



WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A TENNIS PLAYER?

BEING A TENNIS PLAYER DOES NOT IMPLY MERELY WEARING THE ATTIRE, HAVING A GREAT BIG BAG OVER YOUR SHOULDER AND BEING IN A DRILL GROUP. THERE ARE MANY MORE IMPORTANT PHASES TO THINK ABOUT IF YOU WANT TO BE A WINNER, NOT ONLY IN TENNIS, BUT LIFE AS WELL. GOOD COACHES WILL IMPRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FOLLOWING QUALITIES ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY FOR EVERY GOOD ATHLETE, NO MATTER THE SPORT.

1. **ARE YOU COACHABLE?** Can you take coaching? Can you take criticism without ever looking for an alibi? Are you a “know it all?” Will you always do your best to try to improve?
2. **ARE YOU POSSESSED WITH THE SPIRIT OF COMPETITION WHICH FIRES AN INTENSE DESIRE TO WIN?** Do you want to win with a passion - - never taking ‘no’ for an answer when there is a job to be done - - a ball to be run down - - an extra basket of serves to be hit?
3. **ARE YOU WILLING TO PRACTICE?** - - not just showing up and putting in the necessary time but working every day with the same zeal, speed and determination you use during a tournament match? Do you have two speeds - - a practice speed and a tournament speed? Great athletes of the past were the ones who had one speed, and it was the same every day, every practice, every tournament. If you loaf and cheat in practice, you will loaf and cheat in matches.
4. **ARE YOU WILLING TO MAKE SACRIFICES?** Conditioning to play is not fun. It is not easy. It is stark punishment. Training is exacting; the responsibility is heavy. It is rough and includes personal denials in order to remain in tip-top condition, but has its rewards. You thrill with an inner glow that reflects a feeling of happiness when you run down that drop shot and make your opponent play that “one more ball”. The only way for you to remain in good shape is never to get out of it.
5. **DO YOU HAVE AN ARDENT DESIRE TO IMPROVE?** Are you willing to practice the things you cannot do three times longer than the things you can do? Are you willing to put in long grinding hours, concentrating on a skill until you perfect it? Are you eager to work so diligently at the skills you lack that they

eventually become your strongest assets? Too many players only work on the things they did well while their weaknesses were often exploited.

6. **DO YOU HAVE THE ABILITY TO THINK UNDER FIRE?** Can you concentrate on the work to be accomplished at the moment? Can you shut out from your mind a previous failure, success, bad line call or personal insult in order to give undivided attention to necessary tactics and strategies in the here and now? Matches are not won by yesterday's score, but by what is happening now, at this moment. Good athletes play every point up to the hilt - - never depending on past successes to aid them.
7. **ARE YOU WILLING TO BE IMPERSONAL TOWARD YOUR OPPONENTS?** Do you shut out all personal feelings about your opponent except to punish him/her, as often and as effectively as you can, in accordance with the rules? Experience has taught us the moment a player becomes personal he/she plays only to release individual grievances or without the necessary fire.
8. **ARE YOU WILLING TO STUDY JUST AS HARD AS BEFORE YOU BEGAN PLAYING TENNIS?** Tennis was never meant to take the place of school work. The athletic tail must never wag the academic dog. This involves realignment in your time schedule. If tennis will consume two, three or even four hours of your day then you must not draw time from your scholastic pursuits. If you must eliminate something from your schedule it cannot be study time. First things come first, and your academic growth is of paramount importance.
9. **DO YOU BELIEVE IN YOUR COACHES, TRAINERS, PARENTS AND OTHER SUPPORT STAFF?** Your game is as good as you make it. Your coaches and trainers are employed by you and given the responsibility of coaching, not their tennis game, but your game. Are you willing to work toward that spirit of oneness so that everyone possesses the feeling of belonging through their contribution? Will you keep uppermost in mind when a coach blisters you with criticism his/her remarks are never meant to be personal affronts? The only intent is to pressurize you to want to rectify your omissions so that success results. Despite his/her scathing censure, he/she loves you all as if you were of the same blood.
10. **WILL YOU STRIVE DAILY TO IMPROVE YOUR MUSCULAR COORDINATION AND SPEED?** Tennis is a game of movement and daily drills tend to speed up your reaction time. Speed and coordination are necessary ingredients in a winning combination. Only through hard work can improvement be realized. Those who lack these two physical qualities can still find a place in tennis by improving their technique and tactics.

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