

TENNIS COACHING
– Mike James (GPTCA International Coach) analyses what is necessary for a player to develop from a junior player to a world class senior. The player, the coach and the parents must work together in the quest for excellence.



Coaching:

Developing Juniors to become

World Class Seniors

You simply cannot predict with certainty which junior players on the Tennis Europe and ITF circuit will or will not come through to become world class seniors.

In this article I will give you my thoughts on basic principles that are essential in helping players to attain the goal of making it to International senior Tennis. Making the future a bit more predictable rather than a lot less so.

The three most significant partners in the quest for excellence, are the Coach, the Player and last but not least the Parents. To have a relationship with an open & honest communication that all parties “buy in” to this Commitment to Excellence and work hard day in and day out is vital for the players transition. Excellence starts from the moment the player gets up in the morning and dedicates their time in preparing for the day eating the right foods with nutritional value through static stretching before training and treating the warm up as an integral part of the on court session.

Caring for the Athlete as a Person and understanding what makes them perform at their optimum level as the coach is vital for success. Other members of the team built around the player, should always consider the player first and winning second and have the unique ability to show empathy and understanding in all situations.

Allowing the player to create and hold the ownership of success and to let them aspire to be the best they can be is key through out their Tennis journey.

Key components that the player must have are:

- Have groundstrokes that allow them to hit through the court & damage off both wings.
- Can constantly defend with quality to turn the point around
- Have a character that can deal with adversity week in and week out

From a psychical as point of view “any player making the transition from the junior to the senior tour is challenging. Players need great robustness to reduce the chance of injury and be able to compete at a higher intensity for longer durations. Therefore greater conditioning is likely to be required. Players need to manage their bodies to maintain longevity and understand that although missing particular tournaments may reduce the likelihood of picking up ranking points, long term planning rest and regeneration is essential” (Science in Tennis 2014)

Mentally there are “two areas that young players breaking into the senior game should look closely at are self-awareness and resilience. Regarding self-awareness, players need to understand exactly what gets them in the

best frame of mind to perform at this new level. Players must be clear on their areas to improve and, more importantly, their strengths in every aspect of their game. It is also critical for the player to understand the type of preparation they have to do in order to be emotionally prepared for battle each time they step on court. To improve self-awareness players should think about their role models, goals and ambitions, values and philosophy, and the strongest areas of their personality.

In the critical early stages of their senior career players must be prepared to fail and encouraged to learn from these failures. Resilience is about accepting adversity and learning

something from every setback. Resilient players will have a consistent effort level regardless of the challenges they face. They will have a positive attitude to training and competition and view negative situations as opportunities rather than obstacles. Their emotional responses to problems, while not always positive, will be controlled and directed towards finding a solution.”(Grand Slam Sport 2014)

The above thoughts and points are not exclusive for a players development though are the most important ones and would serve as a good template of self examination by any coach who really wants to help turn a Quality Junior into a World Class Senior.



From left: Sam Millard, Mike James, Filip Ambrozy