



JORGE CAPESTANY
T E N N I S

Presents... the eBook

Mental Toughness

Workbook for Tennis

By Jorge Capestany, Master Tennis Professional

and

Steven G. Hamming, Psy.D. Sports Psychologist

Chapters	Page
Foreword by Dr. Jack Groppe	3
About the Authors	4
How to Use this Book	5
1) Introduction / The Four Areas of Tennis Training	6
2) The Mind is the Battlefield	10
3) Developing Your Inner Coach	16
4) Conquering Your Fear of Losing	23
5) Developing a Positive Mental Attitude	27
6) Surviving a Slump	33
7) Developing Your Fighting Spirit	39
8) Mental Toughness with Your Doubles Partner	44
9) Taking Responsibility for Your Own Game	49
10) Understanding Why Tennis is So Tough	55
11) Core Values That Tennis Can Teach	60
12) A Chapter for Tennis Parents	63
13) eBook Summary	67
14) Jorge's Letter of Gratitude to Tennis	67

FOREWORD

By Dr. Jack Groppe – Human Performance Institute.

I have known Jorge Capestany for many years, and throughout all these years, I have observed him to be one of the most student-oriented teachers I have ever met. In two words, he cares. His life has been one of devotion to his students, and to helping them strive for excellence in all that they do.

He is involved in the game of tennis and is considered a leader in the tennis teaching industry. This is seen in the fact that he has been deeply involved in teaching tennis for over 25 years, is a five-time Michigan Teaching Pro of the Year and twice has been named Midwest Teaching Professional of the Year. His vast experience, combined with his desire to learn, have enabled him to write this booklet.

Designed for players, parents and teachers of all ability levels, this booklet will take you on a journey. The journey involves understanding who you as a player, to evaluate your strengths and weaknesses, and then to start down the path to improvement.

In my mind, tennis imitates life in many dimensions. The key to becoming a great tennis player is process. Jorge has done a masterful job of developing a process that will benefit tennis players of all ability levels. The process he has created could be a big step in your development as a tennis player.

Enjoy your journey on the path to excellence! Tennis is the game for a lifetime!

Jack Groppe, Ph.D.
Vice-Chairman and Co-Founder
Human Performance Institute

About the Author – **Jorge Capestany** - USPTA Master Professional and PTR International Master Professional.

Jorge Capestany: Jorge is one of only ten people world-wide that holds the Master Professional distinction with the United States Professional Tennis Association (USPTA) and International Master Professional distinction with the Professional Tennis Registry (PTR). He is the founder of Capestany Tennis Inc. who operates tennis website for Coaches and Players alike and lives in Holland Michigan. Originally from Havana Cuba, Jorge has taught more than 55,000 hours of tennis lessons over a nearly 40-year span.

Jorge is a six-time Michigan Pro of the Year and two-time Midwest Pro of the Year. He has coached hundreds of highly ranked juniors including more than 180 HS State Champions from Michigan, 3 USTA National Champions and his players have received scholarships totaling more than 10 million dollars.

Jorge is an international renowned speaker at all the world's largest tennis conventions including the USTA Tennis Teachers Conference at the US Open, the USPTA World Conference, The PTR International Tennis Symposium, the International Tennis Federation's (ITF) world-wide coaches conference, Asia PTR Tennis Week in Shanghai China, the Australian Open Grand Slam Tennis Coaches conference in Melbourne, and the Norwegian Tennis Federations seminar weekend.

Jorge has appeared on several shows on the Tennis Channel as part of the **OnCourt with USPTA** show series and may be best known for creating two successful tennis industry websites... www.TennisDrills.tv for coaches and www.JorgeCapestany.com for tennis players.

About the Author – **Dr. Steve Hamming** - Psy.D. Sports Psychologist

As a licensed clinical psychologist with over 18 years of experience, Dr. Hamming is practicing in downtown Grand Rapids, Michigan specializing in performance coaching, utilizing EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing) psychotherapy techniques. In working with competitive and amateur athletes and creative individuals, Dr. Hamming has been able to optimize mental readiness, helping them perform to their fullest potential.

He received his Doctorate of Psychology from George Fox University in Portland, Oregon. He is a member of the American Psychological Association (APA), the Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing International Association (EMDRIA), the American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress (AAETS), and the American Group Psychological Association (AGPA).

He personally continues to compete athletically and utilizes all of the concepts and practices he teaches to others. The development of his mental game has proven to be successful. He currently competes on a national level and has been recognized as an All-American multiple times in the sport of fast pitch softball. He also competes in the United States Track and Field Masters division where he has won two gold medals. He has coached and trained athletes in many different sports. Through his practice, his focus is to help others reach their fullest potential.

Dr. Hamming is also the founder of OP Sports, which specializes in sports performance coaching. He trains minds to optimize their performance every single time they compete. Dr. Hamming can teach athletes how to deepen their concentration, sharpen their focus, and to roll with the roller coaster of emotions that accompany any performance-related activity. Visit the website www.op-sports.com.

Dr. Hamming has a unique perspective into tennis because he is a tennis player; he played singles for his high school team in Hudsonville, Michigan. This was the same team that co-author, Jorge Capestany played on and the two of them played together in 1976-1977.

How to Use this e-Book

This booklet was written to be useful to adult players, junior players, coaches, tennis professionals, and parents alike.

Each chapter is set up in the same way:

- 1) The first part of each chapter contains 2-4 pages of information specifically addressing the chapter's topic.
- 2) The second part of each chapter is a workbook style "exercise" section where you will answer questions about the chapter and yourself.
- 3) The third part of each chapter is a simple section where you can write down the top three most helpful ideas that *you* took away from that chapter. This will allow you to write your own book review as you go through the book.

If you are a junior or adult player, my hope is that you can learn the many ways to improve your mental game and become a more mentally tough and relaxed player. I hope the skills you will discover by reading this book will also serve you in your life outside of tennis.

If you are a coach, my hope is that you will develop a passion to teach your players about *all* aspects of tennis, and not just how to hit the ball better. I hope this book can help you and your players/teams develop a better awareness of the advantages of mental toughness training and that you will be able to use these new skills with success on the court.

If you are a teaching professional, my hope is that you can help the students in your classes and private lessons become more mentally tough. I also hope this booklet can serve as an endless supply of lesson topics for you and your junior and adult players alike.

If you are a parent of a junior tennis player, I hope this book can assist you with ideas in helping your son or daughter. I especially want to recommend that parents read chapters 10-12, as they are specifically insightful for tennis parents whether they themselves play the game or not.

I encourage you to write notes, underline sections of particular interests to you, and tear into this book as you read it.

Lastly, I encourage you as the owner of this book to have an open mind when it comes to your tennis mental toughness training. Many younger players have a difficult time seeing the benefits of mental training and avoid doing any, only to regret it later.

Introduction

I've been playing tennis since 1974 and I cannot tell you how many times my mind has worked against me while I competed. The result was more and more negative thoughts swirling around my head which led me to become an exceedingly negative thinker on the court.

I grew more disgusted with myself over my inability to win matches that I should or to close out matches when I was ahead. For years, I could only win matches where I was the obviously better player. I rarely won matches against opponents of a similar level and I could never beat a person that was even moderately better than I was, even if I had a great day. I would often be happy just to have a **close score** with someone that I perceived as better than me. Sound familiar?

Luckily, I was able to reverse this problem and eventually went on to become mentally tough enough to win matches against better opponents, even opponents that I should not have beaten on paper. I can't honestly tell you that I overcame these problems with a concerted effort or plan to do so. Instead, it was a long, sometimes painful, process that took several years. I realize now that I was lucky to stumble upon some methods that worked for me, but it was certainly not an intentional thing that I had set out to do. What I want to share with you in this book are the many things that I learned over a long period of time and present it to you in a concise program that will hopefully lead you to a place where your mind works **with you** instead of against you as you compete on the tennis court. I want to show you a road map on how to succeed and not just hope that you someday stumble upon some useful information.

Another reason I decided to write this book is because I know there are literally millions of tennis players in the world that suffer with the same mental struggles that I did. I am especially interested in helping recreational players learn to listen to how they speak to themselves and pay attention to their thoughts.

I have been a tennis teaching professional since 1980 and I have taught more than 55,000 hours on the court with my students and club members. It was during these hours that I have seen firsthand the many failures *and* successes of my students.

Here are some things that I know for sure:

- 1) Most players playing today would say they are **not** as mentally tough as they would like to be.
- 2) All players could benefit greatly by training in the area of mental toughness, but very few ever do.
- 3) Today's players suffer from an inordinate amount of **negative self talk** and have an inability to control their thoughts while they compete.
- 4) The world's best players have figured out the importance of training themselves to be mentally tough. Almost all the players on the professional tour are actively working on this area of their game!

The Four Areas

For years now, the best players in the world have known to train for tennis in four specific areas which are:

- 1) Technique 2) Mental 3) Strategy 4) Movement**

My first book ***STRATEGY, how to beat every style of player*** was dedicated solely to the strategy side of the game and detailed several tactics that work best against a variety of styles of players. This book will deal with the mental aspects of the game.

One of my biggest hopes is to be able to convince you that the most elite level athletes have already learned that to reach their full potential they need to train in all four of the areas mentioned above. However, I have found that many tennis players still struggle with this concept. Both adult and junior players seem to have a long list of reasons for why they do not want to train in all the areas. I believe it is because they have fallen into the trap of thinking that the only reason they ever lose is because their opponent's *strokes* are better. They incorrectly assume that if they are to beat that same opponent, they only have to improve their strokes. The result is that they train only in the area of ***technique*** and ignore the other areas.

I have experienced this firsthand many times on the court as players have asked me what they did wrong after they made an error. If I reply that the error was due to poor footwork (movement), they almost seem disappointed. It is like they were waiting to hear some great **"technical tip"** that they could easily incorporate into their games and their errors would magically disappear.

The fact is that all errors could be traced back to one of the four areas. Technical errors are common in tennis and are usually the result of poor techniques, grips, or swing patterns. Mental errors are errors where you lose concentration or focus or use poor eye control and it results in a missed shot. Strategy errors occur when you make poor choices on what shots to try or tactics to implement. Lastly, movement errors are the most common and can be traced back to poor footwork or loss of condition.

The chart below shows that as players become more advanced, they should train less and less in the area of technique and more and more in the other three areas. The chart represents what percentage of a player's practice time is should be spent in each of the four areas.

	Technique	Mental	Strategy	Movement	Totals
Beginners	80	5	5	10	100%
Intermediate	50	20	20	10	100%
Advanced	30	20	25	25	100%
Professional	10	30	30	30	100%

Exercises

- 1) Below is the chart that was covered in this chapter. In the last row, you should insert the percentages that represent how you spend your practice time and compare it to the level that best describes your ability. If you are way off from this chart based on your skill level, then you are not training as effectively as you could be.

	Technique	Mental	Strategy	Movement	Totals
Beginners	80	5	5	10	100%
Intermediate	50	20	20	10	100%
Advanced	30	20	25	25	100%
Professional	10	30	30	30	100%
YOU					100%

- 2) What area do you think you need the most work on right now in your game?
- 3) What have you done in the past six months to train in the area of Technique?
- 4) What have you done in the past six months to train in the area of Mental Toughness?
- 5) What have you done in the past six months to train in the area of Strategy?
- 6) What have you done in the past six months to train in the area of Movement?
- 7) Based on your answers above, what is your weakest area of training now?
- 8) What will you do in the next few weeks to address this area of weakness?

- 9) Private lessons are best for training in which of the four areas? (list all that apply)

- 10) Tournaments are best for training in which of the four areas? (list all that apply)

- 11) Practice matches are best for training in which of the four areas? (list all that apply)

- 12) Group lessons are best for training in which of the four areas? (list all that apply)

- 13) Strength training is best for training in which of the four areas? (list all that apply)

- 14) Speed and agility training is best for training in which of the four areas? (list all that apply)

- 15) Hitting off a wall is best for training in which of the four areas? (list all that apply)

- 16) Practicing your serve *on your own* is best for training in which of the four areas? (list all that apply)

- 17) What might your answers above indicate about how you spend your time training?

Chapter 1 - Wrap Up

Below write down the top three most helpful ideas that **you** gained from this chapter.

1)

2)

3)

“What you are thinking, what shape your mind is in, is what makes the biggest difference of all.”
Willie Mays, major league baseball legend

“You have absolute control over but one thing, and that is your thoughts. If you fail to control your own mind, you may be sure you will control nothing else.”
Napoleon Hill, author

You may not realize it, but everyone that comes into a performance opportunity has been there before... Your anticipations and desires about performing well come from a rich and complex history of earlier performances in life. Beginning as a child you were "**on stage**" performing for others. Learning to walk, eating your food, drawing your first pictures, and many other experiences mark your first opportunities to function as a performer. How your first audience (parents) responded to your first attempts at performing still holds an impact on how you view yourself as a performer today. Were you enthusiastically praised? Critically condemned? Ignored? Or perhaps compared to someone else who did it better or earlier than you? The confidence or reservations you have now as a performer have their roots in your earlier performance opportunities.

A performer's view of him/herself has been shaped by these early life experiences. Some come through childhood with confidence, willing to take risks, believing the audience will surely approve and applaud. Many come through these early life experiences with doubt, hesitation, and carefulness, fearing criticism, rejection, and shame.

Your mind is filled with so much information about performing and about yourself. These are what are known as "**self-beliefs**." Beliefs you now have about your abilities, value, and responsibility were formed well before you stepped onto the tennis court. These "self-beliefs" can be positive and motivating or they can be the cause for self-doubt and may well limit how you see yourself, which then limits your success and performance. To reach your full potential now, it is extremely important to recognize your own "self-beliefs" and make modifications if they do not really fit the reality of how you actually are.

Mental toughness plays out in a player's mind. Consider the poem below.

Watch your Thoughts, they become your Words

Watch your Words, they become your Actions

Watch your Actions, they become your Habits

Watch your Habits, they become your Character

Watch your Character, they become your Destiny

It all starts with a person's thoughts, and thoughts occur in a person's mind. Our actions are a direct result of our thoughts. Our thoughts are a result of how we have come to understand ourselves through the eyes of our parents and other influential people in our early life

experiences. Although you initially did not have the chance to accept or reject these ideas/thoughts about you, now is the time to decide what is true about you.

We cannot have a negative thought-life and expect to be mentally tough and exude confidence. So, if we want to succeed at being mentally tough on the court, we must first get our minds clear of any limiting self-beliefs and see ourselves accurately and fully.

If our thoughts are mostly negative, we will have a negative outlook and we will almost never beat an opponent unless that opponent is considerably weaker than us. But I want you to be able to win against opponents that are equally as good as and even better than you. That is when tennis is truly the most fun.

Unfortunately, while it is quite easy to fall into negative thinking patterns, we must be **intentional** to choose right thinking. It is not always easy, but it is possible.

The goal of this chapter is to get you to understand that your thoughts play an important role while you compete on the court. I hope you see for yourself **that you need to start thinking about what you are thinking about.**

So... how does a player control his/her thoughts? Aren't thoughts just things that pop into our minds that we have no control over? I have heard many students pose questions like this one. Usually, they have heard me speak about this topic and it makes sense to them logically, but they just do not seem to have any idea how they should go about controlling their thoughts.

The first step is coming to the realization that you CAN and need to control your thoughts not the other way around. While we may not be able to keep certain thoughts from popping into our minds, we do **not** have to dwell on them or believe them. This is what I call "undoing the lies of childhood."

Here are several steps for learning to control your thoughts:

- 1) Be aware of your thoughts. Normally thoughts will come and go, and you will hardly notice. Watch for feelings of inadequacy or stress, doubt, worry. Awareness is the first step to gaining more mental control.
- 2) Use the "opposite thoughts" method. One of the hardest things to do is to NOT think of something. If I say to you "don't think of a yellow ball," you will immediately think of the yellow ball. One effective technique to use is the "opposite thoughts method." When you have a negative thought pop into your head when you are on the court, immediately replace that thought with its opposite. It is especially helpful if you can speak the opposite thought *out loud*. Even if it is only loud enough for you to hear, say it to yourself several times. If you get a thought that your serves stinks, say out loud "my serve is good." Saying it several times helps drown out the negative thought.
- 3) Be armed with "replacement thoughts." It is helpful to have several positive thoughts in the *bank* before you start to compete. Many players have a hard time coming up with something positive to say about themselves as a competitor, but this is critical. I recommend you have at least four positive statements that you believe about yourself as a player that you can go to and use as replacement thoughts for when the negative thoughts inevitably come into your mind. For these positive thoughts to be powerful and

effective, they must be ones that you actually believe about yourself. Take the time to slow down and discover what positive ideas and thoughts you truly believe about yourself.

- 4) Properly phrase your thoughts. Many tennis players try to stay positive and unknowingly sabotage themselves simply by phrasing their thoughts in a negative way. If a player says to himself “don’t double fault,” he is giving himself a negative instruction. This negative instruction produces a negative mental image. These negative mental images only *increase* the likelihood of making the error that he is warning himself about. You cannot have an intense focus on what NOT to do. It will not allow you the focus and energy of what you *do* want and need to do.

In the example above, instead of the player saying, “don’t double fault,” he should be saying “swing faster, hit more spin” etc... Players need to make sure that the “instructional statements” they make to themselves are phrased in a positive manner.

- 5) Avoid thoughts about past failures. Many tennis players use the **movie screen** of their minds to replay past failures. They lose the match once on the court and then they torment themselves and lose the same match another 20 times in their heads by revisiting it over and over again. No one likes the feelings involved with revisiting a bad performance. However, many players justify it by saying “it is the only way I can learn from that loss” or because they want to play a *victim* for their friend, family, or coach. It is extremely important to limit this kind of thinking. Give yourself a limit on how long you will “mourn” a past match, learn what you can from it, and commit to looking forward.... not backwards.
- 6) Create a list of your best wins and performances. Most players can tell you about their best wins, but we think about these best wins far less frequently than we do our bad losses. It is helpful to create a list of your best three wins and think about them often. If you find yourself beginning to think about your past failures, replace those thoughts with ones from your best wins. For this to work, you will need to have these thoughts readily available. You can not do this without first listing them out.

Exercises

- 1) Positive beliefs are simple statements that help ward off anxieties and build confidence. They should be simple, positive, worded in the present tense and true. Rehearsing these beliefs many times a day makes them powerful and effective in psyching up before competition. Write four positive beliefs about yourself that will be strengthening for you.

1.

2.

3.

4.

- 2) Break down your self talk into these three categories:

1. BEFORE Competition
2. DURING Competition
3. AFTER Competition

BEFORE Competition:

Negative belief I say to myself	Positive alternative belief

DURING Competition:

Negative belief I say to myself	Positive alternative belief

AFTER Competition:

Negative belief I say to myself	Positive alternative belief

- 3) Take a **thoughts audit**. In the space below write down as many thoughts (positive or negative) that you can remember popping into your head in your last match. You may have to play a match with this in mind so you can write the thoughts down as you go (on the switchovers).

-
-
-
-
-
-

- 4) Come up with several “**replacement thoughts**” to these common negative thoughts players have while they compete.

Negative Thoughts	Replacements Thought
I'm such a choker!	
I never play well in the wind.	
I can't stand playing pushers.	
My backhand (or any shot) sucks.	
I'm moving like a cow.	
This guy is such a hook.	
I can't believe what a bad draw I got.	

- 5) Come up with three instructional statements that you tend to tell yourself and list them below in a *positive* phrase. These should be things specific to you and be things that you know you need to remind yourself to do during a match.

(Example: If you know you need to “hit out” on your second serve.)

Negative instruction = “Don't miss this, don't push it, don't miss it.”

Positive instruction = “Swing hard on this, crank the spin on this one, spin it in.”

-
-
-

6) Create below a list of your best three wins.

-
-
-

7) Once you have a list of your best wins/performances, **choose one** and deepen your memory about it. Remembering all the details can help set it in your mind, which will result in it having a greater positive effect in your future performances. Start with closing your eyes; remember the setting where this win took place. See the complex where you were competing; focus down to the actual court you played on. See the details of the surroundings, who was there, where were people sitting, where did you set your bag, rackets, water bottles, etc. Notice yourself in warm up, how you looked, what you were wearing, how your shots looked and felt. Now move to the match itself. Remember, see, and feel your best shots. Notice the ease with which your body flowed, how loose and relaxed your muscles were when you hit your winners. Slow down now and notice your body in this moment. Remember in your body how it felt as you were hitting the ball. (Your body holds memories of how this was for you.) Notice where in your body you feel the most relaxed right now. Focus on that area of your body for a minute. As you remember your next winning shot, notice the look on your face. See the confidence, calmness, and focus on your face. Stay there for a moment and take in that memory. The more you rehearse this memory the deeper it will get stored in your brain and the more you will be able to take yourself there when you need to restore your confidence.

I would like to end this chapter by reviewing the important highpoints. What goes on inside your mind has a definite effect on your ability to perform. These inner realities are best defined as your **self-beliefs** about yourself. The more aware you are about your inner truths the more you can work to modify them or deepen them if they are positive. Not only does your mind hold memories, *but so does your body*. By taking yourself back to successful moments or matches you can recall on a *body level* how it felt to be "in the zone," how your body was responding at its best. By rehearsing these key moments through imagery, you can deepen your memory of those times and learn to utilize the memory at times when you really need it. None of this mental training happens automatically! It takes as much work as practicing your forehand or serve. Commit yourself to working on your game *between your ears* as often as you do your physical training.

Chapter 2 - Wrap Up

Below write down the top three **most helpful ideas** that **you** gained from this chapter.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

"You are really never playing an opponent. You are playing yourself, your own highest standards, and when you reach your limits... that is real joy." Arthur Ashe, tennis legend

"We should never speak to ourselves in a manner or tone that we would not tolerate from someone else." Jorge Capestany, tennis master professional

This chapter is about developing your **inner coach**. This is the inner part of you that will assist and motivate you throughout the rest of your life... as long as you develop it! Achieving a major lifestyle change is like a good old-fashioned rope tug. While a piece of rope does not hold much interest for most of us, rock climbers would certainly disagree, as it is their lifeline and yours as well. The rope is an excellent metaphor for the work you are doing here, and I am sure you will agree that it takes a lot of personal power to pull lifestyle change permanently into your life.

Part of me has always fantasized about having my own private coach; someone who would tell me exactly what I should do to achieve my goals, motivate me, taking me down the road to high achievement of some sort. This kind, loving coach was part of a multitude of glorious images I had for myself. However, the reality is that most of us cannot afford that kind of coach. Therefore, it is important for us to develop our own **inner coach** to serve in this role.

One of the first steps to developing that inner coach is to begin listening to how you talk to yourself, your private voice. If you cannot do that, then your inner coach will not be developed. Instead in its place will develop an **inner critic**. Most of us are already aware that we have a running dialogue with ourselves, but very few of us pay attention to that dialogue. Failing to monitor this dialogue can be very damaging to your mental toughness.

Our **inner coach** is best defined as *that private voice you hear while you are playing that responds to your aces, unforced errors, victories, defeats, etc.*

Our **inner critic** is best defined as *the collection of all the negative messages you have heard over the years from people speaking outside of you and from your own internal dialogue.*

Your inner dialogue can be described as the running conversation you have with yourself. We all have an inner dialogue running in our heads all day long. As we compete, this dialogue can become very negative as we struggle through a tough match. As a teaching pro, my experience has been that about 70 percent of players that do not pay attention to their inner dialogue will slip into a negative dialogue that can best be described as having an inner critic.

A simple test is this; if a stranger was on the sidelines watching your match and he said the same things to you that you say to yourself, and you would not tolerate it, then you have a problem. We should never speak to ourselves in a manner or tone that we would not tolerate from someone else. That just makes sense.

As we get more and more frustrated in a match, our inner dialogue often becomes our *outer dialogue* and others can hear what we are saying to ourselves.

When I was a junior player, I was so unaware of my inner (and outer) dialogue that I would often not believe others when they told me what I was saying to myself. Consider this true story.

When I was about 17 years old, I was playing a practice match against one of my friends at the club where I trained. I was not playing particularly well, and I was losing the match, so consequently what started as a very negative inner dialogue, turned in to a negative **outer** dialogue that others could hear. My coach was moving from court to court as we all played our matches, and I was not aware that he was writing down the things I was saying to myself. The match ended and I lost. I soon forgot about the match and moved on.

The very next week while we were playing our practice matches, I was winning the match and was having no outer dialogue and my inner dialogue was actually pretty good. Then, out of the blue my coach walked past and said to me, "Gosh, your serve stinks!" and he just kept walking. I was sure I could not have heard him right, so I played on a bit confused. A few minutes later, he walked by again and said to me, "Move will ya, you're such a cow." Now I was certain I had heard him, and I was completely taken aback by what he said. I was a bit scared and was wondering what the heck was going on. A few minutes later he walked past me again and said "You suck! Hit it, you wuss." Now I was completely freaked out and not sure what was going on. I thought for a minute I must have been on some kind of reality show with hidden cameras. A few minutes later I finished the set, and the coach called all 12 of us over for a huddle. The first thing he said was, "Jorge, how did you like the way I was talking to you out there?" Of course, I did not know what to say so I just mumbled a bit and said that I didn't like it very much.

Then my coach said, "Well Jorge, all I was doing today was repeating the same things you said to yourself last week when you played against Lee and lost." To which I immediately replied, "I never said those things to myself." It was then that all my buddies set me straight and reminded me that I had indeed said all those things as well as a few more.

So, the purpose of this story is to show you how easy it is to be unaware of the way that we speak to ourselves. Not monitoring your inner dialogue can lead to the development of your inner critic as opposed to your inner coach. Unfortunately, many players today are experiencing that exact same thing.

The result for me was that I played many matches in a state of negativity and wrong thinking. It was like having a verbal terrorist out there on the sidelines ragging on about my every mistake and never getting off my back. Only that terrorist was ME!!

Look back into your own life and bring up memories of POSITIVE role models who helped to form your current self-discipline. Perhaps you have many or perhaps you have few. Even though your mentor may have been "difficult" or "challenging" as some coaches have been for me, look closely at that individual and decide if he was a powerful influence. Ask yourself IF you were to meet him today.....would you thank him? And what specifically would you thank him for? This will help you to know who and what was truly valuable. Whenever we remember in this way, we bring the memories forward, as well as "re-etching" the particulars into our subconscious mind. Since we are discussing "past happenings," remember that we all have had individuals in our lives that simply were not well-meaning, and it is time to let them go..... Because these individuals or the memories of these individuals can often BLOCK our desire for self-discipline.

Our inner coach will be a composite of the positive characteristics of many individuals who have touched our past, as well as others we might have observed. We do not need to know these individuals personally. Just having admired them and the characteristics they represent makes

them eligible to be a part of our inner coaching system. It is important to take time with this part of our work. It took me a lot of effort to develop and deepen my awareness of my own inner coach and to this very day I keep adding additional characteristics. Keep in mind that each time something new is added or updated, the subconscious mind makes note of this and re-etches.

I suggest you keep a section of your journal for building your inner coaching system. This type of journaling opens the mind to locate even more opportunities for self-growth.

So now that you know the difference between your inner coach and inner critic, how can you learn to silence your inner critic? Below are several tips that can be useful.

1) Be aware of “polarized thinking.” This is the type of thinking where everything is black and white, good or bad, success or failure, all or none. Instead, you should use “percentage thinking.” This type of thinking is more realistic and is a better reflection of reality and how things are in our lives. For example, you might say that in your last match, you played 80 percent bad and 20 percent good, instead of saying that it was the worst match you ever played.

2) Avoid over-generalizing. This is when we tend to look at only one piece of evidence and assume it explains everything. If you tend to use words like never, always, everybody, nobody, every, and all, you may be a person that tends to over-generalize. Instead, we should replace that kind of inner dialogue with words like some, most, might, and sometimes.

3) Avoid “magnifying.” This is when we take something small and blow it out of proportion. We may exaggerate the problem and use dialogue like “this is the worst I’ve ever played,” or “I’ll never be able to learn this new grip,” or “I always choke in the third set.” Instead, we should take an honest look at the reality we are facing. Things are rarely as bad as we make them out to be.

Another effective technique for developing your inner coach and silencing your inner critic is to use the ACE (Aware - Challenge - Expand) method.

A. Be aware of what your inner critic style is, what he sounds like and his tone of voice. In short, start thinking about what you’re thinking about.

B. Challenge the limiting beliefs that come from your inner critic. Don’t just believe them or buy into them.

C. Expand your limited thinking through positive self-talk. It is important that these positive self-talk statements are things that you truly *believe* about yourself and not just a wish list. These statements are most effective when they are based on your actual experiences.

Conclusion: Developing your **inner coach** involves developing an internal support system, a positive inner coach, positive self-talk habits, and an attitude toward yourself that brings out the best in you. If you are having trouble silencing the internal critic and developing your internal coach, then consider getting help from Dr. Steve Hamming at www.op-sports.com. There may be some obstacles in your way that are preventing you from seeing yourself positively, which keeps the internal critic’s voice loud and influential. By visiting the website listed above, you can take a free online self-test and Dr. Hamming will respond to you with your results.

Exercises

- 1) Close your eyes for a minute and try to go back in time and think of the most **positive** and encouraging coach you have ever had. (If you are new to sports, then think of the most positive teacher or relative you have ever had.) Think of the kind of person that brought out the best in you; the person that knew just what to say and that you loved being around because he/she was so encouraging. Take at least a minute or so and get a picture that person's face in your mind. Write down the person's name in the space below.

- 2) Now think about what *specifically* that person did or said that made you feel so good. Was it **what** he said? Was it **how** he said things? Write below just a few thoughts about why you felt this person was so encouraging to you.

- 3) Now close your eyes once more and try to think about the person again, paying attention to your **physical** body this time. Does thinking of this person make you physically feel different? Are you happy, smiling, and calm, etc.? Write down what you felt about your physical body as you thought of this person.

Now we are going to repeat the same three steps above but for a **negative and/or discouraging** coach or person in your past.

- 4) Close your eyes for a minute and try to go back in time and think of the most **negative** and discouraging coach you have ever had. (If you are new to sports, then think of the most negative teacher or relative you have ever dealt with.) This person always brought out the worst in you and made you worry that he was going to yell at you or "go off" on you. Take at least a minute or so and get a picture that person's face in your mind. Write down the person's name in the space below.

- 5) Now think about what *specifically* that person did or said that made you feel so bad or tense. Was it *what* he said or how he said it? Was it *how* they said things? Write below just a few thoughts about why you felt this person was so discouraging to you.
- 6) Now close your eyes again and try to think about the person again and this time pay attention to your physical body. Does thinking of this person make you physically feel different? Are you tense? Are you smiling? Are you calm? Do you feel a knot in your stomach? Etc.... Write down what you felt about your physical body as you thought of this person.

The lesson of the above exercise is to teach you that all of us respond better to our positive inner coach as opposed to a negative inner critic. Decide right now that you will turn the volume up on your inner coach and turn the volume down on your inner critic.

- 7) Does your current inner dialogue lean more towards being an inner coach or inner critic?

- 8) On a scale of 1-10, how **aware** have you been of your inner dialogue in the past? (circle)

Totally Unaware								Very Aware	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

- 9) Describe a past experience where you have had to silence your inner critic during a match.

- 10) List at least two mental attributes (not technical attributes like strokes or footwork) that you think the best players in the world possess that makes them stand out from the rest of the tour players.

-

-

11) Give an example of when you have been guilty of “polarized thinking.”

12) Give an example of when you have been guilty of “over-generalizing.”

13) In the spaces below, expand your limited thinking and develop a least three positive self-beliefs about yourself *as a player*. Fill in the blanks below.

(Example: I am a fighter; I am a good athlete; I make things happen)

*I can _____

*I am _____

*I _____

14) Give an example of when your inability to silence your *inner critic* has cost you a match that you could have won.

15) Give an example of when your *inner coach* has helped you win a match.

16) Write down the name of a player that you personally know that has a strong inner coach.

17) What kind of reputation does that player have as a competitor?

Chapter 3 - Wrap Up

Below write down the top three most helpful ideas that **you** gained from this chapter.

1)

2)

3)

“Take chances, make mistakes. That’s how you grow. Pain nourishes your courage. You have to fail in order to practice being brave.”

Mary Tyler Moore, actress

“Failures are expected by losers and ignored by winners.”

Joe Gibbs, NFL coach

The **fear of losing** almost always comes from thinking about outcome-based results as opposed to performance-based results. I like to use the following definitions when describing these two types of results.

Outcome-based goals are by definition, things that are not totally under your control. The most common outcome goal is to *win a match*. Another outcome-based goal would be to make all your second serves.

Performance-based goals are by definition things that are totally within your control. A performance-based goal would be to “swing hard” on all of your second serves.

Just by looking at those two examples, it is easy to see that the outcome-based goal is going to cause the player more stress and be more difficult to accomplish.

Over the years I have seen many players that were so struck with fear before a match that they made themselves physically ill. I know they did not *want* to feel that way, but they just had no idea how to get rid of those feelings. Many of these players just resolved in their minds that they were somehow inferior and did not have what it takes to be a tough competitor.

However, just simply ignoring these fears only makes matters worse. Going into a match with fear is like going into a battle against two opponents, the one on the other side of the net and the one *within* you. Your goal should never be to get rid of all the butterflies in your stomach before the match, but rather to get those butterflies to *fly in formation*.

I think the best way to reduce your fear of losing is by resetting what your goal is for each match. I like to use the concept of the **personal promise**. I define a personal promise as a performance-based goal(s) that you set for yourself before each match you are about to play.

If these personal promises are defined and clear in your head, you can measure your success by how well you stick to your promise instead of winning or losing. And since personal promises are all performance-based, there is no way you can fail unless you simply decide not to do it. They are by definition 100 percent within your control.

Logic would say that your personal promise should be something that will give you a better chance to win a certain match and/or to make you better in the long run. For instance, if you know that when things get tight, you tend to ‘push’ your second serve, then a great personal promise would be to “swing hard” on all second serves. That should be the new goal you set for yourself for that match. Even if you lose the match, if you can succeed at keeping your personal promise to yourself, you can find enjoyment in the fact that you have begun to resolve one of your game’s deficiencies.

Once you have a personal promise identified for your match, you will find that as your match unfolds, you will have a greatly reduced fear of losing because you have switched your thoughts away from winning (outcome-based) to keeping your personal promise (performance-based). This technique has worked very well for me as well as many of my students. The very best win I ever had in my career was a direct result of using this technique.

Sometimes you will find that after a match begins, you may begin to feel nervous or experience the fear of losing creeping back into your mind, especially if the match is close. That simply means you have allowed your mind to wander from your personal promise back towards winning. You may have to fight this habit a lot in the beginning, but as you reap the benefits of playing for your personal promise rather than playing just to win, you will begin to master this skill so that it becomes second nature to you.

Your personal promises will fall into two categories:

- 1) Specific to your next match and opponent.
- 2) For your long-term development.

Personal promises can also be:

- **Technical** in nature like swinging low to high on all your forehands or using a certain grip.
- **Mental** in nature like resting your eyes on your strings after a point so your mind does not wander.
- **Strategical** in nature like serving to your opponent's weaker side.
- **Movement** in nature like split stepping every time your opponent strikes the ball.

Below are some examples of the most common personal promises I have used for myself and my players.

- Swing hard on my second serves.
- Come to the net on all short balls (service box)
- Hit all my serves to their weaker side.
- Rip topspin on my backhand. (no slices)
- Take the full amount of time between points.
- Look at my strings between points so my mind & eyes don't wander.

Exercises:

- 1) On a scale of 1-10, how much do you *fear* losing when you play? (circle one)

Not at all
Fearful

Totally
Fearful

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

- 2) Describe in the space below what an **outcome-based** goal is.
- 3) Describe in the space below what a **performance-based** goal is.
- 4) Can you list any performance-based goals that you have used in the past?
- 5) Create a list of three possible *personal promises* that are specific to a certain player you want to beat (a rival). These promises should be specifically designed for *you* to use against this specific opponent. Make sure these promises are written as positive and not negative statements.

Insert a rival's name here: _____

-

-

-

- 6) Create a list of three possible personal promises that are for your long-term development. You may want to consult your coach about what promises he thinks would be best for your long-term development.

-

-

-

7) List two personal promises that would help you in the area of technique (grips and swing patterns).

-
-

8) List two personal promises that would help you with the mental aspects of tennis.

-
-

9) List two personal promises that would help you in the area of strategy.

-
-

10) List two personal promises that would help you in the area of movement.

-
-

Chapter 4 - Wrap Up

Below write down the top three most helpful ideas that **you** gained from this chapter.

1)

2)

3)

“Most people are about as happy as they make their minds up to be.”

Abraham Lincoln, American president

“A pessimist is one who makes difficulties of his opportunities; an optimist is one who makes opportunities of his difficulties.”

Harry Truman, American president

Most of us can look at a person’s attitude and know quickly what kinds of thoughts are prevalent in his mind.

Consider the following story that has been circulating for some time now. It is about an old Cherokee chief that is teaching his grandson about life.

“A fight is going on inside me,” he said to the boy. “It is a terrible fight, and it is between two wolves. One is evil; he is anger, envy, regret, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, superiority, and ego.” He continued, “The other is good; he is joy, peace, love, hope, humility, kindness, generosity, truth, and faith. The same fight is going on inside *you* and inside every other person, too.”

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, “Which wolf will win?”

The old Cherokee simply replied, “**The one you feed.**”

If you think honestly about your inner dialogue, which of the two wolves do you think you feed the most?

When I think about this story it reminds me of all the times, I have seen players on the court beating themselves up, constantly saying one negative thing after another to themselves. In light of this story, it is obvious which wolf is prevalent when they play a match. I want to make people aware of this concept so they can stop feeding the wrong wolf. These players seem addicted to negative thoughts when in reality they are simply feeding the *wrong* wolf.

Does it seem to you that sometimes the whole world is complaining?

I believe that all of us have a natural tendency towards a certain amount of negativity. We all fall somewhere different on a scale of 1-10 when it comes to how negative we are. The hardest part of becoming more positive is admitting how negative can be. A negative person never enjoys anything; he is no fun to be around.

Remember that our thoughts can affect not only our attitudes but our moods as well. Negative people often use the phrase “**Yeah, but...**” when they speak. They have an uncanny ability to see the negative side of things. They can light up a room.... when they leave!

I have found that negativity is one of the most commonly passed down traits from a parent to a child. When I have an exceedingly negative junior player on my hands, I have found that the parents would also be classified as negative people by most standards. Although this is a difficult problem to address, I think it is important for both players and coaches to recognize this trend so that they can best develop a strategy for reversing it.

One dictionary defines attitude as *a complex mental state involving beliefs and feelings and values and dispositions to act in certain ways.*

The best athletes know that one's attitude is a choice. The most successful athletes have the ability to follow the important guidelines below.

- 1) They view their sport as opportunity to compete against themselves.
- 2) They learn from their successes *and* failures.
- 3) They pursue excellence, not perfection.
- 4) They maintain balance between their sport and the rest of their lives.
- 5) They have predominately positive beliefs about themselves.

If you can live by these guidelines, then you will certainly develop a positive and helpful attitude. Players that begin to violate one or more of these guidelines almost always develop a negative attitude.

Many players understand the need for and desire a positive mental attitude. The problem is that no one has ever taught them or shown them how to develop one. You can't just go to the store and buy a pill to take. The five steps below are a great way to start down the road to developing a positive mental attitude.

- 1) Make it a habit to look for the good in life (and others) rather than the bad.
- 2) Identify the people in your life that tend to make you negative or often lure you into negativity or complaining. Limit your time with them.
- 3) Identify the people in your life that tend to make you positive and keep you upbeat. Be intentional about spending more time with them.
- 4) Keep balance in your life; a hurried and hectic life will always move us towards being unhappy and negative.
- 5) Try to do something that makes you happy on a regular basis. Many times, we just get bogged down in life and experience very little joy.
- 6) Remember that studies show the best way to experience happiness is by doing positive things for other people.

Exercises

Below is a quick test to assess where you might fall on the **negativity scale**. However, this test should **not** be taken by you, instead I want you to have your coach, close friend, or parent take the test and answer the questions **about** you. Taking the test yourself usually results in a false score because we tend not to be good judges of how negative we are.

Negativity test: (Scale: 1= Never / 2 = rarely / 3 = occasionally / 4 = usually / 5 = always)

		1	2	3	4	5
Q1)	Does he tell himself that he “sucks” when he plays?					
Q2)	Do his opponents’ think he is a bad sport?					
Q3)	Does his coach/parent have to warn him about his attitude or behavior?					
Q4)	When he plays a bad match, does he think it is the start of a slump?					
Q5)	Does he think the advice he gets from his coach is “not going to help anyways?”					
Q6)	Does he often complain about his ranking, the seeding lists, or tournament draws?					
Q7)	Does he think that the coach/pro has mistreated him with the court assignments or in the line-up?					
Q8)	Does he assume that he is going to lose if he plays a player that is close to or slightly above his level?					
Q9)	Does he shake hands differently when he wins as opposed to when he loses?					
Q10)	Does he often tend to say “yeah, but...” when he speaks?					

Now total your scores and refer to the chart below to see where you fall: _____

10-19 points: Very positive outlook. Your inner dialogue is consistently strong, and you should now work on developing the other areas of your game because this area is strong.

20-29 points: Positive outlook. Your inner dialogue is usually positive. You do not get overly down on yourself.

30-40 points: Caution. Your inner dialogue tends towards negativity and it could begin to affect your performance.

41-50 points: Warning! Your inner dialogue is negative to the point where it can profoundly affect your performance, your self-esteem, and your reputation.

Below are five of the ten questions from the above test. For this next exercise, read each question and list a time when you succeeded in that area and another time when you failed in that area.

Q1) Do your opponents' think you are a bad sport?

Succeeded:

Failed:

Q2) When you play a bad match, do you think it's the start of a slump?

Succeeded:

Failed:

Q3) Do you think the advice you get from your coach is "not going to help anyway"?

Succeeded:

Failed:

Q4) Do you think that the coach/pro has mistreated you with the court assignments or in the line-up?

Succeeded:

Failed:

Q5) Do you shake hands differently when you win as opposed to when you lose?

Succeeded:

Failed:

Below are a few more questions for this chapter on developing a positive mental attitude.

1) When you play tennis, which one of the wolves from the story in this chapter do you think you feed most often?

2) Being as honest as you can, where do you feel you fall on the negativity scale when you are playing a **close** tennis match? A match that could go either way. (circle one)

Very
Positive

Very
Negative

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3) Describe what influences you think your **parents** have had in developing your positive and/or negative attitude.

4) Earlier in this chapter we discussed five important guidelines that successful players live by in developing a positive mental attitude. Prioritize these items as to how you feel they are important to your development. (Rank from 1-5)

- _____ They view their sport as opportunity to compete against themselves.
- _____ They learn from their successes and failures.
- _____ They pursue excellence, not perfection.
- _____ They maintain balance between their sport and the rest of their lives.
- _____ They have predominately positive beliefs about themselves.

5) Describe in a few sentences how you want people to think of you when it comes to your attitude.

6) What part of the description in the above question (#5) are you the farthest from attaining?

7) The five steps below help players move towards developing a more positive attitude. I want you to rate yourself on each of these skills. (1= doing poor, 5= doing great)

- Make it a habit to look for the good in life (and others) rather than the bad.

1 2 3 4 5

- Limit your time with the people in your life that tend to make you negative or often lure you into negativity or complaining.

1 2 3 4 5

- Be intentional about spending more time with the people in your life that tend to make you positive and keep you upbeat.

1 2 3 4 5

- Keep balance in your life; a hurried and hectic life will always move us towards being unhappy and negative.

1 2 3 4 5

- Try to do something that makes you happy on a regular basis. Many times we just get bogged down in life and experience very little joy.

1 2 3 4 5

Chapter 5 - Wrap Up

Below write down the top three most helpful ideas that **you** gained from this chapter.

1)

2)

3)

“If you can react the same way to winning and losing, that is a big accomplishment. That quality is important because it stays with you the rest of your life.” Chris Evert, tennis legend

“Failure is only the opportunity to start again, only more intelligently.”

Henry Ford, founder of Ford Motor Company

A real challenge for every serious player is the problem of being in a **slump**. Slumps are prolonged periods of time (a month or longer) when both your physical and mental skills are at a level considerably lower than your average performance.

When we take a close look at a slump, we find that a slump is often just an extended downturn in performance. As you know, your performance is always moving either up or down. Even the most consistent of pros is not really all that consistent. Everyone has a level of play that ranges from fantastic to really bad. The really bad days are the days when you think you really ought to sell your racquet and take up bowling. Slumps can begin with a drop in either your physical or mental ability.

There are two other important things to understand regarding slumps. The first is that slumps happen to all players, from the world class to the novice level. The second is that players should not expect to play at their “peak” on an entire year-round basis. If you are a player that tends to think this way, then you are more likely to interpret a decline in performance as the beginning of a slump rather than the natural “dip” in the cycle of improving.

It may be helpful to understand that the normal level of improvement for most players follows a similar path described in the table below.



You can see that the most improvement comes in the beginning right after we start playing. However, as time passes the *rate* of our improvement slows considerably because as we become proficient, it is harder to continue to improve. This chart shows that most players' improvement happens in the first third of their playing careers. You can also see that players do not improve at a steady rate. We all have little dips and valleys on our specific improvement charts. Think of it this way . . . would the best professional players hope to double their abilities in tennis? The answer is NO. These players realize that given their current high level of ability, the most they should be expecting is just a few more *degrees* of improvement.

Failing to recognize this trend and assuming that your improvement rate will be a steady upward climb that never ends, is a common way that many players sabotage their own efforts. If you really think that way, you are setting yourself up for a major disappointment in the long run. You may also tend to think that you are in a slump when you may just be at the end of your game's improvement cycle.

Even the best players in the world do not expect to play at their peak during every match. I read a survey recently that asked the winners of the past several grand slams how many matches out of the seven they had to win to be crowned the champion, were matches where they felt like they played good or great in. The answer was only three to four of the seven matches. That means that for the other half of the matches, they played *less than their best*; they had to just find a way to win ugly. Yet not one of them looked at any of those “bad matches” as the beginning of a slump. If they thought like that, they would have never been able to rebound and win the tournament.

Slumps are caused for a variety of reasons. Below are some things that can *trigger* a slump.

Some of the most common **physical** triggers to a slump are:

- Injury
- Technical changes (grips)
- Equipment changes
- Too much practice
- Too little practice

Some of the most common **mental** triggers to a slump are:

- Burn-out
- Lack of goals
- Fear of failure or other negative emotion
- Playing for the wrong reason
- Problems in other areas of your life
- Negative thoughts

In short, slumps are triggered by a player's response to one bad performance. Many players have a single bad outing and immediately assume it is the beginning of a slump. Once a player assumes that is the case, the slump is almost impossible to avoid.

If your goal is to never experience a performance slump in your competitive career, then you are aiming at the wrong target. We all must realize that slumps are a normal inevitable part of competitive sports. The important thing is how you **react** to them and if you can keep *one* bad performance from leading to another and another.

The way to bust out of a slump is to understand the natural ups and downs of tennis. Know that your mind is trying to move out of the slump if you will let it. It is also important to commit to your fundamental game for three months. Do not try radical changes to make things better. Commit to your equipment, your coach, and to your style of play.

Below are several specific tips for busting out of a slump:

- 1) Talk to your coach and get his input on whether he thinks your slump is caused more from a physical/technical reason or if it stems more from a mental/psychological reason. That way you know what you need to do to get out of your slump.
- 2) Talk to a coach or fellow player that has busted out of a slump in his past. Ask him what he did to bust his slump and what worked and did not work for him.
- 3) Be aware of your inner self-talk. It can easily slip to the negative and put you in a state of mind that will be difficult to break out of and cause you to stay in a slump longer than necessary.
- 4) Recognize that even the best players in the world must endure slumps; it's not just happening to you.
- 5) It is also often helpful to organize your practice. Have specific goals for the practice and work to reach these. Remember, the whole is made up of lots of little parts. If you get the little parts right, the big picture will fall into place
- 6) You should also resolve any personal or non-tennis problems in your life. Perhaps most important is to recall why you play tennis in the first place. Play for the good reasons; to have fun, to meet a challenge, to socialize, or just for the love of the game. Find other physical activities to go along with your sport. For example, you are a tennis player, try playing basketball a couple of hours each week, or take up softball once a week. This type of cross training will help recharge your tennis batteries.
- 7) Begin to focus on a completely different aspect of performance. For example, take a look at your *focus*, independent of how well you are hitting the ball or whether you are winning or losing. You might, for example, make a goal to improve your focus over the next two weeks. Start by rating how focused you were throughout your last match on a 1-10 scale. Each time you perform, you try to raise the level of your focus. By the end of two weeks, you have accomplished success in mental skills development if you can consistently achieve a 9 or 10 in focus. This is completely within your control, as opposed to match result, which is not. Your focus should be on focus, not on outcome!

8) Change your training routine. This might include a new practice court, new hitting partners, or a change in the amount that you are practicing. The main thing is to inject freshness into your sport. Change clothing, grip tape, or shoes. These minor adjustments often contribute to renewed enjoyment of the sport.

9) Take all the pressure off by forgetting about winning and losing for a while. Set goals to perform better rather than to win or lose. Change your focus to skills and effort, while letting the outcome take care of itself.

If none of these tips work after a couple months, give some serious thought to sport psychology counseling! This never indicates weakness. This is simply a search for excellence.

Why does a slump happen in the first place? There are many possible answers to this question. Competition is very delicate and complex, and momentum plays a huge role. It may be that you simply lost to a better opponent six times in a row and delude yourself into thinking that you should have won each match. Then when you should win, you lose! Momentum takes over. Another problem is being distracted by off-court issues.

Expectations have a great impact on performance too. Just as it helps to remain confident (always expecting the best), the reverse holds true too. Expecting the worst usually gets you there. Negative self-talk always leads to negative performances and results.

The mind cannot stay focused on the bad and the good at the same time. The natural balance that is supposed to help you let performance happen gets disrupted. You start trying too hard and overcompensate or start giving up out of despair. Athletes need to remain optimally focused and energized. Too much fluctuation in any direction over a short period of time leads to lapses in attention and problems with consistency. It's hard enough to play a solid tennis match without having mental skills disrupted too. Throw in the inner turmoil caused by frustration and you have a tangled mess!

Exercises

- 1) How many slumps do you think you have had in your playing career?

- 2) How many of those slumps were *technical* in origin (grips, swings, etc...)?

- 3) How many of those slumps were *mental* in origin (confidence, etc...)?

- 4) Have you ever been guilty of looking at one bad loss as the beginning of a slump instead of a normal dip in your improvement cycle? Explain the circumstances of that loss.

- 5) For each of following physical triggers to a slump, write an action plan that you will act upon to prevent it from happening to you.

Physical Trigger	Your Action Plan to Avoid It
Physical injuries	
Technical changes	
Equipment changes	
Too much practice	
Too little practice	

- 6) For each of following mental triggers to a slump, write an action plan that you will act upon to prevent it from happening to you.

Mental Trigger	Your Action Plan to Avoid It
Burn out	
Lack of goals	
Playing for the wrong reason	
Problems in other areas of your life	
Negative thoughts	
Fear of failure or other negative emotion	

Chapter 6 - Wrap Up

Below write down the top three most helpful ideas that **you** gained from this chapter.

1)

2)

3)

“What is the single most important quality in a tennis champion? I would have to say **desire**, staying in there and winning matches when you are not playing that well. It comes down to the mental aspect. All champions have that quality. They don't give up, they dig into something extra. People can sense that and see that. That is a necessity if you really want to be considered a champion.” John McEnroe

“Even when I went to the playground, I never picked the best players. I picked guys with less talent, but who were willing to work hard, who had the *desire* to be great.”
Earvin "Magic" Johnson

A **fighting spirit** is one of the most important assets a competitor can possess. I believe that we all have differing amounts of natural *fight* in us. Some players naturally tend to be feisty (Rafa Nadal) and seem to never give up no matter how bleak the situation may be. Others seem to throw in the towel at the first sign that things might be tough for them in a given match.

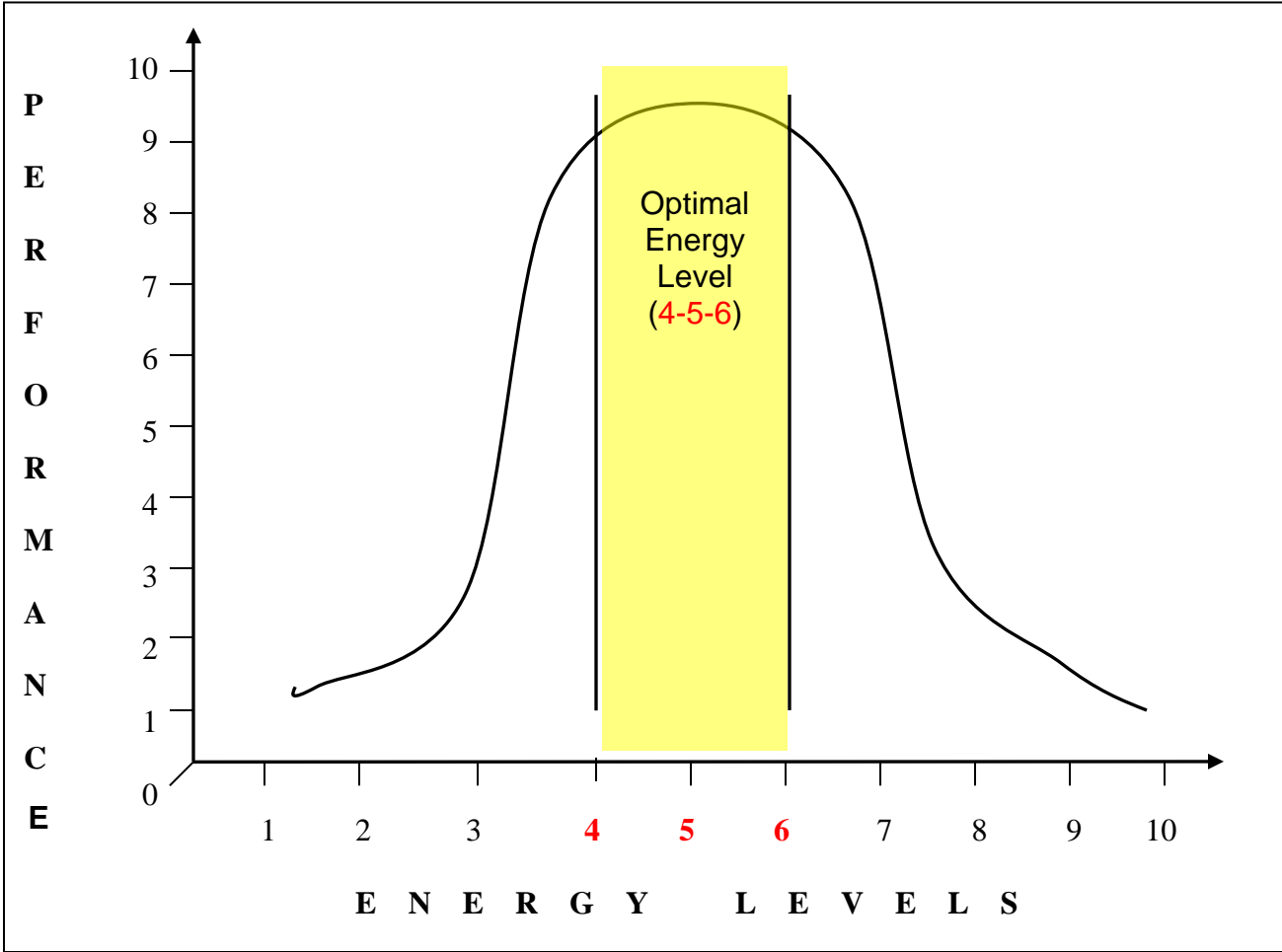
I have learned that players that always have to have someone else pushing them rarely accomplish great things. Motivation must come from the inside, not from the outside. That does not mean that a good coach or motivator is not an important asset in jump starting a player's motivation, but this kind of motivation can only last so long and push a player so far. Not to mention, the external motivator will certainly not be able to be with the player during all the many long hours that it will take to become a great player, so eventually players need to be able to motivate themselves from within.

Each sport has its own very unique **optimal emotional energy chart**. For example, it is easy to see that there would be a difference between tennis and football.

On the next page is a chart that shows that the optimal emotional energy level for tennis is between 4 and 6 on a scale of 10. It is important here to not confuse the phrase “emotional energy level” with hustle or effort. In tennis you always want to have a high level of physical effort and hustle. By emotional energy level, I mean how pumped up or aroused the person is with his emotions and state of mind, not his level of hustle and effort.

In tennis, your goal should be to attain a very high level of effort and hustle, while maintaining a medium level of emotional energy and feistiness.

Optimal Emotional Energy Chart for Tennis



Below is a quick test you can take to assess where you might fall on this energy scale.

Grading Scale									
Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Usually		Always	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

1) Do you like to spend time alone?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2) Do others say you are a private person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3) Do others think you are a *high energy* person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4) Do others tell you that you act hyper?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5) Do you think you are an outgoing person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6) Do you try for balls that others would not go for?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7) Do you pump your fist and say “*c'mon*” a lot during a match?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

8) Do you encourage yourself out loud when you play?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

9) Do you question your opponent when you think he make a bad line call?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10) Do you often slap your thigh or pump your fist when you play a match?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please add up your total number and divide by ten so you can get an average. Now place an "X" on the energy chart on page 40 where your average is. Now you have a basic idea of where you might fall on this chart. If the number you came up with is quite different from what you thought it would be, you should adjust your "X" to where you think it belongs on the scale. Your friends, coaches, and parents can be great people to check with to see if they think you are in the correct spot on the scale.

Now that we have established your spot on the scale, you will have fallen into one of three categories:

If you scored between 1 and 4: This means you are a low energy person by nature. This usually means you have a hard time getting fired up and showing emotions when you play.

If you scored between 5 and 6: This means you tend to have stable energy while you compete. This is good news for you since you naturally tend to be in the best state of energy and arousal to play the best tennis.

If you scored between 7 and 10: This means you tend to display too much emotional energy. Some may view you as very agitated, obnoxious, or misbehaved on the court.

Regardless of where you are on the scale, the goal is to enter (or stay) in the range of 4-6 so you can have your best shot at a good performance. A good technique for moving yourself in either direction on this chart is to use "word triggers" and/or "physical triggers."

Word triggers are things you say to yourself to start to change your emotional energy level. An example would be "stay calm" or "c'mon."

Physical triggers are actions you perform to start to change your emotional energy level. An example would be to slap your thigh or pump your fist. (Think of Rafael Nadal)

Exercises

Below I want you to list two triggers for each area. Fill in all the areas and not just the area where you fall on the chart.

1) Scores between 1 and 4: Low emotional energy

Word triggers

-

-

Physical triggers

-

-

2) Scores between 4 and 6: Appropriate emotional energy

Word triggers

-

-

Physical triggers

-

-

3) Scores between 7 and 10: Excessive emotional energy

Word triggers

-

-

Physical triggers

-

-

4) On a scale of 1-10 (10 being highest), at what level should your hustle and effort be when you play a match?

5) Why is it important that we NOT link our hustle and effort levels to our emotional energy levels?

6) List a player that you know that tends to be *too low* on the optimal energy chart.

What is his reputation as a competitor?

7) List a player that you know that tends to be *too high* on the optimal energy chart.

What is his reputation as a competitor?

Chapter 7 - Wrap Up

Below write down the top three most helpful ideas that *you* gained from this chapter.

1)

2)

3)

“Be polite, be modest, be honest, be friendly, sign autographs, and be available. It is the most important thing for a champion to be a good human being.”

Alberto Juantorena (Cuban Track star)

“As long as I can focus on enjoying what I'm doing, having fun, I know I will play well.”

Steffi Graf

Mental toughness does not typically get brought up when you speak about doubles partnerships. I would like to propose that when it comes to a doubles partner, mental toughness has to be thought of in terms of how you interact with that partner. Since this is a mental toughness book, my goal in this chapter will be to focus on the *relationship* side of doubles.

Many doubles teams fail to make even the slightest attempt to figure out what they want from each other as partners. It is almost like they expect their partners to be able to read their minds, and when things do not go as planned it can really take the enjoyment out of the game.

Consider that *most* players like to be encouraged a lot, but there are some partners that would rather have their partner remain quiet during the match. I have always felt that when a partner is looking for encouragement and does not receive it from his partner, that they will interpret it as discouragement. Sometimes even delayed encouragement feels like discouragement to some partners.

When it comes to doubles partners, I like to talk in terms of what I call **traffic patterns**. Traffic patterns refer to *where* the partners walk on the court in relation to each other. This is all observed in the **time between points**. If the traffic pattern is simply the server going from side to side along the baseline and his partner doing the same along the net, then there is probably a problem with that team. It could be that one of the partners is upset with the other.

In contrast, the best doubles teams use a distinct traffic pattern that has 4 separate phases that occur immediately after each point.

- 1) The partners find each other visually.
- 2) The partners come together and have some kind of physical touch. (high 5 etc..)
- 3) The net partner, walks the server (or returner) back towards their baseline position, strategizing along the way.
- 4) The net partner releases and jogs (not walks) back to their net position.

This traffic pattern is very evident when you watch pro doubles teams. The Bryan Brothers are experts at doing this and even have a chest bump as their signature move in part 2 described above.

Of course, you should always try to partner with a person that you like as an individual. This will make your tennis experience the most fun. However, what do you do when your coach assigns you a partner that you do not care for, or even dislike? This scenario plays out all the time on club teams, high school teams, and college teams.

Again, I think the answer is communication. Most coaches are aware of what the best pairings are for their team and most coaches give it a considerable amount of thought. Remember that coaches want to win as much as the players do and they are not likely to try pairings that they know will not work or that they think are doomed to fail. **It could simply be that it is best for the team for you to have that partner and not necessarily best for you.** If you cannot handle this concept, then maybe team tennis is not the best option for you. Instead, you should consider entering tournaments where you can decide whom you will play with.

It is also essential that you understand what your partner wants from you in terms of coaching and/or advice while you play. This can be a very sensitive subject for partners and, in my opinion, is one of the biggest sources of frustration between partners. While *you* may like to have your partner give you ideas on why you missed your last shot, not all players want that information from their partners. Some would rather accept coaching advice *only* from the coach or pro, and some may not even want to hear it from them. Still others want to hear as much as possible *during* the match while others are open to it but would prefer to hear it *after* the match. Either way, it is important that you talk to your partner about his expectation in this area. Failing to do so may set you both up for some miserable matches and bad experiences.

The last area I would like to address regarding doubles partnerships is the necessity of agreeing on a style of play or tactics. I have witnessed many partners getting frustrated with each other because they have not agreed on how to play against certain players. The worst thing you can do is act like two singles players out on the court, each trying to win the match in the best way he sees fit, and each getting more frustrated with their partner as the match progresses.

If you play on a team, your coach can assist you in selecting the best game plan for each set of opponents that you play. The key is to be on the same page! It would also be a good idea to have a list of what your plans A, B, and C are. This can help you transition smoothly from plan to plan during a match.

Doubles can be a great deal of fun. I personally enjoy playing doubles more than singles. As players get older it is common that they often play *only* doubles. If you keep the lines of communication open between you and your partner, there is no reason that doubles will ever have to be anything but a ton of fun.

In summary, successful doubles partners realize that they are part of a larger system that includes their friends, teammates, coaches, and others. They learn to communicate their feelings and thoughts effectively and learn to listen carefully to others. They have learned useful skills for dealing with conflict, difficult opponents, and other people that may be negative or oppositional.

Below is a questionnaire that I have developed that can be filled out by each partner so that they will know the best way to interact with each other. I highly recommend you spend at least 15 minutes going over these questions with your partner.

- 1) Do you like to play the ad side or the deuce side?
- 2) What would you like me to say or do after you miss an easy shot?
- 3) What would you like me to say or do after you make a double fault?
- 4) Do you want to use signals or not? If yes, what will they be?
- 5) Who do you think should serve first when we play?
- 6) Do you like a partner that is loud and intense or quiet and reserved?
- 7) Which one of us should be responsible for questioning bad calls?
- 8) What should our plan "A" be when we play?
- 9) What should our plan "B" be when we play?
- 10) What should our plan "C" be when we play?
- 11) How much time after a loss would you like to wait before we discuss the match?
- 12) What can I do on the court to help your confidence stay high?

13) Who should serve into the sun if it is in a bad spot?

14) What kind of pre warm-up rituals (before we get in the court) should we do?

15) Do you like to hear advice and coaching from me while we are playing?

16) Do you want me to walk to the baseline between points with you when you are serving?

17) What is the best thing for me to say to you when you are getting mad or frustrated?

18) Should we always elect to receive when we win the toss?

19) Are there certain people that will make you play better if they are watching?

20) Are there certain people that will make you play worse if they are watching?

Chapter 8 - Wrap Up

Below write down the top three most helpful ideas that **you** gained from this chapter.

1)

2)

3)

Chapter 9

Taking Responsibility for Your Own Game

“Champions take responsibility. They don’t blame others when their games have not evolved to the level that they should have.”

Billie Jean King, tennis legend

“I have learned that players that always have to have someone else pushing them rarely accomplish great things. Motivation must come from the inside, not from the outside.”

Jorge Capestany, tennis master professional

Your **first** responsibility as a player is to take responsibility for your own game. This means making sure you are on a proper practice regimen. Below I have defined some general guidelines for what it usually takes to get to various levels of tennis competency. Please note that these are not guarantees to reach a certain level, rather they are to be used as guidelines in determining your practice regimen.

Adult - USTA NTRP = 2.5-3.0	Junior - JV or low Varsity player
These players usually drill once per week, but not year-round. They typically do not take private lessons on a regular basis. They play less than 5 USTA tournaments a year and rarely play practice sets on their own. These players do not have any off-court training program nor do they practice their serves on their own. They normally drill one time a week on a seasonal basis. These players usually do not specialize in tennis and often play other H.S. sports.	
Adult - USTA NTRP = 3.0-4.0	Junior - Low to high Varsity player
These players typically drill 1-2 times a week and may or may not take a weekly private lesson. They play between 5-10 USTA tournaments a year and rarely play any practice sets on their own. Most do not have any off-court training program nor do they practice their serves on their own. These players usually take drills year-round and play 2-3 days per week.	
Adult - USTA NTRP = 4.0-4.5	Junior - High singles on Varsity
These players typically drill 2-3 times per week and take 1-2 private or hitting privates per week. They play roughly 10-12 USTA tournaments per year and play 2-4 practice set per week. About 50% of these players are on an off-court-training program and practice their serves on their own. These players usually take drills year-round and play 3-5 days per week.	
Adult - USTA NTRP = 4.5 & above	Junior - High singles - State Champs
These players typically drill 2-3 times per week and take 1-2 private or hitting private lessons per week. They play about 15 USTA tournaments a year and also play 6-8 practice sets per week. About 90% of these players are on an extensive off-court-training program that includes weight training as well as speed and agility training. They almost all practice their serves on their own and play about 5-6 days per week.	

There are 2 important lesson to learn from the four levels on the previous page.

- 1) It is important that the parents have the same goals for the player as the player has. Many times frustration sets in when the parent's expectation is higher than that of the player.
- 2) Players must be aware of the above information and avoid the trap of having a certain level as a goal while doing the "workload" of a lesser level. It is not uncommon to see players that say they want to be nationally ranked while going through their entire junior career doing the workload of only a sectionally ranked player.

The second area of responsibility a player should take is for his **practice matches**. This is often the missing link in a player's overall practice regimen. Many players like to take lessons and drills or even private lessons, but they never add any *match play* to their practice regimens. After a while they become great "ball strikers," but that cannot win many matches because they are not "match tough." They are only tough when they drill or practice.

A common mistake players make when they schedule their practice matches is to play the wrong kinds of matches. Often, they will play a *friend* because there is less pressure in that situation. These "friend matches" usually become just a hitting session with the players playing only a few points, then they stop keeping score altogether. If you want to be a tough competitor then you have to "serve 'em up" and play.

I have categorized matches into five types:

- Opponent is very much worse than you (**one-star** match).
- Opponent is a little worse than you (**two-star** match).
- Opponent is very even with you (**three-star** match).
- Opponent is a little better than you (**four-star** match).
- Opponent is very much better than you (**five-star** match).

To get the full benefit of match play in your regimen, you must play matches of all types and not just four-star and five-star matches. Insisting on only playing these types of matches is one of the biggest reasons that players fail to play *enough* matches.

A quick test you can take to assess if you are getting enough quality match play into your practice regimen is by answering the following question.

Which of the following three statements best describes how you feel about your game?

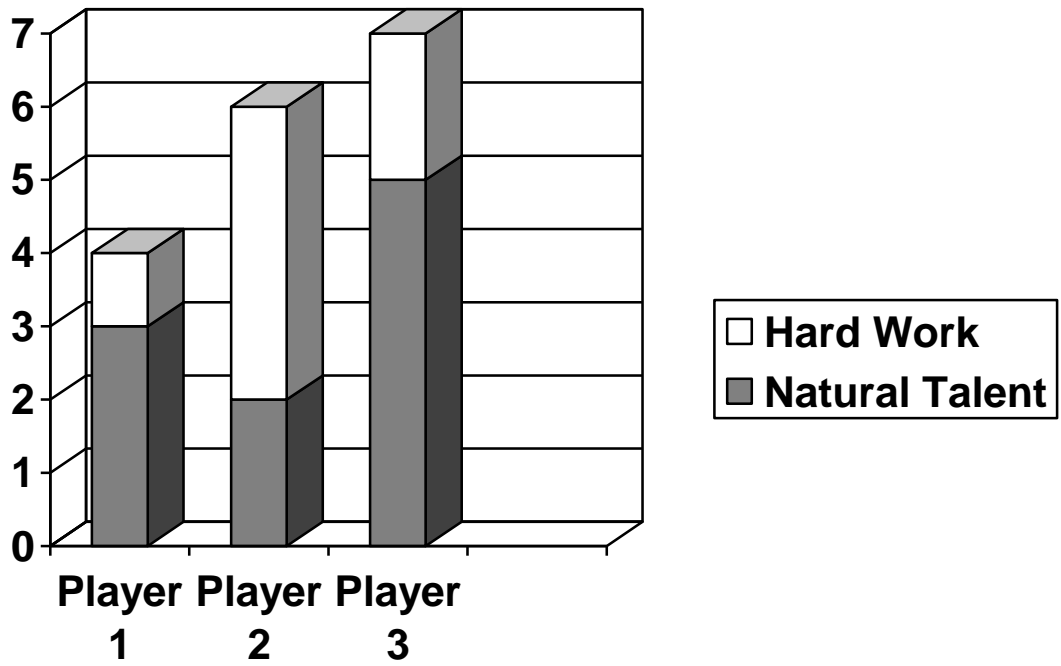
#1 – For the strokes that I have, I win more than I should.

#2 - For the strokes that I have, I win about as much as I should.

#3 - For the strokes that I have, I win less than I should.

Unfortunately, many people answer yes to #3. If you have answered yes to #3, then commit to scheduling more of the right kinds of practice matches for yourself. You may have to create a list of potential opponents to call for practice matches. This is a job that *you* should take care of do not delegate this to your parents or coach.

The last area of major responsibility is for your own **hard work and effort**. We all come to tennis with varying degrees of natural talent, but it is not always the most naturally talented players that make it the farthest. The table below shows three examples of what players may look like.



The table above shows that:

Player 1 has a good amount of natural talent, but his hard work is quite low and he consequently tops out as a mid-range player.

Player 2 has very little natural talent, but he adds a lot of hard work and he gets to a high level of play mostly because of his hard work habits.

Player 3 has a ton of natural talent and adds only a small amount of hard work, but he still gets to a high level of play because he comes to tennis with so much natural talent.

The conclusion is that *both* your natural talent and your hard work will determine how far you go as a player.

Since we have little control over the amount of natural talent we possess, we need to make sure that we excel in the one area that *is* within our control—**hard work**.

Exercises

- 1) From the levels discussed on page 48, what level of tennis would you say that you are currently striving for? (**circle one**)

Adult Player

- 2.5-3.0 level
- 3.0-4.0 level
- 4.0-4.5 level
- 4.5 & above

Junior Player (High School)

- JV or low Varsity player (HS)
- Low to high Varsity player (HS)
- High singles on Varsity (HS)
- High singles - State Champs (HS)

- 2) From the levels discussed on page 48, what level of “workload” would you say that you are currently doing? (circle one)

Non-Ranked Player

District Ranked Player

Sectionally Ranked Player

Nationally Ranked Player

- 3) Is there a misalignment in the level you are striving for and the workload you are doing?

- 4) How many practice sets are you playing a week?

- 5) How many “stars” is your typical practice match that you play? (**circle one**)



- 6) Excluding tournaments or league play, list the last four people that you played a practice set or match against. To the right of the player's name, list how many stars that match was worth.

<u>Opponent</u>	<u>Stars</u>
-	-
-	-
-	-
-	-

- 7) Do you rely on other people to set up your practice matches?

Who?

Why?

- 8) It is important to have a call list of players you can call for practice matches. Although you want most of your matches to be two, three, or four star rated matches, you need to have a list that contains all types of opponents. Below fill in the names of possible opponents for practice matches. Try not to pick only friends or people you like.

Opponent	Phone Number
1 star: _____	_____
2 star: _____	_____
2 star: _____	_____
3 star: _____	_____
3 star: _____	_____
3 star: _____	_____
4 star: _____	_____
4 star: _____	_____
5 star: _____	_____

9) Which of the following three statements best describes how you feel about your game?
(circle one)

#1 – For the strokes that I have, I win more than I should.

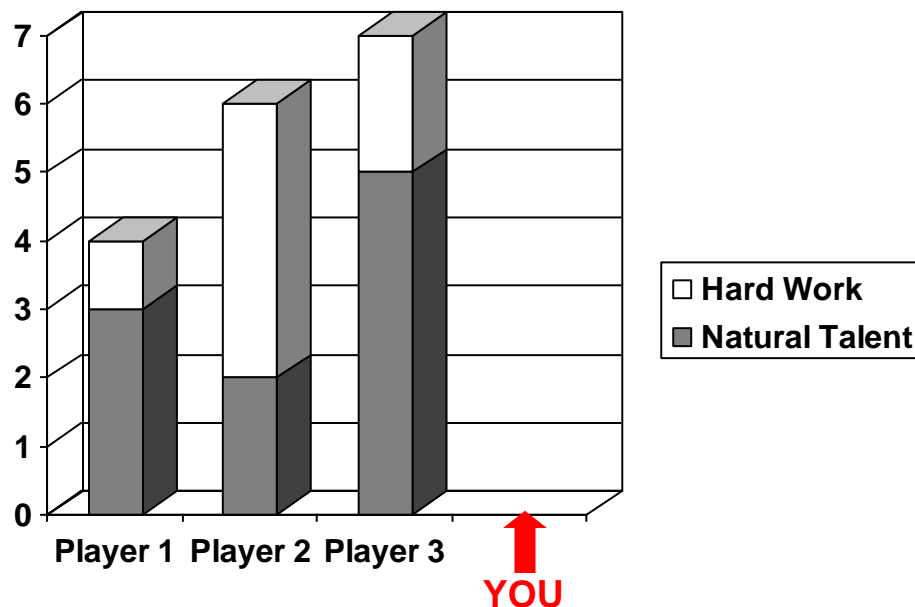
#2 - For the strokes that I have, I win about as much as I should.

#3 - For the strokes that I have, I win less than I should.

10) What might your answer to the above question mean in regards to *how many* practice matches you are playing?

11) Would you say *your* overall level in tennis is mostly because of your natural talent or because of your hard work?

12) On the chart below, fill in what you think **YOUR** bar should look like for your current level of game. Draw in your box in the area provided on the chart below.



13) Have you ever been told that you have a poor work ethic or that you don't hustle as much as you should? By whom?

14) Name a player from the pro tour who is known for his/her hard work.

15) Name a player from the pro tour who is known for his/her natural talent.

16) What two things could you do to become known as a player that really works hard?

-

-

17) Name a player that you dislike playing against because you know he will just hustle and try like crazy until the last point of the match.

Chapter 9 - Wrap Up

Below write down the top three most helpful ideas that *you* gained from this chapter.

1)

2)

3)

“Tennis can be exceedingly frustrating as a sport.”

Dr. Jim Loehr, sports psychologist, author

“It’s one-on-one out there, man. There ain’t no hiding. I can’t pass the ball.”

Pete Sampras, 14-time grand slam tennis winner

You have chosen tennis as your sport and I think it is the best choice in the entire world. I love tennis because I know that it helps my players develop so many valuable traits as a person that will help them succeed later in life. No other sport is as great as tennis when it comes to teaching life lessons.

Let me give you just one simple example. Take the life lesson of **honesty**. No other sport even comes close giving its players the opportunity to learn and practice this important value. In tennis, we serve as the umpires; we are the ones that call our opponent’s shots in or out. It is all up to us! That is a staggering responsibility considering how other sports handle the same topic. In most other sports the players are not expected to be honest. If you “trap” a ball in baseball and do not really catch it, but the umpire says that you *did* catch it. What do you think most players, teams, and coaches would expect you to do? Tell the umpire the truth!? No way, in most cases that would get you in a lot of trouble. Now compare that with what we are expected to do in tennis.

Below are ten reasons why tennis is the most psychologically demanding sport.

(Adapted from USTA Sports Psychology guidebook for coaches)

1) TENNIS IS AN INDIVIDUAL SPORT.

In tennis, you are all alone on the court. No one shares in the glory or the blame. There is no teammate to pass off to if you are playing poorly, and you cannot be taken out of the game for a while so you can recuperate from your poor play.

2) NO COACHING IS ALLOWED.

Tennis is one of the only sports where young players are not allowed to receive any coaching. Except for a handful of exceptions like high school tennis, Zonal teams or Davis Cup, nearly all tournaments do not allow coaching. The no coaching restriction is unusual in sport and clearly forces young competitors to deal with the pressures and problems of play on their own.

3) THERE ARE NO SUBSTITUTES / NO TIME-OUTS.

Many sports allow players to regain their composure or get back on track through the use of substitutions and time-outs. This is not the case in tennis. Players must stay in the game, regardless of how bad or uncomfortable things may get. This is particularly difficult considering that matches can be two or three hours in length.

4) ONE-ON-ONE COMBAT

Tennis is similar to boxing. You have a *real* one-on-one opponent that you must defeat to emerge victorious. A match can quickly become a personal confrontation between opponents, especially if one resorts to gamesmanship tactics. Such direct competition can fuel intense rivalries and threaten friendships in powerful ways among young players.

5) THE ACCURACY OF LINE CALLING

Completely objective, professionally trained linesmen make mistakes all the time. And they are motionless and concerned only with one line. Expecting players in a match to call the lines with the same accuracy is at best unrealistic. Balls traveling at speeds of over 50 miles per hour with fractions of an inch separating “out” from “in” provide distinct opportunities for conflict and controversy. Recent studies show that players are actually legally blind at the moment they land on the court when running. This is added to the fact that many matches can be dramatically changed with only one bad call, and it is easy to see why tempers can flare. (Imagine what would happen if the batters in little league baseball were responsible for calling balls and strikes for themselves!)

6) CONSTANTLY CHANGING CONDITIONS

Changing temperature, wind, intensity of light, court surfaces, balls, altitude, indoor/outdoor play, and equipment add to the depth of the competitive challenge in tennis. Players are forced to deal with changes such as these, many times within the same match. Players’ responses to these situations can provide an indication of their level of mental toughness. Those who are not affected by changes in conditions are often the ones who win.

7) LENGTH OF THE BATTLE

Few sports require young players to concentrate and perform for as much as three hours at a time. It is not uncommon for 12-year-old players to be required to compete in two singles matches and two doubles matches on the same day. Mental toughness and physical fitness become critical if a player is to become successful.

8) THE UNIQUE SCORING SYSTEM IN TENNIS

The scoring system in tennis adds to the pressure a young player experiences. Unlike many other sports, there is no overall time limit. Play continues until one of the players wins two out of three sets. Consequently, there is no room for coasting on a lead or waiting for time to run out. Each player is always just a few points from a complete turn-around, and a lead is never safe. As a contrast, if a basketball team is ahead by 30 points, they will almost certainly win, because their lead is too large to overcome within the time of the competition. In tennis a player can be ahead 5-0 in the third set and lose two games and immediately have reason to fear a loss and a huge comeback on their opponent’s part.

9) “BIG vs. LITTLE” and “YOUNG vs. OLD”

Another dimension of tennis is the fact that a nine-year-old child can successfully compete against a 14- or 15-year-old teenager. A young girl of 14 may be capable of beating a seasoned veteran on the pro tour. Small can beat large and young can beat old. A 12-year-old boy losing to a 9-year-old or a 6’3” boy losing to someone half his size can be extremely stressful.

10) TENNIS TRAINING CAN BE EXTREMELY EXPENSIVE

Tennis training for the competitive player can be a very large expense for a family. Many times, the pressures from these expenses can add additional stress to the young player who feels guilty if he is not winning because of all the money his parents are putting into his tennis. Parents can quickly lose site of what is important and begin to expect a “return” for their investment. This issue is one of the most frequently mentioned by families with players competing at high national levels.

Despite all these difficulties, tennis is still the best sport for a child to play. It is the only Sport that challenges players on the **physical**, **strategical**, and **psychological** levels. It is no coincidence that so many junior tennis players are the best students in their classes. The goal setting and work ethic needed to be successful in tennis are life skills that will help all players as they get older and enter society.

Even the difficulties experienced in junior tennis (like dealing with an abusive or cheating opponent) are opportunities to learn life skills that will be an important advantage later in life. Few other sports offer as many of these types of learning opportunities.

Parents and coaches often make the mistake of wanting to get involved or “fix” on-court problems when they happen. The best thing to do is to recognize those episodes as opportunities to learn important life lessons. Children who develop the skills to deal with difficult people at an early age, are usually far more successful in life than those who do not.

“Each time one prematurely teaches a child something he could have discovered himself, that child is kept from inventing it and consequently from understanding it completely.” -- Jean Piaget.... Tennis can help players achieve this better than any other sport.

Exercise

For the exercise portion of this chapter, I want you to write about your own experience with each of the difficulties that were listed in this chapter.

- 1) Tennis is an individual sport.
- 2) No coaching is allowed (USTA tournaments).
- 3) There are no substitutions or time-outs allowed.
- 4) There is a one-on-one type of combat.
- 5) The accuracy of line calling.
- 6) There are constantly changing conditions.

7) The length of the battle.

8) The unique scoring system in tennis.

9) Little people can beat bigger people and younger people can beat older people frequently in tennis.

10) Tennis training can be so expensive.

Chapter 10 - Wrap Up

Below write down the top three most helpful ideas that **you** gained from this chapter.

1)

2)

3)

Taking the emphasis off winning and putting it on things that you have 100 percent control over only makes sense in tennis. Today we have a multitude of players that feel like they are failures because they do not *win* as often as they think they should. One of the reasons for this is that players do not play enough matches as a part of their training regimen.

The other big reason is that players have been taught through peers, parents, and coaches that winning is the ultimate goal. Instead, we need to realize that tennis is a nearly perfect vehicle to teach players the many life lessons that are so important for all champions to learn. Below is a list of these core values.

- 1) **Character:** Through the responsibilities each player has to call the lines on their side of the court, to keep score accurately, and to give the opponent the benefit of the doubt, tennis offers a great opportunity for players to build character. A player's character can also be seen in the way he keeps score during a drill or even by his line calls while he drills. Good coaches can be very helpful if they can get the players to realize that their self-worth as a person has nothing to do with how well they strike a little yellow ball.
- 2) **Courage:** Tennis gives players the opportunity to play through tough times. The one-on-one style of competition certainly requires the moral fiber to put it on the line. Few other sports require as much courage from its youngest athletes as tennis does in this area. Another example is when players find it necessary to confront or question someone that is cheating them. How many times have we seen players avoid that uncomfortable job, only to wait until the match is over to tell the entire world how their opponent was the biggest cheater on the planet? Think of it, aren't those skills the exact ones that will best serve the players in their adult lives? It's all how you look at the situation. Some parents will think this is an awful burden that no young player should have to endure, while others recognize it as a great opportunity to teach an important life lesson and skill.
- 3) **Honesty:** Tennis is one of the only sports where the players make calls on each other's shots. Can you imagine a Little League game where the batter calls the balls and strikes? Although this huge responsibility in the hands of immature competitors can and has caused problems, no other sport allows for the development of honesty like tennis does. Parents and coaches can facilitate the development of this core value if they seek out opportunities to compliment players when the players get it right.
- 4) **Sportsmanship:** Like in other sports, tennis players will play opponents that are jerks and try to cheat. In the short run this is uncomfortable for players and parents, but it does give young players the chance to begin to develop coping skills with these kinds of people. I know many competitive junior players that are mature beyond their peers in this area simply because they have had more chances to practice these skills than their non-tennis playing friends. Parents should view these episodes as *opportunities* and resist the urge to get involved and "save" the child.

- 5) **Integrity:** More than any other sport, tennis has the potential for “retaliatory” calls because it allows for your opponent to make calls that directly affect you. There will be times when people get cheated, whether on purpose or by honest mistake. How a player reacts to these times offers the player a chance to test and prove his integrity. Will he get even, or will he do the right thing despite the opponent’s actions? Refusing to retaliate will teach players that they should avoid *situational ethics* by refusing to get even “because he did it to me first.” Players that succeed in this area can have a profound sense of satisfaction even if they lose the match, but only if a coach or parent is dedicated to looking for and rewarding their successes in this area.

- 6) **Commitment:** Reaching the highest level of tennis requires a great deal of commitment on the player’s part. The lessons of self-discipline and delayed gratification are great life lessons that will surely serve the player later in life. Even within a player’s game he will need to make decisions to try new techniques that may hurt him in the short run. Commitment to these new techniques is critical for future tennis success and teaches a valuable life lesson that players will surely benefit from as adults.

- 7) **Humility:** Through competition and partaking in drill classes, players soon come to realize people do not look upon arrogance very highly. Tennis offers players the chance to learn the difference between arrogance and confidence. Team settings and class settings are the best arenas for players to learn this. Parents and coaches cannot shun their responsibility to tell players when they are acting arrogantly.

- 8) **Excellence:** I believe the practice court is the best arena to teach players to strive for excellence. Many players find it difficult to practice with the proper level of intensity after a long day at school. These challenges are like the ones they will have in college, and ultimately when they enter the workforce and become parents. The ability to work hard when you do not feel like it is a major life lesson in the area of striving for excellence.

If we can produce players that strive to excel in these areas and look at tennis as a vehicle to become a better person, then they will have learned valuable life lessons and in the process experience less stress in competition. This is because they will no longer view the “win” as the ultimate goal. Instead, they will be aiming at a more important target. Almost every tough loss in tennis can be a victory if the player is tuned into the life lessons that tennis offers.

Exercise

For the exercise portion of this chapter, I would like you to write down and elaborate on three of the Core Values in the preceding list you would most like to develop in yourself. List them and then write 1-2 sentences on how you can develop this value through your involvement in Tennis.

1) **Core Value:** _____

How Tennis can help you develop this value:

2) **Core Value:** _____

How Tennis can help you develop this value:

3) **Core Value:** _____

How Tennis can help you develop this value:

Chapter 11 - Wrap Up

Below write down the top three most helpful ideas that *you* gained from this chapter.

1)

2)

3)

Stan Smith's Quiz about tennis parenting

By Stan Smith with Cindy Hahn - TENNIS / July 1990

I've known a lot of parents in my life. As a junior player, I knew them as friends' moms and dads. As director of coaching for the USTA, I work with fathers and mothers of our nation's top juniors. And, as the father of two racquet-wielding children, I am a tennis parent myself.

Jim Loehr, the sports psychologist who oversees the USTA's sports science program, says "When I work with kids, the relationship with their parents and how it effects their tennis is always my number one concern."

Some parents do a wonderful job. Others make me wish there were remedial parent-training courses. But all struggle with the pressure junior tennis places on tennis parents: Has our son outgrown his coach? Can we afford airfare to the nationals? Is our daughter burning out?

There's no course to teach you how to handle this enormous financial and emotional investment, nor is there any tried-and true answer for even the most common questions. But I can share with you some guidelines that may help, based on the research of sports psychologists, USTA studies, and my own experience. First, to get a sense of how you rate as a tennis parent, take the quiz below, which is based on one in Loehr's book, *The Parent/Players Tennis Training Program*. Use the scale below for your answers.

5 = Always / 4 = Almost always / 3 = Sometimes / 2 = Almost never / 1 = Never

- 1) Do you coach your child? _____
- 2) Do you watch all your child's matches? _____
- 3) Do you look nervous on the sidelines? _____
- 4) Do you treat your child differently when he/she wins? _____
- 5) Do you ignore your child's bad behavior on the court? _____
- 6) Do you tell your child he's being unrealistic when he talks about a pro career? _____
- 7) Do you believe your family's standard of living has suffered because of the expense of your child's tennis? _____
- 8) Do you think your child should give up other sports to concentrate on tennis? _____

Total up your score and refer to the chart below:

8-16 = Good job, as a tennis parent you are a pro.

17-32 = Slight problem, work on your strategy and consistency.

33-40 = Problem parent - re-learn the basics fast.

Read On for tans thoughts on improving your performance in each situation.

1) Be a parent, not a coach.

In the beginning, it is great to be your child's "coach" to introduce him to tennis. He will be more interested in tennis if the initial exposure comes from you because kids naturally want to do what their parents do. However, eventually the parent needs to hand the coaching duties to someone else. Most parents do not have the technical knowledge to instruct their children. But more importantly, the roles of coach and parent are so conflictive that it is nearly impossible for one person to play both.

A coach's job is to build strong tennis players; the coach must criticize, and compliment based on performance. The parents' job is to build a strong person; they must provide unconditional love that instills self-esteem in a child. For one person to tackle both of these jobs is a formidable task and the results are often disastrous.

2) Watch no more than 75 percent of your child's matches.

Your child needs to learn that he is the only person who can control the events on the court. It will also give him confidence to know he can compete without parents watching.

I also feel parents should watch 0-30 percent of their child's practices. Practice is the coach's domain, and he needs your absence to develop a relationship with your child. Your absence will also promote you child's on-court independence. Parents that watch too many practices are sending a subliminal message to their children that tennis is so important, that I must be at everything about it. It can also show a lack of trust that the parents may have about the coach's ability to get the job done.

3) Always look positive during a match.

Your child inevitably will look over at you, and your body language can make or break his confidence. Always maintain a calm, confident air, even in the third set tiebreak. If your child sees you with your head in your hands or pacing nervously, his feeling of pressure will only become more intense.

I know it's difficult, because all parents are nervous for their children. Charting your child's match can help (we recommend momentum charting). This will give the parents something to do with their hands and something constructive to take their mind off the on-court drama. The charted results may also be useful to the coach.

4) Keep an even keel.

You may feel elated by your child's win or deflated by his loss, but don't show either emotion too much. This will help him realize that losing is not the end of the world and that winning is not everything. Always say something positive (that's easy if he wins), but even if he loses avoid the

temptation of becoming the coach. Let the coach do that job at the next practice session. Something like “Bad luck, you competed well, or you can get him next time” would be good things to say after a loss.

5) Reprimand your child for on-court misbehavior.

If cheating, racquet throwing, or abusive language becomes a habit, then take some dramatic action. Pull the child off the court and reprimand him. Make it understood that under no circumstances is that acceptable behavior. If you ignore this misbehavior you are condoning it, and that is failing your responsibility as a parent.

6) Let your child dream.

Never take away your child’s dream, as unrealistic as it might be. Dreams are the fuel that keeps young people striving, learning, and exploring.

If your child says he wants to be a pro some day, and it is obvious that he does not have what it takes, do not say, “You’re just not athletic enough.” Instead say something like, “That would be great, but first you need to work hard at getting a national ranking. Andre Agassi, John McEnroe, and other pro players all competed on the national junior level before making it to the pros.”

By helping your child realize what he needs to achieve to reach the goal, gradually he will see pro tennis is not the right track. He will begin to revisit the dream finding alternatives that can be just as fulfilling and more realistic.

7) Explore financial options.

Loehr recently talked to a woman who took out a second mortgage on her house to pay for her child’s tennis. That is clearly too much of a financial sacrifice. When a family’s standard of living is eroded because of tennis it places enormous pressure on the child, even if the subject is never spoken about. The child is likely to feel responsible to win because of the major sacrifices the family has made for his tennis.

If your child is very talented, there are two ways to support the tennis. Families, friends, or local businesses are often willing to sponsor a talented junior, but make sure to check out any possible NCAA rules before accepting money. The USTA is another avenue of possible financial assistance. Check with your USTA sectional office about assistance programs for talented juniors.

8) Encourage your child to play other sports.

Usually, when junior players get older (around 14 years old) they will have to forgo other sports if they want to reach their full potential in tennis. Until then, they should play all sports they enjoy.

In 1987, when the USTA analyzed other countries’ tennis programs, it found that nearly all of their best players played other sports until the age of 12 or 13, and many until 14 or 15. A child will only develop half to three-quarters of his athletic potential by playing only tennis. Also, distractions from tennis can help keep burnout at bay.

My 11-year-old son, Ramsey, has played baseball (he is a pitcher) for the past three years. This year, my wife and I thought maybe he should not play so that he could concentrate on tennis. But eventually we decided that he should continue baseball. The benefits of playing a team sport, combined with the eye-hand coordination that baseball promotes, and the pressures of being a pitcher will ultimately help his tennis.

Chapter 12 - Wrap Up

Below write down the top three most helpful ideas that **you** gained from this chapter.

1)

2)

3)

E-Book Summary

I hope that you have found this workbook helpful and useful.

As a coach I am decided to become better myself and committed to being a life-long learner. I feel this will help me coach my students to the best of my abilities.

The very fact that you have taken the time to work through this book shows that you are committed and smart enough to understand that not all tennis improvement happens on the court. Many times, the best players in the game have made massive improvement while working on off-court things.

You may not have thought of working through a tennis workbook as a means of for real improvement, but I am glad that you did.

Please be sure to take it easy on yourself. The sport tennis can be extremely frustrating, and I have seen many people suffer needlessly as they compete.

A dangerous question to ask yourself is *what kind of person are you becoming because of your tennis*. Are you a more goal oriented, disciplined person, capable of delaying gratification or are you becoming more of an angry, frustrated person who is difficult to be around? The truth is that I have been both at different times of my life.

My last recommendation is for you to write out a **gratitude letter** to the sport of tennis. When I became certified as a mental toughness coach through the Human Performance Institute, I was challenged to write such a letter and it was very moving for me.

As a final gift to you ... I have decided to share with you my own **letter of gratitude to tennis**. You will see it on the next few pages, and I think you will find it extremely personal and real to me. It details some of my success and failures and how far I have come as both a player and a coach. I hope you will use it as a model to craft your own letter.

Please Enjoy...

Gratitude Letter to Tennis – by Jorge Capestany (March 2014)

Tennis... I just wanted to share my thoughts about what you have meant to me since I've known you for 38 years now. We were introduced on a court at my elementary school in Hudsonville, Michigan in 1976. Little did I know that through you, I would meet my future wife, have a job, and be allowed to travel all over the world as a coach and speaker. But we both know that it has not always been easy for me, when I first began to play, I was hampered by severe bouts of insecurity. Although I loved to practice and train, I often struggled when we actually competed.

Early on I felt so insecure as I played all these other kids that I knew had played much longer than me... after all, I did not get serious about you (or even meet you) until I was almost 15. I loved the idea of tournaments and competing against others, but it was in that competitive arena that some serious self-confidence issues that I had inside, could surface. Being an immigrant family and not able to speak the language when I started Kindergarten, had laid a deep seeded insecurity in me that only competition exposed.

I remember going to my first tournament with a group of players from my club. I thought all of them were so much better than me and I ended up losing 6-0 6-0 in my first match... I was embarrassed. My coach tried to console me and told me that I still got to play in the Back draw, which I was not even aware existed. He explained how it would be easier for me because it was full of people who had already lost in the first round, (sweet, I can beat scrubs...) I was excited not to still have another chance to compete. But within a couple hours I had lost 6-0 6-0 again, only this time I felt even more humiliated because I had just been crushed in the "toilet bowl". After that, we parted ways for a couple weeks which was the first (of many) times I "broke up with you".

Our relationship for the next several years (my late teen years and into early 20's) was volatile most of the time. I am not proud of the way I acted on the court on many occasions, or in my apparent inability to **get it together** on the court. I always seemed to find a way to lose. To be honest, I was quite immature, and my only view of success was if I won or lost the actual match. It was not until I became a coach that I saw the potential that you, tennis, have for teaching life lessons. Thinking back, I see that my own junior coach had tried to teach me these lessons, but at the time I had no interest in developing as a person, only in winning, which for me meant acquiring better strokes.

During this time tennis was only about winning for me and developing myself as a person of character was not even a thought in my head. My endless pursuit of **results** had put me well on my way to **winning the race to the wrong finish line**. In fact, there were many days where I was becoming a **worse** person because of tennis... more impatient, more angry, more cynical, more difficult to be around (especially if I lost). It is a dangerous question to ask one's self... what kind of person are you becoming because of your tennis?

As I transitioned from being a player to a coach, I had the opportunity to help a lot of kids that were having the same struggles that I did as a competitor. All those heartbreaking losses, struggles with self-doubt, and anger issues, that I had experienced as a **player** would now come in handy as I helped students deal with those issues themselves.

So, I want to thank you tennis for the many things you have taught me to make me a better person, dad, husband, and coach. It has taken me way longer than it should because I spent so much time only concerned about results and the scoreboard, worried what others would think of me based on my results. What I have learned specifically is...

- 1) Now I know that chasing only results is **fool's gold**, never satisfying or justification for the immense amount of work I put into getting better as a player.
- 2) There is danger in measuring one's self-esteem by how well we strike a little yellow ball that after all, only cost \$1. I have matured to the point that I know if I don't have a **clear purpose for competing** in my head, I will never have peace as I compete... you taught me this in a brutal manner. Now as a coach, my clear purpose is for why I coach rather than compete.
- 3) I learned that my **private voice** was often an internal terrorist, a source of constant criticism and spoke to me in ways I would never allow others to do. This is perhaps the most important area I can help players as a coach.
- 4) I learned that as a teaching professional I spent way too much time on the court abusing my body, and way too many weekends away from my family watching my students play in tournaments. I regret the time I missed with my family during those years.

5) All those hours I taught on the court (55,000) took its toll on my body and evaporated any desire I had to get back on the court and practice for myself. This led to my increased weight and consequently injuries that kicked it over the top for me so that I stopped hitting and competing all together and can now barely demonstrate shots to my players. My diet had become very unhealthy.

6) I have learned that the **story** I was telling myself around my body and diet was detrimental. I would tell myself that since I worked so hard and worked so many hours and was always available 24/7 to students and my job that I DESERVED to eat whatever I wanted, whenever I wanted. I had made a poor diet my reward for being so unselfish with my time. The stories we tell ourselves shape our lives.

7) I have learned that in every single case I am aware of, reaching the pinnacle of results leaves one feeling empty and unsatisfied. From Luke Jensen to Andre Agassi, I have seen firsthand that playing tennis without an **ultimate purpose for competing** that is more transcendent than results (wins/losses) is the only way to really be happy and fulfilled, while at the same time making the competitive experience more enjoyable.

I feel blessed that in my fifties I'm still learning about life through tennis. I love the fact that I can help other players navigate the minefield of competitive tennis in a healthy way. Even with all the struggles and frustration I have experienced as a coach, all the kids that have come into my life, and the parents I had to deal with... I still love you Tennis - I would not want to do anything else for a living.

As I enter my last decade of teaching tennis, my desire is to be a better example for others, and help more players find their **real purpose** for why they compete. Not for their friends, not for their parents, not for their coaches, but as a means to GROW UP. Thank you, tennis, for helping me **grow up** and become a better and balanced person, even if it did take a long time.

The End.... I wish you the best on the courts and please check me out at either of my websites listed below.

Learn more from Jorge at his website that ca BOTH be found at:

CapestanyTennis.com