



Coaching Mental Toughness Road Map

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This product provides the findings from Dr. Ross’s Masters of Sport Psychology Thesis that explored the development of mental toughness in tennis over 12 months. This study involved extensive interviewing of i.) Coaches of Grand Slam Champions/World #1 players (junior, ATP, WTA), ii.) Grand Slam champion players (and parents of these players), and iii.) Players who were viewed by respected coaches as having been mentally weak throughout their careers (and their parents). This research project was the most extensive mental toughness review ever undertaken in tennis and the first in the mental toughness field to gain access to mentally weak players and their parents in any sport. It also contains relevant recommendations and quotes from these study participants regarding understanding and developing mental toughness therefore providing a comprehensive coach guide for player mental toughness development.

#Please note: Participant names are not revealed to respect research project confidentiality agreements...

Contents

Defining Mental Toughness.....	Pg 2
Parent Recommendations for Mental Toughness Development.....	Pg 3
Coach Recommendations for Mental Toughness Development.....	Pg 9
Mental Toughness Attributes.....	Pg 15
Mental Toughness Situations.....	Pg 22
Mental Toughness Behaviours.....	Pg 24

Defining Mental Toughness

Mental toughness was considered a multidimensional concept that allows a tennis player to consistently get the best out of his/her physical and technical ability. The current definition aims to reflect this stance while integrating the key findings of this study and strengths of previous definitions:

(In tennis) Mental toughness is a collection of behaviours that allow performance consistently exceeding what physical and technical skills would suggest in perceived challenging situations.

Table 1

Parental recommendations for mental toughness development and representative quotes (recommendations based on participant interviews)

* No relevant representative quote, () indicates quote responsibility

REPRESENTATIVE QUOTE(S) MENTAL TOUGHNESS HELP	RECOMMENDATION AND DESCRIPTION	REPRESENTATIVE QUOTE(S) MENTAL TOUGHNESS HINDERANCE
Provide Appropriate Support		
<i>Provide Support/Not Over involved</i>		
<p>Parents need to step back and take pressure off, help take pressure off that is tied into the fear of losing. If the kid doesn't have that fear of losing it is going to help them become mentally tougher. If parents are there to support them, emotionally support them, financially support them and let the coaches deal with the performance stuff because it just gets too emotional when the parents are too involved. (player)</p>	<p>Parents should provide appropriate support (emotional, tangible) for their child. The key is balancing the level of this support as it is equally detrimental to the development of mental toughness to be either under supportive (show lack of interest) or over involved (e.g., when parents' level of involvement prevents the implementation of other recommendations in this product)</p>	<p>My parents didn't have a whole lot to do with my tennis, I wasn't around them much with regards to that, they very rarely came to watch me play so I was more influenced by the friends who didn't play a lot of tennis I think. (player)</p>
<p>A parent's role is simple- it is to support their kids and improve their chance of them feeling good about themselves. The best parents are supportive of their kids and non-judgmental in terms of how they play. (coach)</p>	<i>Motivated by Child Wellbeing/ Not Success</i>	<p>When parents don't get involved at all, they just drop them off and leave, there is no accountability because the parent doesn't know what is going on, the kid is left to their own devices to do what they like when they like, so it is the parents that find that middle ground, that balance, that do the best job. (coach)</p>
<p>I think, overall, all my parents wanted was for me to be in a situation where it was always enjoyable to do what I did. It was never a chore to do things. They were very much "if you want to do it we will support you, if you don't want to do it, don't do it." Yeah, so I think enjoyment. Their outlook was for me to enjoy whatever I did. They never once pushed me to practice (player)</p>	<p>Parents should reflect on their own motivations regarding their child's tennis. Those that see it as a developmental opportunity are likely to promote enjoyment and increase long term motivation to compete whereas parents whose primary motivation is for their child to become a professional tennis player promote a stressful environment that can lead to lack of enjoyment or withdrawal from the sport</p>	<p>It was probably some of my fault, I wanted (player x) to win, I think I made mistakes by pushing to hard, (player x) probably wanted to win because of me, you get in competition with other parents, just stupid, I wanted (player x) to win so bad which was bullshit, looking back it didn't matter whether your kid is winning at 14, but you get carried away, it's a sad thing (parent)</p>
		<p>Most parents with kids with mental toughness issues put way too much pressure on results. They see their kid's tennis as an investment rather than a development opportunity, they see it as an opportunity for their kid to play professional tennis (coach)</p>
		<p>I think a big mistake a lot of parents make today is that they don't just let kids be kids, they are trying to make too much of them, they are forcing their own wishes onto their kids, we always wanted them to play sport just because it was good for them, as long as they enjoyed it and played it fairly (parent)</p>
		<p>Whenever I started working with someone I would always ask the parents if they would rather their child be happy or to win. If they answered happy then there was never a problem but if they hesitated or said they wanted both then you knew it was bullshit</p>

Promote Resilience

Expose to Tough Experiences/Don't Overprotect

If you're constantly put in tough environments or challenging environments from a young age then you have to figure out a way to get out of them, with the right support from parents you will learn mental toughness behaviour over time that will transcend onto the court (coach)

I think experiences can contribute to some of these things. I mean if you are born into hardship, now we are seeing a lot of players coming out of Eastern Europe, because they see tennis as a better way of life from what they are used to (coach)

I think it was a benefit when we didn't support (Player x) when (Player x) moved out because we tried to show that you can't get something for nothing, we are not going to spoil you, so I think that was a good lesson for (Player x) too. (parent)

They didn't give me everything on a plate, I mean I couldn't go to tournaments that I wanted, get the coaching I wanted sometimes, I think if you give everything to someone they don't know what it is like to work hard for it. (player)

Well we always worked hard and expected them to work hard as well, we were probably a little bit tough on them, compared to today, but I think that has helped them in the long run (parent)

Parents should allow (and encourage) their child to experience adversity and 'tough experiences'. This promotes opportunities to adapt, grow and become resilient. Parents who are overprotective debilitate mental toughness growth

Do Not Spoil

Parents who spoil their child diminish opportunities for hard work and learning to overcome difficulties that promote mental toughness development. This is likely to lead to players who become 'helpless' when facing difficulties during a match. Parents who are 'tougher' on a child allow their child to develop the ability to overcome 'tough' situations

(Player x) was like the golden haired child who had never had enough negative exposure to things, he was just used to doing things that were nice, so when he was faced with a difficult situation he didn't know how to cope. (coach)

If at a young age everything is just provided for you and you don't have to fight or be challenged or toughen out for anything then you don't have a learned behaviour that allows you to go to the depths of your performance capabilities. So often a parent is a hindrance in that regard because they're over protective when a challenging or negative situation occurs (coach)

I tried to give (player x) what ever (player x) needed, you want them to have the best, but I think I overdid it a bit (parent)

If their parents have a lot of money it's very tough for a kid to become mentally tough if they are spoiled. I know that as well myself because my parents had a lot of money when I was young and they just gave me everything, everything came pretty easy, they would just buy me new racquets whenever I broke them and that definitely hindered me. (player)

The ones that have the most problem with mental toughness are those who have been spoiled as a child. Three players in particular that I have worked with- huge similarities, they come from situations where they have been spoiled, haven't had to do the work to achieve results at a young age, and so never learnt the processes involved when the going gets tough (coach)

Promote Self-Belief and Self-Esteem

Communicate Unconditional Love

They never emphasized winning or losing, it was go out there and do your best and if you do your best you should be happy, and I think that helped me learn when I get to the end of matches even if you don't get the result you want you can still take a lot away from it. (player)

Love your kids unconditionally, it doesn't matter whether they win or lose a tennis match, you have to communicate that it doesn't matter that you lost that match, I still love you, and make sure they are getting that message. (coach)

Parents should communicate love and acceptance of their child regardless of match outcomes or performance. This is likely to help build self-esteem and result in a balanced approach to competition. Parents who communicate love conditionally on results will lower self-esteem and increase anxiety regarding results

Parents who use love withdrawal usually rationalize that they are trying to make their kid tougher or stronger and they are probably right in that fear can be a great motivator but the question is at what cost (coach)

My parents were a hindrance in that they put so much, everything into my tennis, in a way put a lot of pressure on me, not meaning to do it, but I felt it in that if I won or lost there was a huge difference in mum and dad's reaction to that, because it meant so much to them, I could tell if I won they were happy and if I lost they were sad, sad for me but also themselves, I felt a lot of pressure from that and I think it sort of set off starting defense mechanisms with my tennis. (player)

Often with bad parenting a player will get scared to compete because of what might happen afterwards and a lot of players can then start to value their self worth based on the result (coach)

One player I worked with her father wouldn't give her a hot meal if she lost and she ended up hating tennis and quitting and another was literally hit when she lost and she was so fearful, she became a broken young lady, she would lie about results because she was so scared, both very unhappy (coach)

Positive and Encouraging/Not Negative or Critical

It is really about the feedback parents give when they come off their matches in terms of being encouraging and trying to let them know all the good things they did. They tend to focus on what the player did well, that positive reinforcement (coach)

Parents should encourage their child in all endeavours and focus on competence along with abilities to achieve future goals. When communicated consistently these measures will increase the child's self-belief. Parents who are negative and critical with regard to their child's performances promote self-doubt and self-criticalness

I have seen many parents focus on past negative experiences which is debilitating for the kid. A couple of parents of kids I work with will in front of their kids say "such and such always loses the big points, or such and such always loses matches under pressure." It is really important not to remind them of where they have failed in the past. Words from parents can cut like a knife as far as I am concerned. And it might only be one or two instances where a kid might hear from their parent and doubt themselves for the rest of their life (coach)

It's tough for coaches because they spend such a small percentage of time with players compared to the years they spend coming out of their home environment, and (Player x) had a father who was very negative, he would always have a

reason why something couldn't work and she came out of that negative environment and was a product of that, which is hard to make a difference (coach)

I remember (Player x) in (Tournament x), before she had won anything, I think she was ranked about (#), because her father had instilled in her that she was going to be the best player in the world, she was walking around demanding practice courts, thinking already she was the best, so once she got in the position to do something very big, the moment wasn't bigger than her, because she believed all along since a very young age that she would be there. (coach)

I look at the likes of (Player x) whose father always instilled in him that he was going to be the best, the same with the (Player y), and even (Player z), they grew up with that belief that they were the best and going to be the best, so I would say parents play a big role in the building that belief in yourself. (coach)

We tried to encourage (Player x) to do the best that (Player x) could, but we tried not to place very high expectations, we would say "good luck, do as well as you can, but we never said, we expect you to win or anything like that (parent)

High Expectations/Not Low or Unrealistic High

Parents who communicate high expectations encourage their child to challenge themselves, experience the joy of achievement and overcoming challenges, and develop self-belief. It is important to balance this between extremes of communicating low expectations which promotes low self-belief and achievement drive, and unrealistically high expectations which encourages unrelenting standards, increased anxiety, and continual frustration and disappointment with performance

I don't think we ever gave (Player x) enough credit, I don't think deep down we thought (Player x) would make it. I don't think we believed it ourselves. (parent)

My dad always used to tell me that if I tried 100% that I should win every match I play, and when I was young I never lost a match and started believing it I think. (player)

My dad would say, "if you worked as hard at school as tennis you will be successful in life, which I interpreted as – you are probably not going to make it in tennis so that made me feel like I couldn't do it, or maybe it was impossible to do (player)

Promote Autonomy

Promote Autonomy/Don't promote Dependence

When (Player x) was 5 I was always so busy so (Player x) had to do a lot of things on own, we were there whenever we could be but it just wasn't possible a lot of the time and I think having to be responsible for at such a young age helped with development (parent)

Parents should encourage developmentally appropriate levels of autonomy in their child. Parents who achieve this are able to balance autonomy with clear limits, boundaries and consequences for poor behaviour. In contrast, controlling parents promote dependence where the child is likely to become a pawn for parental desires

(Player x) is a great example of how you can get a great short term result but I don't think a long one, she was travelling the first time without her mother, she was playing a practice match and halfway through the match she stopped, she couldn't cope, and said "this is the only time since I was three years old that my mum hasn't been here on the court. Her great big wish was to have some success on her own but she never did it. (coach)

Independence is vital, they absolutely have to be independent competitors. They have to be taught to be their own decision makers, and the earlier that can be done the better, and I find it interesting the perception out there that the pushier parents have produced the top in the world, but in my view it is those that understood that it was the independence of the player that was important (coach)

In my experience you can get a good short term result from controlling parenting, if you look at (Player x), never really understanding why she is playing, maybe out of fear, but she was definitely driven to do things under pressure, and that driving force was the parent, but once that driving force was gone, once she was on her own, because that drive never came from her, it came down to fear or different things, she couldn't play (coach)

Promote Decision Making and Problem Solving/Don't Do Everything for Child

It was when my parents gave me the independence and responsibility that whatever I- and especially when I went away my parents said "you're on your own and we are not around so any decisions you make are your responsibility", and my parents, throughout childhood allowed me the independence to go in the direction I wanted, with all endeavours I chose. I think this led me to be able to make decisions for myself, I was able to look at a situation, from a very young age, put the pros and cons together, and make a decision, and it was likely a responsible decision (player)

Parents should promote decision making and problem solving by encouraging their child to figure out problems and make decisions for themselves while providing support and encouragement. This fosters children who can solve problems and make decisive decisions whereas parents who do everything for their child or reveal answers rather than challenging the child to problem solve promote helplessness

If the parents do everything for the kid, it is very hard for the kid to become mentally tough. This usually adds up to a helpless kid on the court. They look for mum or dad to come on the court and help them (player)

Promote Accountability

Provide Clear Rules/Boundaries/Limits and Consistent Consequences

I think if a parent is tough, provides a clear consequence for a poor behaviour through a mature process of education, including explanation of why the consequence is in place, and then provides positive reinforcement for a correction in that behaviour, I think the kid over time learns the right behaviour, they might go through a stage of taking a while to learn that but over time as they mature they will. (coach)

Parents should implement clear rules and limits with regards their child's tennis and home life and when these are not met apply appropriate consistent consequences. This teaches a child that their actions are important and fosters appropriate limits

I think we were probably even thinking we were doing the right thing, but we were probably a little to lenient. We trusted (Player x) to do the right thing and at times (Player x) definitely didn't (parent)

There is a degree of accountability from home life, to training, they give the child the chance to choose but if they do the wrong thing there are appropriate, clear repercussions. For bad behaviour they are pulled off the court, if they cheat they pull them up, it is a loving environment where the kids know that their parents love them unconditionally but the parents make them accountable for their actions. It is delineating the lines clearly between their relationship and their responsibility. They are two different things. (coach)

Model Mental Toughness

Well (Player x) came from a bit of a blue collar family, parents were hard working, and he learnt the value of hard work (coach)

It is important that parents model taking responsibility for outcomes, working hard, calm responses to emotional situations, emotional regulation, determination and, enjoyment of competition

So often when a challenging or tough situation arises the parent has a built in excuse mechanism to explain the event and the child has watched how their parent responds in that situation and learns what those are and adopts them (coach)

During matches, not to react at all if possible, because when you talk to kids it is amazing how much they see, and often we are just transferring our own anxiety onto the kids, so to watch a match as a parent and not react, maybe some clapping

My parents are very emotional and I get very emotional on court, I get pissed off at certain things, my parents were very emotional, my dad wasn't the most relaxed guy in the world so

is alright, but I think players would prefer neutral (coach)

We tried to show by example, both my wife and I would say we have strong characters, but we go about it quietly (parent)

that probably affected me, it definitely affected me because I am like them now (player)

Communicate Empathy

It's basic but talk to them and listen and I think parents listening to their kids more is important as well (coach)

Parents should view their child's competitive situations with empathy and try to understand their child's perspective before giving advice. This can increase a child's self-esteem and promotes feelings that they are important and understood

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Increase Self-Awareness

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An acute self-awareness is the underlying requirement that allows all preceding recommendations to be implemented. A parent cannot change what they are not aware of

Some parents just seem to find it very tough. They just seem to not have that background of how to deal with the situations that arise. I think it is vital to talk to parents and try to help them understand why they are acting a certain way and even what they are thinking about prior to acting a certain way (coach)

Table 2

Coach recommendations for mental toughness development and representative quotes (Recommendations based on participant interviews)

() indicates quote responsibility

RECOMMENDATION	DESCRIPTION	REPRESENTATIVE QUOTE(S)
1.) ‘Tough’ Environment	Coaches should provide environments that promote opportunities for mental toughness growth	
<i>Competitive Environment</i>	Coaches should promote competition rather than avoiding it. Although this may be more ‘uncomfortable’ for the coach, it provides opportunities for feedback and player self-reflection that develops adaptive competitive behaviours	<p>You have to provide a competitive environment. Get good players together and have them competing. It’s important to try to set up competitive matches in practice that mean something. Often women will play men and avoid playing other women in practice because it is easier mentally, they need to play more matches that are a challenge (coach)</p> <p>If you can learn as a younger player competitive behaviours and how to respond to different competitive situations and you learn the correct way to respond they are lessons in mental toughness that helps later in life (coach)</p>
<i>Tough Experiences</i>	Coaches should provide ‘tough’ situations so players can learn to grow and cope with difficulties that will be faced as an elite tennis player. These should be presented in a manageable fashion and accompanied by communication of belief in a players ability to cope	<p>It is giving experiences that players may not think are positive. If you have 1000 experiences in tennis 700 might be good and 300 might be bad. If I wrap you up in cotton wool and don’t give you these situations, how are you going to grow and cope when these situations arise on the court- you won’t because you haven’t experienced them. (coach)</p> <p>Just put players in situations where they have to be tough, not make it easy for them, like telling them they are going to do 6 sprints and make them do 7, setting up points where you start each game down 0-30. You have to be careful because you still want them to have fun so it’s a fine line (player)</p>
<i>Tough Training</i>	A coach’s role in developing mental toughness includes promoting hard work and tough training. In part, mental toughness is the result of a player developing self-discipline via tough training	<p>It is important to do mundane things for long periods of time, because it effectively does force you to become mentally tough, it’s kind of like, for me, like a prisoner of war being subjected to relentless torture over and over, it’s that disciplined hard work that is required at times of long extended periods of doing something relentless or monotonous to produce that toughness (coach)</p> <p>That’s what (Coach x) did, you have heard about the drills he would have players do, they became so self-disciplined there was never the thought that they would quit (coach)</p>

Quality Practice

It is important to implement not only tough practice but quality practice to develop the skills (technical and mental) that promote mental toughness

(Negative) One coach definitely was not hard enough on me. From about 16 through 20 I really required a coach who was willing to help me get rid of the bad habits I had developed, not technically but mentally, he just didn't address it when I definitely needed more discipline (player)

I am a massive believer in good quality practice- if you don't know bad tennis you can't play bad tennis (coach)

Clear Expectations and Structure

Coaches should provide an environment that includes clear rules, expectations and structure so players can develop clear links between behaviour and consequences

Coaches have to be consistent in setting boundaries, they can't just have knee jerk reactions to things, there needs to be consistent discipline and structure so the kid is clear on the consequences for certain actions. (coach)

Well, when I went to the (Training centre x) there were certain expectations, very strict rules in place, and if you didn't meet those standards, or broke the rules then you would be out of the program. And that regimented, quite strict structure was where that work ethic was instilled in me (player)

2.)Promote Specific Mental Toughness Attributes

Coaches should encourage development of specific mental toughness attributes, behaviours, and cognitions

Self-Belief

Coaches should promote player self-belief. This can be accomplished by placing players in situations where they experience success (overcoming tough situations, winning matches). It is important to focus on what a player does well more than what they don't do well and promote their ability to overcome challenges in the future. When a player fails it should be communicated as a learning opportunity

(Coach x) instilled in (Player x) what nobody else did, it's unbelievable what that guy did, he believed in (player x) when nobody along the line ever really did, but he instilled belief in (player x), and as soon as (Player x) accepted that it could be done (Player x) did it. He helped 1000%. (parent)

I think when you work with players you can build that self belief, it comes from placing kids in situations where they have success and this grows that self belief. So I continually try to do that. When someone does something well, you keep focusing on what they do well, not the thing they don't do well. (coach)

I think meeting (Coach x) was huge because he was not only a coach but a mentor, he showed a lot of belief in me and put a lot of time into me, and I started to believe in myself again. I still tell him and others that if I didn't meet him and work with him then I would never have played professional tennis and achieved what I have through tennis. (player)

All the best coaches get their players believing in themselves, (Coach x) would have them believing they were fitter and worked harder than everyone else, whether they were or not didn't matter it's that they believed it (coach)

(Negative) I had a coach when I was young that used to always say, "you could be a good player if you had a forehead," and I remember that's all I would think about, it stayed with me till the end of my career (coach)

Autonomy

Coaches should promote player autonomy at appropriate developmental levels. Coaches should move towards reduced direct instruction in favour of player self-reflection and evaluation when possible. This differs from coaching behaviours that promote player dependence and control of the coach

With my players I make sure they have ownership of their result, make sure they get the message that they are the one playing so it's their result. One thing I tell them constantly is that they shouldn't play for me, and you have to back that and be clear on your coaching role, and the definition of a player doing that is when you're not there, that they can continue their success. (coach)

(Negative) In that situation I don't think he tried to create that mental dependency but once he left, she struggled to win a match, lucky to win at all (coach)

Adaptive Focus

Coaches should continually reinforce adaptive attentional focus and cognitions (See table 3)

It's a fine line between not caring enough and caring too much but if you care too much about the result, then you get completely result orientated and actually lose focus on what you are trying to do out there and now I try to implement that into my own coaching as well with the players I work with. It's a simple philosophy but it is amazing how hard it is to achieve (coach)

Self-Awareness

By encouraging players to reflect on and evaluate experiences a coach helps a player develop autonomy, independence, problem solving abilities, and accurate self-assessment. When accompanied by reinforcement from a coach regarding competence to overcome challenges, self-belief can also be enhanced

One of the biggest qualities I try to engender in players is the ability to evaluate experiences, it's the ability to retain the things they do well and modify what they don't do well. This way the kids teach themselves and I think you can do this from day one. (coach)

I think to get players to diarize their experiences and reflect on how they are going, performance evaluation should be integrated into everything we do (coach)

Reframing of Fear

Coaches should encourage players to perceive anxiety as a normal part of competition that can be used as an advantage, as well as to take appropriate risks and challenge comfort zones rather than developing avoidance adaptations to situations that elicit anxiety

I have always believed the most limiting factor in people is fear of failure, so I try to get players to take risks, help them feel like it is okay to fail, that it is part of the growing process, and setting up drills that reward people for taking risks, as long as that is a characteristic you want developed in the person (coach)

I would walk around with (Player x) before his matches and he would be as nervous as hell and I would say "you feel that

feeling in your stomach, that's the feeling of competition, enjoy it, love it, that's why you compete, use it" and that used to get him going (coach)

3.) Training Situations

Coaches should implement training situations that enhance mental toughness

Rehearsing Pressure Situations

Coaches should aid development of players' ability to behave adaptively in pressure situations by practicing implementing desired behaviours in these situations repeatedly

We would put in place situational practices where we would recreate a tough situation and then go out and practice how you would respond. You can't create the real environment but you can mock what it is going to be and then practice over and over how you will respond. Then when you get in the situation you have a learned response. (coach)

Look at how armies do it, they remove variability and make soldiers regimented, it has to override what's natural, you know if an explosion goes off I am going to run unless something overrides it, and armies train that, and looking at tennis as a battle situation a lot of the best coaches are tough and they just train that required response (coach)

Adding stress by requiring certain patterns that you will have to execute in a match, and if they don't execute giving a consequence, I guess I learnt a lot about its value from years working with (Player x), about continuing to have this pressure to make a shot in practice, trying to create stress in practice without so much stress that the player doesn't want to come to practice (coach)

Training Sport Intelligence

Coaches should help players reflect on desired long-term game style. This game style should then be encouraged by coaches in training and competition. Within this game style, the coach ought to help develop players' patterns of play and practice these repeatedly until they can be executed in extreme pressure situations

It is important for coaches help the player take the time to understand their game and, more importantly, how, again, what's the best way for them to win points, put that into patterns of play and those type of things that are practiced repeatedly. And this should be done as an individual, not as a group, so even in a group setting, you should still be addressing what they need to do as a player (player)

Racquetball

It was suggested that racquetball teaches mental toughness due to its intense physical and competitive nature. It can also be used by a coach when a player's over involvement of ego is causing mental toughness difficulties

Racquetball is the best thing I have found to teach how to compete point for point which really is mental toughness. It is perfect because there is no ego involved, whereas tennis becomes ego involved, and you can transfer lessons from the racquetball court onto the tennis court (coach)

4.) Teaching Skills

COACHES SHOULD TEACH SKILLS THAT ENHANCE MENTAL TOUGHNESS

Technical Competence

An obvious role for coaches is to develop a player's technical competence which in turn is likely to enhance mental toughness

I believe it is inherent in someone's technical skill where if a player is near perfection as far as the way they swing at the ball, they have a really good shot at being mentally tough because they can rely on it under any circumstances (coach)

5.) Personal Development

Coaches should engage in continuous personal development to increase relevant knowledge regarding developing mental toughness

Understanding Effects of Stress

Coaches need to recognize the stress/ anxiety that continuous competition promotes and possible effects this state can have on players (e.g., behavioural choices, physical effects, and stress related illness)

It is very stressful to play the way you must, and take on a character, for (Player x) it was stressful and in the end, that caused her illness, it was just a stress related illness. Looking back I remember her not being excited about playing finals of tournaments and I should have seen that, a coach has to be aware of how stressful it can be and it's important to realize how mental stress can turn into physical stress (coach)

Understanding Self-Esteem Links with Behaviour

Coaches require better education on matters regarding player self esteem/self image and how this can affect behaviour

The first year I coached (Player x) was really disappointing, I thought a terrible attitude and no will to win. But I learnt with time that that was just a cop out, for whatever reason, that self image, she didn't want to run for the ball in case her skirt came up, but behind that was actually a big will to win. She was acting like she didn't care but really it meant a lot to her and you have to be aware of this as coaches, and there is a way to get at that (coach)

Learning From Others

Coaches should approach coaching as a continuous learning opportunity

I have learned a lot from others and even players that I have worked with about mental toughness. Process orientation is really something that I have learnt over and over through (Player x) and through (Coach x). I have learnt from (Player y) that value of just relentless hard work. And from them I have tried to implement it into my coaching (coach)

6.) Model Mental Toughness

Coaches should model actions that display mental toughness attributes

I tried to do it by example, because I would be willing to hurt more than the players I worked with, and I would never quit, I showed them how to do it, and it helps you get more out of them, I just never liked telling people to do something unless I could do it myself (coach)

Coaches I think need to make mistakes in front of their players and act as if it's okay instead of a coach being infallible, it's good to show the kids that it's good to fail, it's

7.) Improve Own Self-Awareness

An acute self-awareness is the underlying requirement that allows all preceding recommendations to be implemented. A coach cannot change what they are not aware of

part of the learning process (coach)

He was just so mentally tough himself, I mean no one could beat the guy at (sport x), he was just so tough and he never asked me to do anything that he wouldn't do himself which just made him so credible (coach)

The coach when (player x) was young, who coached (player x) until about age 11 I remember him coming to me and saying, I have taught (player x) everything I know, I can't teach (Player x) any more so (Player x) needs to go elsewhere. (parent)

I believe it is a coaches responsibility to not only be clear on our role but also be more self-aware as to why we are doing things, for instance I have had a coach come up to me and tell me how they missed their opportunity because one of their players didn't get the success they should have. For him, it was an opportunity to be recognized as a good coach which is a pretty average attitude (coach)

Table 3

Mental Toughness Attributes in descending order of importance (average number of times acknowledged per interview) and representative quotes

* No relevant representative quote, () indicates quote responsibility

REPRESENTATIVE QUOTE (S) Mental Toughness	ATTRIBUTE AND DESCRIPTION	REPRESENTATIVE QUOTE (S) Lacking Mental Toughness
<p>On big points he'd be like, "Oh yeah, I want the ball coming to me," whereas some guys would not want that, any big situation he would see it as an opportunity to succeed, he had that confidence, he wanted that control over the outcome because he believed he was better (player)</p>	<p>Self Belief /Confidence</p> <p>The belief in ability to achieve a desired result under varying circumstances, both during matches and in tennis related endeavors</p>	<p>I would say deep down I didn't know whether I, I probably lacked a little bit of self belief, I just didn't know whether I was good enough to be in the environment that I was playing in, so personally my lack of mental toughness had a lot to do with lacking that self belief I think (player)</p>
<p>I was playing a Davis Cup match and I was playing the deciding match and I was down two sets to love and the home crowd was just crazy, abusive, shining things in my eyes. My opponent was being unsportsmanlike using the crowd and I went down five-three match point in the third and I came back and won in one of the toughest situations I have faced (player)</p>	<p>Resilience</p> <p>The long term ability to deal with adversity, whether that be rebounding from on or off court distress, or maintaining high performance through difficult situations</p>	<p>Anything worth achieving is going to have bumps in the road, and people who can't overcome those challenges whatever they are, it's those people who can only play when things are perfect, that lack of toughness to deal with all those things that are part of it (player)</p>
<p>I think I rise through adversity, sort of rising through what I perceived as negativity of other people, when I thought that others didn't believe in me, I think it helped me or inspired me to improve my situation (player)</p>	<p><i>Optimistic</i></p>	<p>I was on a six or seven match losing streak and I remember playing a match and essentially stopped believing in myself, stop thinking that I could actually do it, like there was nothing I could do to win (player)</p>
<p>What I have learnt is that the tough ones expect that their opponent is going to quit, they look down the other end and wait for them to crack (coach)</p>	<p>The expectation of favourable control over future outcomes</p>	<p><i>Accountable</i></p>
<p>A great example of a player who put in an unbelievable effort but still lost. At dinner that night he just reflected on a few missed opportunities that if he had done things differently he could have won the match. An example of a tough conversation, taking responsibility and ownership for the loss (coach)</p>	<p>The tendency to take responsibility for personal performance</p>	<p>I would just let outside distractions bother me and I think I almost used them as an excuse, I just let them bug me. Like I don't know why I did that so much but now looking back I think I was just using them as an excuse (player)</p>
<p>Cope With Pressure</p>		

I mean it's getting in a really tight position towards the end of a match, or serving for a match, so I just look and see how they cope in these situations, because at the end of the day that's what it comes down to, everyone can do something once the pressure is not on, the better ones can deal with the pressure (coach)

Look at (Player x), everything he did he was the most competitive person on the planet, he had to win at everything. If it was the warm up skipping double jumps he had to win and would be there for half an hour if it took it until he won. He just loved to win, so passionate about winning and just hated to lose (coach)

He is just so incredibly competitive, I mean that guy doesn't want to lose to anyone, just a competitive animal (player)

It's a wild competitiveness, willing to kill themselves to win, in order to get the other guy to quit, just so focused to get the win that nothing can stop them (coach)

You have to be so driven to go through everything that we do, to get where you want to go. Without this drive we just wouldn't do what it takes, we wouldn't train as hard, travel these insane distances to play (player)

Well when (Player x) was 3 (Player x) had a mind of own just so determined, (Player x) would just wait and wait for hours until it was (Player x's) turn to hit, just a determined kid in everything (parent)

They are not easily sidetracked by distractions, they have just got their path they want to go down, their goals, what they want to achieve and it's, I guess, single minded towards those goals (player)

(Player x) set a goal that (Player x) wanted to do really well in tennis, and pursued it with great effort and great drive, (Player x) was willing to work hard at it (parent)

See below

The ability to perform required skills under the pressure and stress associated with competing as a professional tennis player

Desire to Win/Competitive

An insatiable and internalized desire to win

She just loses the plot and all the strategy that we have talked about before the match goes out the window under pressure (coach)

What it comes down to I think is that I don't think I wanted it as much as, or I know I didn't want it as much as a lot of other people, and when it came to the crunch that showed I guess (player)

Drive to Achieve

The internalized desire for significant achievement, mastery of skills, and control over environment

Determined

Consistent persistence and perseverance on and off court to achieve desired outcomes

Goal Focused

An ability to focus on a goal and strive towards it regardless of the situation

I spent a lot of time contemplating how I could get him to do the required work, he often needed to be confronted to actually get out there and do it, just had no drive (coach)

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Emotional Intelligence

A balanced emotional approach to competition including an awareness of own emotions and understanding their effect on competition behaviours, as well as the ability

See below

to effectively regulate and relate to these emotions to enhance performance

Self Awareness/Understanding

Well mentally tough players are just more self aware. They understand themselves better so they are more aware of when they are getting frustrated, nervous, and they have a process that they go through on these occasions. They understand themselves well and are honest with their feelings (coach)

Recognizing internal states and their effects

I didn't do anything to curb my lack of mental toughness because I just didn't realize the extent of it. Looking back it's easy to see it cost me a lot of matches but at the time I wasn't aware of the effect of my mental actions. It's sounds funny to say now but I really didn't consider myself mentally weak at the time (player)

Emotional Regulation

We have a very primitive brain, which tends to interpret sport as combat, we are wired to compete, but especially in tennis because there is a lot of time to wait in between points, the fear can start getting in, fear is the big one, and so the anger, the irritability, the choking, the excuses, is often just a distraction from the fear (coach)

Effective managing of internal states to enhance performance

I had gotten a couple of code violations and my anger was building, getting out of control, and I quickly got a game penalty followed by being disqualified. Looking back, At the time I just felt angry but now I would say I became very confused and acted on clouded judgment (player)

(Player x) was very volatile, a bit wild, (Player x) just had no control, I think that's why (Player x) never got anywhere, just couldn't control the emotions (parent)

Balanced philosophy/Low fear of failure

I think just the ability to be able to go out and compete with no fear but still be able to give 100%. I think that is the biggest thing in sport, or at least in tennis that is the biggest thing. To give 100% but not have that fear of losing (player)

Recognizing that tennis is a game and approaching it as such where there is a hate of losing but little fear.

I find now in coaching a lot of kids who, I call it defense mechanisms, whether it is using injury, going nuts on the court, giving up, look as though they are not trying, tanking, it is the most common thing I deal with for sure, they are just looking for the easy way out. Protecting themselves- kids not putting it on the line, they are so worried about losing, scared of losing (player)

Work Ethic

One attribute is just disciplined hard work for starters. I think purely those that have put in hours and hours of hard work, just relentless hard work can stay away from cheap options for long periods of time (coach)

An approach characterized by always working hard, pushing through difficulties, and focusing usefully through demanding situations that are common in training *

Quality of practice

I am a big believer in the importance of practicing how you want to play. You can't play bad if you don't know bad (coach)

Effective use of time spent on court training *

Physical conditioning

It's challenging yourself when it is hard, if it was easy everyone would be doing it. That's what (Coach x) said to me a lot, "if it were easy everyone would be doing it," so when you are confronted with something hard, you have to push yourself through it (player)

Training physical aspects required for effective competing *

Technique

I believe it is inherent in someone's technical skill. If a player is near perfection as far as how they hit the ball they have a good shot at being mentally tough because they can rely on it under any circumstances (coach)

Ability to focus on and improve technical aspects of the game

(Player x) is an example of a player with a huge technical issue on his backhand where when it came to the crunch he knew he couldn't execute a backhand so it was impossible to be mentally tough because of that (coach)

Concentration/Focus

I think mental toughness has a lot to do with being able to focus just on the task you have to do, the best can forget about everything else going on around them and have the skill to focus on the task they have to do. That's where most players have the problem, worrying about everything else and being distracted by all the other things going on around them or inside their head (coach)

The ability to maintain attention on adaptive stimuli despite the presence of distracting factors

They are so easily distracted, it takes very slight things to turn a match, for instance if you get a mentally tough player, a bad line call won't influence the outcome of the match but a mentally weak player, all it takes is one very small distraction to turn the whole situation around and it's almost like they start looking for those excuses (player)

Tough Attitude

One great attribute is consistency in what they do in that they don't just flip a switch to be mentally tough on the court, but they are tough about everything they do. They are tough about their discipline and practice, tough about physical training, tough in their dealings with other people, and this then translates onto the court in competition (coach)

A consistently tough approach to every aspect of life, on and off the court *

Self-Discipline

I think self-discipline is the biggest thing simply because that's what tennis requires, to stay out there and fight, to override what feels natural and normal and stay tough (coach)

Consistent behaviour corresponding with goals regardless of the difficulties encountered *

Professional

(Player x) is very thorough and prepares for matches, (Player x) will study opponents, what they have done, strengths and weaknesses, (Player x) is methodical in the research of the situation, very professional I think (parent)

The tendency to leave no stone unturned in maximizing the chance for optimal results

If I had it over I would just be more professional in my approach, surround myself with professional people, I probably enjoyed myself at the wrong times, going out too much, I would try to be more professional in every aspect, warm ups, routines, just looking after what was best for my performance (player)

Sacrifice

You need to ask yourself the question of whether you really want to play professional tennis because it requires a certain amount of, like it's actually a huge sacrifice to play tennis professionally (player)

The willingness to surrender or give up other desired aspects of life *

Physical Toughness

You develop that threshold to pain, that tolerance for pain that allows you to stay the course for long periods of a match (coach)

The ability to tolerate and persist through injury or physical pain *

Self-Esteem

I think to feel good about yourself is very important, to have that positive self-esteem, because it allows you to take risks and not be so worried about the negative consequences of failure (coach)

High overall self-appraisal or evaluation of general worth as a person

It is so common for players to think that if they are winning in tennis they are a winner in life and if they lose in tennis they are a loser in life. They equate their self worth with success on a tennis court (coach)

(Player x) always believed people judged her on how she hit a tennis ball. She never understood that people liked her for her sense of humour, her qualities as a person (coach)

Sport Intelligence

See below

Having a 'sense for the game', an understanding of what it takes to compete effectively, self-awareness in terms of own

See below

gamestyle combined with awareness of opponents' games that allows for consistent implementation of strategy that increases the chance of success

Good Knowledge of Gamestyle

I think a big part of mental toughness is understanding your own game, what type of player you are, and understanding your best percentages for you to win points, then developing patterns of play from that. If I look at the great players, they have their set plays, their 'go to' plays that they know they can execute under pressure (player)

A sound understanding of strengths and limitations in forming a general style of play

I look at someone like (Player x) who has all the shots in the world, but I just know if he knows his go to game plan, I feel like he gets caught up in playing too instinctively and lacks decisiveness to his game (cd)

Tactical Nous

I felt he was really being mentally tough and not only did he know his gameplan, but he pretty much always stepped up and did it. He knew his game and played the high percentages and pulled it off when he needed to (coach)

Forming and implementing a strategy that takes best advantage of one's strengths and opponents' weaknesses

She gets easily frustrated in matches, very emotional, and can't assess what her opponent's weaknesses are (coach)

Accurate Self Assessment

It's how someone reflects and communicates about how they compete, the matches they play, I think if they communicate and reflect with honesty about their skills, their deficiencies, things they are working on, that transcends into how you will compete in tough situations (coach)

Knowledge of strengths and limitations

My experience has been that generally boys think they are better than they really are and girls think that they aren't as good as they really are (coach)

Love of Competition

They not only want to win bad, they simply love to compete which means that they compete unconditionally whether sick or injured, winning or losing they compete consistently from point to point, game to game, match to match because they love the game, because they just love to compete, the fight inspires them (coach)

Separate from being competitive, competing for the joy of competition, not only is there a love to win, but there is a love to simply compete

Look at all the tanking that goes on today, that never used to happen, or it happened a lot less, now they play for all this money but tank, go figure, they are not out there for the love of competing as much as used to be (coach)

When (Player x) was a junior his mum told me he would hide his racquet so he didn't have to play, and the happiest I ever saw him was when he was out injured and couldn't play, he just actually didn't like to compete (coach)

Dominant Personality

A tendency to be more assertive, aggressive, and stubborn compared to peers

I definitely think that there are innate attributes that increase chances of becoming tough. I think that some personality types are born with a tendency towards toughness. In my experience those who have a

Assertive/Aggressive

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more aggressive or assertive personality are more inclined to be tough than those who are kinder and softer (coach)

Also being stubborn is a tendency for those who become mentally tough. (Player x) was just such as incredibly stubborn person who wouldn't accept that he didn't have the ability to do something, wouldn't accept anyone else's opinion until he believed it himself (coach)

Stubborn

Obstinate and inflexible in beliefs and behaviours

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Table 4

Descriptions of match-specific and general situations that most require mental toughness behaviors

SITUATION	DESCRIPTION
MATCH-SPECIFIC SITUATIONS	
External Pressures	
<i>Match Variables</i>	<p>Several match variables were considered to require mental toughness, these include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ When losing ➤ ‘Critical moments’ such as end of sets and matches, big points, break points ➤ When leading and trying to finish the match ➤ When winning easily ➤ Extremely long matches ➤ Backing up from a long match or important victory ➤ When opponent is playing very well ➤ Starting the second set after winning a close first set
<i>Environment & Playing Conditions</i>	<p>Several environmental and playing conditions were considered to require mental toughness, as both players are subjected to the same conditions and have to play no matter how challenging these conditions are. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Exposure to important matches (e.g., Davis cup, Federation cup) ➤ Unchartered territory (first time at certain level) ➤ Expectations of winning and losing (Others) ➤ Difficult weather conditions ➤ Playing in front of an aversive crowd ➤ Poor umpiring decisions, bad calls ➤ Playing on unfavourable court surface ➤ Lack of suitable preparation (e.g., practice time)
Internal Pressures	
	<p>These include pressures that are more under the control of the player</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Making easy errors

- When not meeting own expectations (missing out, poorly)
- Feeling fatigue or physical pain
- Expectations of winning and losing (self)

GENERAL SITUATIONS

Off-Court Distractions

When good (e.g., endorsement opportunities) or bad events (e.g., Relationship difficulties) arise off the court that have the potential to be a significant distraction

Overseas Travel

Playing overseas presents several difficulties including long periods away from home (loneliness, lack of support), adjusting to different cultures (language, lifestyle), and frequent travel

Injury

Both dealing with injuries and participating in required rehabilitation were considered to require mental toughness

Experiencing a Losing Streak

Experiencing poor form, especially when overseas, requires mental toughness

Changing Gamestyle/Technique

Changing gamestyle away from comfort zone to what is required for best success was recognized as stressful for most players

Competitive Requirements

The competitive requirements of being an elite tennis player were described as being like balancing on a tightrope in terms of dealing with a continually stressful environment, especially:

- Long periods of continuous competition
- Sharing locker room with those who you compete

Preparation Requirements

It was considered that all requirements necessary to become and maintain an elite level require a level of mental toughness including:

- Training requirements
- Physical conditioning requirements
- Technical improvement

Table 5

Descriptions of match-specific and general behaviours displayed by tennis players and representative quotes

* No relevant representative quote, () indicates quote responsibility

BEHAVIOUR AND REPRESENTATIVE QUOTE(S) MENTAL TOUGHNESS	DESCRIPTION	BEHAVIOUR AND REPRESENTATIVE QUOTE(S) LACKING MENTAL TOUGHNESS
Match-Specific Behaviours		
Unconditional Effective Competing	Competing effectively regardless of the match situation	Conditional Effective Competing
<i>Compete effectively when losing</i>		<i>Compete poorly when losing</i>
I was playing (Player x) and I was up a set and a break but he still kept it together fine and kept competing hard it was unbelievable like I didn't feel I was up and he ended up coming back and beating me. He just never gives up, doesn't know when to quit, if it's one all in the first set he is going to play exactly the same as if he is down a set and 5-2 (player)	Fighting hard when behind as opposed to giving in or being overwhelmed by anger	A lot of French players, or at challenger level, I always felt like , if I could win the first set, then there was a big chance they would go away in the second, meaning they wouldn't try as hard, they would look to finish points quickly, or they would act frustrated, like arguing with the umpire, or tossing their racquet, which usually led to them throwing in the towel (player)
<i>Compete effectively when leading easily</i>		<i>Compete poorly when leading easily</i>
This translates into having the ability to sort of demolish opponents when they are front, there's no let up when in front (player)	Ruthless and relentless when in front displaying the ability to 'step on throat' of opponent	*
You need mental toughness when you are ahead, because when you are ahead in a match you need to keep your discipline, to keep the guy down, play the right shots, whereas being behind it's more obvious, but it's not just these obvious situations (player)		
<i>Compete effectively when in winning position</i>		<i>Compete poorly when in winning position</i>
(Player x) was great in pressure situations, he committed to what needed to be done. When he played (Player y) in (Tournament x) and got in a winning position in the third set	Maintaining composure when in a winning position	I call it the cocoon effect when maybe someone has the opportunity to win the match and they go into their shell and become extremely defensive and await for the opponents to

he stepped up and there was conviction in everything he was doing. He played even more aggressively (coach)

Trying to put away a set, the closer you get to winning, being ahead its tough to finish, the toughest thing (coach)

Compete effectively in pressure situations

I would say playing the big points well, whether it be a break point at an important stage towards the end of the set, or serving at 4-4 in the third, I have been able to step up and do what I am trying to do, playing the big points well, doing lots of things well under pressure (player)

Mental toughness erodes with time, it's a lot easier to pass someone early in the first than at 5-5 in the third set (coach)

Compete effectively through adversity

They just compete unconditionally, it doesn't matter about the conditions, windy, court type, abusive opponents, bad luck, bad calls, they just compete and can shut out those outside distractions and influences (coach)

Compete effectively over long periods

When we get into tough situations in a match, everyone is human, and there is a tendency to want to take cheap options when the going gets tough, but he doesn't do that, he just continually takes that tough option time and time again throughout matches, it's amazing (coach)

Compete effectively after big/tough win

Well we had to play 2 matches in a day and he had won 6 in the third in about 3 and a half hours against some South American grinder and it was brutally hot. I remember thinking "He is going to be rooted from that match" and I won the first set and I thought he was done for sure but he came back and beat me in 3, an unbelievable effort (player)

Compete effectively during a losing streak

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Compete effectively immediately after winning close first set

make an error rather than creating an opportunity (coach)

Compete poorly in pressure situations

It was the first year I coached (Player x) and every time she got deep in the third, and had a chance, she would do something to end the stress, get out of the point, usually a drop shot or going for a winner that wasn't there. And you see that a lot with young players in tight situations. They'll go for a shot that ends the point and therefore the stress ends (coach)

Compete poorly through adversity

It was the quarter finals of (Tournament x) and a big opportunity to get to the semis. He was up two sets and in a tiebreaker in the third and got a horrendous call to go down 6-4. He let that call affect his tennis negatively for about 15 minutes which put him behind in the fourth and he was never able to recover (coach)

Compete inconsistently over long periods

I would say one is the tendency to switch on and off, play one good game then two bad games, not being able to produce that consistent performance throughout a match (player)

Compete poorly after big/tough win

Backing up from great results can be tough, you see a lot of players have a great result then their next one is one of the worst they play in the event, they can't avoid that let down (coach)

Compete ineffectively during a losing streak

I just remember being on a 6 or 7 match losing streak and it got to the stage where effectively stopped believing in myself and I was just going through the motions (player)

Compete poorly at start of second set after winning first set

Maintaining composure during pressure situations

Maintaining playing standard through difficult circumstances or recovering quickly from adversity

Maintaining consistent high playing standard for long periods during a match

Maintaining high playing standard over a number of matches, especially after a tough or important victory

Maintaining effective competing during a losing streak

It's tough after you win a tight first set, you feel a degree of safety and often get flat, that let down starting the second, it's so easy to get down quickly in the second, those first couple of games are so important (coach)

Routined

I would say routines. It's just what they do. That is their modus operandi. So when it comes to a point where they really have to put it on the line and are really challenged they have the background and history of being faced with that and therefore there is a comfort on how to respond because they have experienced the consistency of how to respond to the situation (coach)

The way she is routined, the structure of her routines in between points was always the same, very similar to another of the mentally toughest players out there at the moment (Player x), the same thing, she had the same routine characteristics as (Player y) (player)

Patterned

If you watch the best players over the course of a match, you see patterns of play develop, these ingrained patterns that they can repeat successfully time after time, no matter what the situation (player)

Play Well in Big Matches

I remember I was playing the opening night match at (Tournament x), and in that situation playing in front of (#) people, so many viewers at home, it's a situation where other players in the past have sort of succumbed to that type of pressure, and I was able to actually step up and play at even a higher level than I had been (player)

Take Responsibility

A great example of a player who put in an unbelievable effort but still lost. At dinner that night he just reflected on a few missed opportunities that if he had done things differently he could have won the match. An example of a tough conversation, taking responsibility and ownership for the loss (coach)

Maintaining standard at start of second set after winning close first set

Displaying observable consistent routine characteristics between points and games

Implementing observable patterns during points that utilize strengths

Raising game and competing more effectively during important matches

Accepting responsibility for performance outcomes rather than using excuses

Random

*

Lack of Patterns

And I got frustrated early which led to me going away from those patterns of play that have been serving me so well (player)

Play Poorly in Big Matches

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Use Excuses

I remember being in the change room at (Tournament x) and two players were on the other side of the room and one of them was talking about a match he just lost. He was making excuses as to why it didn't happen. I remember clearly one of them was his shoes didn't feel comfortable because they were new, another was the wind blowing across from one side of the court, and the other was his complaints about the ball fluffing up really quickly (coach)

Consistent/Positive Body Language

You could feel that he wanted to win, he didn't change body language based on the result of the point (coach)

Assertive During Conflict

When they believe they are right, like challenging a call, they won't back down, they will do whatever it takes to get the result, I have seen (Player x) argue back and forth with an opponent for ten minutes and when they went back out he didn't lose another game in the match (coach)

Act on Rational Thoughts

They do what the occasion requires, rather than acting in accordance with how they might feel in that situation. They play how they must, not how they feel. So under pressure even if they feel passive when the best thing to do is to attack the second serve they have the mental conviction to do that. It's black and white- no grey (coach)

Even those with a deep desire to win can get mixed up with fear of failure, because it's not natural to stay out there and fight point for point under duress, it's unnatural, the good guys just learn to do it better but certainly not perfectly (coach)

Physical Intensity/High Effort

It's the physical intensity, she's constantly bouncing around, she had this energy happening around her the whole time she was on the court, it's all about that intensity (player)

Execution of Strategy

A period with (Player x), I felt he was really being mentally tough and not only did he know his gameplan, but he pretty much always stepped up and did it. He knew his game and played the high percentages and pulled it off when he needed to (coach)

Honest/Accurate Performance Evaluation

It's how someone reflects and communicates about how they compete, the matches they play, I think if they communicate and reflect with honesty about their skills, their deficiencies,

Displaying neutral to positive body language during competition regardless of the situation

Displaying assertiveness during conflict encountered in competition

Acting on adaptive rational thoughts while distancing oneself from emotions

Displaying high physical intensity and effort during competition

Implementing and executing clear strategies with conviction

Demonstrating honest and accurate assessment of performances

Inconsistent/Poor Body Language

His body language was dependent on whether he won or lost the point. He just looked like he didn't enjoy competing (coach)

Timid During Conflict

A lot of players, they'll call the ball out and someone at the other end will challenge them and they'll actually give them the point, and then they become shaken from the experience and don't compete (coach)

Act on/Controlled by Emotions

Most might play for that person to miss when they feel passive even if the right thing is to be aggressive. This is a normal thing but you almost have to be abnormal to be a true champion, doing abnormal things, you can't act on that second choice (coach)

Low Physical Intensity/Effort

You could see they had lost desire to be out there, their effort level, you could see they were deflated, defeated, everything appeared a bit too hard, like it required too much effort (player)

Poor Execution of Strategy

She just loses the plot and all the strategy that we have talked about before the match goes out the window under pressure, she lacks the ability to implement that simple plan, to stay the course with an effective strategy (coach)

Poor/Inaccurate Evaluation of Matches

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things they are working on, that translates into how you will compete in tough situations (coach)

Display Physical Toughness

He was playing (Player x) and had never beaten him, up a set and a break and he screws his foot, I mean he couldn't put any weight on it but he wouldn't quit, he couldn't play for weeks, but he was willing to suffer more than other guys (coach)

Implement High Percentage Strategy

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Pushing physically and tolerating pain through difficult training and competition situations *

Display Physical Weakness

Implement Low Percentage Strategy

He actually went out there to impress people rather than to win so he just constantly went low percentage trying to go for the big winner to show how good he was rather than looking like a dork and going high percentage (coach)

General Behaviours

Hard/Effective Work

Underlying is a self belief, it's obvious to me that , in pressure situations, the mentally toughest players rely on the massive amounts of hard work they have put in on the practice court, so they know under pressure they can rely on that (player)

Dedicating more time and quality to practice and physical conditioning *

Inadequate/Ineffective Work

Make Sacrifices

It actually takes huge sacrifices to play any professional sport but in particular tennis, so I think you need to ask yourself the question whether you are willing to do this (player)

Displaying a willingness to make sacrifices in other areas of life for the betterment of tennis

Lack of Sacrifice

I would have surrounded myself with more professional people rather than the people I liked to hang out with, I would have been more professional, not going out as much, and doing the right things in terms of preparation (player)

Respond Adaptively to Difficult Requirements

I know (Player x), well he knew the value of hard work, and when I would ask him to do something very difficult he never blinked an eye, whether it be painful, monotonous, whatever, he could always get out and do it (coach)

Engaging in and committing to difficult requirements implemented by coach

Respond Poorly to Difficult Requirements

With (Player x) it was the opposite, I spent a lot of time contemplating how I could get him to do the required work, he often needed to be confronted to actually get out there and do it, just no drive (coach)

Take Risks

Well, (Player x) always had a belief in himself about his ability to get where he wanted to go. An example of this was when his ranking dropped from (#) to (#) and his (Company) sponsorship was up for renewal. They offered him a very

Taking acceptable risks during competition and in tennis related decision making as opposed to preferring internal states that feel comfortable

Stay Comfortable

(Player x) would never take risks under pressure, she would always play very conservatively. She had the ability in practice to come over the back and attack the ball but under match pressure she would always just chip the ball. She wasn't

small amount and he knocked it back because he knew he would be able to get a lot more when he returned. Then a year later he was signed for some ridiculous amount when he got his ranking back. The money at the time of the injury was tempting but he said no (coach)

(Player x) was not that type of player. He generally wasn't aggressive like that and he showed mental toughness in my view by making a conscious decision at that point that he was going to play out of his comfort zone. His toughness was displayed in risk taking but only doing that because that's what he had to do to win (coach)

Competitive Off Court

If it was the warm up skipping double jumps he had to win and would be there for half an hour if it took it until he won (coach)

Long Career

*

Displaying competitive behaviours in off court activities *

Having a long career as opposed to retiring early from the sport often due to poor pressure coping mechanisms and fear dominated motivation

prepared to take acceptable risks under pressure (coach)

Not Competitive Off Court

Early Retirement

I think it takes so much to get the necessary conviction mentally and ability to handle that pressure is tough, that's when (Player x) really separated herself but then retired early, I think to get relief from that pressure (coach)

