

# LIFE ON TOUR

As he guides top Australian woman Ash Barty to new heights, Craig Tyzzer provides an exclusive insight into life as a coach on tour.



**W**hen Ash Barty speaks about her career, she uses collective terms such as “we” and “our”. The Australian No.1 recognises her achievements are a team effort, with coach Craig Tyzzer playing a pivotal role in her success.

Often the unsung heroes on tour, coaches work tirelessly behind the scenes to prepare their charges for each match and every challenge that arises. *Australian Tennis Magazine* asked the Melbourne-based Tyzzer, who won the Australian Tennis Award for High Performance Coaching Excellence in 2017, to elaborate on his role.

**ATM: How much of the year do you actually spend travelling?**

**CT:** This year it will be 30 weeks if we complete our full scheduled year. That does not include training weeks that I do in Brisbane (where Ash lives).

**What is the longest stretch away from home?**

The longest stretch is the Europe



“As a team Ash and I have worked hard on treating both wins and losses as a learning experience.”

swing, which started in Madrid in May and we will finish after Wimbledon in July. All up, it is about 11 or 12 weeks. It is difficult to get back to Australia through this period, so after the clay season we trained in London to get some practice on the grass and get ready for the upcoming tournaments.

**Do you have a favourite place to visit?**

My favourite tournament would be Strasbourg in France. It is such a beautiful city.

**When on tour, what tasks take the most time?**

Probably opposition analysis. I generally watch two to three matches of upcoming opponents if I do not know them and one or two recent matches if I know them well.

**What is the most under-recognised part of your role?**

Most people are surprised by how much time is spent in preparation to play matches. Most of the general public only see players when they play

matches and don't realise the amount of preparation that has gone into just getting them out on court. On a general day before a tournament starts Ash could do anywhere from three-to-four hours of work to get ready. It could involve any or all of these aspects - conditioning, strength training, rehabilitation, body management, physiotherapy and massage - and that is before we even step on the court.

**How much time do you spend scouting other players?**

Other than being on court with Ash, it is the most time-consuming part of the job. As coaches we need to be fully aware of the opposition and all aspects of how they play the game. Each day I generally watch at least one player that I have not seen before.

**As a travelling coach, how much time do you spend with your player?**

We are generally together every day when training or during tournament play. It can range from a shorter

two-to-three hour day, to a longer four-to-five hour one.

**Who else, besides the coach, plays a key role in supporting players on tour?**

All of the tournaments provide massage therapists, who play a vital part of keeping players bodies ready to perform. We also generally travel with a physio, who again at times can be a major part of a player's preparation before and during tournaments. The toll of the tour can get pretty demanding at times and player's bodies can need lots of work depending on how much tennis they are actually playing. We also at times have a strength and conditioning coach travel with us, but most of the time this work is done in our training blocks before we leave to go on tour.

**What does the morning before a big match look like for a coach?**

It is generally pretty relaxed, we try to keep it as normal as possible. Most of the work is done by then. We would start with a light warm-up for Ash on court, which is determined by when she is playing on the schedule. We will also generally go over the plan again

**TOP TEAM:** Ash Barty and coach Craig Tyzzer were both recognised at the Newcombe Medal Awards in 2017.

**Does a coach's role post-match depend on results?**

As a team Ash and I have worked hard on treating both

wins and losses as a learning experience, otherwise each week can become a bit of an emotional rollercoaster. In every tournament we play there is only one winner every week. We focus a lot on the process, as we feel this is the best way to keep progressing. We try to get something out of every match that she plays which helps improvement regardless of the outcome. Having said that, I will also allow Ash to enjoy some of her better wins if only for a short period.

**Are losses hard to deal with?**

We do not treat losing as a negative; rather it is a learning process. Tennis is about facing losses and disappointment, then putting it in perspective.

**Are you a supporter of on-court coaching?**

I am not completely sold on the idea. Tennis players are taught from an early age about trying to figure out your opponent and the strengths and weaknesses of their game. I like the fact that it

is just two players out there, going toe-to-toe and you have to figure out a way to win. It can also benefit certain players more than others, not all players

are making the same money and may not have a coach on tour. Having said all that, it has at times certainly benefitted Ash that I could go on court and offer her some new tactics and a different perspective on the way a match is going.

**How do you help a player achieve balance when they are travelling each week?**



## SHARED SUCCESS

A second career title was a shared success for Ash Barty, who is inspiring many others with her rise.

In 2016, Ash Barty arrived at Nottingham as the No.623-ranked player. In her first WTA-level singles appearance in almost two years, Barty qualified for the main draw and progressed to the quarterfinals.

This year, Barty returned as the top seed and clinched the title, scoring wins over Naomi Osaka and local favourite Johanna Konta in the final two rounds.

“I think it's been an amazing two years,” Barty reflected. “Last year was phenomenal, and I feel like I'm trying to do the best that I can to play consistent tennis week in and week out.”

Barty, whose rapid rise was rewarded with the Newcombe Medal in 2017, is quick to acknowledge the team elements of her success. “I feel like I've got

a really solid team around me of genuine people. They're helping me through everything,” she said.

At the same time, Barty inspires others as a mentor to scholarship-holding females at the National Academy in Brisbane.

“Ash regularly communicates to the girls through text and social, no matter where she is in the world, offering support and guidance as the young players try to emulate her successes in the sport,” said Belinda Colaneri, Coach Education Manager.

The mentorship program, the brainchild of Ash's physiotherapist Adam Schumacher and National Academy Manager Chris Mahony, pairs the Academy's professional women's players with the next generation of female players.

I think it is important to keep a good life balance, as the tour can be pretty demanding and tough. We try to get to as many interesting tourist spots that we can when we get the chance. Staying connected with our family and friends even when we are away from them is important, just to keep up with all the news that is happening at home. Sometimes it is good for Ash to have some time to herself to do whatever she wants.

**How do you help a player adapt to the demands of**

**travel and quick turnaround times for events?**

This is probably one of the harder parts of the tour, as every week you head off to another tournament. Both players and coaches must be disciplined enough to maintain a routine that includes a proper balance of sleep, rest, good nutrition and body management.

**What do you miss most when you are away from Australia?**

My family. It is a massive sacrifice that my family makes to allow me to do my job. **ATM**