

MY COACH

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Thriving in any language

Under 10s development programs may vary throughout the world but they're united by one purpose: the desire to have more kids participating in tennis more often. In Australia, coaches are providing the critical link in achieving that objective. VIVIENNE CHRISTIE reports

All around the world, the young players starting out in tennis are considered the most important participants to its long-term future. It's no surprise then that the International Tennis Federation (ITF) has not only created the "Play and Stay" initiative to ensure young players do exactly that, but has also developed a special name for the very participants they're targeting.

"We call it Tennis 10s. The reason was that tennis is the same in every language and the number 10 is the same in every language," explains Dave Miley, the ITF's Executive Director of Development. "It didn't need to be translated, whether you're in Australia or in China or in other countries."

The other aspect that doesn't require translation is the common purpose in the development of those young players. While under 10s programs can be delivered in slightly varying ways, there's a thematic objective in all of them – the desire to have more kids participating in tennis more often and to provide them with an enjoyable experience on which they can develop a lifelong love for the game.

That means introducing those young players to the game in the right way and the modified equipment that's become synonymous with developing juniors is critical. Slower balls and smaller courts create an easier game, which means both enjoyment and learning are automatically enhanced. "The point is that players can implement tactics that they could never implement with a regular ball," Miley explains.

While that philosophy has been prevalent in some countries for years – Miley points to young Czech Republic players participating on mini courts as far back as the 1950s and Swedes adopting slower balls in the 1970s – it's only recently that the significance of modified equipment has taken on an official context.

In January 2012 the ITF's new rule stating that slower red, orange or green balls on the appropriate-sized courts must be utilised in 10-and-under competitions came into effect. It was only the fifth time the ITF Rules of Tennis had changed in the history of tennis and while that highlighted a major milestone, it was also easily adapted considering the well-established 10-and-under programs that exist throughout the world.

Belgium – whose status as a leader in junior development is proven by the number of top Belgian players who have emerged in the context of its relatively small population – was one of the first nations to formally adopt the red, orange and green balls development system. Miley explains that Belgium's head coach, Steven Martin and Carl Maes, who coached Kim Clijsters from childhood and throughout much of her professional career, were early endorses of the program.

"They think it's one of the reasons for the success of the kids in developing more of an all round game," he explains. "They really do believe that somebody like (Justine) Henin would not have been able to play a one-handed backhand or do the thing she could do unless she'd been able to start off playing with the slower balls."

Those programs were soon replicated in various formats by the national bodies of other countries, but often with an aspect unique to that country, which has been highlighted by recent initiatives. In Australia, the growth of MLC Tennis Hot Shots was highlighted by the 9200 families who attended the MLC Tennis Hot Shots day on

MARK REDDY



Laura Robson (right) and Kim Clijsters, pictured at Wimbledon, are among many high profile players who support 10-and-under initiatives.

the weekend prior to Australian Open 2012.

The Lawn Tennis Association in Britain have a recently re-launched Mini Tennis Program that saw an inaugural “National Mini Tennis Week” taken into schools, parks and tennis clubs prior to Wimbledon.

The USA’s 10-and-under program resulted in 3000 courts being marked with the permanent 60-foot blended line and stand alone red (36 foot) and orange (60 foot) courts installed. At the BNP Paribas Tennis Showdown in March at Madison Square Garden, smaller court lines were again in place on the regular court during the matches between Roger Federer and Andy Roddick and Maria Sharapova and Caroline Wozniacki.

Tennis Argentina’s launch of their Tennis 10s Tour was similarly impressive in March 2012, incorporating the closure of a major Buenos Aires thoroughfare and the construction of red courts where over 300 children could participate in tennis.

In almost every one of those nations, there are high-profile supporters boosting support for 10-and-under initiatives, with Federer, Rafael Nadal, Agnieszka Radwanska, Kim Clijsters, Steffi Graf, Andre Agassi and Fernando Gonzalez among those who have participated in promotions or activations. “They’re embracing it all over the world,” says Miley.

Another commonality is the enthusiasm of coaches in adopted the most up-to-date methods in educating young players. As Miley explains, there’s a fine-tuned appreciation of the fact that on-court coaching methodologies have evolved in a similar manner to teaching in schools – and that’s through participation.

“In the same way that people learn a language now by making mistakes and speaking, we believe that tennis should be learned in a game-based way, which means people are playing, the balls allow them to play and coaches are giving them relevant instruction to help them play.”

In Australia, coach support of MLC Tennis Hot Shots, the development program for

primary aged children, is boosted by the existence of a strong and unique coaching community in Tennis Australia Coaches, whose members are provided with many opportunities and resources in engaging and retaining the interest of young players.

Craig Morris, Tennis Australia’s Hot Shots Leader, explains that extensive recent research into the junior development programs of other Australian sports – including AFL, cricket and netball – highlighted ways to build even further on an already-successful program.

“Fun play and development are probably the key aspect for us and that’s why the coaches are so important in how they deliver it,” Morris says. “We depend on them to deliver Hot Shots in a way that keeps kids engaged and wants kids to keep coming back. We’re making sure we’re working with them in supporting and creating the environment, that kids love playing tennis and develop that passion for the sport.”

That’s a process that often starts with schools, and Morris explains that providing coaches with appropriate equipment and a reminder of the Hot Shots experience through merchandise packs facilitated the objective of retaining young players’ interest. “We said let’s give out a gift that the coaches can have access to and give out, which is all the right messaging to really help support the coaches.”

The focus on school has since evolved even further with this month’s introduction of the National Schools Partnership Program, focusing on tennis becoming a formalised part of a school’s curriculum. Again, the link with coaches is critical.

“Part of the criteria for the schools was to have a coach linked to the school and a club linked to the schools so if the students liked tennis in the curriculum and thought they wanted to have some lessons there was a clear pathway,” Morris says.

Other Hot Shots initiatives are also providing young Australian players with more opportunities to enjoy tennis more often. Aware that volunteers – for the most

part parents – are intrinsic to the growth of other sports, a Hot Shots Community pilot program will launch next month, which allows accessibility for clubs and venues without a coach, particularly in rural areas. The structured six-week program is provided by Hot Shots but can be delivered by volunteers.

“We want coaches to be able to say ‘well Hot Shots is about getting more kids to play more often,’” Morris points out. “We want kids to have lessons on a Tuesday or a Wednesday (for example) and on a Friday come down and apply those skills. Mums and dads can help on court too.”

Competitive experiences are another area of junior development that will soon be further enhanced, with Hot Shots tournaments to be launched throughout Australia next year. As is the case with other international 10-and-under tournaments, such events will be played with specially-tailored scoring systems and formats that exist within the ITF Rules of Tennis.

The numbers point to steady growth in Australia. As recently as the 2008–2009 financial year, there were 252 coaches delivering Hot Shots in Australia; that number had jumped to 472 by mid-2011 but the biggest growth was in the 12-months that followed, with 764 Tennis Australia coaches delivering the program by mid-2012. All those figures translate to more kids enjoying tennis more often and in the past year, 348,480 young players experienced Hot Shots.

It’s almost certain that at least one of those young Australian players will eventually encounter competitors who experienced their own country’s 10-and-under starter development program. No doubt there’ll be some aspects that are unique to a specific country. At the same time, the very nature of having remained in tennis to compete on a larger stage will also highlight how much development programs throughout the world also have in common.



Modified balls, racquets and courts enhance learning and enjoyment.

MARK FREDY

Inflammation in an ankle injury can be reduced by applying ice.



Ever wonder – when you should ice an injury?

Icing an injury is one of the oldest and best known injury management strategies, yet there is often confusion among tennis players and coaches as to what injuries they should ice, how often and for how long.

Based on scientific research there are no definitive answers to these questions, however here are some basic guidelines for you to follow:

1. Always ice an acute injury involving joint sprains and muscle tears. Acute injuries are those that occur suddenly, such as an ankle sprain or a calf tear, which often result in swelling and inflammation. Although inflammation is an essential precursor for healing to take place, excessive inflammation can cause further damage, particularly in muscle fibres, due

to hypoxia and the release of chemicals such as oxygen free radicals. By reducing skin and muscle temperature, there is a reduction in the inflammatory reaction through vaso-constriction and slowing of cell metabolism. Once an injury has happened, the faster you can get ice on it, the better.

2. How long you ice an injury for will depend on whether the injury is superficial or deep. The important concept to remember is that the tissues of the injured area must reduce in temperature in order to be effective. So if the injury is deep you will need to ice for longer, usually up to 20 minutes.
3. During the first 48 hours of injury, icing every one to two hours is ideal. For acute

muscle tears, if you are really serious about improving as quickly as possible set an alarm every two hours during the night to get up and ice. After the first 48 hours, once the initial inflammation has settled, icing is less effective and therefore can be performed less frequently.

4. Chronic and long-term injuries to tendons, joints and bone do not usually involve an acute inflammatory response and therefore icing these injuries is much less effective. I have found that rather than icing, those 20 minutes can be better utilised performing rehabilitative exercises to try and address the injury. However if there is a sudden flare-up of an old injury resulting in acute



The quicker ice is applied to an acute injury, the better.

inflammation, then icing may be effective in settling it quickly.

- When icing always ensure that there is a barrier so that the ice is not in direct contact with the skin. Keeping the ice in a thin towel or a plastic bag is usually sufficient in order to avoid sustaining an 'ice burn'. There are also many commercially available alternatives that can be very handy.

References / further reading

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IAN PRANGLEY is Tennis Australia's National Physiotherapy Manager and Australian Davis Cup Team Physiotherapist.

Exercise of the month: Prone angels

In tennis players, muscular weakness and poor control of the posterior muscles of the shoulder girdle is considered a risk factor for developing shoulder problems. This exercise is a favourite of mine for strengthening these muscles, but it is important that you follow the instructions very carefully. It does not require any weights or bands, so you can do it anywhere and at anytime. I recommend completing them three times per week.

Instructions

1. Lie on your stomach with your arms by your side and your palms facing downwards.
2. Draw your shoulder girdles together and downwards slightly as shown by the arrows in figure 1 ensuring you keep your hands in contact with the ground as you do this.
3. Lift your hands approximately one inch from the ground ensuring you shoulder blades stay retracted.
4. With your shoulders girdles remaining retracted and your hands off the ground move your arms in an arc from beside your hips to 90 degrees as shown in figure 2 and return to your side.
5. Repeat the above steps for a total of 10 repetitions.
6. Do three to five sets with one to two minutes rest between each set.

Progressions

You can progress this exercise in one of two ways:

1. Move your arms into a Y position before returning back to your side as shown in figure 3.
2. Hold a 0.5 kg weight in your hand (a 500 ml full bottle of water will also do) as shown in figure 4 and complete the same steps as above.

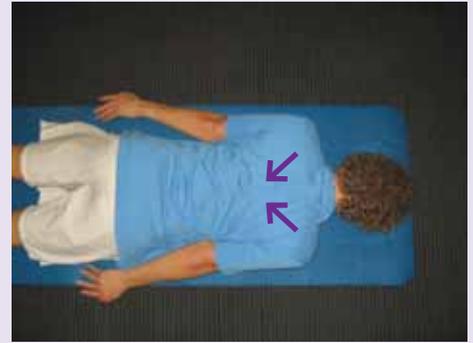


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

My Coaching Life

Always striving for that little bit extra is a philosophy that Danial Stredder not only instils in his students, but lives every day.

I started playing tennis competitively at age 10. A bit of a late starter by today's standards.

My most memorable moment was winning four titles in the one junior tournament over two age groups with my family watching on. It was the best family/community atmosphere I can remember.

I decided to become a coach because my coaches picked up on qualities they saw within me and nurtured me towards being a tennis coach since as long as I can remember. I think they did a pretty good job. Cheers fellas.

The players I've coached scale from one end to the other. I used to coach a 15/u Russian boy in the UK who was ranked at a state level in his age group, along with the 13/u

My Pa inspired me in tennis and competition and would always tell me "if you're suffering or tired then so is the other guy". There's always one more thing you can do.

I maintain a positive coach-player relationship with honesty. If the player doesn't trust you they aren't going to listen to you.

An athlete's work ethic goes in part with that age old saying 'You only get out what you put in'. Again, being honest with them about the reality of what they want to achieve versus what they have to do to get there.

My team and I just want what's best for the players at all levels. And that's what we deliver. We are always looking to raise the bar for all of our players, from



Name: Danial Stredder
Venue: The Gap Health and Racquet Club, The Gap, Brisbane, Queensland
Qualifications: Tennis Australia Junior Development Coach

quite well. We consistently and successfully operate at least one MLC Tennis Hot Shots Tennis in Schools program or equivalent program per term. We also ran a MLC Tennis Hot Shots Inter School Tennis Cup participation competition which operates with schools entering red, orange and green teams at different times of the year. This year we had approximately 250 participants across the three levels – certainly one of our most exciting competitions of the year! In recognition of our hard work our club also managed to win two Queensland state tennis awards, which were 2011 Most Outstanding Club and MLC Tennis Hot Shots Most Outstanding Coach. None of this is possible without an excellent team to work with.

What I most enjoy about being a coach is seeing the future of tennis development grow within Australia and knowing that I'm a part of that. Not just within player development but working with coaches as well to also help bring on their own skills. I think I would have to say it's a passion of mine to develop tennis in all areas.

Right now I'm happy in my current position but I could see myself one day working in tennis on a national or international scale. Perhaps some sort of ambassador to Tennis Australia/ITF or operate my own tennis business, all of which would not only be challenging but an interesting lifestyle and a lot of fun. I like to challenge myself and am always looking to develop my own skill sets. So far that mentality has worked out pretty well.



Passionate about the development of young players, Stredder is delighted with the success of the MLC Tennis Hot Shots program.

No. 1 junior from St Lucia, also UK based. I now coach predominantly MLC Tennis Hot Shots and grassroots level tennis, focusing strongly on development pathways for junior tennis in Australia.

A philosophy I want my students to take away is never give up, especially on yourself.

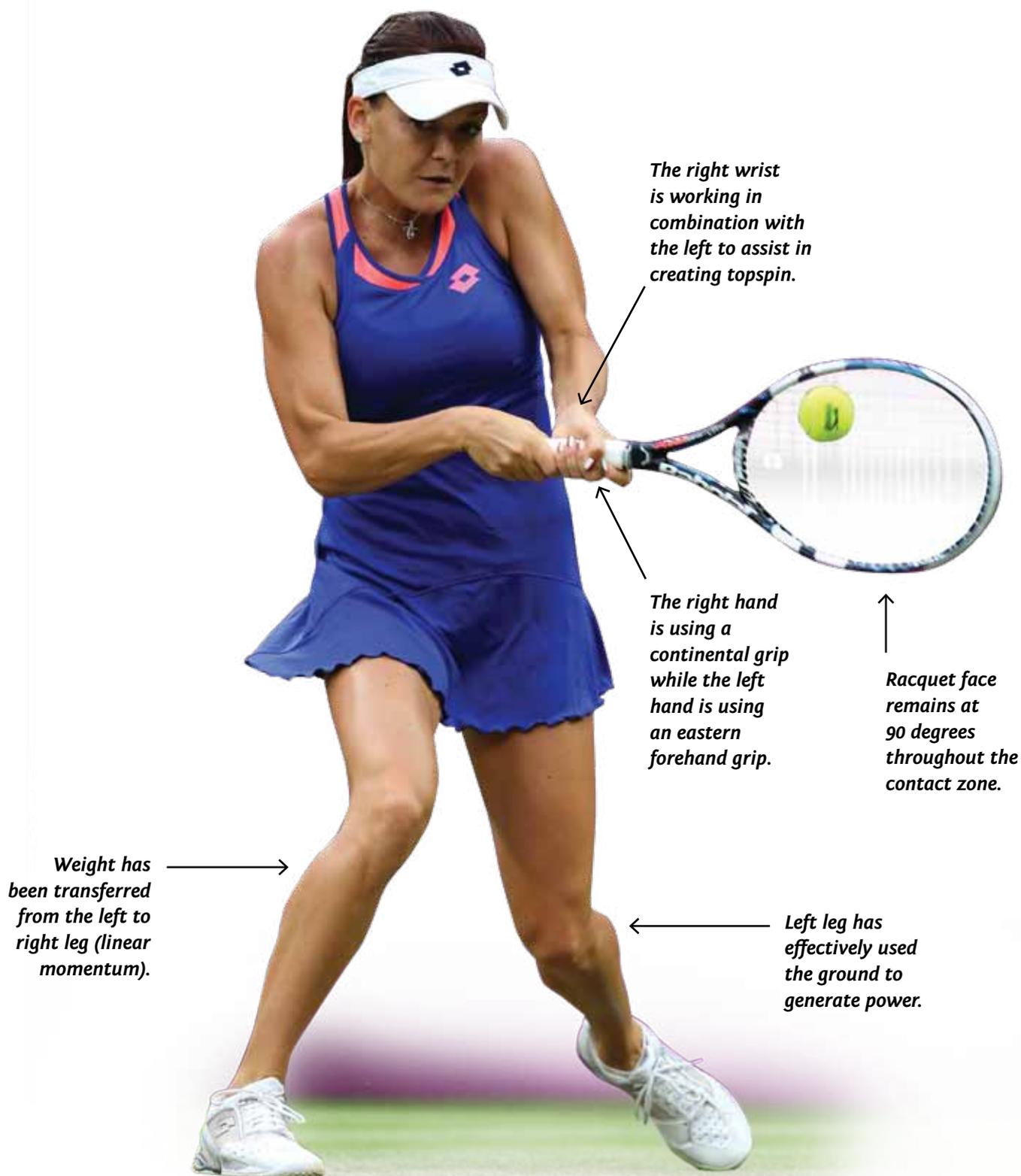
kids three years old and older to our tournament squad players.

There's been a lot of progress at The Gap Health and Racquet Club: We have resurfaced to the Australian Open True Blue on all hard courts. Retention of MLC Tennis Hot Shots participants is key and we do

What do you see?

By the Stroke Master

Agnieszka Radwanska has had a breakthrough season in 2012. She made her first career Grand Slam final appearance at Wimbledon and soared to a career-high ranking of world No. 2. Her powerful double-handed backhand is analysed below.



The right wrist is working in combination with the left to assist in creating topspin.

The right hand is using a continental grip while the left hand is using an eastern forehand grip.

Racquet face remains at 90 degrees throughout the contact zone.

Weight has been transferred from the left to right leg (linear momentum).

Left leg has effectively used the ground to generate power.

COACHES' CORNER

Planning for the peak period

With summer fast approaching it's time to put aside the cold weather, but preparation for a very busy coaching period is critical in meeting demand. **JOSHUA BOZIN** reports.

Current Tennis Australia High Performance Coach Andrew Sun understands the importance of preparing his staff at Max Tennis in New South Wales for the increase of participants in the coming months.

"Term 4 serves two objectives at Max Tennis. To consolidate the skills of students and to take advantage of the warmer weather," Sun says.

The term sees many winter sports out of action until the next year, which allows Sun and his team to capitalise on 'the summer of tennis'.

At Max Tennis, the development of all their students to become great tennis players and great people are the main priorities.

"We integrate all the various aspects of social development into our lessons



Organisation and planning are critical components in keeping up with demand.

including problem solving, co-operation and team work, dealing with challenges, making good choices, respecting others and communication skills," Sun says.

As it is a very busy coaching period during Term 4, good lesson planning, good staff communication and training and empowering key staff with various responsibilities is a must in order for the success of the business.

Sun believes that the success of his business during the peak coaching period at Max Tennis is due to the encapsulated philosophy of his staff that 'learning through play' is how a student best develops.

"The students don't learn how to wait their turn in a line or how to pick up balls.

Sun selects and trains his staff very carefully at Max Tennis, so when the time comes around between October and December, their knowledge and delivery skills to their students in such a busy environment is above standard.

"I empower my staff to modify the plan as they see fit and they are always offering feedback in the overall lesson planning process. Energy and on court presence is vital," Sun says.

"We run regular staff training with the team to assist their knowledge and learning new delivery skills. Not only do we teach our students the required tennis skills, we also address complimentary aspects, whether that be nutrition, off-court physical



Andrew Sun prepares his staff early for the busy times.

"Term 4 serves two objectives at Max Tennis. To consolidate the skills of students and to take advantage of the warmer weather." **ANDREW SUN**

We all have a genuine desire to teach and improve each player by the end of each lesson, and this is done simply by the environment we create on court, which is engaging and fun," Sun says.

"We facilitate each player, whether it be MLC Tennis Hot Shots or an adult session, to leave them feeling that they have improved."

conditioning or facilitating some extra practice with their friends or family."

The Term 4 coaching period will see Sun and his team at Max Tennis increase the awareness of all their programs in the community and hopefully finalise the MLC Tennis Hot Shots Tour to the Australian Open in 2013.