the first of a number of guardian angels ... (he) nurtured me and without whom I could never have achieved what I have*” (p. 17). There is no greater accolade possible for this remarkable person.

He facilitated Margaret's journey to the highest echelons of tennis greatness and has been respectfully acknowledged by his legendary player for doing so.

The stories told by Margaret Court and Rod Laver about their first coach show remarkable similarities in the approach, philosophy and strategies adopted by Wal Rutter and Charlie Hollis. Taken collectively, the stories remind us that, as coaches, we may well have opportunities to shape the destiny for our players. There are no guarantees that our players will end up as Wimbledon champions but it can, and does, happen.

Both accounts of Margaret and Rod of the significance of their first coach are inspirational and heartening. Let's continue to love our coaching and maintain the passion for our players to achieve happiness and fulfilment in playing the game. Dreams can come true with the right coach and players who are committed to give it their absolute all to be a better player each day going forward. Salutes to Wal Rutter and Charlie Hollis, but not forgetting Margaret Court and Rod Laver!

DECLARED INTEREST

The first author is a friend of Margaret Court having first met Margaret when she came to Melbourne from Albury as a teenager to progress her tennis. Margaret lived with the first author's family for several years and would hit with her and correspond when travelling. The friendship extends through to today.

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RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ACADEMY CONTENT (CLICK BELOW)





Coaching philosophy: "Why do we do things the way we do?"

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Ireland.

ABSTRACT

Coaching philosophy has become the subject of much attention amongst sports researchers and practitioners alike. Rather than formal coach qualifications, it is now believed that many factors influence the philosophy and behaviours of sports coaches. Firstly, this article examines some of the current research related to forming personal coaching philosophy. Secondly, the article intends to encourage tennis coaches to reflect on personal philosophy to gain a greater insight into the belief and values systems that underpin their coaching practice.

Key words: coaching, tennis, philosophy, sport.

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INTRODUCTION

World-renowned tennis coach Nick Bollettieri once described how he constructed the Academy philosophy primarily based on lessons learned from "my years as a paratrooper". More specifically, he defined how "if you put the best together (like paratroopers), you have a chance of raising the level of anything that you did, whether it be in sports or anything in life" (Barlett, 2012). His philosophy was built around early specialisation and work ethic. In this example, the simplistic philosophical belief (influenced by his years in the military) led to many grand slam tournament tennis champions. While the Bollettieri example may sound unsophisticated, the topic of coaching philosophy may be a little more complex.

Without understanding philosophical principles, coaches fail to question how their beliefs and values influence their daily practice. As a direct result, behaviour can become too situation-specific, too reactive (Cassidy, Jones and Potrac, 2015). Some authors suggest that a coach's 'philosophy' underpins their coaching practice and is crucial to understanding their behaviour (Cassidy et al., 2015; Jenkins, 2010; Lyle, 2002). Indeed, if determining personal philosophy can benefit coaching practice, as coaches, we need to consider options to facilitate this discovery. However, practically, the role of a tennis coach is usually hands-on, and coaches often see little value in assessing philosophy as they attempt to cope with more tangible aspects of coaching practice, such as session content and organisation (Nash, Sproule, and Horton, 2008).

Against this background, this article's objective is to first provide coaches with a greater understanding of the theoretical foundations of coaching philosophy. Secondly, this article aims to provide tennis coaches with a practical reflection process to facilitate the discovery of this philosophy.



Coaching philosophy

There have been several attempts to define coaching philosophy. For example, Jenkins (2010) describes coaching philosophy as those beliefs, principles, and values that guide behaviour and characterise one's coaching practice. Similarly, Hogg (1995) describes coaching philosophy as a set of fundamental principles or a values framework that guides a coach in decision-making and behaviour. Based on these descriptions, it appears that philosophy is a personal attribute built on one's individual beliefs or values system. Secondly, this belief and values system influences one's coaching behaviours and decisions. Put simply; philosophical beliefs influence why we do things the way we do on the tennis court.

Furthermore, despite these descriptions, it is worth noting that one's coaching philosophy is not a stable state of thinking. In other words, one's philosophy can change over time. For

example, as tennis coaches, our beliefs and behaviours can regularly adapt during our coaching careers. It is implausible that coaches will teach the same from their first on-court lesson until retirement. For instance, according to Barlett (2012), Bollettieri's teaching philosophy changed dramatically from 1978 to today: more specifically, from initially favouring the traditional all court approach to the modern power game in recent times. Thus, despite the definitions outlined above, philosophy can be an ever-changing personal journey.

Similarly, most coaching philosophy definitions describe the general underpinnings and the influence of one's philosophy on behaviour. However, it appears plausible that coaches require a greater understanding of how this philosophy is initially established from a practical perspective. Interestingly, the establishment and adaptation of personal philosophy have a deep-rooted underpinning from a broad milieu of sources, notably not just the traditional formal coach education route.

Gaining coaching knowledge

Over the past decade, many authors have studied high-performance coaches' epistemological chain to gain greater insight into where they have acquired their coaching knowledge. Epistemology is an individual's stance on learning and knowledge; the Epistemological Chain (EC) is essentially the link amongst an individual's philosophy, beliefs about learning, and the resulting behaviour (Grecic & Collins, 2013). Interestingly, the findings suggest that coaches obtain their knowledge from numerous sources rather than relying entirely on traditional formal coaching courses (Stoszkowski and Collins', 2014; Mallett, Rossi and Tinning, 2007). As a result of an in-depth literature review by Cushion et al. (2010) highlighted that coaches acquire knowledge from three primary sources: specifically (a) Informal (experience, mentoring, reflective practice); (b) non-formal (coach behaviour interventions); and (c) formal (thought programs). Therefore, as tennis coaches, we are learning from various sources, but many of our perceptions and behaviours happen automatically.

Notably, our experience can significantly influence how we do or see things within our coaching practice, even if many of these perceptions and behaviours are tacit by nature and based on personal belief, perspective, and value system (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995, p.7). A recent tennis-specific study by Anderson et al. (2021) study explored performance tennis coach philosophies and approaches to practice design. Their findings suggest that coaches may interact with consistent social and cultural constraints that create a tennis 'form of life. Coach beliefs and, in turn, practice design may therefore reflect the social, cultural, and historical constraints that exist within tennis both internationally and nationally. Cushion et al. (2003) have a similar opinion and claims that coaches have established deep-rooted habitus due to past experiences. These past experiences can range from instilled values from childhood, social interactions, and experience as coaches and athletes ourselves.

In line with Cushion's research, some authors believe that our developmental experience moulds us as coaches. For example, a study by Williams and MacNamara (2020) described how development experience influenced the philosophy underpinning the practice of talent pathway coaches. Also, the purpose of their practice was orientated to impact youth development far and beyond sport. This research may perhaps explain why it is common in tennis to see players with similar playing styles to their coach. Playing experience may also positively influence our coaching decision-making as we have the added advantage of a player's perspective (Jones, Armour and Potrac 2003). In summary, our own developmental experience can potentially influence our thinking and more importantly, our coaching behaviours.

Matching behaviours to philosophy

While considering coaching behaviours, it is critical to consider Adler's (1956) work, in which he hypothesised that internal states such as values could not be observed apart from the action. Thus, what people do is all that can be known about their values. Considering this point from a practical tennis perspective and relating it to everyday practice, values are meaningless unless we display them daily through behaviour as coaches. Nowadays, entering high-performance sports training centres in Europe, coaching values are often emblazoned in large letters, but rarely are they matched with intentional daily behaviours. For example, because words like "discipline" are plastered all over the wall does not mean that players will automatically become more disciplined. Furthermore, words themselves can be perceived in many different ways and therefore understood differently from person to person. The challenge for us as coaches is first to step back from the intense demands of our daily practice to reflect and establish our philosophical beliefs.

Some researchers, such as Lyle (2002), claim that coaches do not have sufficient philosophical understanding to articulate the real values underpinning their thoughts and behaviours. Reflecting on our philosophy can generate increased clarity around these underlying values and behaviours. Even if it is not part of formal coach training, simply taking the time to write a personal philosophy allows coaches to identify and clarify what is important to them personally (Cassidy, Jones and Potrac, 2015).

PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

The following is a brief personal example of some fundamental principles that underpin my coaching philosophy. To help identify these principles, considering the questions below may be helpful. Also, it is helpful from a practical sense to match these principles with the expected training behaviours.

Possible reflection questions

- "What do I believe as a coach and why?"
- "How can my beliefs influence my athletes?"
- "What behavioural change should I see?"

Table 1
Example of coaching principles.

Coaching Principles	How
“Gradually take the stabiliser off” (Autonomy)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Say less, ask more 2. Listen to my players 3. Encourage players to have input into their training
“Tasks first winning later” (Performance-based)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set match objectives based on tasks 2. Training structures, goals are task-based, group selection is task-based 3. Regularly show improvement in tasks
“Each player is an individual project within a team” (Individual approach)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Each player has an individual goal profile 2. Make an effort to know each person both on and off the court 3. Provide personal feedback to each player during sessions
“Tennis is a way of life” (Social side of sport)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organise regular events for both players and parents outside the training centre 2. Match players to train regularly outside of the training program 3. Training always has a fun element, especially at the early stages of the pathway
“Training sessions relate to game philosophy” (Game-based)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Relate content as close as possible to the game 2. Technical blocks never more than 20mins 3. Re-create pressure as much as is possible during a training session

CONCLUSION

Understanding our coaching philosophy provides a roadmap to base our training structures around. Without understanding why we do things the way we do, we risk becoming reactive and lacking a clear structure. Learning is constant and is influenced by a broad milieu of sources. However, reflection is the glue that ultimately makes this learning stick. Finally, as coaches, we can never forget the quote from Julius Caesar that “experience is the teacher of all things.”

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RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ACADEMY CONTENT (CLICK BELOW)





Periodization of strength and conditioning during the competitive period: 6 weeks on tour with elite junior tennis players

Carlos Valle García

Pancho Alvariño Tennis Academy, Spain.

ABSTRACT

The importance of maintaining optimal physical condition during a six-week tour with elite junior players will allow tennis performance to be maintained or diminished as little as possible during a prolonged competitive period. It is important to adapt the type of periodization during the tour according to the needs of each player, as well as to establish physical routines that will allow them to reach their optimal physical, mental and tennis condition.

Key words: strength and conditioning, juniors, tournament tour, periodization.

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INTRODUCTION

The strength and conditioning work during a 6-week tour for junior players is fundamental to maintain their optimal physical condition in each week of competition. The physical condition of the player and the results of the matches during the tour are factors that are interrelated and have a direct influence on each other. In this article we analyse the periodization followed by elite junior players in the previous training blocks, during the tournaments and the routines used daily. For more information on periodization in high performance tennis players see Martens & Maes (2005), Porta & Sanz (2005), Roetert & McEnroe (2005) and Morris (2005) among others.

TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE

The planning of the ITF Juniors tournament tour in 2019 was composed of 5 tournaments, two Grade 2 (G2) tournaments - Salsomaggiore and Città di Prato -, one Grade 1 (G1) tournament - Città di Santa Croce -, one Grade A (GA) tournament - Trofeo Bonfiglio -, and one Grand Slam - Roland Garros (see Table 1). As preparation and contact with the players, a block of pre-competitive training was carried out to prepare them for the first tournaments and a block of training prior to Roland Garros. Molina (2005) provided specific details on periodization during this type of tour.

IMPORTANCE OF PRE-TOUR WORK

Prior to the start of the tour, the players and coaches of the players selected for the Grand Slam Development Fund (GSDF) European Tour 2019 filled out reports with details of tennis, mental and physical aspects. Delving into the area of physical preparation, it is essential to know the injury history prior to the tour of each player as well as the discomfort or possible chronic injuries they may have. This is a determining factor in the planning and structuring of the sessions during the tour. It is also vitally important to know what kind of physical

Table 1

Tournament schedule on the European Tour 2019.

DATE	COMPETITION
25-28 APRIL	BLOCK OF PRE-COMPETITIVE TRAINING
29 APRIL	36th Bayer di Salsomaggiore Tournament, Italy (G2)
5-11 MAY	27 International Tournament Junior Circuit "Città di Prato", Italy (G2)
11-16 MAY	41st Torneo Internazionale "Città Di Santa Croce" Mauro Sabatini, Italy (G1)
16-23 MAY	60th Trofeo Bonfiglio - Campionati Internazionali d'Italia Juniores, Italy (GA)
23-31 MAY	TRAINING BLOCK
1 JUNE	ROLAND GARROS

work the players do daily: weekly hours of tennis training and physical preparation, physical goals, type of specific work prior to the tour, routines during and outside of competition and other relevant aspects of the player, as it is essential for the effectiveness of any planning that the coach knows his players, knows how they respond to certain situations and plan accordingly. It is this in-depth understanding of the players that will reward your programme with success (Morris, 2005).

Effective communication is a two-way process (i.e., it requires intermediate steps and a common understanding between two or more individuals) and is fundamental between all components of the team surrounding each player. (Young, 2006) and fundamental between all the components of the team surrounding each player, so it is necessary to ensure prior communication between the player and his technical staff to achieve maximum performance during the tour. Another relevant aspect prior to the tour, in this communication



process between technical staff and coaches of the tour, is to obtain objective results of various physical tests performed by the player, from stress tests to objective data from physical tests. These data are of great help in drawing a physical profile prior to the tour and to know the level of the player in the different areas of physical condition.

PERIODIZATION DURING THE TOUR

There are several factors to consider that can change the practical application of periodization during a tournament tour. The main factors that complicate its application in tennis are the lack of an official off-season period, the single-elimination competition system, the continuous ranking system, and the unique nature of the game, which constitute a serious challenge (Roetert and McEnroe, 2005). Therefore, physical trainers must find and apply the periodization model that achieves the best performance of the player during the competitive period.

Some contemporary periodization models are the following: integrated methods (training of all elements of the game (conditional, coordinative, cognitive) with emphasis on technique and tactics) by Bondarchuck (1988) ATR (Accumulation - load, transformation - realization) by Issurin and Kaverin (1985) structured methods or structured micro-cycles (weekly periodization, concentrated blocks, prolonged fitness) by Tschien (1985), Seirul.lo (1987) and Bompa

(1999), which present solid alternatives to periodization in sport games including tennis (Crespo, 2011). During the present tour an adaptation of structured weekly micro-cycles between tournaments was used using the ATR model, adapting its three phases previously mentioned to the calendar of the next tournament.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION - PRACTICAL EXAMPLE OF A MICROCYCLE BETWEEN TOURNAMENTS

Development of a microcycle prototype with exercises.

The application of the "Accumulation" phase within the microcycle between tournaments was only carried out if the player finished the tournament in the qualifying phase for the main draw or in the first or second round, having enough time to continue with the following phases of the periodization in the following days (see Table 1). The aim of this phase is to try to maintain strength levels at their optimum or to decrease them as little as possible during the six weeks of competition touring. The number of sets and repetitions are adapted to the player's experience in each exercise, motor control and the difficulty of its execution. In this way, a margin is established in the number of repetitions (which will depend on the objective of the program) so that the player adapts the subjective load to the difficulty of reaching the percentage of subjective strength established by the physical trainer without negatively affecting the performance of the tennis player when the competition begins.

The transformation phase during an adapted competitive microcycle is based on plyometric training/high speed execution through resisted training with elastic bands, light weight medicine balls, racquet with external resistance or a plastic cover and own body weight. Plyometric training has been shown to be an important stimulus for improving explosive actions in junior tennis players. (Fernández-Fernández, Sáez de Villareal, Sanz-Rivas, & Moya, 2016). It is important that the execution technique is correct, the rest time between sets is adequate, and the number of repetitions is adapted to the objective. In coordinative training, the importance of explosive movements with visual stimuli of short duration and high intensities, with high rest times (density 1:4) is emphasised.

Table 2
General microcycle between tournaments.

DAY 5	DAY 4	DAY 3	DAY 2	DAY 1	MATCH
WARM-UP 30'	MOBILITY ROUTINE 20' + SPECIFIC WARM-UP 20'	WARM-UP 20'	MOBILITY ROUTINE 20' + SPECIFIC WARM-UP 10'	WARM-UP 20' + MOBILITY ROUTINE 10'	TOURNAMENT COOL DOWN 30'
INJURY PREVENTION PROGRAM 20'	COORDINATION TRAINING 20'	INJURY PREVENTION PROGRAM 20'	SPECIFIC TENNIS COORDINATION	PLAYER ROUTINE 10'	
		EXPLOSIVE POWER 25'	TRAINING 20'	REACTIVE TRAINING 15'	
TENNIS	TENNIS	TENNIS	TENNIS	TENNIS	
STRENGTH PROGRAM 30'					
COOL DOWN 30'	COOL DOWN 30'	COOL DOWN 30'	COOL DOWN 30'	COOL DOWN 10'	
RPE: 6-7 DENSITY: Light-middle load	RPE: 5-6 DENSITY: 1:4	RPE: 4 DENSITY: 1:5	RPE: 4 DENSITY: 1:5	RPE: 3 DENSITY: 1:5	



Finally, in the realization phase, the days prior to the match, training with specific movements on the court and reaction to visual stimuli of high intensity and very short time were performed. Because tennis could be classified as a task of external regulation, where it is necessary to collect and adapt continuously to the information received from the environment and the player must constantly anticipate the ball and his opponent (Micó Salvador, Martínez-Gallego, & Rams, 2020) the objective in this phase is to work specifically on the player's reactive capacities with specific movements and/or racquet, varying in the cognitive and perceptive process with different types of balls, cognitive tasks, and body adjustment. Both the transformation phase and the realization phase were carried out prior to tennis training, since this type of exercises provide a high neuromuscular activation that enable the player to start training in an optimal competitive state.

It is important to highlight that the general microcycle between tournaments is flexible and should be adapted to the needs or objectives of the players in the competitive period between tournaments. After losing in the tournament, the players whose fatigue index accumulated after the matches was high, had one day of recovery between tournaments, adapting the general microcycle to the needs of the players and the calendar of the next tournament. If players had three days until the next tournament, their periodization generally started on "day 3" to prepare for the next match.



PRACTICAL APPLICATION - COMPETITION DAY

During the competition day, the main task of the physical trainer is to help the player in the pre-match warm-up or pre-match training. Since each player has his specific preferences and routines, the physical trainer's work consist in helping the warm-up for those players who needed it (it was optional):

1. **Exercises of progressive mobility of the joints:** pelvic girdle, shoulder girdle, back, wrists, ankles.
2. **Body activation.**
3. **Specific activation with equipment:** with elastic bands, medicine ball, spades, etc.
4. **Proprioceptive exercises and plyometrics:** Static and dynamic balance followed by explosive movements of high intensity and short duration such as Dropjump and countermovement jump, tennis specific coordination with weight transfer.
5. **Variability:** Reactive and perceptual exercises with tennis ball and reactive ball.



LOAD CONTROL DURING THE TOUR

One of the aspects of improvement for a better control of the loads during the training blocks of both the first and the sixth week could have been the implementation of the load control through the subjective values of the perceived effort of each training session of Genevois, Rogowski, & Le Solliec (2020). In this way, both coaches and physical trainers could obtain some reference values on the load of each session and/or match, which could help in making decisions on the duration, intensity, and number of training sessions.

CONCLUSIONS

The application of such periodization in a six-week tournament tour with elite junior players was successful in allowing the ITF/GSDF team players to continue their pre-tournament fitness without any injuries that prevented them from competing. It also helped some of the players to establish a physical routine prior to matches and training, helping them to achieve optimal physical and psychological activation.

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RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ACADEMY CONTENT (CLICK BELOW)





How to practice the return and +1s in women's professional tennis

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to present stroke placements of the return, the 3rd stroke and 4th stroke in professional women's tennis. Based on recent scientific insights (Born et al., 2021), training recommendations as well as practice patterns will be derived from these results. For returns, training recommendations include aiming to the middle zones and longer than the service line. For 3rd strokes, it is recommended to e.g., train hitting into the c-zones, whereas for 4th strokes this is e.g., hitting more frequently to the backhand or, respectively, the weaker side of the opponent. Practice patterns are exemplified for each stroke.

Key words: extended game opening, stroke placement, match analysis, zones of the court.

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INTRODUCTION

The extended game opening, consisting of the serve, return, 3rd and 4th stroke is a crucial situation in tennis (Born, 1996; Born, 2017; Weber & Born, 2012). This is because every point clearly has to start with a serve which, in most cases, is followed by a return. Moreover, 70% of all points are already played after four strokes (Born, 2017; Fernandez-Fernandez et al, 2007; O'Shannessy, 2016; Weber et al., 2010; Weber & Born, 2012). Since tennis-research has widely addressed the serve (i.e., Born, 2017; Grambow et al., 2021; Meffert et al., 2018; O'Donoghue & Brown, 2008), this article focuses on the practice of the return, 3rd and 4th stroke, particularly with respect to professional female tennis.

Several factors are important for a great successful stroke: speed, spin, percentage, placement. Hereinafter we will focus on the latter. According to the tactical principles the stroke placement into certain zones of the court can be used to move the opponent sideways out of the court, push her back and, thus, away from the baseline or put her under time pressure (Crespo & Miley, 1998; Ferrauti, Maier & Weber, 2014; Tiley, 2002; Schönborn, 2012). Also, a misplaced stroke (e.g., too short) can bring players in a difficult situation.

SAMPLE

28 female professional players (mean age: 23.5; mean WTA ranking: 253.3) on the WTA and ITF Tour in the years 2018-2020 were part of the sample.

RESULTS ON STROKE PLACEMENT

Return placement

According to the return placement of the players in the sample (Figure 1a; Born et al., 2021), the following training recommendations can be derived:

- Hit the return to the middle zones and longer than the service line (zones 1b, 2b, 1d, 2d).
- Hit the return more frequent to the backhand/weaker side.

Since a deeper return is considered to be more effective, the third training recommendation for the return is:

- Hit the return to the deeper zones (1b, 2b) while maintaining a high in-percentage.

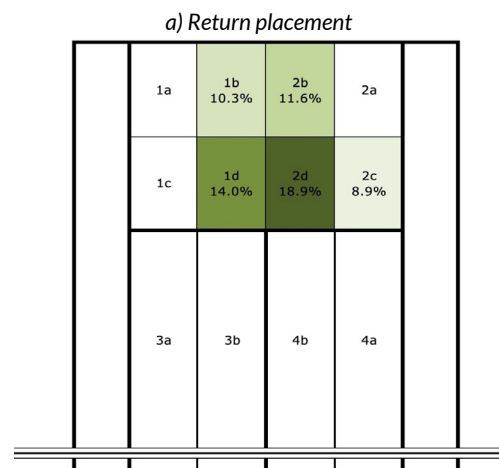


Figure 1a. Target zones according to training recommendations for the return (a). The darker the green, the more frequented the zone is.

3rd stroke placement

- The 3rd stroke placement of professional female players is shown in Figure 1b (Born et al., 2021). Accordingly, training recommendations derived are: Hit the 3rd stroke into the outer zones and longer than the service line (zones 1a, 1c, 2a, 2c).

- Hit the 3rd stroke more frequent to the backhand/weaker side.

It can be argued that many of the 3rd strokes that landed in 2d were intended to go to 2c since the c-zones are ideal to move the opponent out of the court while keeping up a high ball velocity. Hence the third training recommendation on where to place the 3rd stroke is:

- Hit the 3rd stroke to the c-zones, especially to zone 2c while maintaining a high in-percentage.

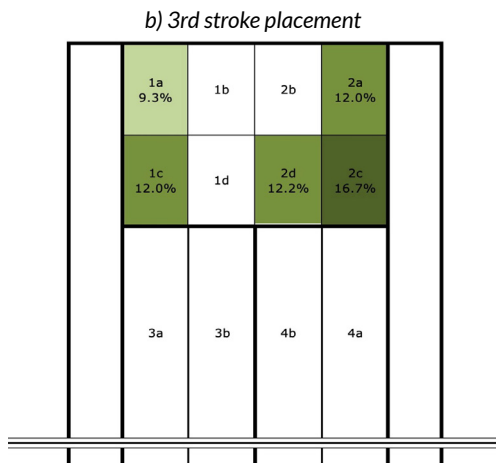


Figure 1b. Target zones according to training recommendations for the 3rd stroke (b). The darker the green, the more frequented the zone is.

4th stroke Placement

The 4th stroke placement of professional female players is, at least in part, correlated to different 3rd stroke placements (Figure 1c; Born et al., 2021). But, since the 4th stroke is more often played out of a defensive situation than the 3rd stroke, its stroke placement is more spread-out. Accordingly, the training recommendations for the 4th stroke are:

- Hit the 4th stroke longer than the service line and when tactically necessary away from the lines (2d and 1d).
- Hit the 4th stroke more frequent to the backhand/weaker side of the opponent.
- When tactically appropriate, hit the 4th stroke to 2c while maintaining a high in-percentage.

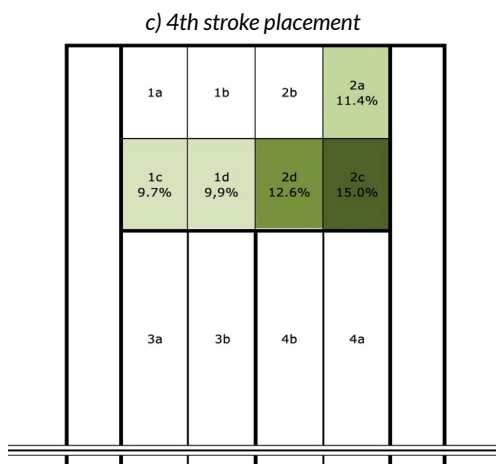


Figure 1c. Target zones according to training recommendations for the 4th stroke (c). The darker the green, the more frequented the zone is.

Keep in mind that aiming closer to the lines could increase the number of errors. Find the best solution of maintaining a high in-percentage while hitting into the tactically smart zones.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION EXERCISES

It is essential to not only know about the best placement for the different strokes (i.e., target zones) but to know how to best implement this knowledge into everyday practice. Therefore, specific practice patterns are presented below. All practice patterns are described for two players and one coach but can easily be adjusted to less or more players. Firstly, the respective practice pattern focuses on a high stroke repetition to achieve stability (Ferrauti, Maier & Weber, 2014). Secondly, the focus shifts to applying the stroke in the extended game opening to simulate specific competition affordances (Krause, Buszard, Reid, Pinder & Farrow, 2019). Always keep in mind that a good placement is only as good as the in-percentage with which the strokes are executed; thus, aim for more than 80% in (Born et al., 2021).

Return

In general, the return should have a much higher priority in practice than it usually has, since it is one of the most played and, thus, important strokes in a tennis match. Accordingly, whenever you practice serves add the return with respect to specific training recommendations.

Exercise #1:

Player 1 is returning, coach or player 2 are serving. Player 1 has one target zone for her returns (Figure 2a). While the serve direction is known at the beginning, this advantage is taken away when the exercise advances. Count the returns (out of ten) that are in the target zone. To ensure a high number of repetitions, the returning player returns every serve regardless whether the serve is in or out.

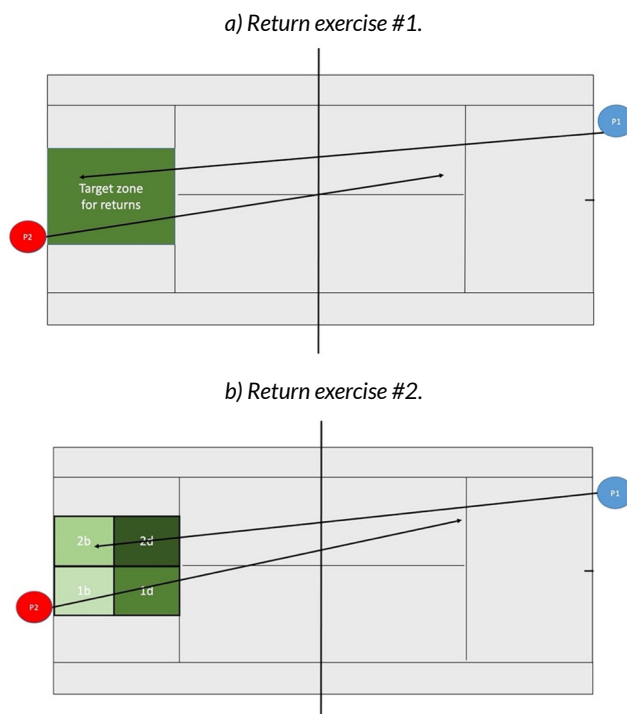


Figure 2. Return exercises #1 (a) and #2 (b).

Exercise #2:

Setting as in exercise #1. The target zone is more detailed now (Figure 2b), so the returning player gets specific tasks where to hit her returns to, e.g.: "Aim to the backhand side (2b, 2d)", "aim to the deeper zones (1b, 2b)", or "aim to a specific zone depending on the serve direction" (e.g., wide serve from deuce → return to 1b/1d).

Exercise #3:

Setting and tasks as in exercise #1 or #2 but the point is played out. When hitting the return into the required target zone the returning player wins one bonus point.

3rd stroke

The 3rd stroke is also a crucial part of the extended game opening but is still also often neglected regarding specific exercises within practice sessions. The following exercises are easy to implement into practice and will increase the quality of the 3rd stroke enormously.

Exercise #1:

Player 1 imitates a serve motion without actually hitting a ball. The coach feeds the ball from the return position (Figure 3a) and puts the player in different situations for her 3rd stroke by varying speed, spin, placement and height of the ball. The players get specific target zones to aim at: in the beginning to the outer zones behind the service line (1a, 1c, 2a, 2c) and subsequently to more specific targets like the outer zones on the backhand side (e.g., 2a and 2c) or the c-zones.

Exercise #2:

Player 1 is serving to player 2 while the coach stands behind player 2 to feed a ball instead of the return whenever necessary (Figure 3b). The players hit serve, return, 3rd and 4th stroke into the same target zones as in exercise #1. The 4th stroke provides instant feedback of the quality of the 3rd stroke.

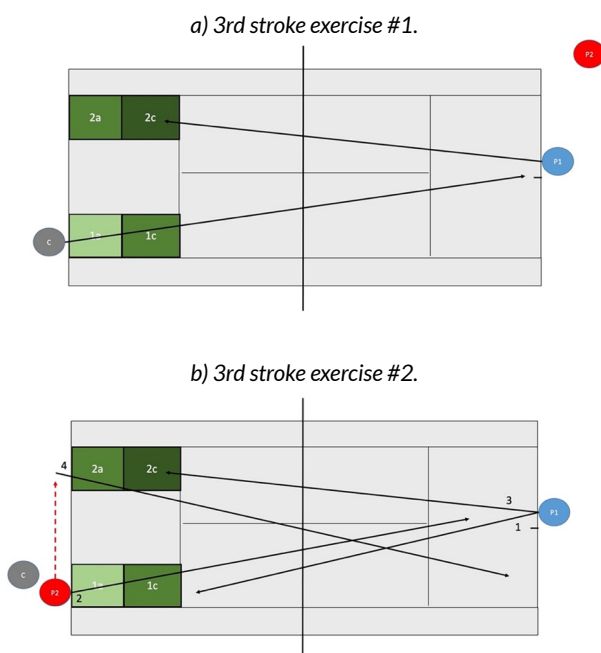


Figure 3. 3rd stroke exercise #1 (a) and #2 (b).

Exercise #3:

The players play points, and the server wins bonus points for hitting the 3rd stroke into the required target zone.

4th stroke

Although the 4th stroke is the "last" part and the least played stroke within the extended game opening, it is still the 2nd stroke of the returning player, thus, important and should be practiced in combination with the return (Born et al., 2021).

Exercise #1:

Player 1 is in the return position with player 2 waiting behind her (Figure 4). The coach serves and then feeds another ball to the player for her to hit the return and the 4th stroke. By doing this the players get a lot of return and 4th stroke repetitions and the coach is able to control what kind of return and 4th stroke they have to hit. The target zones for the 4th stroke differ depending on the tactical situation: In a neutral or offensive situation, players should aim for 2c, whereas in a more defensive situation, the first target should simply be longer than the service line.

Exercise #2:

The players play points against each other. The returning player wins bonus points either when hitting the 4th stroke into one of the target zones or only when hitting in the tactically smart target zone (e.g., offensive situation → 2c).

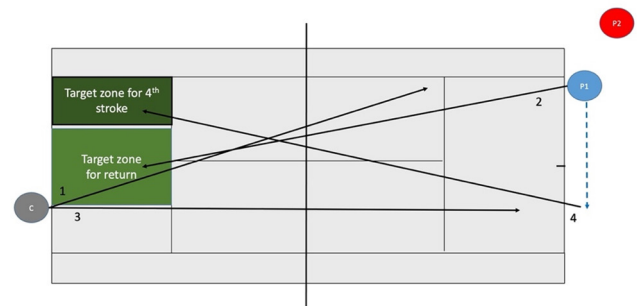


Figure 4. 4th stroke exercise #1.

Combined exercise:

Two players play rallies starting with serve and return. For each stroke (including the serve) there are specific target zones to which the players should hit the respective strokes (e.g., serve wide, return to middle zones behind service line, 3rd stroke to 2c, 4th stroke to backhand side longer than service line). For every target hit, players earn one point, for every combined hit (e.g., return and 4th stroke both hit the target) three points. Either the players count their points as a team or against each other. Note: playing only four-stroke rallies instead of the whole rally causes more repetitions of an extended game opening in a given time and, thus, sets the focus respectively.

CONCLUSIONS

Research shows that there are certain recommendable target zones on the tennis court with respect to the different strokes of the extended game opening. This is e.g., returning to middle zones behind the service line, hitting the 3rd stroke to outer

zones and the 4th stroke longer than the service line to the opponents' backhand or weaker side respectively. Coaches and players should be aware of this and implement specific practice of the stroke placements in their everyday practice.

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RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ACADEMY CONTENT (CLICK BELOW)





The credibility of Instagram-based information on strength and conditioning in tennis

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ABSTRACT

Background: Social networks are an important and widely used resource for training information for many people. However, the content on these platforms regarding the recommendations for strength and conditioning in relation to tennis has not yet been fully evaluated. We investigated the credibility of Instagram-based information on the strength and conditioning development specifically in relation to tennis. **Methods:** Three experts with more than ten years of scientific and professional experience in the field of tennis (39.6±7.4 years of age) evaluated the credibility of the Instagram-based content of five selected accounts based on three aspects: information based on scientific knowledge, the practical applicability of information and the demonstration quality of the presented exercises. We calculated the means (AS) and standard deviations (SD) for each criterion. **Results:** The results of this research indicate a very low level of credibility in relation to the data published on social networks. The information is inaccurate and poorly verified, and as such is not a reliable source and selection for the purpose of strength and conditioning progress in tennis. **Conclusion:** Only validated training approaches and exercises that leverage players' fitness abilities might serve as an avenue for strength and conditioning promotion in tennis.

Key words: tennis, strength and conditioning, credibility of information, Instagram.

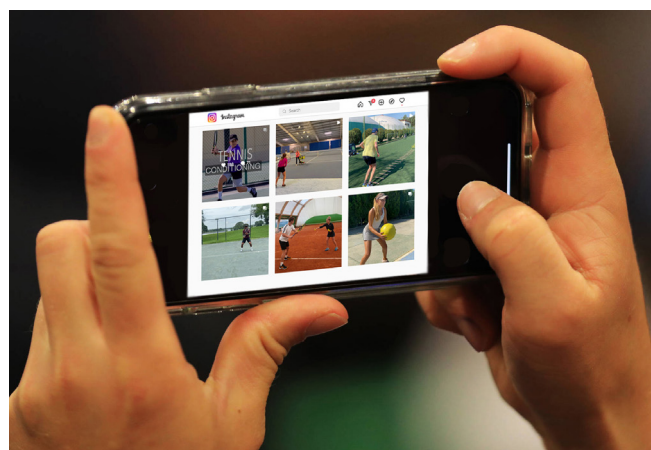
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INTRODUCTION

Social networks have become a global trend in recent years and have greatly changed the way we communicate on a daily basis. Thus, social networks have soon been recognized as a potential promotional tool for direct communication with clients, users, and consumers. Social networks can be defined as applications that allow users to connect with each other by creating personal profiles (Kaplan & Heanlein, 2010). Dean (2020) states that currently 3.96 billion people throughout the world, which is over 50% of the population, use social networks. The average user has more than 8 profiles and spends an average of two and a half hours per day on various platforms. The increasing use of these social networks has also resulted in the fact that published information is often not based on previous scientific knowledge, so the question of credibility and practical applicability arises. This can also be down to the fact that much of the information published on these platforms is not under editorial supervision (Johnson & Kaye, 2004). Also, social networks have launched a new trend of knowledge transfer through various profiles that consider themselves competent to give advice and recommendations, these being more commonly known as "influencers". Even today, it is a known fact that there are pages of dubious relevance on the internet, one of these being Wikipedia, a general information website used by millions that can in fact be edited by anyone in the general population (Chesney, 2006; Ferreira et al, 2019). For social networks, the situation is almost the same - the content we watch is created by people who do not necessarily have the required expert knowledge related to the information that they publish. Ferreira et al. (2019) conducted a study on the reliability, accuracy and completeness of information on lower back pain in the population that can be found on the Internet. The research showed that only 43% of the processed sources have accurate recommendations regarding lower back pain and that the comprehensiveness of treatment recommendations



on all sites is extremely low. However, to the best of the authors' knowledge, no study has been conducted on the Instagram-based accuracy of information about strength and conditioning development in tennis. Accordingly, in this study, we investigated the credibility of Instagram-based information on the strength and conditioning development in tennis.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

In the first phase of this research, five profiles were selected that meet the following criteria: a) profiles providing practical information related to the fitness training of tennis players, b) profiles have a minimum of 2000 followers and c) profiles are publishing information in English. After selecting 151 videos, three trained experts with more than ten years of scientific

and professional experience in the field of tennis (39.6±7.4 years of age) (one expert with PhD diploma in Kinesiology and two with master’s degrees in Kinesiology (5-years of university education) evaluated the credibility of the material collected based on the following criteria:

1. Information based on scientific knowledge.
2. Practical applicability of the information.
3. Demonstration quality of the presented exercises.

For each criterion, the experts expressed their degree of agreement on a five-point Likert scale with number one denoting complete disagreement and number five complete agreement. Each expert coded independently with multiple checks for interobserver agreement, all of which were above .85. The statistical package Stata, V.12 (StataCorp, Texas, USA) was used to process the results, and the descriptive statistical parameters presented in the research below are both the means and standard of deviations.

Hypotheses:

Three hypotheses were set for this research:

- H1: Videos on the strength and conditioning in tennis posted on social media are based on scientific knowledge.
- H2: Videos on the strength and conditioning in tennis posted on social media have high practical applicability.
- H3: Videos on the strength and conditioning in tennis posted on social networks have high-quality demonstrations.

RESULTS

The mean scores of all the videos for each criterion was 3.03±1.00. Overall, the most frequently awarded rating was 3 (500) and the least frequently awarded rating was 5 (59).

Information based on scientific knowledge

The criteria item “Information based on scientific knowledge” received an average score of 3.16±0.99 based on the ratings of all the evaluators and as such is the best rated criteria within this study. The total number of individual grades per evaluator is shown in Table 1 below and the most frequently awarded grades by each evaluator are marked in yellow.

Table 1

A comparison between the total number of individual assessments for the criteria item „Information based on scientific knowledge “ for all three evaluators.

INFORMATION BASED ON SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE					
Rating	1	2	3	4	5
Evaluator 1	10	16	58	64	3
Evaluator 2	15	19	46	62	9
Evaluator 3	14	24	58	51	4

Practical applicability of information

This criteria item received the overall average rating of 3.03±1.04 and is slightly lower rated than the criteria item “The basis of information on scientific knowledge”. The total number of individual grades per evaluator is shown in Table 2 below and the most frequently awarded grades by each evaluator are marked in yellow.

Table 2

A comparison between the total number of individual assessments for the criteria item „Practical applicability of information“ for all three evaluators.

PRACTICAL APLICABILITY OF INFORMATION					
Rating	1	2	3	4	5
Evaluator 1	10	40	55	40	6
Evaluator 2	21	35	37	43	15
Evaluator 3	6	26	63	48	8

Demonstration quality of the presented exercises

The criteria item „Demonstration quality of the presented exercises” received an overall average score of 2.89±0.97 which makes it the lowest rated criteria item in this study. The total number of individual grades per evaluator is shown in Table 3 below and as in the previous tables, the most frequently awarded grades by each evaluator are marked in yellow.

Table 3

A comparison between the total number of individual assessments for the criteria item „Demonstration quality of the presented exercises“ for all three evaluators.

DEMONSTRATION QUALITY OF THE PRESENTED EXERCISES					
Rating	1	2	3	4	5
Evaluator 1	17	50	52	28	4
Evaluator 2	16	34	55	40	6
Evaluator 3	7	24	76	40	4

DISCUSSION

The aim of this article was to critically review the credibility of Instagram-based information on strength and conditioning in tennis training. Strength and conditioning recommendations for tennis training published on Instagram from trustworthy sources failed to meet our benchmarks for credibility, provided a high proportion of inaccurate or unclear recommendations, and lacked comprehensiveness. In general, the selected accounts did not provide adequate resources to independently verify the truthfulness of the information provided.

Previous research had surveyed the accuracy of information only for a specific type of prevention training (i.e., lower back pain) (Hendrick et al, 2012; Ferreira et al, 2019). In contrast to previous studies, we specifically surveyed the credibility of Instagram-based information in relation to strength and conditioning in tennis (Li et al, 2001; Butler & Foster, 2003; Hendrick et al, 2012; Black, Sullivan, Mani, 2018; Ferreira et al, 2019). Based on the findings of previous studies showing that commercial websites were mostly of poor quality, our a priori hypothesis was that non-commercial freely accessible private Instagram accounts would provide more comprehensive and accurate information compared to commercial websites (Li et al, 2001; Butler & Foster, 2003; Hendrick et al, 2012) This was not the case for many of the assessed strength and conditioning Instagram accounts.

We found a very low average score for each criterion. None of the three criteria items received an average score higher than 4.5, which we believe can be considered as a threshold for meeting a single criterion. The results of the research refuse the first hypothesis which claims that the videos published on Instagram, related to the fitness training of tennis players, are based on scientific knowledge. Although an overall score for this criteria item was the highest average rating compared to the other two criteria items, this rating does not instill confidence that the published videos are reliable and based on scientific information. Moreover, the results of the research do not confirm the second hypothesis, which claimed that videos related to the fitness training of tennis players published on Instagram have great practical applicability. This indicates that the videos are non-specific and therefore the information provided is very unsuitable for actual use on a tennis court. There is empirical evidence to the importance of sport-specific stimulus for enhancing on-court performance (Warren & Farrow, 2013; Fernandez-Fernandez et al, 2015). Something of particular concern is the very low average score for the demonstration quality of the presented exercises. Noticeably, this is the worst rated criteria item in this study. Our results refuse the third hypothesis which stated that the videos related to the fitness training of tennis players published on Instagram provide high quality demonstrations. There is empirical evidence of the effectiveness of demonstration in specifying the task, especially for children and youth, which has been shown to be of primary importance (Haguetauer et al, 2005). People learn most easily by observing at a certain action that is to be adopted, or through kinesthetic learning where they imitate a "model" that demonstrates a movement or exercise.



A high number of strength and conditioning recommendations given by selected Instagram accounts in our review were either inaccurate or unclear, which risks misleading the public. If one of the goals of Instagram-based information is to help coaches, players, medical staff and parents in their everyday practice, these sources of Instagram-based information on strength and conditioning in tennis must provide the necessary means to make informed decisions. For this to happen, improving the credibility standards, as well as providing accurate and comprehensive training recommendations is necessary.

The strengths of this study include the participation of three experts with more than ten years of scientific and professional experience in the field of tennis. Another strength involves a very high number of consistencies between the three evaluators (above .85 in interobserver agreement). One potential limitation to the study was the use and analysis of only one social platform (Instagram). Nevertheless, our choice was based on the fact that Instagram is one of the most used platforms worldwide. Another limitation involves the small number of social media accounts that were evaluated.

CONCLUSION

Selected Instagram profiles demonstrated low credibility standards, provided mostly inaccurate information, and lacked comprehensiveness across all types of strength and conditioning information they were providing in relation to tennis. Our findings highlight the need for these social media accounts to reformulate their training recommendations to reflect current evidence in tennis-related strength and conditioning. As a practical application, specific-tennis related exercises that are scientifically validated could potentially be more beneficial tennis players (i.e., sport-specific on-court drills, sport-specific reactive agility drills, neuromuscular exercises...). If used, this approach could be valuable to the coaches, athletes, and medical staff in addressing players' needs. Beneficial training should be the only the verified targeted training and exercise programs used in order to prolong and safeguard players' careers as well as improve their performance.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND FUNDING

The authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest and that they did not receive any funding to conduct the research.

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RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ACADEMY CONTENT (CLICK BELOW)





Reflections from a humble and much revered Wimbledon champion

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a review of the post-match interviews with the Australian Ash Barty during the 2021 Wimbledon Championships. Seven transcripts were inductively content analysed to reveal six dominant themes. The analysis provides insight into Barty's mindset and highlights the importance of her coach, support team and role model. Implications for coaches to adhere to sound coaching principles are discussed.

Key words: Ash Barty, mindset, well-being.

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INTRODUCTION

Much has been written about the magical journey of Ash Barty to Wimbledon champion. Intrigued with her success, we (the authors) reviewed her post-match interviews (Wimbledon, 2021) to see what light they might shed on her outstanding feat. What were the key factors that might help to explain her success? This paper reports on our review of the transcripts.

PROCEDURE

Copies of transcripts (7) of Barty's post-match interviews were retrieved from the official 2021 Wimbledon website. Ethics application was sought but not required as data was taken from the public domain.

DATA ANALYSIS

An inductive content analysis was conducted to analyse the transcripts. Following Patton's (2002) recommended procedure for analysing qualitative data, key phrases and paragraphs in the transcripts were identified. Those sharing explicitly similar meaning were then grouped into higher order themes. The authors, both experienced researchers, conducted their own analysis of the data that was then shared. Discrepancies between the authors were consensually validated (Patton, 2002).

RESULTS

Six higher order themes were identified in the analysis. These themes were: plan your play and compete for every point; respect opponent and embrace the challenge; competing is fun; dream 'big'; priority to being a good person and accepting the journey will have ups and downs.



DISCUSSION

The findings of the review provide insight into understanding key elements of Barty being a champion.

Plan your play and compete for every point

For us (the authors), one of the most critical insights into Barty's mindset was found when she described her approach to competing, and specifically:

"I think each and every point it's important to try to execute as best you can, keep it simple. Really the score-line for me was irrelevant... It was more about the process of trying to do the best that I could each and every point on its merit, and understand you're going to make some mistakes, she's going to come up with some really good stuff. You accept that, move on, continue to try to bring it back to the patterns we wanted to do".

This description directs our attention to the importance of having a game plan, pro-actively attempting to execute it on each and every point with total commitment, but accepting total perfection is not a reality. Mistakes will be made and one's opponent will understandably make some exceptional winners.

Respect opponent and embrace the challenge

After several matches Barty credited her opponent as an "incredible competitor who brings the best out in me". In these instances, Barty embraces the challenge to play at her best. It appears that she truly relishes, and looks forward to, these pressure matches knowing that they will require her to access the upper limits of her abilities. These are matches when anything less than an exceptional level of commitment throughout the match will not suffice. As described by Barty, "You have to bring your best and be engaged for the whole match".

Competing is fun

Another valuable insight into Barty's approach to competing can be gleaned from her description of "the moment, it's all taking it in, it's about enjoying it". Elaborating on this, Barty described her semi-final match:

"I was really able to enjoy myself today right from the start I had a lot of fun. That was a focus of mine. I wanted to go out there and enjoy playing in such an incredible moment, and regardless of the result, walk off the court knowing that I had enjoyed it and had fun".

It appears Barty embraces a way to find competition fun. For her, the outcome of matches is somewhat irrelevant. It is about 'the process' of being fully challenged and knowing that true satisfaction and enjoyment comes from within and is not necessarily dependent on the results of matches. Successfully competing is a cherished inner experience of being in the present, knowing she have given it her very best endeavours.

Dreaming 'big'

"I just hope I made Evonne proud" Barty told the Centre Court crowd in her victory acceptance speech. The 'Evonne' referred to here is unquestionably known to many of us. It is the legendary Evonne Goolagong Cawley who herself had first won Wimbledon 50 years ago. No wonder Barty referred to her Wimbledon win as an "aligning of the stars" and a dream come true "to achieve her biggest dream".

Evonne has been Barty's inspiration and mentor for many years. She had dared Barty to dream big, advocating that dreams do come true (Cawley & Jarratt, 1993). Yes, they certainly did come true for Barty and Evonne, begging the question whether Wimbledon success would have happened without those dreams. We guess we will never know for sure, but we surmise not. Barty was inspired to commit herself to the holy grail. Evonne had given her a path to follow! As described by Barty:

"... I have worked so hard my whole career with my team and with people that mean the most to me to try and achieve my goals and my dreams".



It has not been a solo effort by Barty, but how refreshing to see a player so opening and generously acknowledge her support team. Again, we see a mindset that is truly inclusive, appreciative and selfless. This comes through a number of times in her interviews, but none so clearly as when Barty credits her team with successfully getting her back on the court after a serious hip injury that had forced her to retire from the recent French Championships. What we can glean from this is the 'power of the team' is greater than the 'power of one' individual! In this regard, Barty described her support team as the "best in the world".

Priority to being a good person

According to Barty,

"I've just tried to live by my values that my parents instilled in me. I mean that's always been my priority, is making sure that I'm a good human being. Being able to learn from my parents and my siblings, my family, was a massive part of my upbringing. I was just extremely lucky that I was able to have an opportunity to learn how to play the game of tennis. But I think being a good human being is absolutely my priority every single day".

This quote says volumes about Barty, the person. It goes to suggest that had Barty not achieved tennis's highest acclaims as Wimbledon champion, she still would have been successful and fulfilled. She would still have achieved inner peace and contentment. Life appears balanced for Barty and there is ample room for both tennis and living in accord with a set of high morals and family and community (including indigenous cultural) values.

Accept the journey will have ups and downs

On a number of occasions Barty referred to the difficulties she encountered, and grew stronger from, along the path to Wimbledon victory. Her time out from tennis after winning Junior Wimbledon as a 15 year old is well documented (e.g.,

Trollope, 2016), as is her recovery from a serious hip injury in Paris only weeks out from Wimbledon (e.g., Battersby, 2021). As Barty says, “It’s just trying to find a way each and every day”. It was apparently not easy at times but, according to Barty, she would not change anything. No regrets. Just learning experiences! She believed there was a ‘silver lining’ in all setbacks.

Practical Implications for Coaches

What insights can a coach extract from Barty’s reflections? We suggest a coach might self-reflect on:

- Developing and shaping a player’s approach to the game by always encouraging fun and well-being; instilling realistic expectations about challenges along the way; and rewarding/acknowledging a player’s efforts to train, prepare for matches and compete for every point (versus match results)
- Arranging, and managing, a support team around a player (the composition of which will depend on the player’s needs)
- Being an outstanding role model who is ethical, professional, honest and sincere

CONCLUSION

The review we conducted provides clues for understanding Barty’s ‘winning’ mindset and the key factors important to her success (e.g., her coach, support team and role model).

As such, there is an opportunity here for a coach to reflect on their own coaching practice to ensure they are adhering to sound coaching principles (Weinberg & Gould, 2019), with a focus on promoting a player’s well-being and developing that player’s abilities, interests and love of the game.

In closing, the tennis community has been captivated by Barty’s charm and humility in her pursuit of personal excellence. She is testament to what can be achieved with the right mental approach, coach, mentor and support team.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND FUNDING

The authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest and that they did not receive any funding to conduct the research.

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RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ACADEMY CONTENT (CLICK BELOW)





Promoting tennis in Spain: The example of the RFET Amateur Circuit

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ABSTRACT

Sports practice has nowadays great importance for society to maintain health and guarantee an optimal quality of life. Sports such as tennis have been of interest to young and old, both at a global and national level, generating programs for the introduction to this sport. That is the reason why the Amateur Circuit of the Royal Spanish Tennis Federation was created as a competition that encourages motivation to practice tennis aimed at amateur players. It was created in 2017, reaching its highest levels in 2019, the year before the Covid-19 pandemic. It can be concluded that the promotion of the sport through competitive activities such as this one, allows to increase the interest and participation of children and adults in tennis at the beginners' level.

Key words: tennis, amateurs, promotion, amateur circuit.

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INTRODUCTION

Sport today is a fundamental aspect to facilitate well-being and quality of life, as it allows the development of leisure activities and outdoor enjoyment individually and/or in groups. Studies prove that physical exercise reduces discomfort, anxiety and generally improves health (Córdoba, et al, 2018; Álvarez, et al, 2020; Camacho, 2021).

Global sports practice is one of the topics of interest for the organisations responsible for health and sport promotion, as current lifestyles, the use of new technologies, etc., have led to inactivity at all ages, which has an impact on the risk of developing chronic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, obesity, among others (Martínez, et al., 2020; WHO, 2020). Therefore, plans are continually being developed to increase participation in physical activity (Arufe, et al., 2017).

In Spain, sport practice has been increasing over the last 30 years, a fact that is also a trend in the rest of Europe and other continents (García and Llopis, 2017). Studies conducted by the High Sports Council and CIS (2020) show that sport practice has increased during the period between 2015 and 2020 (table 1).

The data show that an average of 60% do not practice any sport at all, with 58% practising at least once a month. It is worth noting that, in all frequencies of sport practice, it is evident that in 2020 there has been a growth in the incidence, approximately 5% between 2015 and 2020.

Sport in Spain is organised by federations and sponsored by different companies, thus achieving a competitive level that allows physical activity and sport to be promoted in



the general population (Valiño, 2019). This article presents an example of a programme created to promote tennis, which is one of the sports that has more fans around the world, regardless of age, sex, and level of play.

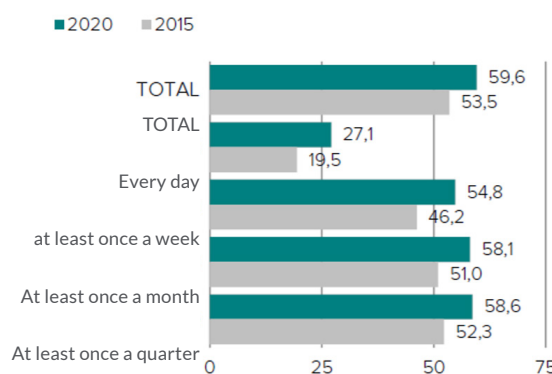


Figure 1. Evolution of sport practice in Spain 2015-2020. CSD (2020).

Tennis has undoubtedly become a recognised sport of interest (Marín, 2010) and in recent years has progressively increased its practice worldwide (ITF, 2021). It has become a sport that is widely disseminated worldwide through the media, with an increase in interest in the game, the number of players who play it and the existing sports facilities (public and private) (Martínez, 2013).

Several studies have investigated the extent to which the practice of tennis has been affected by Covid-19 (UNF, 2020; Slater and Watkins, 2020). Furthermore, in Spain this impact is evidenced in the statistics of sports habits of the CIS (2020), which shows that, in 2015, 14% of those who played sports chose tennis, while in 2020 only 7% played tennis. Another indicator that can be mentioned is the weekly participation in tennis, which between 2010 and 2015 stood at 1.9%, and in 2020 at 1.6%. This drop is mainly evident in 2020 due to the Covid-19 situation, in which sporting activities were restricted, and rules were established for access to sports facilities to reduce infection and control the health situation.



Other countries have created programmes with the same objectives as the Amateur Circuit programme organised by the RFET. This is the case of Argentina with the amateur tennis circuit (Asociación Argentina de Tenis s/f), France, with the tennis festival (French Tennis Federation, 2019), or England with the local leagues (LTA, 2021). All organised by their respective Federations.

ANALYSIS OF THE AMATEUR CIRCUIT

The Amateur Circuit was created in 2017 and originated from the idea of organising tennis competitions in different categories for beginner players from children to adults. The Circuit is under the federation umbrella, to promote the practice of tennis as a sport at the amateur level. Thus, in 2019, the year before the pandemic, 125 tournaments were held throughout Spain with 6,000 participants.

The Amateur Circuit is managed by the Royal Spanish Tennis Federation with the help of the respective Territorial Federations. It is a tennis circuit played throughout Spain, mainly in small clubs lacking activity, aimed at players of all ages and beginner/amateur level. It has been created mainly to motivate and encourage family participation, as well as facilitating socialisation.

The main objective of the amateur circuit is that tennis players can compete according to their level without losing to many matches in their first competitive experiences, and playing close to their homes. The organisers of each tournament can also be motivated to deliver a fun event and improve their own brand, thus promoting the sport and above all its practice among children, young people, and adults, in small clubs and even rural areas. The competition is organised from February to November, and the Masters event is held in December with the best ranked players in their category in their geographical area. At the Masters, many parallel activities are organised in an event called "Tennis Fiesta", where the best Spanish professional tennis players are brought together with the best amateurs in a city without such a strong tennis tradition. Some of the professional players that have participated in the event have been Roberto Bautista, Pablo Carreño, Pablo Andújar, David Ferrer, Alejandro Davidovich, Carla Suárez, Anabel Medina, Juan Carlos Ferrero, Alex Corretja, etc. The aim is to motivate amateur players by getting to know up close some of the best tennis players in the world.

In this way, the practice of tennis is promoted in different venues, for different audiences, having as a centre the sports clubs that promotes our sport. This is how this

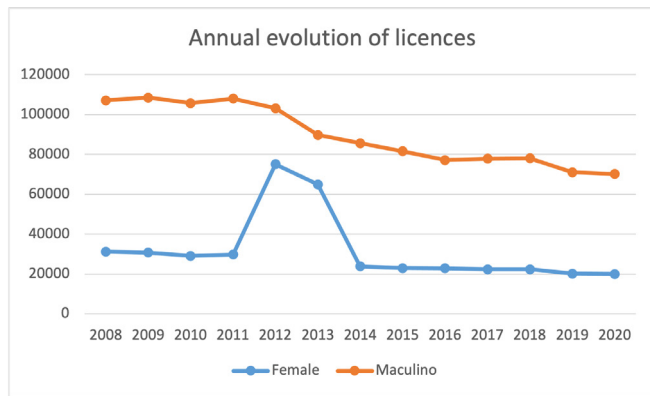


Figure 2. Annual evolution of the number of Royal Spanish Tennis Federation sporting licences between 2008 and 2020, by gender.

The data on the number of licences shows a decrease, not because there are fewer players, but because there are fewer players competing or interested in renewing their licence each year (Chacón, et al., 2018).

The aim of this article is to analyse the promotion of tennis as a sport in Spain through the Amateur Circuit programme promoted by the Royal Spanish Tennis Federation (RFET, 2021).



event motivates people through a competitive, healthy, and innovative environment. To maintain the interest in playing tennis, clubs organices also different activities, such as training sessions to improve the playing level of competitors as soon as possible.

The circuit is aimed at children and adults who have already started playing tennis. By participating in different competitions against players of a similar level they can show what they have learnt and evaluate their own performance to improve. Table 1 summarises the main features of this project.

Table 1

Characteristics of the Amateur Tennis Circuit. Source: RFET, 2021.

Name	Amateur Circuit
Dates	2017-present.
Organising entity	Real Federación Española de Tenis together with Territorial Federations and Clubs.
Target audience	Children, young people, and adults at beginners' level.
Competitive format	Each participant plays several short matches in a single weekend according to the level they belong to, adjusting the size of the courts, rackets and balls to the age and level of the players.
Fee	Singles: 8, 10 and 12 € depending on age Doubles: 16 and 20 €/couple depending on age Teams 50€/league, 15€/cup.
Categories	The categories are U6, U8, U10-1st, U10-2nd, U12, U15 and U18 in the children's age group and senior (19 to 49) 1st, senior (19 to 49) 2nd and +50 in the adult age group.
Ranking	RACE for each category plus participation points.
Funding	All material and shipments will be paid for by the RFET. Registrations are split 50/50 with the club.

In 2017, 30 pilot events were organised between Extremadura and the Valencian Community, completely antagonistic communities in terms of tennis (in statistical comparisons these communities are at opposite poles), to test the success of the product. The Community of Valencia is one of the Spanish regions with the most players, clubs, academies, coaches, referees, events, and economic resources, while Extremadura is one of the regions with the lowest number of athletes, federated clubs, companies linked to sport, events, and expenditure on sport by municipalities and other entities (Ministry of Culture and Sport, 2019).

It is important to note that, due to the pandemic situation, the circuit planned for 2020 and 2021 was affected. To participate, a federation licence or Tennis Card (cheaper non-competitive licence) is compulsory.

The investment in the programme is approximately 80,000 euros per year. In 2022, and improvement compared to the 2019 figures is expected. The success of the programme is measured by the number of tournaments requested by clubs to organise, the number of participants, and the number of licences obtained for these events.



CONCLUSION

Quality of life is a subject of increasing interest today, that is why tools have been created that favour people's physical and mental health. For this reason, the practice of physical activity has become one of the most important factors in maintaining people's health, and mental and social balance. Therefore, more strategies are being used by different sports to capture the interest of players from an early age. This is the case of Spanish tennis, where through the Royal Spanish Tennis Federation, the Amateur Circuit has been organised since 2017. These are tournaments for different categories in which children, young people and adults of beginner level participate. These tournaments facilitate not only that those who already play continue playing tennis, but also that those new players join the game. Therefore, not only competitive players but also amateur players can take part in competitions.

Finally, it is important to mention that the circuit has been progressing gradually, and that it is reaching more and more places and including more innovative formats such as doubles or team tournaments.

It is therefore advisable that the various tennis federations strive to create programmes of this kind to achieve the goal of increasing the number of players participating in our sport. We hope that this article has provided some practical ideas for the implementation of such initiatives.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND FUNDING

The author declares that he does not have any conflict of interest and that he did not receive any funding to conduct the research.

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RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ACADEMY CONTENT (CLICK BELOW)





Gestalt-tennis: A coaching technique, a psychotherapeutic support and a psychosocial activity

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ABSTRACT

Club players can easily deploy on court their unique 'bag of nerves', cramping their game. Following practical tests on court, this paper explores how a Gestalt approach to tennis coaching supported by an extensive application of mindful breathing can help players improve their tennis by increasing awareness of their body and emotions, with a beneficial impact on their well-being.

Key words: gestalt; full contact; mindful breathing; self-awareness.

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INTRODUCTION

This preliminary study was stimulated by acknowledging the obvious: whatever their age or skills, tennis players are people. People with often complex lives, bringing on court their unique cocktail of emotional experiences. A background which, as any coach has noticed, has repercussions on their game and efforts to improve it (Chung et al., 2020; Perry, 2020; Van Der Kolk, 2014).

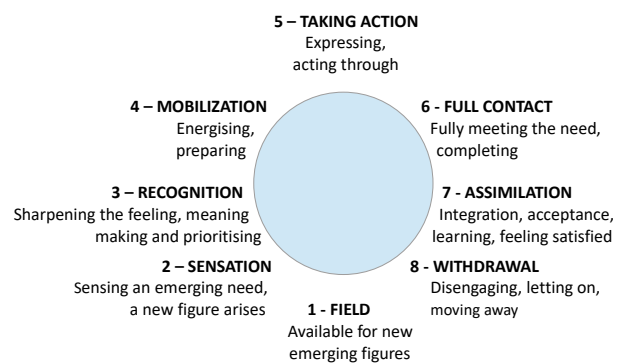
After studies in psychotherapeutic skills (Bond, 2010; Clarkson, 1995; Joyce and Sills, 2010) followed by practical tests on court with 28 adult club players, I suggest that thanks to an extensive implementation of mindful breathing and self-awareness experiences stimulated by a Gestalt approach to tennis coaching, any club player can improve their game in a more gratifying, self-empowering way. Beyond that, I argue that they can benefit from new, self-constructed emotional awareness which transcends tennis and can have a broader positive impact on their lives (Posadzki et al., 2010). Finally, I propose that this interpretation of coaching can develop a lesson into an explicit psychosocial activity, where the primary goal is the socio-emotional well-being of the players (Lay & Barrio, 2019).

GESTALT-TENNIS AS COACHING TECHNIQUE

Gestalt, the psychotherapeutic theory developed in the 1950s by Drs. Fritz and Laura Perls, is nowadays highly respected in the field of Psychology (Yontef, 1988). With its holistic approach regarding the individual as a whole of body, mind and emotions experiencing reality in a unique way, the central pillar of Gestalt is the self-awareness of what is happening from one moment to the next, in the 'here and now', starting with the exploration and acknowledgement of physical sensations (Ginger 2007; Joice and Sills, 2010). In this light, Gestalt can provide great insight for the interpretation of tennis, where the management of the 'here and now' of ball and body is evidently fundamental to control the game

situation. In a striking example of structural theoretical similarities, in Gestalt the apex of a positive experience is named 'full contact' (Perls et al., 1951), while in tennis the apex of an effective shot is the 'contact point' (figure 1).

GESTALT – CYCLE OF EXPERIENCE



TENNIS – SHOT CYCLE

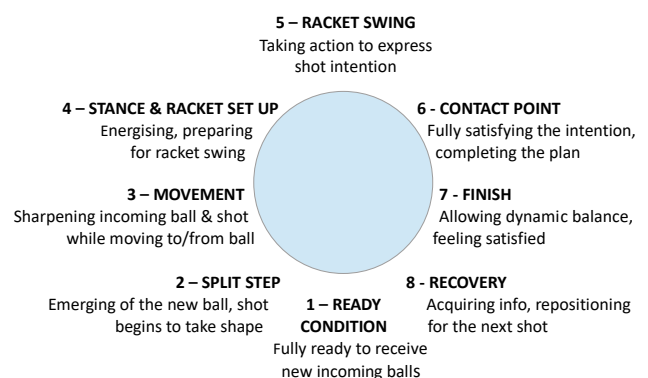


Figure 1. Gestalt 'cycle of experience' vs Tennis 'shot cycle'.



Mirroring the relevance attributed by Gestalt to bringing the person in the 'here and now' before supporting them towards any adjustment (Ginger, 2007), a Gestalt-inspired tennis session aims first at bringing the player into experiencing their body through mindful breathing, that is to bring the focus of the attention on inhaling and exhaling (Van Lysebeth, 1973).

Unfortunately at club level breathing is generally taken for granted, considered a given by both coach and player. Mindful breathing is traditionally associated with Yoga or Pilates, where a student is invited to link their movements to the 'natural' rhythm of their breathing from the very first class. Aiming at stimulating self-awareness from the start of any tennis experience, Gestalt-Tennis fully embraces such focus on breathing as a priority, but reverses its correlation with movement.

Here the guidance becomes to adapt the cycle of breathing to the 'natural' movements of the body in relation to the 'here and now' dictated by the incoming ball. Of course, traditional technical advice would also be offered; but all body and racket movements would be linked to breathing, encouraging the player to adapt the timing, pace and volume of their inhalation/pause/exhalation to each individual ball, now seen as an unique breathing opportunity. In other words, the player is invited to consider each ball as a snowflake: there will never be two exactly identical; and to be hit at best, each ball requires movements and breathing which perhaps are very similar to others but which are in fact unique. In this way the player is encouraged to enjoy tennis as a creative process and to perceive the ball as a partner, with often immediate results: looking at it carefully while setting up the shot becomes spontaneous, hitting it a moment of physical joy and reward.



To quote players K and F, receiving the ball feels 'energising', to play the shot 'liberating'. From this perspective, a Gestalt-Tennis lesson includes at the beginning a short warm-up exercise to experiment with breath control. These simple practices (table 1) aim at inducing the player to reduce their rational thinking and increase the awareness of their body.

Table 1

Examples of warm-up mindful breathing exercises.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While sidestepping along tramlines, throw/catch ball focusing on inhaling when catching, exhaling when throwing. Increase difficulty/speed/variety (beginner/improver)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ball tap-up with racket, focusing on breathing in when bending the knees and breathing out when extending knees (beginner)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volley focusing on breathing in/out in synch with receiving/hitting. Vary distance, speed (improver/advanced)

The implementation of the lesson in all its technical and tactical aspects can now take place in a fertile context of 'feeling' and consistently linked to breathing (table 2).

Table 2

Examples of mindful breathing applied to teaching point/progressions.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When trading, synchronise loading legs with end of breathing in at ball bounce, control pause between breathing in and out to adjust contact point (beginner/improver)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On serve, breath out to complete ready position, then breath in at ball placement/racket set-up, pause, breath out when swinging. (beginner/improver)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust pace and volume of breathing when executing a delicate drop shot as opposed to a powerful drive down the line (advanced)

GESTALT-TENNIS AS PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC SUPPORT

As mentioned above, average club players are people with complex lives who are likely to bring on court 'tensions' related to off-court emotional circumstances. This doesn't mean that every player necessarily arrives at a tennis lesson with some emotional knots to disentangle; but the reality is that many do, with profound implications for their game. It would be great to ask player J, T2 or V to 'just relax' and forget about their disabled child, abused childhood or relational struggles. Indeed by playing tennis they might seek solace from those difficult experiences. The catch is that such ambition can be frustrated by tensions unleashed precisely by those off-court events which the player might wish to escape.

In order to address these dynamics I suggest that tennis coaching can borrow directly from Gestalt theory and techniques (Joyce and Sills, 2010), with the goal of helping the player to first feel and become aware of those tensions, and then try to unlock them. This is one example, recollected by the player, of how stimulating physical awareness can lead to an emotional breakthrough and game improvement:

Player: T2; 29/6/21 ; ct. 7, Clissold Pk, London N16

"I arrived and we played points, I didn't enjoy and there was no pleasure in hitting the ball. We began chatting and you said how I looked uptight when playing. I said I felt like it was a fight. Every muscle tight, ready to defend myself, reacting quickly and lashing out. You talked about how tennis is a bit like a fight - confronting your opponent face on, weapon in hand, winner takes all. Come to think of it, even the language 'shot' and 'hit' have echoes of violence. I reminded you about my upbringing: I was always ready for a fight and somehow tennis reveals that part of my character. Your acknowledgement that tennis can feel like a fight was useful because it made me understand the way I feel when playing is disproportionate but not crazy. We then talked about breathing, and reminding me of this and that tennis is not actually a fist fight allowed me to change my approach.

When we next started hitting I remembered to breathe and I was looser, calmer and I played so much better, hitting the ball with speed and accuracy. The difference was huge. Now I've written this I realise just how much is going on. To be encouraged to think how I feel when playing tennis allowed me to understand why I feel like that and make adjustments. I started to feel better, happier. It felt quite freeing."

The evolution recorded above highlights how the way a player experiences the game is crucial. What emotional value do they attach to playing tennis in general and that ball in particular? Following Gestalt, it's only by helping the player to become aware, accept and explore these issues that they can then overcome the 'tensions' dragging down their game. And perhaps achieve more than that. Feeling better, happier, freed: the words by T2 point beyond the tennis court. Indeed the player has identified an emotional disturbance that was preventing them to achieve full contact in a specific situation, and then found within themselves a way to overcome it. A successful experience in emotional control and problem-solving that can be transferred to everyday life (Posadzki et al., 2010).

By following this path, a coach can reach beyond teaching a good forehand and backhand. While they do that, they can encourage the player to develop emotional self-awareness and help them to experience their ability to make their own judgments and choices, to change and correct from within, relying on their own resources and maturity (table 3). Indeed, as player T2 indicates, there can be a lot going on in a tennis lesson.



Table 3

Main principles of Gestalt-Tennis.

- Invite any player to focus on what they can control: their breathing.
- Help them experience how to control breathing helps to control the body, therefore to control racket-ball-point.
- Encourage players to develop a physical, close relationship with body and 'field' (court/racket/ball) as opposed to an abstract, cognitive relationship.
- See the tennis lesson as an opportunity for self-awareness, and bring the player to get hold of the obvious, of the situation in which they find themselves in.
- Help them to identify and deal with emotional dynamics and tensions that might be limiting their enjoyment of the game.
- Encourage playing tennis in a sensual, experiential way.

GESTALT-TENNIS AS PSYCOSOCIAL ACTIVITY

Considering the opportunity for therapeutic support that a coached session can provide if sustained by a Gestalt mindset, I believe that tennis can be developed towards a full psychosocial activity, that is an activity completely dedicated to improving the 'social health' of the participants and their ability to maintain healthy relationship with others (Lay and Barrio, 2019). Here the emotional and relational well-being of the players are the explicit and declared goals and, with due diligence and professional supervision (Bond, 2010), a group session could be entirely dedicated to self-awareness and self-control with relative interest in balls 'in' or 'out'. This proposition has been well received at the on-line international conference 'Gestalt Beyond The Border - Projects For The Community' held in January 2022, and will be developed in partnership with the Florence Gestalt Institute, Italy (Puccioni, 2022).

CONCLUSIONS

The preliminary tests referred to in this paper have received clear, positive feedback from all players experiencing Gestalt-inspired coaching, with two common themes emerging: improvement of the ability to control the ball and improvement of the overall enjoyment of the game. As respective examples, for player M "It felt like being in the Matrix, being able to slow bullets down. Only I was trying to hit them"; for player A instead "It makes you feel more alive". These type of remarks offer now a strong incentive to design and set up a more structured and rigorous qualitative study, with between 6 to 12 participants, to explore in more details their experiences of this approach. This will aim at providing increased understanding of how a bridge between Gestalt and tennis coaching can help players improve their game alongside their emotional well-being.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND FUNDING

The author declares that he does not have any conflict of interest and that he did not receive any funding to conduct the research.

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RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ACADEMY CONTENT (CLICK BELOW)





Make it fun! A new proposal to organize tournaments for 12&U

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ABSTRACT

The main goal of this article is to expose a comprehensive overview of mental health concerns in young athletes while playing in competitions and to provide a list of new different initiatives to organize tournaments for 12&U, with the aim of finding higher satisfaction and fewer levels of stress while performing.

Key words: tournaments, mental health, development, young athletes.

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INTRODUCTION

In the past few years, we have seen enormous achievements from the ITF and the different national tennis associations in the increase of the participation of youth and adult players. The launch of the Play and Stay campaign by the ITF in 2007 seeks to promote tennis as an easy, fun and healthy sport. The use of modified equipment makes tennis more accessible and keep the players more motivated due to the quicker achievement of positive results on the court. Evidence consistently supports colour balls, different rackets and tennis courts size as viable method to improve tennis performance (Farrow, Buszard, Reid, & Masters, 2016). Also, a positive association has been shown between regular tennis participation and positive health benefits. Playing tennis regularly will contribute to improve fitness level and mental health reducing symptoms like depression or anxiety (Pluim, Staal, Marks & Miller, 2007; WHO, 2020; Sciamanna et al., 2017).

While it seems obvious the efforts applied in the technical, tactical and physical aspects of tennis, we have to inquire whether the same efforts have been implemented in order to take care of the mental health of the tennis players. We will focus in this writing in the potential negative impact that the current format of tennis competitions might have in young tennis players and offer possible alternatives.

MENTAL HEALTH

Despite the benefits that can be gained through competition, concerns have been raised regarding potential negative consequences (Sagar & Lavalle, 2010). Different studies have already tested in the past that participation in competition is one of the main stressors for youth athletes (Nicholls, Holt, Polman, & Bloomfield, 2006). High performance sports not only demand an optimum physical attribute but also require optimum psychological factors to perform better in sports. The possible consequence is that children might experience high levels of stress and pre-competitive anxiety when they compete, and these feelings can negatively affect



Figure 1. *It is ok to not be ok. Naomi Osaka. Time.*

performance, participation, and health itself (Kowalski, Crocker, Hoar, & Niefer, 2005). High-levels of pre-competitive anxiety have been associated with avoidance of sport, reduced sport enjoyment, burnout, and sleep disruption (Gould, Udry, Tuffey, & Loehr, 1996). Even more, it has been repeatedly shown that athletes competing in individual sports were more prone to depressive symptoms than athletes competing in team sports (Beckmann, Nixdorf, & Frank, 2016).

Mental health concerns in tennis world have been recently spotted in a documentary shown in the popular platform Netflix about the life of Mardy Fish called "Untold. Breaking Point".

In this documentary the former Top 10 ATP player exposes his problems dealing with anxiety during his career.

Also, Naomi Osaka is one of the first female players to come out on the stage naming a series of problems that she has been dealing with for long time regarding mental health.

It is important to take into account that there is a good stress "eustress" (that have a positive impact on performance) and a bad one "distress" (that have a negative impact on performance) (Hackfort & Spielberger, 1990). It is the latter that is problematic and which can have negative repercussions on the mental health of the players if it is systematic before and during events. For many years, sport psychologists have been concerned with the study of the deleterious effects of stress and anxiety purported to the main factors in the failure of performers to fully and effectively use their skills (Robazza, 2006). Identifying the problems that competition might create in young athletes can help not to develop undesirable mental conditions. The solution shall not be to avoid competitions but to create a healthy environment. Through competition, children not only test and develop their physical skills and fitness but also have an opportunity to develop their psychological and social qualities (Grossbard, Smith, Smoll, & Cumming, 2009). Sports competition during youth gives an opportunity for the athletes to learn and develop skills that will be beneficial in the future (Macnamara, Button, & Collins, 2010).

PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT

If we attend to the different phases of development presented by the majority of the different tennis associations we can observe that the phase of competition starts only after the age of 12 years old. The ages between 6 and 12 years old are reserved for the phases of discovering, learning, play and learning to train. It is only after 12 years old where most of the associations recommend to start the phase of competition (or learn how to compete).



Figure 2. Tenisxetapas by Spanish Tennis Association (2019).

The Spanish Tennis Association divides the pathway of a tennis player in 7 different stages: Discovering (4-6 years old); Development (6-8); Consolidation (8-10); Specialization (10-12); Pre-competition (12-14); Competition (14-16); Performance (16-18).

So the question to ask to the federations, tournament directors, coaches and tennis community in general is: why all the tournaments follow the same format in all the phases of development? Is this not a contradiction with the pathways recommended by the majority of the tennis associations in the world?

While it seems obvious that we have achieved good results adapting the game of tennis to the age and level of the player with modified equipment, not many adaptations have been applied in the organisation of national tournaments at young ages.

PROPOSAL

The main goal of this article is to propose some initiatives to open a debate in the tennis community to make tennis competitions for 12&U more fun, attractive and beneficial for the kids, but also more competitive.



Figure 3. 12&U Tournament. *Take note that this proposal is not recommended for important or prestigious tournaments like the Nationals where the regular format shall be still applied.

- **EFICIENT:** The tournaments shall be squeezed to play in only 2 days.
- **SUSTAINABLE:** Less number of trips since tournaments are concentrated in fewer days.
- **COST-EFFECTIVE:** Reducing potential nights of hotels and traveling spends.
- **FAMILY-FRIENDLY:** It will help families to organise themselves better: time frame instead of a match scheduled (e.g. the event shall be hosted Saturday and Sunday from 9am to 5pm).

- **SOCIAL:** The tournaments shall organise only 1 or 2 categories maximum (e.g. 10&U and 12&U) avoiding organising tournaments with a wide range of different ages. Same range of age promotes more interaction among the kids.
- **MORE MATCHES:**
 - o Different score format (shorter) but guarantee at least few matches per day and per event.
 - o Different formats: singles, doubles and mixed doubles.
 - o Ranking system instead of a knock out tournament. National points given according to the final ranking in the event. (This format is already applying in some international competitions).
- **FUN:** The goal of the following measures is giving the option to the players to have some fun while waiting for their next match. These activities should be run by a coach of the venue hosting the tournament:
 - o Provide a “friendly games tennis court” where one of the coaches of the club/academy runs a number of different fun games. This could also be used as a warm up court.
 - o Service competition (Speed and precision challenge).
 - o Digi -Tennis 2.0 competition (or balle au mur 2.0)
 - o Other different activities (e.g. touch tennis, padel, ping pong, squash, or even other non-racket sports like football, basketball, etc.).

- **EDUCATIONAL:** workshop for players and parents run by a certified coach at the club that hosts the event.
- **POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT:** organise a tournament party for all players and parents with food, music, lucky draw and some prizes, rewards and certificates (e.g. sportsmanship of the event, fastest server, funniest double team, trophy for the best ping pong player, touch tennis, etc.).

CONCLUSION

We still assist to tournaments or competitions where we can see a variety of different negative situations: kids leaving the clubs crying, parents getting angry at their own children, families making long trips to play a non-quality match that lasts less than an hour (or even worst, having a walk over), exhausted coaches watching unfinishable matches, endless waiting time until the match starts... and many other situations that makes the event very frustrating. Let’s face it: for the majority of the kids, tournaments are not a good experience.

All the measures proposed above have the purpose to promote that the kids end the event without much frustration but good memories, keeping their motivation up with the game of tennis and encouraging them to repeat again in the next event. But also, to force clubs and organisations to see who will hold the best event (valued by the players and regional or national associations).

To conclude, it is worth of mentioning that tennis is facing a tough reality in some countries. The decrease of number of licenses.

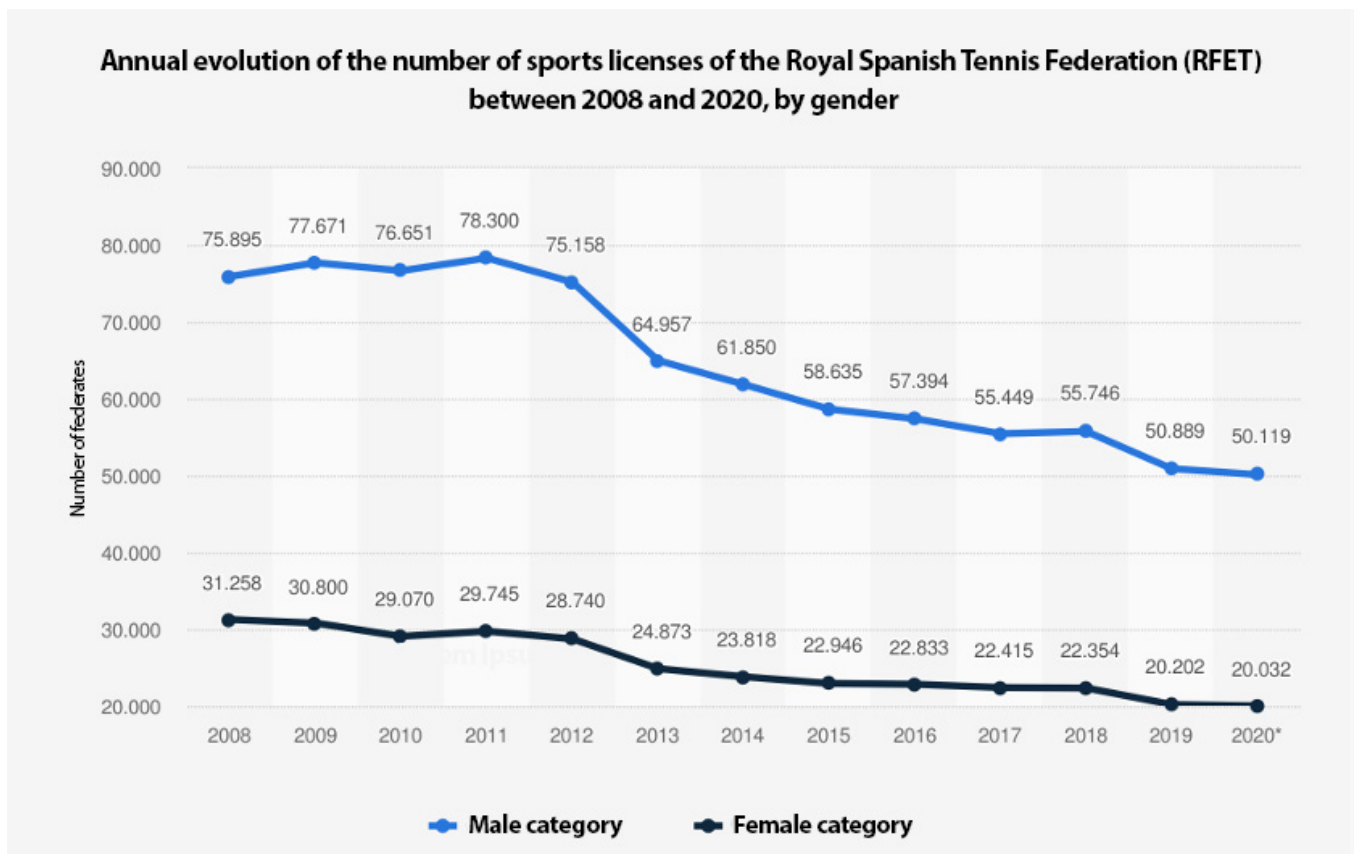


Figure 4. Number of licenses for females (black) and males (blue) provided by Spanish Tennis Association from 2008 to 2020.

This could be explained due to the emergence of other racket sports like padel or beach tennis. However, a quick response is needed from the tennis community if we want to keep tennis as one of the leading sports. I believe a new format of competitions in young ages can have a positive effect in the continuity of people playing tennis in the future, but also in the development of professional athletes.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND FUNDING

The author declares that he does not have any conflict of interest and that he did not receive any funding to conduct the research.

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RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ACADEMY CONTENT (CLICK BELOW)





Impact of the ITF Tennis Play and Stay campaign on 10-and-under tennis: The views of top National Federation experts

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ABSTRACT

The ITF Tennis Play and Stay campaign has been a crucial initiative to increase the number of tennis players in the world and promote tennis as easy, fun and healthy to all ages, genders, playing standard and physical abilities. The aim of this study was to find out the views on this campaign of those responsible for the participation programmes of the 35 national federations with the largest number of recreational players. These 35 experts responded to a questionnaire developed specifically for this study. The results showed that the 10-and-under competition rule change, implemented by the ITF in 2012, was well communicated to coaches and brings benefits in terms of increased participation, learning and performance improvements in beginner players. In addition, most countries reported that they have implemented the concepts of the campaign both in training and competitions, as well as in coach education programmes. Therefore, it is concluded that, in general, the opinions of the experts within national federations who are responsible for the participation directive and for implementing programmes related to the concepts of the ITF Tennis Play and Stay campaign obtained through this study are extremely positive.

Key words: development, participation, tennis, federations.

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INTRODUCTION

The International Tennis Federation (ITF) is the world's governing body of tennis. The development of tennis in its 213 member nations is one of its functions as it is the only global organisation that allocates budget to the development of tennis in the world (ITF, 2022). Increasing the number of people playing tennis has traditionally been a fundamental pillar of its development focus, and since 2017 is one of two objectives for Development under ITF2024 through the Development Strategy - Increase participation in tennis worldwide for all ages, genders, playing standard and physical abilities (ITF 2017; 2021). One of the programmes implemented by the ITF to achieve this goal is the ITF Tennis Play and Stay campaign.

The campaign that was established by the ITF in 2007 has attracted considerable research interest (Miley, 2007). Indeed, it has been presented as an example of a participation-oriented programme, having adopted some of the research findings that support the importance of attracting and retaining as many players as possible by providing them with a positive and active introductory tennis experience (Crespo & Reid, 2007). Research also sees it as an initiative that supports the use of a new teaching methodology based on the use of scaled equipment (Buszard, et al., 2014; Timmerman, et al.,

2015), and adapted facilities (Goldfine, 2013) and constraints (Fitzpatrick, et al., 2017). Its importance has even been recognised in coach education in some countries (Athaniilidis, 2020) and its effect on the modification of tennis rules has been studied (Giménez-Egido et al., 2020).

Other research has studied specific benefits of the application of the campaign in the acquisition of different skills, such as Kozak, & Ibraimova (2014) who emphasised the importance that this devotes to the development of coordination skills in 5–6-year-old tennis players, an aspect that coincides with the thesis of Khaniukova et al. (2012) who highlighted its use as an extracurricular activity to develop the physical qualities of 9–10-year-old players. Similar conclusions regarding the satisfaction of players of these ages participating in the programme were reached by Koronas (2018).

Similarly, Zetou et al. (2012) studied the impact of the campaign on the learning of the serve and the satisfaction of a group of Primary School students. The authors concluded that the students who participated in the programmes learned the serve while having fun and enjoying the process, which motivated them to continue playing tennis. These same authors replicated their previous study by analysing the application of the campaign to the improvement of the backhand shot (Zetou et al., 2014) while relating it

to the teaching for understanding methodology and the improvement of the players' self-efficacy. Authors such as Kist and Ben Makhoulf (2017), Cabral (2010), or Sanz (2017) reflected on its practical application in tennis beginner programmes around the world.

Furthermore, Krylov & Shesterova (2017) analysed the advantages of the implementation of the campaign and concluded that it was very suitable for the development of 10-and-under tennis players but that a fundamental aspect was the appropriate use of the equipment, especially the adapted balls. In fact, this aspect had already been indicated by Farrow and Reid (2010) who suggested that the campaign was based on the principle of using the adapted equipment as a constraint strategy and demonstrated the benefits of its use from the point of view of game development and satisfaction. In the same line, Schmidhofer et al. (2014) and Bayer, et al. (2017) emphasised the importance of the use of scaled courts, Kachel et al. (2015) of balls, and Limpens, et al. (2018) corroborated the relevance of adapting the height of the net to facilitate the development of tennis at these ages as proposed by the campaign. For a summary of the aspects learned, see Buszard et al. (2017).

From a psychological benefits perspective, Ishihara, et al. (2017) demonstrated the benefits of the use of this campaign on the executive functions of 6–12-year-old players. In addition, Fitzpatrick et al., (2018) studied the influence of regulatory and equipment modifications on the performance of these players and Gonçalves et al. (2017) studied it from the point of view of competition. On the other hand, aspects related to the progression in skill acquisition have also been studied by Cortela et al. (2019) and Elderton (2009), among others. For a summary of the general benefits, see Vilches (2017).

The implementation of the campaign has already been the specific subject of an earlier research conducted by Buszard et al (2020) who studied the perceptions of coaches and national federation staff members on the impact of implementing programmes focused on the participation and skill development in children and adults. The study concluded that the concepts of the campaign was positively associated with increased and sustained participation, skill learning, talent development and people's attitudes towards tennis. It was also noted that participants felt that the success of the campaign was due to both the implemented 10-and-under competition rule change to the ITF Rules of Tennis in 2012 (ITF, 2012) and the campaign's core messages (ITF, 2022).

The aim of this study was to find out the views of those responsible for the participation programmes of selected national federations on the ITF Tennis Play and Stay campaign.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample consisted of a total of 30 male and 5 female national federation experts, with an average age of 48.06 years. Of the 35, 21 had more than 15 years of experience within the tennis industry, 4 between 11 and 15 years and 1 between 5 and 10 years. The experts represented 35 different countries (Table 1) and all of them held a position related to participation or

coach education programmes in their national federation. The criteria for selecting the countries of origin of the experts was based on the number of tennis players in each nation. The sum of the players from the countries participating in our study accounts for more than 99% of the total number of players in the world according to the ITF Global Tennis Report (ITF, 2021).

Table 1
Country of origin of experts.

Countries
Argentina
Austria
Belgium
Brazil
China
Colombia
Croatia
France
Hungary
India
Indonesia
Iran
Israel
Italy
Mexico
Poland
Portugal
Russia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Tunisia
Turkey
United States
Vietnam

Instrument

Data were obtained through a questionnaire designed ad-hoc for this study. A discussion took place between the authors to reach an agreement on the selected items, their definitions, and an initial draft of the questionnaire. The next step consisted of a quantitative and qualitative evaluation by 5 tennis directors, certified coaches and coach educators who analysed, evaluated, and suggested changes to the proposed definitions and items. Based on these improvements, a final version of the instrument was designed. The final questionnaire consisted of 11 items that included communication, benefits, implementation, availability, improvements, impact of the Tennis Play and Stay campaign for 10-and-under players, and the 10-and-under competition rule change implemented by the ITF in 2012 (Table 2).

Table 2
Categories and subcategories included in the questionnaire.

Category	Subcategory	Item
Communication	Knowledge	I was aware of the 10-and-under competition rule change implemented by the ITF in 2012.
	Communication	The ITF has communicated the 10-and-under competition rule change effectively to its stakeholders.
Advantages	Participation	The change of the rules for 10-and-under players has obvious advantages for increasing the level of participation of beginner players.
	Learning and performance	The change of the rules for 10-and-under players has obvious advantages for the improvement of learning and performance of beginner players.
Implementation	Training	Coaches in my country implement the 10-and-under competition rule change in most of their training sessions.
	Competition	Competitions in my country implement the 10-and-under competition rule change in most tournaments.
	Training of trainers	My country's coaching certification programme includes information on the rules for 10-and-under players in most courses.
Availability	Material	The equipment (red, orange, and green balls) related to the 10-and-under competition rule change is generally available in my country.
	Facilities	The facilities (red, orange, and green courts and nets) related to the 10-and-under competition rule change are generally available in my country.
Improvements	Changes	More changes should be made to the Rules of Tennis to make it easier for 10-and-under players to play.
	Research	More research on 10-and-under tennis is needed to increase knowledge about the rules for 10-and-under players.
Impact	Overall impact	Overall, I believe that the 10-and-under competition rule change has had and will continue to have a considerable positive impact on 10-and-under tennis.

Procedure

With the support and assistance of the Participation and Education area of the ITF Development Department, the online questionnaire was sent via email to the participation or coach education departments of the selected national federations, requesting to be completed by the person with the noteworthy knowledge and competence in 10-and-under tennis in that organisation. At the beginning of the online questionnaire, respondents were shown a description of the study and were informed about the confidentiality and voluntary nature of the research in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki.

Data analysis

The data obtained through the online questionnaire were exported to Microsoft Excel, where they were processed for formatting, analysis, and graphing.

RESULTS

Figure 1 shows the opinions of the experts regarding each of the questions included in the survey, related to the study variables.

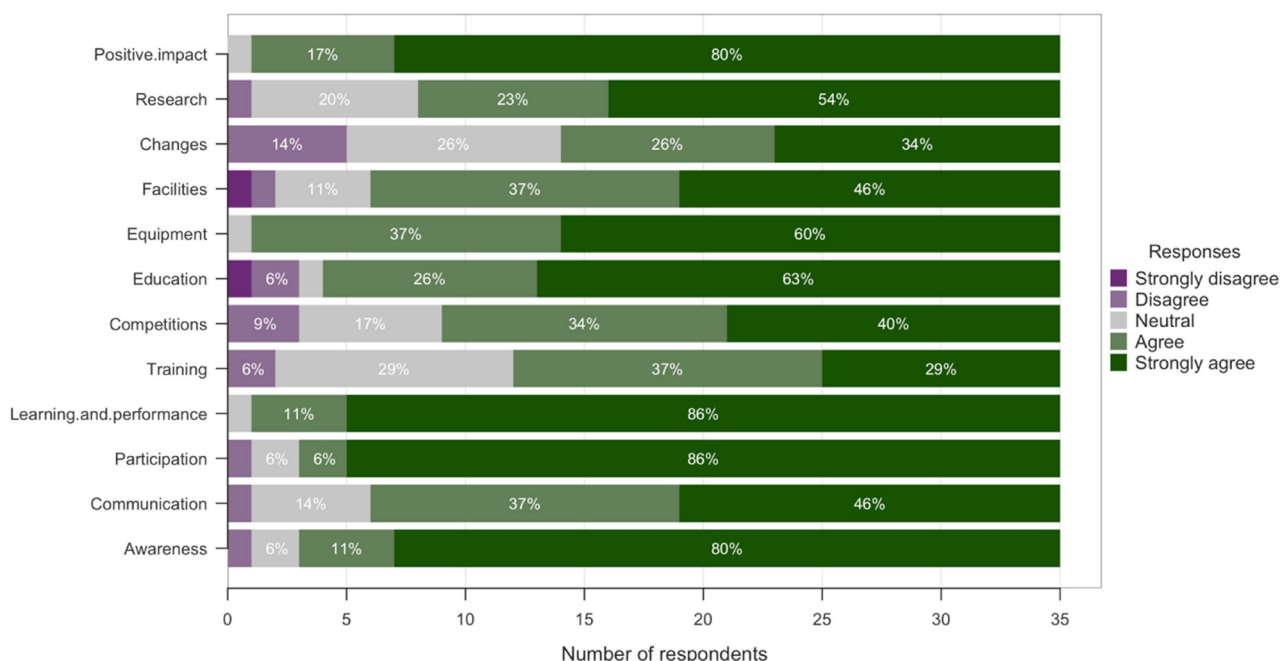


Figure 1. Expert's opinions regarding the variables analysed.

Regarding the communication of the ITF Tennis Play and Stay campaign for 10-and-under players, and the competition rule change implemented by the ITF in 2012. Overall, experts in most countries indicated that they were aware of this rule change and that communication to stakeholders by the ITF was effective. Discrepancies were noted from only two experts. One indicated that he was unaware of the rule change, and another disagreed with the ITF's effectiveness in communicating the rule change.

In terms of increased participation and learning and performance at beginner levels. Most experts were in full agreement that this change was an advantage, both in terms of increased participation and in terms of learning and performance for beginner players. One of the experts was against this trend, disagreeing that this change in the rules would be an advantage in terms of increased participation.

In general, regarding the implementation of the 10-and-under competition rule change in training, competitions and coach education, experts agreed that the rule is implemented in all three areas, although a significant number of experts were neutral. In addition, a small number of experts (n=3) indicated that they did not agree that it was being implemented, either because the rule was not implemented in training or competitions, or because it was not included in the information in the coach education courses.

Most experts agreed on the positive availability of facilities and equipment to implement the 10-and-under competition rule change. While some countries were neutral, a single coach indicated that he disagreed with having access to facilities to implement the rule.

Regarding the introduction of more rule changes, most experts surveyed were in favour of making more changes, although there was a significant percentage of experts who were neutral, and a smaller percentage who disagreed. In terms of the need for more research on the 10-and-under competition rule change, most experts indicated that they agreed with this statement.

Finally, except for one expert, who was neutral, the rest of the experts indicated an agreement or strong agreement in that, overall, the rule change has had and will continue to have a positive impact on tennis for 10-and-under players.

DISCUSSION

This study has analysed the opinions of those responsible for the participation programmes of selected national federations on the ITF Tennis Play and Stay campaign. The results showed that the 10-and-under competition rule change, implemented by the ITF in 2012, has been well communicated to tennis coaches and brings benefits from a participation point of view, as well as from a learning and performance perspective. In addition, most countries have implemented the concepts of the campaign in training and competitions as well as in their coach education programmes. On the other hand, regarding the availability of equipment and facilities, it has been shown that in most countries there is a high level of availability. It has also been observed that there is a high level of interest on the experts in the introduction of further rule changes, as well as in carrying out further research. Finally, it is considered that the implementation of the ITF Tennis Play and Stay campaign has had and will continue to have an overall positive impact on tennis for 10-and-under players.

The results obtained in the study are in the same line as the conclusions reached by previous research. In fact, with respect to the influence of the ITF Tennis Play and Stay campaign on participation and learning, the results are in full agreement with those obtained by Buszard et al. (2020), who concluded that the campaign was positively associated with increased and sustained participation, skill learning and talent development. Furthermore, they also agree with a significant number of studies that have analysed the influence of the campaign on learning and performance (Kozak, & Ibraimova, 2014; Khaniukova et al., 2012); Koronas, 2018; Zetou et al., 2012; Zetou et al., 2014; Cortela et al., 2019; Elderton, 2009; Vilches, 2017).

Regarding its implementation in competitions for 10-and-under players, previous studies have shown its advantages (Giménez-Egido et al., 2020; Gonçalves et al., 2017), which reinforces the fact that it is widely implemented in different countries. On the other hand, some studies have recognised the importance of including the ITF Tennis Play and Stay campaign in their coach education programmes (Athaniilidis, 2020), which also supports the inclusion of the concept in the national curriculum of most countries.

Regarding the equipment and facilities related to the ITF Tennis Play and Stay campaign, the fact of its high availability is very positive to sustain the impact that it can have on the development of players aged 10-and-under. According to several studies, the use of adapted balls, racquets and courts is one of the most important aspects that determine the success of the campaign (Buszard, et al., 2014; Timmerman, et al., 2015; Goldfine, 2013; Krylov & Shesterova, 2017; Farrow and Reid, 2010; Schmidhofer et al., 2014; Bayer et al., 2017; Kachel et al., 2015; Limpens, et al., 2018; Buszard et al., 2017).

The fact that most experts are in favour of further rule changes and research projects reinforces the campaign's philosophy of presenting itself as an evolving initiative that is open to changes and adaptations based on research feedback. A good example is the recommendations referring to net height modifications for 10-and-under competition, which was recently trialed as an amendment to the ITF Rules of Tennis (ITF, 2021) after several research studies determined the ideal height (Buszard et al., 2017).

Finally, as it happened with the studies carried out by Kist and Ben Makhoul (2017), Cabral (2010), or Sanz (2017), the results we have obtained in this study are very positive regarding the impact this campaign is having for the development of 10-and-under players worldwide.

CONCLUSION

The opinions of those responsible for the participation programmes of the national federations with the largest number of amateur players about the ITF Tennis Play and Stay campaign obtained through this study are, in general, extremely positive.

However, some limitations of this work can be noted, such as the fact that the sample was limited to 35 of the 213 ITF member countries and that no in-depth interviews were conducted that could provide a more accurate picture of the views of the participants in the study. On the other hand, the results obtained in this research suggest new lines of study aimed to gain a better understanding of possible differences in the impact of this campaign in different countries and to analyse the particularities of its management and implementation on a global scale.

We can conclude that the views of the experts in this study are in line with the results from different research regarding the various benefits of implementing the ITF Tennis Play and Stay campaign to increase tennis participation worldwide.

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RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ACADEMY CONTENT (CLICK BELOW)



Recommended e-books

ITF EBOOKS

ITF ebooks offers an exclusive range of publications from the world of tennis, which are a must read for all those with an interest in the sport.

In this app users will find manuals for training and development, regularly published scientific research articles from worldwide experts and key technical and tactical information.

Users can also download and read several free publications on their mobile device or purchase ebooks at a significant discount to the printed versions. This app provides publications in Spanish, English, French, Russian, Chinese, Portuguese, Arabic and more.



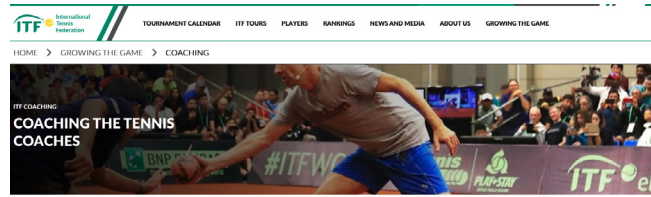
ITF ebooks

Available to download on all Apple and Android mobile devices and tablets

ITF
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Recommended web links

ITF Coaching:

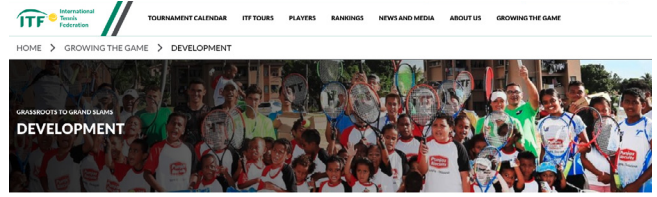


Top quality tennis coaching is vital to develop players to the best of their abilities at every level. The ITF is focused on coaching the coaches, and providing support to National Associations (and individual tennis coaches) through courses, conferences, online learning and various publications

Worldwide Coach Education

Every year, the ITF Coach Education programme works with an average of 60 countries to help develop and deliver ever higher standards of tennis coaching. We also develop programmes for our member nations who don't currently have a system for certifying coaches. We provide qualified experts to deliver the tennis coaching courses, along with course resources in English, French and Spanish, and selected documents in four other languages

ITF Development:



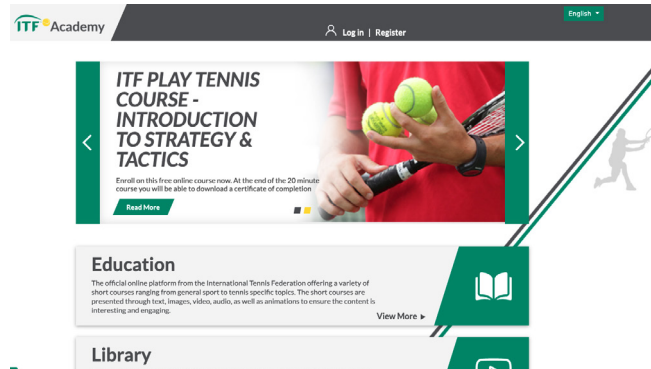
The ITF is here to develop and grow tennis around the globe, working with Regional and National Associations to identify rising talent and build new and better facilities. And we're here to support players on every step of their development, from playground to podium

FUNDING

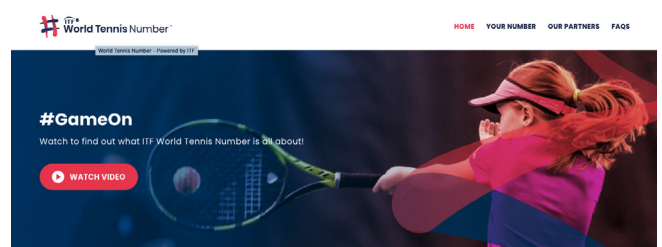
We focus our funding across six pillars that cover all areas of development: Performance, Participation, Coaching, Facilities, Events and Administration & Resources. 2019 saw a 17% increase in the amount we spent on development to over \$11.3 million. More than half of this figure



ITF Academy:



WTN:

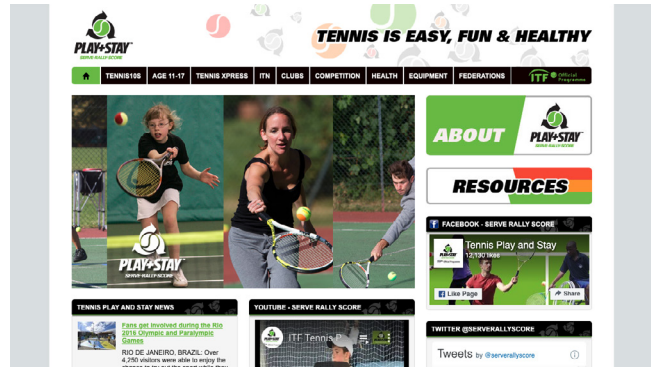


ITF World Tennis Number

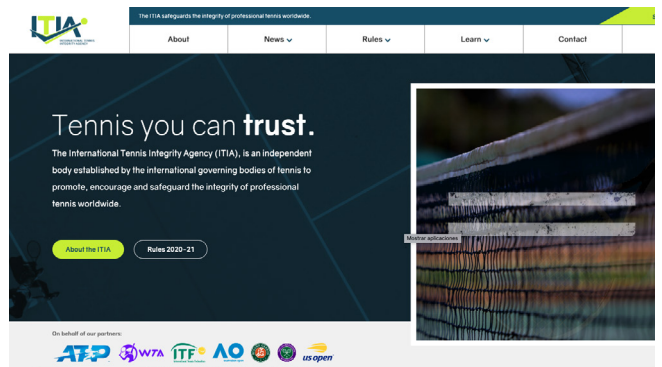
We are creating the world's largest tennis community and we want you to be a part of it.



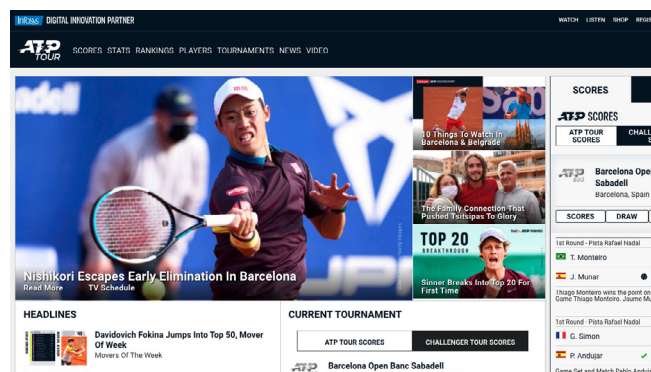
ITF Tennis Play and Stay:



ITIA:



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