

**Edu World 2016**  
**7th International Conference**

**WAYS TO INCREASE TENNIS PLAYERS' MOTIVATION**

Traian Ionut Mercea (a)\*

\* Corresponding author

(a) University of Pitești, street Targu din Vale, Pitesti, Romania. [ioncodruta@yahoo.com](mailto:ioncodruta@yahoo.com)

**Abstract**

This article aims to identify the main techniques for increasing tennis players' motivation in order to increase performances both in official competitions and at the training level. We focus our research on tennis players aged between 14 and 18 who are part of AS Pitești Tennis Club and who participate in the national championship.

We know that motivation plays an important role in the training process, it is the main factor that separates a champion from the rest of the players. Without a motivation, the player perceives the training as monotonous and thus fails to reach its superior indices. A very good motivation makes the players to overcome opponents in competitions and in case of injury causes them to recover more quickly. Our work presents the facets of motivation in tennis as a major indicator in achieving a good sports performance. A good mental training will lead to superior performances in contests and competitions for tennis players.

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**Keywords:** Motivation; tennis.

## **1. Introduction**

Intrinsically motivated players are those who play tennis because they love the game.

They will be competent to perform the tasks successfully. They play for their own pride, to feel good, happy, fun, curiosity, etc. (Brown, 1997).

Most tennis players report these reasons to be most important for playing tennis. Extrinsically motivated players are those who play tennis because they want to get tangible rewards (trophies, money, etc.) or intangible (recognition, praise).

Most tennis players report these reasons to be less for playing tennis. It is possible that players to play tennis for rewards, intrinsic or extrinsic ones. Intrinsic rewards are best to maintain a good motivation, whereas extrinsic rewards help the player to be initially interested in tennis.

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Most tennis players report these reasons to be less for playing tennis. It is possible that both players play tennis for both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Intrinsic rewards are best to maintain a good motivation, whereas extrinsic rewards help the player to be initially interested in tennis (Nelson, & Thomas (1997).

The extrinsic rewards are better and more effective if: helps to transform the extrinsic motivation into the intrinsic motivation. • are managed not by the coaches, but by the players themselves. • give information, not control, about the power of the player. • there are given by the quality of the performance and not by the results. • there are given in the correct proportion. • coaches can also help develop a player's motivation rather rewarding the effort/ hard work than talent/ skill (ex. fine motor skills). Skills/ motor skills are innate, to this the player should be happy, but the thing that players should be proud of is the effort/ hard work.

## **2. The Hypothesis of the Article**

We suppose that using motivational techniques carefully in the tennis game will lead to superior results in contests and competitions.

### 3. The Purpose of this Article

The purpose is presenting motivation techniques of tennis players.

Extrinsic rewards are better and more effective if:

- a. help transform extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation;
- b. are administered not by the coaches, but the players themselves;
- c. give information, not control, about the power of the player;
- d. are given by the quality performance, not by the results;
- e. are given in correct proportion;
- f. the coaches can help develop a player's motivation rather rewarding effort / hard work than talent / skill (ex. fine motor skills).

Skills / motor skills are innate, and for this the player should be happy, but the thing a player should be proud of is his effort / hard work (Brown, 1997).

### 4. Types of Problems on Motivation

1. Lack of motivation to work out during periods of intensive training;
2. Without motivation when participating in low level tournaments;
3. Player perceives as boring and monotonous the training;
4. Due to other issues: ex. a series of repeated defeats, changing the coach, personal issues;
5. Due to injury.

Excess of motivation:

1. When faced with very important matches;
2. When you play for a big money prize;
3. After a number of successive victories.

Negative motivation:

1. Fear of victory or failure;
2. The fear of some opponents and competitions;
3. Fear of injury;
4. Fear of the reaction of others (parents, coach, partner, etc.)

False motivation:

Poor motivation: "Tennis is everything to me", "I cannot live without tennis", "If I lose this match, I give up".

Poor extrinsic motivation: "I am motivated only when playing for money in front of a large audience or because the coach to praise me". Poor self-reward "After a win, I always buy a gift for me", "I must criticize myself every time during a match", "Every time I lose I have to blame myself".

Optimal activation status or area of the best performance usually occurs when a player has a moderate level of anxiety (in this case the heart is usually between 140 and 170 beats per minute).

This means that a certain level of anxiety is normal and necessary for all players (Choquet, 2007).

They need a minimum level of activation to get a good performance during a match.

It is important to note the individual differences because two players do not control their emotions in the same way, for example, the best performance of Agassi will be closer to one of high nervous

excitement (high activation), while Sampras's will be closer to low excitation (low activation), but both lead to outstanding performances.

Problems arise when the player is in a state of too high or too low nervous excitement, in both cases it is difficult for the players to play well (Choquet, 2007).

These two states appear when the player does not reach levels of activation required for optimum performance. The nervous super-excitation, also known as anxiety, occurs when a player exceeds the activation levels required for optimum performance.

Each player should take care of his personal ideal of nervous excitement and its own rituals necessary to achieve maximum performance.

On the other hand, not all the tennis hits require the same level of nerve excitation, ex. at the service, the player must be very relaxed to get the maximum racket head speed, while when returning, it is better for the player to be activated to react quickly to the ball.

Self-confidence means that the player expects success or failure. Trust is the belief that one can successfully perform a desired behavior in a given situation.

The most important factor that distinguishes between success and less success is great confidence. Top players show a strong confidence in their abilities (Georgescu, 2012).

For example, when a tennis player has defensive or negative thoughts, that makes him to move the center of his gravity back (more weight on his back foot) and up (losing balance and leans back).

When this happens, usually the player does not have the power to hit the ball and try to do everything with his arm.

Comments and your behavior as a coach will indicate the level of trust you have in your players. Players will realize that it is easier to believe in themselves than others (ex. coach) to believe in them. Confidence awakens emotions and positive thinking, facilitates concentration, causes the player to choose several objectives that challenge, increase persistence and effort, and when psychological blow choice affects and causes the player to be more optimistic and realistic.

There is obviously a close connection between technical competence and confidence.

The list of the psychological characteristics of the great tennis champions defines what they feel when playing their best tennis.

Have a stable mental state (regarding the emotions control), playing "in the zone".

They are mentally and legally very strong determined, they are positive, but realistic, very confident, energetic and ready for action. They have their concentration focused on alert and mentally relaxed, they are physically calm under pressure, they make economy of effort and are automated, they are not afraid and like the battle. They are under control and fully responsible, they like to play, they are eager for results and eager to win. They are very competitive and play with great intensity.

## **5. Conclusions**

Top players and coaches think that the mental part of tennis is extremely important, especially when physical abilities are equal.

In addition, during the hours before the match and during the match, it is the least to be improved technically and physically, but from a mental point of view there are a lot of things to do.

In a study about the coaches opinions about psychological techniques of tennis, some of the findings include: 90% of the interviewed coaches firmly believe that the mental abilities were very important in determining • the success in competitive tennis. 90% of coaches interviewed reported that they dedicate some time each week to “review and discussion” on mental abilities.

Coaches find difficulties in transposing the theoretical knowledge of sports psychology in practical exercises.

The coaches reported that motivation, concentration, self-esteem, mental preparation, control anxiety, anger control and visualization were the most important mental skills in tennis. Coaches have reported that positive self-talk, imagery, setting performance targets, deep breathing and calming behavior were among the most common psychological techniques in tennis.

Surprisingly, the mental part of tennis is not practiced as often as the technique, tactics and physical condition. The reasons for this aspect include: many believe incorrectly that the psychic abilities are innate: If a player is “weak” from a mental point of view, many believe that it is impossible to change himself.

It is hard to find sports psychology specialists in tennis. The mental skills were not needed in the past, so why now? However, past tennis champions (Tilden, Laver, etc.) used mental strategies without being aware of it (ex. Training in bad weather conditions, or in terms of noise).

Coaches do not know to teach knowledge about mental abilities. One important thing that coaches need to accept is that psychological skills can be learned and improved if practiced regularly. These skills are not inherited, and coaches can help players on the mental part of tennis, both on the tennis field and out of it.

Optimal activation of the best performance status or area usually occurs when a player has a moderate level of anxiety (in this case the heart is usually between 140 and 170 beats per minute).

This means that a certain level of anxiety is normal and necessary for all players. They need a minimum level of activation to get a good performance during a match.

It is important to note the individual differences because two players do not control their emotions in the same way, for example, Agassi’s best performance will be closer to one of high nervous excitement (high activation), while Sampras’s will be closer to one low excitation (low activation), but both lead to outstanding performance.

The problems arise when the player is in a state of too big or too small nervous excitement, in both cases it is difficult for the players to play well. These two states appear when the player does not reach the activation levels required for the optimum performance. The nervous super-excitation, also known as anxiety, occurs when a player exceeds the activation levels required for the optimum performance. There is no secret that tennis is a very expensive sport. Many children with huge potential are lost due to the financial situation which is not very generous. There are issues such the physical endowment, the family we are born, the financial situation, aspects which are beyond our power of choice. But when it comes to attitude, tenacity, perseverance, effort, spirit and passion, well, they belong only to us. These playgrounds belong to us. In these areas the place we occupy is a matter of personal choice, not of chance. I think that a champion has a force inside. That force which allows him to ask “Am I able to create

something that belongs only to me? One thing to be responsible of without help from outside? Am I able to watch myself and my own vision and change something or remain an imitator, a pawn?" The real champions already answer themselves to this question when keeping in their own hands a racket for the first time.

When fighting with yourself and with the others becomes exhausting, how do you resist? When you feel overwhelmed by helplessness, what do you say?

Winston Churchill said: "Never give up! Never, never, never, never!!! In nothing- big or small, important or mean- never give up only when facing convictions of honor and good sense. Never give up while facing force. Never surrender in front of seemingly overwhelming power of the enemy". In your case, the enemy is the millions of balls waiting to be hit, the hundreds of hours waiting for you in the sun, the bitter tears of defeat and the tennis racket which stubbornly does not listen to you.

Can you grow up in time and move beyond the patterns in which you feel comfortable? If you fail this, the increase value is going to be a stunted one, and the chances to build your own destiny will be destroyed. Dedicate yourself to those things that will help you become a champion!

Answer questions about your level of maturity with absolute sincerity and the results of your training will improve. First, you will become your own friend and the dreams and visions' endorser about the game that you keep to yourself in those moments of peace, of desires that rarely manage to utter them aloud.

The fulfillment of your own dreams is in your power, because you can do about this much more than you realize. You have to face disillusionments and disappointments, defeats and repeated punishment but you have to get up and stand again and again each time. Finally you will triumph, if not on the tennis field, at least you get to know what it really means discipline, fight to the end, the courage ... Basically, you will live your life as encouraged by Churchill and you will be able to apply it in any aspect of your life.

The entourage has a huge importance to achieving your goals. Surround yourself with people that you respect and admire! Avoid any association with a negative, toxic environment, consisting of negative patterns and pathetic palliatives! Avoid the company of those who do not give you reason to respect them and those who do not respect you and your attempts!

In my opinion, you have to respect yourself before you can expect respect from the others. Even in an individual and individualistic sport like tennis, without a strong and harmonious connection with a team, you will not be able to achieve goals. Choose your team that always fits, that a coach who you trust and who speaks your language, a physical coach who knows you and breaks you in two and you love this, and friends ... those friends who understand your dream you and who give you the illusion of a normal life without too much renunciation...

To get somewhere, or to accomplish something, make sure you have control of the only thing you can really control: yourself. Try to be stronger, smarter and braver than you think you can be! Thus, you attract people around you with the same qualities like yours.

You have to believe in your chance, you start to think like a winner and take this confidence in you every day on the training field. No vanity, no conceit, because the real quality of a champion is based on confidence but without desire to show it to anyone, anytime. Confidence, concentration, effort, discipline and modesty at the same time. Nobody says that the road to the top is easy. Success is luck but

you must always go forward. But by trying to reach the victorious end, by fierce fight that have with others and with yourself, by winning the capacity to find solutions in critical situations, through all these, whatever the result, you will find the ultimate distinction and inner peace .

Each player should take care of his personal ideal nervous excitement and its own rituals necessary to achieve the maximum performance. On the other hand, not all tennis hits require the same level of nerve excitation, for example at service, the player must be very relaxed in order to get the maximum racket head speed, while when it returns, it is better for the player to be activated to react quickly to the ball.

A good psychological preparation must:

- a. develop a preliminary plan that keeps the player focused on game;
- b. develop the constant rituals to focus only on the game coming;
- c. stress concentration and relaxation.
- d. accustom the player to stand aside 20 to 30 minutes before the game in a quiet place;
- d. try to train players to “play in the area” by putting it on the player to see how he wants to play and feel, train players to develop the most sustained effort.

Most tennis players report these reasons to be most important for playing tennis. Extrinsically motivated players are those who play tennis because they want to get tangible rewards (trophies, money, etc.) or intangible (recognition, praise).

Most tennis players report these reasons to be less for playing tennis. It is possible that both players play tennis for rewards, intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsic rewards are best to maintain a good motivation, whereas extrinsic rewards help the player to be initially interested in tennis.

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