



Tennis: Winning the Mental Match

Allen Fox

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Tennis is more difficult mentally than most other sports. Because of its one on one personal nature, it feels more important than it is. Competitive matches can become highly stressful, and losing is painful. Emotions tend to get out of hand, with fears and nerves becoming difficult to control. Confidence comes and goes; the scoring system is diabolical; everyone is at risk of choking, even the greatest players in the world. This book attacks these and other issues faced by players of all levels. Dr. Allen Fox's solutions are logical and straightforward, and most importantly, they have been tested and they work.

PARTIAL CONTENTS:

CH. 1: WHY DO WE WANT TO WIN?

Winning a tennis match feels more important than it is because players are genetically wired to compete for position on the social hierarchy. The emotions of a tennis match resemble those of a fight. Players may realize that winning a match doesn't really matter, but they will always want to win anyway.

CH. 2: THE EMOTIONAL ISSUES OF COMPETITION:

Tennis is inherently an emotional game. Because match outcomes feel important but are ultimately uncontrollable, matches can become stressful. There is often an unconscious urge to escape this stress, which leads to counterproductive behaviors, among which are anger, tanking, and excuse-making. These can be overpowered by the conscious mind, but it requires understanding, high motivation, and constant effort.

CH. 3: USING EMOTION TO HELP YOU WIN:

Your emotions will dramatically affect your tennis performance. We discuss how to keep counterproductive emotions in check and how to create productive ones that will help you win. Topics include the use of adrenalin, profiting from the time between points, and maintaining an optimal excitation level.

CH. 4: REDUCING THE STRESS:

Matches can become overly stressful, and this hinders performance. Stress can be reduced by developing a more realistic perspective of the game. Included are accepting outcomes that can't be controlled; resisting a narrow focus on winning; avoiding excessive perfectionism; getting over losses quickly; and using goals for hope and motivation rather than allowing them to become expectations and cause stress.

CH. 5: THE PROBLEMS OF FINISHING:

Most players become nervous and stressed when they are ahead and face the hurdle of finishing the match against a dangerous opponent. The unique tennis scoring system intensifies this problem. The closer players get to winning, the greater the stress. Trying to reduce it gives rise to counterproductive behaviors such as procrastinating the finish or becoming overconfident and easing up with a lead.

CH. 6: CHOKING - ITS CAUSES AND HOW TO MINIMIZE ITS EFFECTS:

Choking is most frequent at the finish of games, sets, and matches due to the uncertainty of outcome. You can limit choking damage by immediate acceptance of this uncertainty. Avoid stressful thoughts of winning by using rituals, focusing, and relaxation techniques. Rid yourself of the idea that choking will make you lose, and recognize that there are usually multiple opportunities to win, not just one.

CH. 7: CONFIDENCE AND HOW TO GET IT IF YOU DON'T HAVE IT:

Confidence, aka self-belief, comes mostly from winning. Though it's more difficult, you can win without it by replacing it with sufficient emotional discipline. Slumps and hot streaks occur in cycles and both end naturally with time. Stressing over a slump prolongs it. You can speed its ending by several methods which we discuss.

CH. 8: GAME PLANS:

Game plans give your efforts direction and structure. They can rely primarily on offence or defense but should be consistent with your personality. With Plan A you are looking for a match-up where you have a

relative advantage, most commonly pitting your strengths against an opponent's weakness.

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