

SWEAT, TEARS AND COURAGE



The saying may be ‘Those who can’t do, teach’, but this is far from the truth for Ryan Kebblewhite who combines both playing and coaching successfully.

The pressure on the court, the times when you feel like you’re down and out but come back from the brink are moments that every player experiences during their tennis playing days.

But when this is still fresh in the mind of a coach, who in fact feels these as he continues to compete, this is sure to be an advantage to the student who is under this type of coach’s guidance.

“When I play matches and students are watching I give nothing less than 110 percent win or lose,” Ryan Kebblewhite says.

“I want to walk off that court knowing that I have nothing else left in the tank and hopefully my students see that as a good thing and it inspires them to work just as hard. I will always prepare, be organised and be ready for anything. So this can only be passed onto my students.”

Having been encouraged by his Pa when he moved from Sydney to the Gold Coast, Kebblewhite started playing tennis at the age of 12.

“He took me to the local courts and from there on I loved it and started doing lessons with the local coach Bev Peck,” he says.

The Tennis Australia Club Professional coach has now been coaching for nine years and the bond he formed with athletes was the catalyst for his decision to coach in a more permanent role.

“When I finished Year 12

I was asked by local coach Scott Syman to help him with a couple of lessons on an arvo. At this stage I was training full-time and heading to tournaments pretty much most weekends,” he says.

“But as time went on my hours on the coaching court were building up and my friendship and bond with all the kids was so good. This is when I decided that I wanted to be a coach and have a real crack at it.”

Kebblewhite is now the Director and head coach of Sonic Tennis, which is located at Pottsville Beach in New South Wales and Palm Beach Currumbin Sports High School in the Gold Coast.

“I started my own business Sonic Tennis in January 2009 and in November 2010 Sonic Tennis took over coaching rights at Palm Beach Currumbin,” he says.

And he’s definitely seen it grow. When he first started, Pottsville Beach Tennis Club only had 12 athletes involved within the coaching program, but these days Kebblewhite has 145 athletes enrolled in coaching, along with nine competition teams, which were only one.

At the moment 14 of Kebblewhite’s athletes have national points and with his commitment to his players, he’s sure to make an even bigger impact to the tennis careers of many juniors.

“One thing I want my players to take away from my coaching is the intensity and hard work that we focus on in our sessions. My goal as a coach for each session is to have the kids walking off the court feeling that I have reached or gone past their maximum effort of level of play and intensity,” he says.

“Knowing that I reached that makes me happy and I want all my students to use that

key factor when it comes to the battle in the arena. I never want my students or myself walking off court saying ‘what if?’”

With this philosophy in place, Kebblewhite is aiming to get the most out of his athletes, and with not singling out favourites; he upholds a positive relationship with all his athletes. And at 25 years of age, he can still relate to many of his athletes.

“I keep everyone on the same par ... I respect my red class players just as much as I respect my High Intensity Squad tournament players,” he says.

“I will always listen to what every student has to say. When we are away travelling, when we are not at the courts I try to have as much fun with them as possible as well as trying to engage into what the students like music, hobbies and movies.”

And to experience the travelling tour, Kebblewhite travels with a group of athletes



to 15–20 tournaments a year. They even ventured to Melbourne for the first three days of the Australian Open last month.

During the Melbourne tour a week before the Australian Open Kebblewhite’s athletes played the Victorian Grasscourts at Wodonga with Dylan Bloor and Blake Kebblewhite winning the 16 boys’ doubles.

“They were down 1-6, 0-5, down two match points at 15-40 in the final, but they came back and won 1-6, 7-5, 11-9. So was very impressed to see the fighting effort I use and teach for every point wear off on my students.”

“Seeing students improve, seeing children battle it out on court sweat, tears and courage and seeing them walk off doing things you have taught them is what it’s all about.”