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Evolution of tennis teaching methodology

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The multiple ways in which coaches deliver their lessons to players no matter their gender, level of play, and physical or mental condition are an integral part of their daily routine. In this context, teaching methodology plays a crucial role in progressing players through their long-term development in the game.

In this presentation, the terms teaching methodology, tennis pedagogy, teaching systems or methods, and skill acquisition are used indistinctly. Teaching methodology has been understood as a systematic set of teaching practices related to several aspects such as, among others, the structure of the lesson, how the content is delivered, which is the role of the coach and the player, the provision of feedback, the use of equipment, etc. (Reid, et al., 2007).

The way coaches have tried to assist players in their acquisition of tennis skills has evolved throughout the decades. This progress has been documented by research (Unierzyski & Crespo, 2007) and is present in the different coach education and development systems implemented by the ITF, national associations, and other tennis organisations.

Throughout this pathway, some interesting statements have been made regarding how to learn tennis. For instance, some authors wrote that "*The tennis skills cannot be learned easily without an instructor and personal criticism on errors made while learning*" (Chafin, et al., 1978). We will try to challenge this and other common beliefs in the coaching fraternity through a process of critical self-reflection on the on-court practices implemented by the coaches.

During this presentation, different stages in the evolution of tennis teaching will be shown, with special attention drawn into the origins, main tenets, benefits, and challenges of the different proposals. From the early methods based on the importance of imitation and repetition, evolving through the different analytical approaches, and the game based or teaching for understanding strategies, to the constraint-led approaches built around the dynamic systems and ecological theories, the coach will be exposed to examples of best...and worst practices which are hoped to engage them in self-reflection.

In fact, just couple of years ago, during the first stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, research also concluded that coaches have changed their teaching methodology to adapt it to the limitations imposed by the preventive measures (Martinez-Gallego, et al., 2021). Let's hope that we do not need another pandemic to continue evolving and progressing in the improvement of our delivery methods for the benefit of our players.

## References

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