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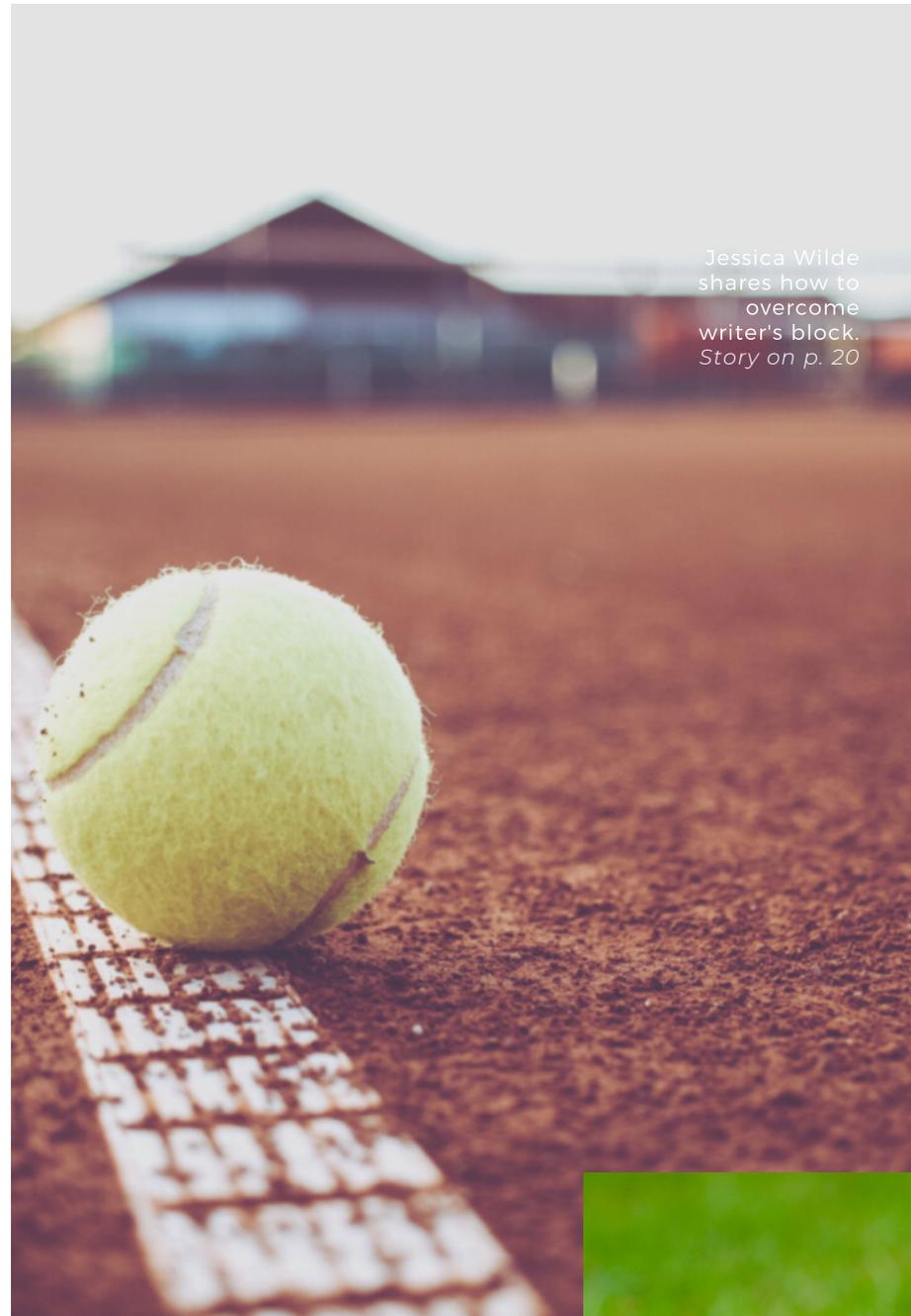
FRENCH OPEN 2022

MATCHFIXING SCANDAL AND SERENA'S NEW NIKE COLLAB

Edited by
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ADRIAN RATTENBURY**

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Rafael Nadal

Simply the Best



Rafael Nadal won a 14th French Open and record-extending 22nd Grand Slam title on Sunday with a straight-sets rout of Casper Ruud to become the oldest male champion at Roland Garros with victory coming 17 years to the day since he claimed his first French Open as a 19-year-old in 2005.

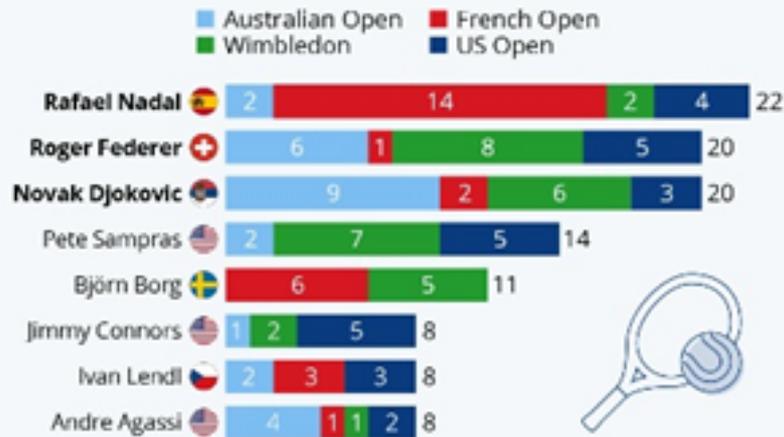
Nadal won the last 11 games of the final and is now two Slams ahead of old rivals Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer with Sunday's victory coming against all the odds.

Nadal, the oldest winner in Paris since a 34-year-old Andre Gimeno in 1972, had not been certain of taking part after a chronic left foot injury, which has plagued him throughout his career, flared up again. He also needed the best part of a gruelling 12 hours to see off Felix Auger-Aliassime, Novak Djokovic and Alexander Zverev in the previous three rounds.

His two-hour 18-minute win on Sunday took his record at the tournament to 112 wins against just three losses and also put him halfway to a rare calendar men's Grand Slam last achieved by Rod Laver in 1969 so is he now the Greatest of All Time?

The Road to GOAT

Number of Grand Slam singles titles won by male tennis players in the Open Era (since 1968)



Bold players still active. As of June 6, 2022.
Source: ATP



statista

Well he has more Slams than any other player so surely, yes, is the answer but then the argument comes that he has 14 wins on clay so does that mean he is the King of Clay but not really anything else? Then Djokovic has won 10 of his 20 on hard courts and Federer has half on hardcourts too.

Nadal has 63% of his titles on clay, 27% on hard and 10% on grass

Djokovic has 55% on hard, 40% on grass and only 5% on clay

Federer comes in with 50% on hard, 40% on Grass and 10% on clay

So does this show that Federer is the greatest as he has won a more even number on different surfaces? What it does show is that these three are the greatest with the next 4 on the list only winning Slams on 3 different surfaces!

Whatever you think how ever you play the numbers there is little doubt that the level of tennis being played today simply cannot be compared to the past. These players continue to push each other to new and higher levels. Federer's high backhand weakness was initially exploited by Nadal's high bouncing topspin, but Federer improved his game and found an answer. Nadal's high bounce has caused problems for many players and has been part of our coaching methodology focusing on keeping the ball above shoulder height making it almost impossible for an opponent to attack the ball. Now during the French open we see Djokovic has now developed his forehand further to be able to attack that ball! So, question, where to next? Answer, who knows! one thing we do know is that the game continues to develop, and standards get higher and higher and the best in the world are, in my opinion, the greatest of all time.

STAR ATHLETE SERENA WILLIAMS HONOURED BY NIKE BUILDING

Following years of being the face of women's tennis and undisputed most accomplished player of all time, Nike have decided to pay homage to Serena Williams by naming the biggest building in their Oregon headquarters after the tennis star.

Serena who was ranked world No. 1 by the WTA for 319 weeks, including a joint-record 186 consecutive weeks, and finished as the year-end No. 1 five times. She has won 23 Grand Slam singles titles, the most by any player in the Open Era. At the 2017 Australian Open, she won her 23rd major singles title, surpassing Steffi Graf's Open Era record. She then took a break from professional tennis after becoming pregnant and has reached four major finals since returning to play.



Williams has also won 14 major women's doubles titles, all with her sister Venus, and the pair are unbeaten in Grand Slam doubles finals. This includes a non-calendar year Grand Slam between the 2009 Wimbledon Championships and the 2010 French Open, which granted the sisters the doubles world No. 1 ranking.

She has won four Olympic gold medals, three in women's doubles — an all-time joint record shared with her sister. Serena has also won two major mixed doubles. Williams is widely considered one of the greatest tennis players of all time and is the highest-earning woman athlete of all time

The new Nike building, which is roughly 1 million square feet, crafted for its design, insights and product-merchandising teams, is a state-of-the-art facility made with around 20% recycled content. The building's structure is inspired by the wings of the Greek goddess of victory, Nike. With Serena being the embodiment of winning for so many years it seems fitting that such a building would be named after the living legend. With her playing days maybe now reaching the twilight, maybe this is a step into the business world for Mrs Williams with her Nike partnership reaching a new level in the near future.



By Cameron Taylor and Adrian Rattenbury

FOUR IN TO ONE, ALCARAZ

Federer's technique, Murray's tactics, Djokovic's physique, Nadal's mind: the Spanish talent seems a synthesis of the Fab Four, and he can still improve a lot.



He has come as a lightning bolt, a shot to the heart, a blessing to our sport, not just because of how he plays but because of who he is, because of his humility, because of how much he arrives at people's hearts. That's why I am in front of my computer, writing down the similarities to the greatest of all times. He's a simple guy who really loves tennis and the audience feels it, people get excited they even jump off the bench. Carlos plays and wins, he does everything, I can hardly remember any player at his age with so much tennis. I have been around tennis for many years, seeing stages of young athletes become great, but this time, Carlos can be called one of the most exceptional young tennis athletes.

At the age of 19 years old, we should be discussing whether or not he has the potential to get there, whether or not he can win, or a prediction about what his career will look like. But, we are not discussing any of that because he's already there, on April 25 he got into the top 10, the same day as Rafa Nadal, in the same place, Barcelona. He's already won so much and had many achievements.

I am here because I want to talk about what he has that makes difference, and how he's able to reach that many people and excite them with his game.

Let's go into a full analysis comparing him to the top 3-4, let's start with Technique. I want to start by talking about his first coach, his pope, who works in Tiro de Pichon, a traditional club in Murcia where they have always supported him. Great as a groundwork where we learned to work on all of his shots becoming very clean. Pope told me in Miami that he made Carlos dedicate so many hours in the sun playing against the wall, that he was constantly repeating the drills, the shots until he had them in his hand. Great work by Pope and the wall.

Federer technique

Reminiscent of Federer in terms of the range of technical options and how he uses the slice backhand to handle the exchange. The movements are more like Nadal.

The forehand technique is more like Federer's one, with the point of impact, the acceleration of the hand, and the style. He has Rafa's movements where he is able to have variety in the forehand and find the arch of the ball to defense, same as Roger. His stance is very forward thanks to Juan Carlos's work and he plays above the line so you can see the similarity. In conclusion, he has a mix of Federer's style, Rafa's arch of the ball, and Novak's plasticity to be able to receive without losing position, and have a good balance even in cases of difficulty.



Djokovic's Physical abilities

At 19 years old, he already possesses Djokovic's flexibility and great balance that allows him to defend without losing court position, he is able to change his game with fluency.



The backhand is similar to Djokovic's one, with so much ease like the Serbian for cross shots and changing with the longline without showing it. I would say the slice is more like Roger's, keeping it in play and improving it on attacking mode. He also has a devastating backhand bunt. At his age, Carlos has an incredible slice which seems unbelievable for a two-handed backhand player. This naturalness and ability to change and to maneuver helps him so much to have many options. To me, the real talent is here, and that's where he can use it to become better than the rest of the players.

Murray's tactics

Tactically he has the skill to read the game, this is a quality that brings him closer to Andy Murray, a master at finding the opponent's weaknesses



The serve is what he can improve the most, he can use it to make different choices, directions, and percentages.

Let's say the execution is between Roger and Novak. The flat serve to the "T" is similar to Roger's style, the serve slice is like Djoko's, but my favorite is the topSpin, especially on his second serve, the one that bounces very high and where he dominates.

Many times he changes his execution position and plays with threes. In this area, there is a lot of room for improvement for the future. This reminds me of the mentality that Rafa has, although he does not serve killer but, during the second or third shot is where they have equal initiative.

Tactically, he is significantly developed at his age, working with Juan Carlos, but especially because he has many skills that he can use to give diversity in the different moments. In my opinion, he looks more like Roger because of his variability.

Rafa's outstanding mindset

Carlo's mental ability, the ability to think like a champion reminds me of Rafa's. He is able to forget mistakes and give his best no matter the situation.

He has a natural strength in believing in himself, he knows his game is different so he exploits it. When he makes mistakes, he forgets them fast and keeps his head in the present. And this is where he drives me crazy, he's not afraid of anything, not even of trying other things. He plays and wins, he looks, he attacks and pulls and that's his skill, he has a superior state of mind. People love him, it is extravagant, a fun tennis to watch, it is like those flashing new shoes that you see and make you fall in love. At his age, neither Fed, Djoko, nor Rafa who have won with their heart and legs can be compared to Carlos.



To resume, I would say that he has the technique like Federer, the Tactics like Murray, the physical side like Djoko, and the mind like Rafa.

The last time I saw him was in Miami, I got excited to watch him play, I even got up from my chair to applaud him, he inspired me and it reminded me why I fell in love with tennis. He is a mirror, I will always take him as an example to my children and academy athletes. I am convinced that, if he continues to improve, Carlitos can become one of the few capable of revolutionizing tennis.

What a Difference a Day Makes

As coaches, you know full well how performances can vary on the day; one day you play the best tennis in months and the next your play downgrades into a dismal mess and the disappointment that goes with that can be really demoralizing. It happens in every sport and even Formula One, where a previous champion, Lewis Hamilton suffered a last minute loss at the year end race to Max Verstappen in a race that determined the all round championship. So it can happen to anyone, but as Muhammad Ali said, its not how many times you fall, its how many time you get up.

Getting Back Up with the help of Analytics

Why does a basketball coach, who's main player is in a slump let him keep shooting? Why does a baseball coach let his big hitter, keep swinging and missing when at bat. It's very simple, these athletes, no matter how good they are, all have slumps, but the difference is that the athlete and coach know that changing their game would be a disaster, and their analytics shows that by sticking to what they do best, that every slump will end.

In tennis for instance, we see serves and forehands go off and back on during the same match. If players know that their serve or forehand is strong overall, they will stick with it until it works or at least go down trying. That belief is from hard data, not from guessing or a subjective opinion. General encouragement is always recommended, but it is not a replacement for hard data. Hard data from analytics is impossible to beat under any circumstance. How many times have you discussed performances with your player only to have them basically reject it or make excuses. And how about a player who is working diligently on attacking certain types of shots. They begin the match executing well, BUT as the match progresses they become timid and resort to a more passive game. After the match you bring this up to them and they either deny it, make the excuse that they won anyway, or bring to light that they missed their approach shot, volley or overhead and lost confidence so stopped carrying out the game plan.

Iga Swiatek recently played Kaia Kanepi in a seesaw match of errors and winners with Iga winning 67% of the points when she went to the net so one would surmise that she should go there more. That stat is a bit misleading because when we looked at the actual data, she won only six points while losing three; winning only 1 forehand volley, losing only 1 backhand volley and the remainder of points from her opponents errors or winning passing shots. Is she good at the net, we can't tell from this data, but overall, she only goes to the net on 4 - 6% of the points probably because she isn't confident there, YET!! But let's look at another part of her game, her serve. She recently broke her double fault record of 12 with a performance of 13. Now here is a stat worth watching because she knows about this and like Sharapova and even Zverev, her attitude towards the serve will be interesting to see how she deals with it. If her will to overcome this issue is not strong enough, she may get disheartened and give into it as "this is what it is and I can't improve it". Fortunately, the rest of her game more than makes up for this problem, and she can be encouraged to see how Zverev corrected his 2nd serve problem.

Confident Players Understand Their Game

As in life, total awareness is necessary for any athlete to successfully compete. Analytics allows us to see our ups and downs, to see our averages through all our matches and to see how we respond to different players on different surfaces. In short, it allows us to fully understand our game, our ups and downs, our strengths and weaknesses and how they can all fluctuate. Like driving in the snow, if all you have ever done is drive on nice dry pavement, hitting snow or ice covered roads can cause you to panic. Drivers who are exposed to these dangerous conditions know how to handle them and do not panic. So like driving in the snow, analytics gives us the confidence to perform as best we can when things may not be going well. And like Iga with her large number of double faults, she found a way to win; confidently relying on her steady backhand and aggressive forehand. She knows her analytics as do most of the pros. So why don't you join them by using one of the many tennis analytic/statistic apps available for your smartphone. You who are early adaptors will set the tone for those who wait and see and your players will benefit immediately.

5 TIPS FOR HITTING A KICK SERVE

A good kick serve technique generates a high-bouncing topspin on the ball and can be a strong play against an opponent who has trouble returning high balls. A kick serve works best as a second serve because their high arcs have a lower margin for error. This serve reduces your chances of a double fault, while still pushing your opponent back with its high bounce. To hit a kick serve, you'll need to:

1. **Get the right grip.** Choosing the right grip is essential for hitting a good kick serve. A Continental grip is the most commonly used grip for a kick serve. It puts your hand in the right positioning to execute the right service motion. Players with experience sometimes use an Eastern backhand grip for this serve.
2. **Alter your toss.** With a kick serve, tossing the ball just a bit further behind you can help you generate the right spin. A perceptible ball toss will be a dead giveaway to your opponent as to where you plan on hitting the ball, and the serve you plan to use.
3. **Bend your knees.** When the toss is behind your head, you may tend to arch backward to reach it. By bending your knees and leading with your pelvis first, you can help prevent injury to your lower back, while also balancing your weight for optimal stability and control.
4. **Brush up on the ball.** A kick serve may not be as fast or powerful as the flat serve, but that doesn't mean you hit it in slow motion. When hitting a kick serve, your racket face must brush the back of the ball in an upward motion at the same speed in which you would hit a first serve. While the kick serve won't cut through the air as quickly as a flat serve, it will generate enough arc to make it over the net and into the opposite service box, and enough topspin so that the ball bounces up sharply.
5. **Follow through.** Uncoil towards your target, making sure not to open up too early, or else you'll be squarely facing the net, without any momentum to give to your serve. The racket should continue to move forward as you strike the ball, pronating after you've made contact.



Written by the MasterClass staff

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

.In discussing tactics on the court, we need to be clear about "strategies" versus "tactics."
A strategy is an overall game plan that incorporates specific steps that will be taken to achieve success.

Tactics are specific measures (either pre-determined or improvised) that permit a player to realize a game plan or strategy.

In playing this wonderful game of ours, a competitive player must have both a strategic and tactical approach to each match. However, in determining each of these essential components, a player must realize his/her limitations!

I would love to have a serve/volley and chip/charge strategy, but they are not inherent strengths for me. If need be, I will employ either, but this is not my first choice for an overall game plan. Each person must be honest with themselves and recognize what is viable and what is not.

Recognizing one's limitations is a very useful "tool." Why? Well, if we recognize what we can't do well, we avoid the techniques in critical match situations. More important, realization of one's limitations allows for a person to set goals that will improve her/his game! One of the most wonderful aspects of this great game is that there is always room for improvement!

To expand your strategic options, you need to develop more specific tactics. Generally, this requires specific strokes, movement and/or conditioning. I should also mention what the hierarchical components are when playing tennis. Essentially, I see two pyramid-like structures. These pyramids start with the most basic and essential aspects located at the bottom of each pyramid. As you move up the pyramid, the more sophisticated aspects are located. You can't build a good pyramid without establishing its base first!

Regarding Strokes, here is the basic pyramid of tennis:

5. Power
4. Topspin and Slice
3. Hitting in Every Direction
2. Hitting All Balls Deep in the Opponent's Court
1. Hitting Every Ball Over the Net... Even if it is hit out

It amazes me how many players (especially the younger, "Type A" competitor) will start with power... the last element in establishing solid strokes. Regarding where strategy fits into this great game of tennis, I offer the following pyramid.

5. Self-Actualization
4. Strategies and Tactics
3. Visualization and Mental Strength
2. Proper Stroke Development and Stroke Variety
1. Strength, Foot Speed, Endurance, Flexibility, Balance, Aerobic Capability

Note that I place strategies and tactics in the fourth highest position. If you have not developed the first three, you are not likely to be successful with respect to the fourth. I should note that self-actualization occurs in those rare instances where we are playing "in the zone." Nothing seems to go wrong, and everything is effortless. We are merely spectators watching in mindless amazement as we compete at a self-actualization level.



Ron Waite, USPTR



MOST COMMON TENNIS STRATEGIES

1. Simply keep the ball in play. Just get the ball over the net one more time than your opponent.

2. Hammer an opponent's weakness. If your opponent has a weak backhand, can't move well, or hates a particular spin, etc.; you simply do everything you can to exploit this weakness. Discovering weaknesses in players with whom you are not familiar may take some time. Usually, you can scout a player before a match. Sometimes, the warm-up will betray a weakness. Guess what! We all have weaknesses... even the pros.

3. Keep your weakness from being discovered. This is much easier said than done. The way to hide a weakness is to execute well in the warm-up, and to not attempt winners that involve the weakness during the match. I have literally coached players who have had no backhand of which to speak. Still in many instances, they hid this weakness by simply hitting safely crosscourt whenever a ball was thrown to his/her backhand.

4. Out power your opponent. Unfortunately, there are so many young players who use this as their only strategy. They go out on the court and literally try to bash their opponent into a loss. If you have "the goods," go for it. But, I don't recommend this strategy for the vast majority of players. Allied with this mentality, a player may possess a really great weapon... like a big, first serve or powerful forehand. Don't be afraid to utilize these... after all they are weapons. Just don't be seduced into believing that your entire strategy can be built upon power!

5. Push! I know. We all hate pushers. It almost seems "weak" to play this type of game. Don't let Brad Gilbert hear you think this out loud. He made a professional career out of massaging... not hitting... balls. Even if you are not capable of being a pusher, you can always temper your shots and take pace off of what you send in your opponent's direction. Adopting this strategy of three quarter pace shots may do two things. First, it may add control to your shots. In addition, it may actually frustrate your opponent who feeds off of shots that are hit to her/him with pace.

6. Serve/Volley and Chip/Charge. Sooner or later, this style of play is going to resurrect itself and become far more commonly played on both amateur and professional levels. Granted, modern racquet and string technology have made the net game a more difficult strategy. Let's face it. It is harder to close the net and not get passed when groundstroke oriented players tee off on passing shots. Like John McEnroe, I have hope for this strategy in the future. Sooner or later, the pros will adapt to the increased speed of the ball. Already, training techniques have greatly improved the foot speed of the modern player. Although many of you may not want to venture into this strategy, I strongly encourage you to reconsider your decision. It may be that serve/volley does not pay dividends for you. But, you would be amazed at how successful chip/charge can be even in the modern game.

So, assessing your game, setting viable goals and expanding your tactics can lead to new and more successful strategies. Once you have an arsenal of strategies and tactics to achieve them, you will invariably discover that you are becoming a tennis overdog!



MOST COMMON TENNIS TACTICS

1. Coast to coast tennis. This is really a wise tactic. Moving your opponent from corner to corner means that you are hitting crosscourt. Hitting crosscourt is percentage tennis. Why? Well, the net is lower in the center and by hitting crosscourt you actually gain extra court space in which the ball can land. Thus, you are increasing your margin for error. This type of tennis will force you to run as well, but more often than not, the player who decides to hit down the line will lose the point. To help make sense of this, you may want to read my previous column entitled, Euclidean Geometry available at: http://www.tennisserver.com/turbo/turbo_98_5.html.
2. In/Out Tennis. This is probably one of the most underutilized tactics in tennis. Given the fact that most, modern players are not comfortable at the net, why not move them forward and backward. Hit a moonball deep in your opponent's court and follow it with a short drop shot.
3. Never let your opponent see the same ball twice in a row. Many players (particularly "Type A" competitors) are looking to establish a rhythm when they are in a match. A great way to neutralize an even superior player is to vary every shot. Change the spin, change the pace, change the depth, etc. The goal is to never let the opponent establish a comfortable pattern of play. This is one of my favorite tactics and has won me many points, games and matches. When coaching tennis on the collegiate level, I would be spotting my players 20 plus years as we competed in practice sets. This style of play earned me the nickname, "The Junkman." I take the name as a compliment!
4. Take a step in after each groundstroke. Jimmy Connors and Andre Agassi were masters at this tactic. After hitting a groundstroke, each would take a little step forward. After several strokes, they were automatically in a position to hit a winning put away or charge the net for a winning volley. They were so subtle in this "advancement" that I suspect many of their opponents never realized that Connors and Agassi were increasing their court angles.
5. Play points as long as is possible. This tactic goes against everything we normally are taught about tennis competition. Still, it sometimes is a great tactic to try and keep the ball in play as long as is possible... even when avoiding hitting winners. Years back, I remember a former player from Georgia by the name of Bob Bull. Bob won just about every ETA tournament in which he competed. In fact, many (if not most) of his opponents simply retired before the match could end. Bob was incredibly fit. He never seemed to go for a winner. Indeed, there was nothing really big about his game other than the fact that he seemed to want to keep every point going as long as was possible. Well, most of us are not as fit as Bob. But if you have an opponent who is the impatient type or is not fit; Bob's tactic will pay dividends... I assure you!
6. Play inside/out tennis. You may not want to adopt this as an overall strategy, but as a tactic that is employed judiciously, we all can benefit from this form of play. Last fall, I addressed this form of play in one of my columns. The reader can access this at http://www.tennisserver.com/turbo/turbo_10_09.shtml.
7. Hit every ball high. Not to flatter myself, but I am a master at hitting moonballs and kick serves. Balls that bounce high and deep are usually not coming back in a manner that will harm you. Indeed, it has been my experience that one-handed backhand players actually become fatigued if you consistently force them to hit high returns of serves and groundstrokes. If you find yourself fatigued in a match, this tactic will slow down the pace of the game, and allow you to "rest" a bit. When training in Florida years back, I was playing on a court adjacent to the Peruvian Player, Jaime Yzaga. At that time, Jaime was on the ATP tour and ranked fairly high. I was losing my match. It was the end of July, and Tampa was hot and humid. Literally, my shoes were a few pounds heavier from the accumulated perspiration. I speak Spanish. Jaime and I were taking water in between our separate, practice sets. He said to me in Spanish. "Lob every ball deep and into the center of the court." I took his advice and discovered that I was no longer running as much. My opponent was beginning to try to hit winners from deep in his own court. I became bold when Jaime said during one of my points that he was watching, "Now, hit a drop shot." I did and my opponent never made it to the ball for a reply. I ultimately won the set but just barely. After the match, Jaime winked at me as I left the court. Back in my hotel room, I reflected on what had occurred during the match. We were playing on Har-Tru clay. So, every ball bounced a bit higher. I was so tired that I was hitting every serve as a kick serve (my normal second serve). My opponent had a one handed backhand. He used a continental grip for all his backhands. Once I started moonballing him, the fatigue factor switched to him. By the end of the set, he was struggling to hit a decent backhand. This lesson from a true pro is one that I never forgot!
8. Force your opponent out wide. If you are capable of hitting extreme crosscourt shots, you may find yourself a winning tactic. Shots that land a bit short, but force your opponent to be in the doubles alley or wider can win you lots of points. Why? Well, most players don't find themselves having to hit from this wide out. Generally, they try to hit winners. The pros on either tour will be successful in this effort more often than not. But, most recreational, collegiate and high school competitors will hit shots that are errant or allow you to hit a clean winner. This is a great tactic to employ, if you can hit the wide shot.

Tactics are always temporary! You can't employ a tactic in a really repetitive manner and expect to have success. Eventually, your opponent will figure out a way to neutralize the tactic. Thus, I reiterate the importance of developing new tactics to add to your arsenal.

What I have provided in this month's column are just rudimentary strategies and tactics. Pancho Segura's seminal book, Championship strategy: How to play winning tennis is probably the single best "bible" on strategies and tactics that I have encountered. It is out of print. So, you will have to find a used copy. But, it is well worth the search.

TENNIS FOOTWORK- HOW TO IMPROVE

Nathan and Giselle Marti

Here is the misconception! We have seen time and time again, players wasting their time training the incorrect way. Quality tennis footwork could be the most critical element for a solid game. You have to get it right! Let's look at how you should structure all your tennis footwork drills. Have you noticed Roger Federer's footwork? It can be hard to understand how smooth and graceful he moves when you watch on TV, but it was only until I saw him train and play in person, I truly appreciated why he is regarded as the greatest mover in the game.

While we can't promise you'll reach the same standard as Federer, there are proven ways to improve your tennis footwork on the court.

The 'Tennis Fitness, Martin Method' movement patterns that we use daily with the professional players who work with us. And don't worry it will work for you also, no matter what level you play at. The thing is all tennis players have something in common, they all want to move better on the court. Let's show you how this can be done. Firstly, it's important you understand there are six types of footwork steps used on the tennis court.

Tennis Footwork Drills

1. PREP STEP
2. SPLIT STEP
3. FIRST STEP
4. CROSSOVER STEP
5. TRANSITION STEPS
6. MULTI-DIRECTIONAL STEP

Once you understand this, you can then plan your tennis training around the footwork steps you feel need more work.

For the majority of tennis players, the first step is the most critical...

Prep Steps are small, controlled steps that are used when preparing to set-up for a shot.

Instead of taking large forceful steps, it is better to take small controlled rapid steps, which allows for better body position and the ability to change direction at the last moment if needed.

Prep steps are generally used when moving forward to the ball or when a player has time on their groundstrokes.

Prep steps are performed by holding a wide leg base, staying predominately on your forefoot, with knees slightly bent and maintaining good athletic posture. Holding this position, you should take controlled dynamic small steps when getting in position to hit the ball.





The **split step** is a fundamental step for all players. It is important to get it functioning right and use it as often as possible.

The split step is generally used when starting a dynamic movement such as returning serve or preparing to move to hit a groundstroke. The split step is performed by pushing up off the toes, jumping a few inches in the air and dynamically moving towards the direction of the ball.

The tennis **first step** is one of the most important factors in dynamic court movement. The nature of tennis means that players rarely run more than five meters in one direction during most points, so that quick first step is critical.

The first step is the one taken directly after the split step or the first step taken in any direction. We generally consider the first 2-3 steps part of the first step (acceleration).

What we find important is that you lean toward the direction you need to go and step first with the leg closest to the direction you are heading (except in a cross over step). The first step is as much about attitude and mentality, as it is about the physicality of it. Having an aggressive and assertive approach to your first step will help promote good dynamic court movement.



Many players use the **crossover step** when changing direction moving laterally.

It is an efficient way to set-up the initial lateral movement. By taking the outside leg and crossing it over the inside leg, players can then go into a lateral shuffle. Players that have a dynamic cross over step, will be able to get into position a lot easier which will continually put pressure on their opponent.

The steps taken when changing direction on the court are known as **transition steps**.

These steps are critical for moving quickly around the court as they provide players with more time.

Transition steps are performed through multi-directional movements.

Once a movement has finished, such as a wide forehand being hit, the transition step is the first one taken in a multi-directional plane (diagonal, lateral, forward or backward). We typically refer to the transition step (load and lean) when pushing off in a diagonal plane.



Multi-directional steps take place on nearly every point played in tennis. They are a combination of steps 1-5, as well as the movement between each shot. Possessing good multi-directional movement gives players the ability to maintain good posture while getting themselves in the best position more often. Effective multi-directional steps lead to an increase in court agility and fluid movement. Now you understand all the six tennis footwork steps you use on the court. Its now time to train those steps you feel are letting you down on court. Don't just train and hope for the best, train with a purpose. It may sound all very simple, but even the best players in the world train this way.

IMPROVE YOUR MENTAL TOUGHNESS

By Will Boucek



How is Rafa so mentally tough?

What makes Novak so good in tiebreakers?

How can you study their mental toughness in tennis matches and apply it to your own mental game?

Let me explain why most advice on mental toughness and pressure in tennis is a myth, and how you should start thinking about mental toughness. The

The Truth About Pressure In Tennis

Recently during the French Open, I heard the announcers talking about how certain players handle pressure.

They were saying something like, Djokovic just handles the pressure so much better than his opponents.

But what is this pressure thing? And is it true that certain players handle it better, or is it a story we tell ourselves? Pressure is that feeling we get in those tight matches, the nerves.

How We Know Who is Mentally Tough

So how does someone like Nadal continue to crush the ball and go for big forehands on pressure points?

How is he so good under pressure?

First, we need to decide if it's objectively true that he is good under pressure.

To really answer this, we need to:

- Define what a pressure point is.
- Find what percentage of points Nadal wins on pressure points.
- Find what percentage of points Nadal wins on non-pressure points.
- Compare the difference to that of other players.

If Nadal is "mentally tough" and handles pressure well, then his percentage of points won would increase, stay the same, or at least not drop as much as other players on those same pressure points.

For example, take a look at this fake table I made, with fake numbers.

| | Non-Pressure Points | Pressure Points |
|--------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Nadal | 59% | 58% |
| Zverev | 55% | 51% |

In this chart, even though Nadal's percentage of points won drops by 1%, he handles pressure better than Zverev, because Zverev's level drops by 4%.

Why The Best Tennis Players Play Better Under Pressure ?

Let's define pressure points as tiebreakers to make it easy.

When we look at the data, this is mostly negligible in tennis. In an analysis by Jeff Sackman, he finds that "a player's performance in non-tiebreak situations did a very good job of predicting his chances of winning tiebreaks."

Players who win a higher percentage of tiebreak points are players who win a high percentage of all point because... they're just better players!!

This idea of handling pressure well and mental toughness in tennis is mostly arbitrary and made up by people to explain players who are really good. So, it turns out that while we do all feel pressure, the idea that some players handle it better, or are mentally tougher, is simply not true.

Okay, that makes sense, but what about that nervous feeling?

Tennis Players Who Don't Feel Pressure, Explained

Not trying to pick on some of the commentators, but this statement "she is playing a big point and rips a down the line backhand winner. Then the commentator says "Her mental game is so good. She simply doesn't feel the pressure." Really ?

How You and Roger Federer are the Same

One of my favourite writers, Seth Godin, has a saying... "Dance with the fear."

The idea is that people don't overcome fear like society tells us they do. Instead, we must accept it and learn to dance with it. Act despite the fear, and pressure of the moment.

When commentators say things like "she just isn't feeling the pressure right now," I cringe.

It not only isn't true, but it has us place tennis players like Federer on a pedestal as if they just have some God-given, non-human, mindset or mental toughness.

All players, from me to you to Federer, feel the pressure. What's important is how we choose to act with it.



6 Spanish tennis stars banned for match fixing

Following a long and thorough investigation, the tennis world was shocked when players Marc Fornell Mestres, Jorge Marse-Vidri, Carlos Ortega, Jaime Ortega, Marcos Torralbo and Pedro Bernabe Franco were convicted in Spain as part of an ongoing case involving organised crime as all six players pleaded guilty to the corruption charges.

The players faced severe sanctions with each facing differing levels of fines based on their involvement and facing lifetime bans from competition as well as escaping with suspended 2 year prison sentences. Following the criminal proceedings, the International Tennis Integrity Agency said it was “one of the most significant infiltration’s of tennis by organised crime that we have seen”. This follows a string of prior cases in which 6 male Moroccan players were found to have participated in match fixing, 4 of whom had represented their nationality at the Davis Cup. As well as this, Ksenia Palkina was recently found guilty of betting offences and banned from the sport for 16 years.



Marc Fornell Mestres

However, with the criminal side of the sport being brought into the spotlight with a major case like this does it any way tarnish the reputation of the game and leave us to wonder how widespread the corruption is? Or was this just an exceptional case of people benefitting from the ever expanding gambling market on sports to make easy money?

ITIA chief executive Jonny Gray will certainly hope it’s the latter and states that “this ruling sends a strong message that match-fixing is a crime which can see criminal convictions.”.

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