

## The club/facility coach relationship

*As the tennis industry becoming increasingly commercial, the importance of a strong relationship between clubs and coaches becomes greater than ever. There are many ways for all parties to ensure these all-important relationships are established and maintained as strong ones.*

**T**he tennis coach is the key to any tennis club/facility. Research shows that the most successful tennis facilities are those where there is a strong mutual respect between club/facility and coach, the coach placing themselves at the heart of club activities. Evidence suggests that club/facilities that have a wide variety of services offered by a qualified coach positively impact on the growth of the club/facility.

With the tennis industry becoming increasingly commercial, greater emphasis needs to be placed on fostering healthy club/facility - coach relationships. In order to establish and preserve healthy relationships, there are a number of key factors that tennis coaches looking to establish themselves at tennis facilities, and facilities looking to appoint a coach, should consider.

### Coach considerations

Any coach looking to establish a business at a tennis club should ask some key questions before they commit.

- **Length of tenure:** Is the duration of the agreement sufficient, and does it offer the necessary security, to establish and grow your coaching business?
- **Capital Works:** Is the club committed to improving the quality of its appearance and amenities? Is the coach willing to contribute to capital works programs to improve the quality of the facility and match this with a longer tenure provided by the club?
- **Number of courts:** Are there enough courts, and are they available (both length and duration of accessibility) to support your coaching program?
- **Size of membership/community:** Is the membership large enough and of a suitable demographic within the surrounding community to sustain your business? Primary and secondary schools within community, other sporting activities offered, other sporting facilities (including competition from other coaching business etc.)

Above all, it's crucial that the relationship between club/facility and coach is formalised in a contract that outlines a job description, remuneration, any costs relating to court access and lighting, targets in services offered, dispute resolution and



termination process and any additional duties or expectations.

The Tennis Australia coach relationship framework gives coaches access to a range of useful online resources including contract for service templates, covering letter templates, interview tips, advice for approaching local schools and a checklist for facility leasing.

### Club considerations

There are four key factors a club should look for when recruiting a coach.

- **Qualifications:** Does the prospective coach have a recognised coaching qualification?
- **Insurance:** Does the coach hold public liability and professional indemnity insurance to protect themselves against legal action?
- **Screening:** Has the coach undergone a working with children check or a national police certificate.
- **Experience:** Does the coaches previous experiences reasonably match with the clubs current and future expectations? The club needs to ensure that the potential coach understands/suits their Club's business plan and

vice versa (ask the prospective coach what sort of coaching services do they offer? Does the coach offer a wide range of services for all ages, standards, i.e. beginners through to High Performance.

While there isn't a national screening system in place, most states/territories have introduced legislation requiring coaches who work with children aged under 18 to undergo mandatory screening. Tennis Australia is committed to helping coaches adhere to these legislative requirements and from July 1, 2009 screening will be a prerequisite for Coach Membership.

In addition to these fundamentals it's worth considering whether prospective coaches have any additional skills or abilities. Tennis Australia's 2008 coaching census revealed that 37 per cent of coaches have a formal qualification outside tennis. Business, sales and marketing qualifications are among those that can be hugely advantageous to a coaching candidate, helping them to manage a successful business.

Tennis Australia's 2008 coaching census indicates that the most successful club/facility-coach relationships are those where coaches are involved in club activities. Clubs and their coaches should discuss areas in which the coach can contribute such as membership promotion (progressing young players into competition and therefore membership), selection of junior teams and open days.

In some club/facility scenarios the coach has become a paid administrator to combat the declining club committee volunteerism. Appointing coaches in this role can add a degree of professionalism to the operations of the club/facility. Tennis Australia has established a Master Club Professional Coaching Course for coaches interested in furthering their career in this area.

The Tennis Australia coach relationship framework has a range of resources available to tennis facilities to assist them in the appointment of a coach. These include templates for the planning phase, a position description and a job advertisement that can be placed on [tennis.com.au/membership](http://tennis.com.au/membership) for all Tennis Australia coach members to view. The resources also include an interview evaluation form to assist the assessment and rating of candidates, guidelines for creating a customised contract for service and communication and review documentation that can help to set performance goals and provide the basis for an annual performance review.

## Solving disputes

Even with the best intentions, disputes can sometimes arise between tennis facility committees and coaches. A contract gives both parties the opportunity to resolve issues and should identify clearly steps to be taken to rectify disputes. Without a contract both parties could find themselves in a vulnerable position.

### Coaching Census 2008 – did you know?

A total of 25 per cent of assistant coaches have formal written contractual agreements with head coaches.

In the absence of a contract, there are some basic steps that should be observed when disputes arise.

- The facility's management team or committee should be made aware of the dispute and attempt resolution, offer solutions where possible.
- Evidence always helps to resolve disputes so, where possible, issues should be documented. (Keep factual records of incidents including dates, times, presented logically, not emotionally.)
- If the facility and coach can't find resolution, they should seek an independent mediator.

Grievance handling procedures are a valuable service offered as part of Tennis Australia's Coach Membership, guiding members through issue resolution steps and if necessary directing them to subsidised sports mediation where necessary.

In recognising its goal to attract, develop and retain the best coaches globally, Tennis Australia is aware that the club/facility-coach relationship is vital to the development of the sport and is working to strengthen that relationship through continued investment. In coming months Tennis Australia will work on guidelines for fair and reasonable court access and assistant coaching contract templates.

In 2009 Tennis Australia will conduct a national awareness campaign for coaches – promoting the value of the coach and the importance of employing Tennis Australia coach members because they are qualified, insured and screened. Progress on these resources will be updated in future issues of CoachesWorld. ●

## Contract for service template

Tennis Australia has developed a contract for service template to assist coaches to develop a strong and healthy relationship with their club/centre/association.

The template provides optional clauses for inclusion such as: term of contract, services to be provided, obligations from both parties, shared objectives, transferral of the business or assignment, dispute resolution and termination.

To view the contract services template visit the exclusive downloads section on [tennis.com.au/membership](http://tennis.com.au/membership) or email [coachmembership@tennis.com.au](mailto:coachmembership@tennis.com.au) to request a word document format.

**Tennis Australia coach members can go to the exclusive download section on the [tennis.com.au](http://tennis.com.au) website to access the range of coach relationship fact sheets and templates.**

**For further information, please contact the coach membership team on (03) 9914 4191 or contact your state/territory coach development coordinator or email [coachmembership@tennis.com.au](mailto:coachmembership@tennis.com.au).**