

On Court Tips to Help Your Player Stay Emotionally Strong

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Establish Protocols: These are the pre-set solutions for common mental/emotional Issues.

Drills

- 1. PROBLEM:** Often video analysis of juniors show an average of 80% offense, 15% neutral, 5% defense. At the higher levels, improper shot selection is repeatedly the leading cause of unforced errors.

SOLUTION: Applying the proper use of offense, neutral and defensive shot selection options. Pro tour studies show that professionals often hit on average 60% neutral, 20% offense, 20% defense.
- 2. PROBLEM:** Donating points with first or second strike errors.

SOLUTION: Simply focus on hitting three clean balls straight down the center of the court. You'll go from handing the opponent the trophy to making them earn a seven ball rally.
- 3. PROBLEM:** Allowing a mistake to ignite anger tantrums. Anger leads to increasing ball speed and increasing ball speed often leads to more errors.

SOLUTION: To steady up, simply match the opponents ball speed until you get your game back to a controllable level. Yes, champions simply match the ball speed.
- 4. PROBLEM:** While sneaking a peak at where your beautiful stroke is going to land, you pull out of the strike zone and shank balls off the frame.

SOLUTION: A new twist on an age old tip is to simply say "one" when the incoming ball lands on your side of the court and "two" as you begin to uncoil the kinetic chain into the ball. Trick yourself into thinking that you can see the ball "hit" the strings of your racket. Guess what... No more shanks!
- 5. PROBLEM:** Assuming that your being "hooked" and allow that speculation to cloud your physical, mental and emotional performance. The human brain cannot complete two complicated tasks at once. This is called channel capacity.

SOLUTION: Revisit the 8-ball placement drill. The human eye cannot pick up a 3-millisecond event clearly, especially while moving. This is called motion blur. A mental toughness factor is the ability to redirect the focus to executing the correct shot the moment demands versus the "drama" of the possible stolen point.

Point Construction

1. **PROBLEM:** Spending 99% of your time practicing stroke mechanics, when the most common cause of errors in tournament play is usually shot selection.
SOLUTION: Use the "Cause of Error Chart" to identify the source of errors. Identifying the cause of the error is the first step in error correction.
2. **PROBLEM:** Self destruction as demonstrated with quick walking/serving and frustrated play. This mindless play is known as panicking.
SOLUTION: Re-commit to applying the three pillars of between point rituals: Get over the past points, stop for a few seconds and plan the next point's pattern and then apply your rehearsed relaxation rituals.
3. **PROBLEM:** Ignoring change over rituals. Many juniors use their external routines, yet ignore their internal rituals.
SOLUTION: A proper internal changeover routine is designed to stop a wandering mind. Simplifying the thoughts to the past two games. Mentally fix flaws and design proactive plans, then organize how these modifications will be applied during the next two games. This changeover routine is designed to redirect the focus to the task at hand.
4. **PROBLEM:** Failing to close out a leads. This over thinking situation is commonly known as choking. Thoughts such as where that cool trophy is going to sit in your room, the award presentation, your possible new ranking or what your friends are going to say when you beat the "seed" is a sure fire path to Loserville.
SOLUTION: Focusing on executing the next point's pattern versus the sociological ramifications of winning or losing. Remember: Fear inhibits muscle movement. Under stress muscles contract, breathing becomes shallow and problem solving stops. Start by employing positive corrective steps such as taking a few "swoosh" shadow swings in between points to break down that excess muscle tension, listening to your feet and focus the attention on simply winning 3 points in a row.
5. **PROBLEM:** Going into a match without match notes.
SOLUTION: If you're self destructing and want to respond to adversity like a champ, you should have your notes prepared and actually choose to pull them out and read them if needed. Important notes may include patterns to beat various styles and/or two or three of these solutions to stop self destructing.