

Drilling Psychology on Court!

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Introduction

Inadvertently whether coaches recognize it or not, players will be required to access their psychological skills as part of the technical, tactical and physical work they perform. It follows that while most coaches have little trouble prescribing specific technical, tactical or physical drills, it is rare to see coaches utilising on-court drills, specifically designed to improve the psychological skills of their players. As a result the purpose of this article is to provide several examples of on-court drills that can do just that.

Motivation (through goal-setting)

Players play points and before starting each point must tell their coach their strategy for the point. One point is awarded for winning the point and another if the point was played according to plan.

Concentration

In half a court, two players rally with two balls at the same time. The two balls are introduced with underarm feeds. These players compete against two other



Speaking to players is an important component of on court psychological drills

players performing the same drill to see how many consecutive balls can be hit without an error being committed.

100% effort

Players A and B play a singles match in which the receiver plays in the doubles court and the server in the singles court.

Momentum

Players play points with or without the serve. The winner of the point is rewarded with a score that equates to the number of balls he hit during that point (i.e. 3). If he wins the next point he adds the number of balls he hit (i.e. 4) to his score from the previous point (i.e. 3 + 4 = 7). However, if he loses the point his score returns to 0 and his opponent's score becomes the number of shots his opponent hit during the point. Players play first to 10 or 15.

Visualisation

Players play a set and a "changeover" is introduced after each game. During this time players are to visualise that which they endeavour to do in the next game.

Self-confidence

Players inform their coach of their best shot (i.e. inside-out forehand) or tactical play (i.e. serve and volley). They play points and are rewarded double points for every time they are able to use this shot or tactic to win the point.

Playing under pressure

Players play a five set match with one of the players starting from 4-1 down in each set; it can be the same player throughout the entire match or roles can be reversed from set to set.

Emotional control

Players play a set during which each player is able to choose to "take" a total of four free points at anytime.

Rituals

Prior to playing a set players tell their coach the type of between point and between game rituals they are going to employ. The coach observes and takes note of any instances where these rituals are not employed and the player is penalized point/s during the following game accordingly.

Self-evaluation

Players play points and the coach specifies one of the above psychological skills, whose implementation players are to self-evaluate. Each player has ten paper clips in his right pocket and each time he believes that he has successfully engaged the specified skill, he moves one clip to his left pocket. After "x" time or "x" number of games, the coach and players get together to discuss what has transpired.

Conclusion

Although the abovementioned drills do not represent an exhaustive list, we hope that we have provided coaches with some insight as to how on-court psychological drills can be designed such that they can be more regularly and specifically incorporated into tennis practices.

References

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