

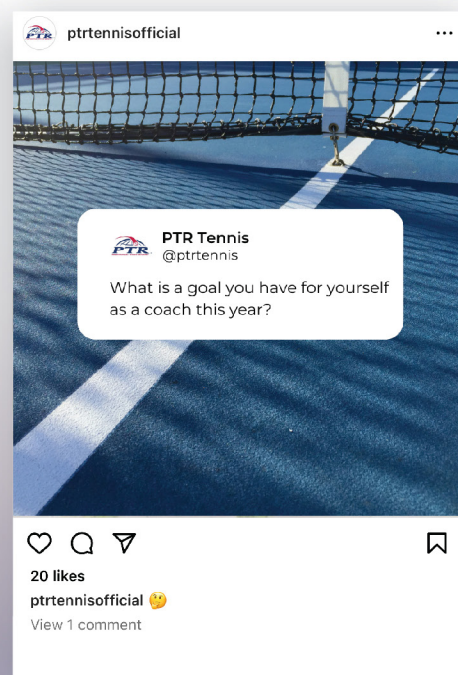
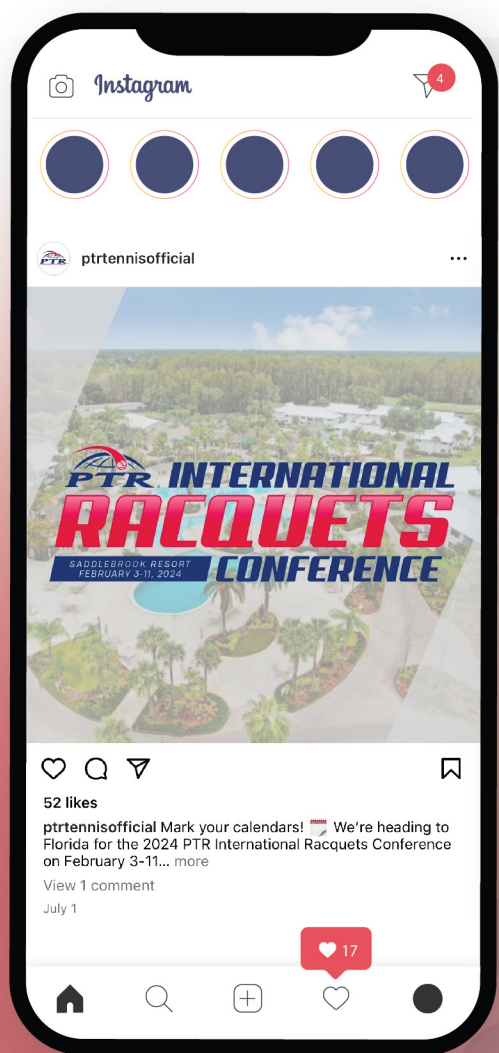
TennisPro®



The International Magazine for PTR Tennis Teachers and Coaches

August/September 2023

“Today, we can do so many things more efficiently and effectively thanks to improved technology.”



In this Issue...

- Strategies for Keeping Your Courts Full
- How Your Racquets Committee Can Build Success
- Tennis and Social Media
- Can Tennis Follow the Lead of Major Sports
- Innovation for Fun Racquets Experiences
- True Professional

... and more!



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For the Record

I've been writing the "For the Record" column for 38 years now. The number of things that have changed in our industry since the mid-1980s is mindboggling!!! A big part of that change is of course the advent and growth of technology.

Many of us look back and wonder how we got things done without today's technological conveniences. The simple answer is we got things accomplished, but it just took us longer, in some cases, a lot longer! Today, we can do so many things more efficiently and effectively thanks to improved technology.

With computer laptops, smartphones, and other portable communication devices, our ability to connect and share information, especially on the go, is simply awesome. The best part is that what we think is fantastic today will be even better in future years to come.

The one technology area that I'd like to focus my message on is social media. There is an article in this issue of TennisPro about effectively utilizing social media. You'll be happy to know that PTR has really ramped up our social media in the past year and has made impressive gains in Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Twitter since the beginning of the year. Overall, the quick rate at which social media followers grow has slowed down. So, this makes PTR's growth in numbers and percentages all the more remarkable. Thank you for following us!

We basically have three types of social media posts. The first is informational (a need to know) where we promote our educational events like the new International Racquets Conference in Saddlebrook, PTR W Summit at IMG Academy, the PTR West Coast and NYC Conference, and more. We also have PTR news to share like the upcoming changes to the certification ratings and new workshops.

The second type of post is to promote the PTR certification workshop program. You have seen many posts where workshops are advertised to let you, your colleagues, and the general public know about the location, date, and time of upcoming Level 1, 2, and 3 certification workshops.

In addition, we also do posts of PTR workshops that have been completed. The post typically is the entire group of participants on the tennis court behind a PTR banner - all smiling because they just finished a great educational experience!

The last type of post is to gain some interaction with you. We ask questions like - It's Friday, what fun thing are you going to do today? Are you planning on going to the US Open and what is your favorite thing to do there?



Dan Santorum
CEO/Executive Director

Dan Santorum

We'd like to hear from you about what you would like to see from our social media posts. Also, it would be great to know what social media platforms you use on a regular basis and why. Personally, I use LinkedIn mainly and Instagram. So, if we are not connected, please send me a connection request.

Until then, if you have renewed your US dues, I/we thank you. If not yet, we look forward to hearing from you soon! Better yet - sign up for automatic renewal! We appreciate you being a PTR member and thanks for Making a World of Difference.



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From the Professor's Desk

by Kim Bastable, Director of Professional Tennis Management at the University of Florida

You have 30 minutes? Then Simon Gale and I have a podcast for you that can help you learn more about the business and leadership side of the racquets industry.

Many of you have a commute at or around 30 minutes in length. Simon, who is Director of Racquet Sports at the USTA National Campus in Lake Nona, can actually ride his bike to work, but the rest of you probably drive about 30 minutes, so we are attempting to inspire you in your "drive time."

The challenges before us in the racquets industry are large but not insurmountable. We all need to share ideas and work together to improve the industry, and that's what our new "Racquet Fuel" podcast offers. You'll learn about leadership, business, how to work best with co-workers and how the industry is now working toward creating 5-day work weeks – all in just the first 8 episodes.

The Director of Racquet Sports education programs I run at the University of Florida are somewhat exclusive, requiring PTR Level 2 certification. So, I realized that many great people out delivering racquet sports don't have access to what I teach at UF. I wanted to make a way for everyone to learn.

Enter the idea of a podcast – open to all tennis pros and administrators and even open to all POTENTIAL pros and administrators. We need more people who love tennis to love the idea of working in and around tennis/racquet sports.

There is no admission requirement to listen to Racquet Fuel, and you can listen anytime via Spotify, Apple podcasts or wherever you get your pods. And many people have been listening! In just the first 90 days, each podcast episode was downloaded an average of 152 times, and we have listeners in 20 countries around the globe. Racquet Fuel has met a need because it's already in the top 10% of all podcasts globally, based on the download stats.

Our first season of 8 episodes includes interviews covering the subjects of:

- The varied paths that pros have taken to reach leadership positions
- The importance of a mentor
- How to deal with multiple generations in the same workplace
- How to develop leadership competencies
- How to retain top talent
- The industry's need for a 5-day work week
- Guests included:
 - Craig Morris, Chief Executive -Community Tennis
 - Author and leadership expert Alistair McCaw
 - Author and expert in generational research Dr. Tim Elmore
 - Chris Gale, Director of Racquet Sports at River Oaks CC in Houston
 - Simon Gale, Director of Racquet Sports at the USTA National Campus in Lake Nona, FL

We are now recording episodes that will be releasing this fall but check out the ones already in existence and drop me a note with any comments or topic ideas.

www.racquetfuelpodcast.com

Let's get better together,
Kim
kimbastable@ufl.edu



Kim Bastable is the instructor of the Director of Racquet Sports Certificate Course and the Director of Professional Tennis Management at the University of Florida. She earned her NCAA All-American Honors as a Gator player and earned her B.S in Finance in the early 1980s. For 35 years she has been leading players and programs from 10U to high performance at many clubs and levels.

Member News

Member Spotlight: Arielle Shuren



My name is Arielle Shuren and I am the men's and women's assistant tennis coach for Hofstra University. I joined the Pride in 2023 after coaching at St. John's University and at Rutgers University. In my first year coaching the Pride I helped guide the men's program to its first post season conference win since 2008. I made the transition to becoming a collegiate coach after playing for the University of Delaware, staying and receiving my Masters at UD and then working as an Exercise Physiologist and a High Performance Coach for junior and professional athletes. I currently also train several

WTA professional players.

Tennis and fitness has always been my passion. When I was a young girl, my mother introduced me to the philosophy and objectives of the Professional Tennis Registry. Before I started my coaching career, I obtained my certification from the PTR. The PTR has provided me with the credentials and resources to grow as a coach, and has continued to foster my love of the game and passion to develop players at all levels.

I joined the PTRW Because We Can Program, because I wanted to get connected with other women coaches from around the world. The PTRW program helps get more

women involved in coaching by giving them the building blocks they need to thrive in this competitive industry. Coaching has been a largely male dominated position and having strong women role models is a great way to balance the field. I want to take the role of women coaches to another level. As a coach for both the men's and women's teams at a Division I university I am proving that women have the skills and ability to coach men at one of the highest levels of the game and it is my goal to become one of the first female head coaches for a Division I men's team. It is also my fervent desire to help inspire and guide other women to pursue opportunities in coaching sports at any level and for any gender.



ASSISTANT COACH WORKSHOP

PTR Assistant Coach workshop held at Apex Racket and Fitness in Portland, ME hosted and delivered by PTR Coach Developer Gavin Glider.

Member News



LEVEL 1 AND 2

A Level 1 and 2 certifications in Orlando Florida at USTA National Campus. Hosted by the USTA, the Level 1 was run by PTR Coach Developers Nigel Pugh and Kelly Anchors and the Level 2 PTR Coach Developer Marc Stingley.



LEVEL 1 CERTIFICATION WORKSHOP

This impressive group of coaches completed their ACE Program at the Diamond Lakes Tennis Center in Augusta, GA. Thank you to our gracious host, Michael Harden and to our expert Coach Developer, Jorge Andrew!

Member News



12TH ANNUAL TENNIS SEMINAR

PTR Member Steve Riggs hosted the 12th Annual Tennis Seminar and included guest speaker, Brian Parkkonen, PTR COO!



PTR PERFORMANCE COACHING PROGRAM

Habtu Belayneh had the incredible opportunity of hitting on the grass courts at the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club. He also participated in the PTR Performance Coaching Program at Wimbledon, while also sharing some time with Oivind Sorvald, PTR International Master Professional.



LEVEL 1 CERTIFICATION WORKSHOP

PTR Level 1 Workshop at Eagle Creek Golf and Country Club in Naples, FL hosted by Tim Bauer and run by Coach Developer Federico Mas.

Member News



ASSISTANT COACH WORKSHOP

Assistant Coach Workshop June 17th at Midtown Athletic Club Chicago, IL hosted by Mary Beth Bowman and run by Barb Rueth.



ACE PROGRAM ASSISTANT COACH WORKSHOP

Assistant Coach workshop we ran in Columbia, SC at Greenview Park, put together by USTA's Cee Jai Jones and conducted by PTR Coach Developer Jorge Andrew.



BURNING TREE COUNTRY CLUB

PTR Level 1 workshop at Burning Tree Country Club in Greenwich, CT hosted by PTR Coach Developer Carole Waite and run by Coach Developers Carole Waite and Mitch Case

Member News



LEVEL 1 CERTIFICATION WORKSHOP

Level 1 Workshop at Fort Smith, AR at Creekmore Tennis Center hosted by Brian Pillar and ran by PTR Coach Developers Kelli Russell-Holmes and Laura Puryear.



CAREFREE RACQUET CLUB

PTR Level 1 workshop at Carefree Racquet Club in Long Island, NY hosted by Ben Marks and run by Coach Developer Tito Perez.



PTR LEVEL 2 CERTIFICATION

PTR Level 2 (part 1) workshop at Tennis Center Sand Point in Seattle, WA hosted by Johann Tan and run by Coach Developer Nigel Pugh

CALL FOR MEMBER NEWS

Share your latest successes in teaching or playing the sport we love! Send an email to cate@ptrtennis.org with your member news (pictures or videos are always welcome), and we'll share it with the rest of the membership in the next issue of TennisPro Magazine!



FULL COURT PRESS: Strategies for Keeping Your Courts (and Wallet) Full

by Paul McGowan

Consider this scenario: a man selling pencils on a street corner is approached by a woman who just happens to need a pencil. It goes like this:

- Q. How much are your pencils?
A. One million dollars.
Q. A million dollars?!? Well, I guess you don't sell many pencils, do you?
A. No, you're right, but I only need to sell one.

A little farcical, perhaps, but let's explore how this line of thinking might translate into a winning strategy for developing your "business" of racquet sports.

We likely can all agree that keeping the courts full greatly enhances the likelihood of success of your racquet sports program.

Full courts – whether from clinics, leagues, or private lessons – presumably translate into increased revenue that is pleasing for the facility ownership/management. This is true whether you are a private, for-profit facility (where profits generate income for the stakeholders) or a non-profit facility (where profits help the racquet sports programs be self-sustaining). But what is the best strategy for achieving that goal?

You could, for example, try to maximize the profit on each lesson/clinic by charging as much per hour as the market will bear (i.e., offer the pencil for the highest price, and hope it sells). On the other hand, you can try to keep every court full, every hour of the day with abnormally low rates (i.e., flood the market with low-priced pencils). Predictably, a more balanced approach lies

in between: you can price your services competitively, maybe even aggressively, but offer incentives to entice your customers to book (and rebook) and, importantly, refer their friends/colleagues/family to book (i.e., sell more competitively-priced pencils, even if you have to give a few away). To that end, consider a few tips:

DON'T BE AFRAID TO RAISE YOUR RATES

Importantly: Tennis is a business and that's how it needs to be approached. So, as tennis professionals, we all must confront the awkward topic of money, hourly rates, monthly/annual dues, etc. Truthfully, some clubs have not raised their rates for years for fear of losing customers to their competitors. If this is your concern, then perhaps you aren't fully explaining all the benefits your club has to offer. Most likely your customers aren't staying (or leaving) because of the monthly/hourly costs, but more likely because of the excellent instruction and personal experiences they are receiving (or not receiving) at the club.

Famously, when the legendary Kung Fu master, Bruce Lee, began giving private instruction in the early 1960's, he initially charged well under \$100/hour, for what he thought was a successful business. When he began working in Hollywood (think movie stars, producers, etc.), he was advised, "Bruce, you should raise your rates, so your services are viewed as more exclusive." He did. When his rates increased to \$275/hour (adjusted for inflation, about \$2,825/hour today!), Bruce Lee was never busier! Granted, there was only one Bruce Lee and his clientele was exclusive, but you get the point.

At the end of the day your rates need to

be competitive in the marketplace. As the saying goes, "Do your research." Find out what other clubs are charging and do an honest assessment of what they have to offer as compared with your services. Price yourself accordingly. If this translates

💧💧 Most likely your customers aren't staying (or leaving) because of the monthly/hourly costs, but more likely because of the excellent instruction and personal experiences they are receiving (or not receiving) at the club.

into a price increase, then, by all means, make the necessary adjustment. Do be transparent about the increased costs with your customers; don't apologize for it but justify the increase and be sure your staff understands and can articulate all the reasoning behind the increase. Your customers will understand that the costs for tennis, much like virtually every other service they are paying for (e.g., satellite tv, internet, food, insurance), will increase over time. So, don't be shy about raising your rates (even a little), at least annually.

PEOPLE LOVE "FREE STUFF"

It's true: people really do love free stuff. Grocery stores, for example, understand that a BOGO (buy-one-get-one) special will entice customers to make purchases they might not otherwise have made. Why?

Because of the illusion they are getting something free (or nearly free). Similarly, when I have a poor experience at a restaurant and choose to make a complaint, I am much more likely to be quelled (and, importantly, more likely to return) if I feel like they are giving me something, even if it is something nominal like a “free” dessert.

The same principle applies at your club. What can you “give” to your customers so they are more likely to make additional purchases such as enrolling in additional clinics or scheduling private lessons? Mind you, it’s not about giving away your services, but more about showing appreciation and enticing customers to continue paying for your services. So, you may forego some income now, but you are more likely cementing long-term relationships that will produce income well into the future.

Here are just a few of the many examples of “free stuff” that can lead to future earning opportunities:

- A free 15- or 30-minute private session with every registration for a junior or adult multi-session clinic. For marketing purposes, you might call it a “Professional Evaluation Session” or something similar. Yes, this “free” session will take some time away from the regular teaching duties of your staff, but it is a nominal investment, especially considering it likely will lead to other “paid” sessions in the future.
- While we’re on the topic, how about a free one-hour free ball machine rental, a free over grip, or even 25-50% off a stringing job with every registration for a junior or adult multi-session clinic. While this perk, in and of itself, may not entice someone to enroll in a clinic, it’s

still “free stuff” that makes them feel good about having spent their money.

- Every 3rd (or 4th or 5th) clinic is free. Again, this will appeal to those who want more bang for their buck, not so much because it reduces the cost of a clinic, but because it includes something “free” to them. Try it, it works.
- Discounted (or blended) rates for purchasing a “package deal” for clinics or lessons. This is for the more cost-conscious customer who feels better about paying for a clinic or private lesson if they are getting a reduced price on the individual session.
- Membership referrals, such as, for example, discounted (or free) lessons for every member that your customer refers (and that becomes a member of your club). As noted below, such referrals may indeed be more valuable than any other form of advertising you might use.

The bottom line here is to observe the three “Be’s”: Be generous with your customers and you will likely reap the benefits; Be creative with your ideas for enticing customers to pay for your services; but Be practical in balancing what you give away versus the likelihood of a return on the investment.

PAY IT FORWARD

Recall the film “Pay it Forward” (2000, based on the novel of the same name), where an 11-year-old introduced the concept that the recipient of an act of kindness does something kind for someone else, rather than simply accepting or repaying the original good deed. More simply put: Do good things to others because someone



did good things to you. As applied here, perhaps the next best thing to a satisfied (and paying) customer is when one (or more) of her friends become satisfied (and paying) customers. In practice this can have a powerful cascading effect especially if that member who was referred, then goes out and makes her own referral(s).

As noted above, one way to jumpstart the referral process is to let it be known that "free stuff" is coming the way of any member who makes his/her own referrals to friends and family members alike. No advertising or recruitment is required, apart from ensuring the quality of your clinics and lessons in the first instance. At the end of the day, this might just be the most potent way to build your membership with loyal customers who can't wait to see what other "free stuff" they might get.

* * * * *

These are just a few strategies for increasing your revenue-earning potential. There are many others out there. At the end of the day, the goal is to make sure that everyone who wants a pencil is enticed to buy your brand of pencil, at a competitive price, and, more importantly, to make them feel good about buying more than one pencil because they got something "free" out of the deal. A win-win situation for all!



Paul McGowan is the Head Pro - Juniors at the YMCA of Buckhead (Atlanta, GA). He is a PTR & USPTA Certified Tennis Instructor and Certified Director of Racquet Sports (University of Florida).



Norms And Expectations: How Your Racquets Committee Can Build Success In Their Monthly Meeting!

by Len Simard

You are the Director of Racquets but are you working in unison with your racquets committee? Here are a few great ideas to bring to your committee chair that may make your life a little easier, and at the same time create a great committee culture for the club.

The concepts shared are inspired by the work we do with committees during and following our nationwide executive

searches, combined with the industry best practices we have recognized throughout our tenure.

Number one: The committee will focus on policy/strategy versus operations.

The club should honor the concept that an executive search had resulted in the hiring of a very accomplished director of racquets for the club. It is understood that the

committee chairperson and the committee members' roles are purely advisory, and the director of racquets would make all operational decisions related to the racquet program.

"This allows committee members to focus on the policies and long-term strategies for ensuring an enduring racquets program, says search and consulting executive, Len Simard."

Number two: One person speaks at a time.

We have observed that more than one person would vie for the attention of the chair and this behavior was counterproductive. So therefore, only one committee member would be recognized at a time, and they would be allowed to finish their comments before a fellow committee member would be recognized to speak. It cannot be allowed for any "talking over" a fellow committee member.

Number three: No one will speak for more than three minutes at a time (appoint a timekeeper if necessary).

It should be expected that every committee member thinks about the comments they would like to make and limit their remarks unless they are asked to elaborate.

Number four: No side conversations.

One of the most disrespectful behaviors in a committee boardroom is to have participants sitting next to each other chattering while another committee member is speaking. Every person in the room should focus on the committee member who has the floor and eliminate the sidebar conversations.

Number five: Absolute confidentiality – zero tolerance.

Each person on the committee will respect the confidential nature of any sensitive discussions and refrain from any disclosure that is not appropriate. If it is discovered that the confidence of this committee has been compromised, the responsible person could be asked to resign from the committee.

Number six: Reach a decision and commit to it after the committee meeting to minimize second-guessing.

There should be adequate opportunities at every committee meeting to thoroughly discuss all sides of an issue. After a decision is reached, committee members should be supportive in their narratives and actions within the full membership.

Number seven: United front outside of the committee room.

Everyone must understand the need to support each other after the committee meetings and to support the decisions of the committee no matter how divided a particular vote might have been.

In essence, this is a strategy called "circle the wagons," where committee members are prepared to defend not only the action of the entire committee but the committee chair and fellow committee members against attack or verbal abuse from some of the "squeaky wheel" members.

Number eight: Read the committee reports in advance to save time at the meetings - arrive prepared.

Each committee member is generally called upon to give a monthly report for your area of responsibility. There should be a written copy of your report submitted to the chair or the DOR in advance of the committee meeting. These reports should all be distributed and read in advance, paying particular attention if the committee chair is requesting an action item to be approved by this committee.

Number nine: We will stick to the agenda.

All extemporaneous issues will be put in the parking lot. The Racquet Chair should not allow for spontaneous discussion on non-agenda issues. If a committee member feels there is an issue that needs discussion that was not on the agenda, it should be put in the parking lot until the agenda is finished. If there is enough time at the end of the meeting, the issue can be discussed.

Number ten: No single-person agendas.

We believe that all committee members have an obligation to serve the best interests of the club. While someone may not agree with everything the committee does, they should support the wishes of the majority.

Number eleven: Operational report.

The Director of Racquets should be not only invited to each committee meeting but also play an active role. The DOR should give his/her report on how the operation is functioning, any issues that may have come up, the success of events, staff performance, and any other related operational topics.

Each committee member may have certain issues they feel strongly about but at the end of day, the committee needs to look at what is best for the club and not for any one person's partisan agenda.



Len Simard,
Kopplin, Kuebler and Wallace
Search and Consulting Executive
PTR & USPTA Master Professional

Len Simard oversees all racquet sports, fitness, wellness, and GM/COO searches for the firm's club clients. Len is an industry leader in racquet facility consulting, performing evaluations, compensation reviews and providing solutions to all types of racquets facilities and organizations throughout the Country. Len has been directing, teaching, and coaching at well-respected country clubs throughout North America for more than 40 years and is regarded as one the country's leading racquets directors and managers. Len has hired, trained, and worked with hundreds of professionals in his career and is extremely proud that more than 50 of his former assistants are leading prominent clubs in the U.S. and Canada.

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Boom

by Mike Barrell

Tennis is booming, and most of us live a life of waves, flowing seamlessly between excitement and exhaustion. We are happy to be busy and for courts to be complete, but equally, as this was an explosion more than a gradual build, thanks to Covid, we were not ready. Nonetheless, tennis is sitting, slightly smugly on its proverbial

umpire's chair and grinning. We didn't make this happen and are not screaming and shouting about our growth like some other activities are. But if you talk to most owners and directors, you will hear more caution and concern. After all, we were not the architects of this build, nor do we have the original plans, so how do we ensure that

the people streaming through the door are here to stay! But before you think “I am a glass half full person”, a harbinger of doom, let me share some ideas that might help keep the air in the tennis balloon.

Redefine Value

Why do you play tennis? I mean, really, why? Why did you start playing? Why did you carry on? My answer explains some of the drivers and the value I found on a few grass courts next to a ramshackle wooden hut in the Kent countryside. I had been a basketball kid, weird as an English kid. Having played for a season, I was looking for offseason training: somewhere I would develop more skills, but ironically not to be used in tennis but between the hoops. I arrived as a 13-year-old with a Fino racket from ASDA (Walmart), ready to develop my skills. When people talk about why they came to tennis, there are some passionate and inspiring stories. Mine was not! I didn't have an iconic role model and an exhilarating start. I didn't fall in love with the game overnight. Tennis did have something that caught my attention as a teenager: Girls! Wouldn't you know, one captivated me.

I know I started a conversation about value by saying that I didn't love tennis at the start, and I initially played so I could hang around with a girl, hardly a recipe for ensuring the long-term success of a program.

Sorry, I don't mean to be flippant about this, but I want to illustrate the first big mistake we make in defining what value is. It's easy to think that everyone has a mature and passionate vision of our sport, that people come with an almost religious passion for

learning, competing, and excelling. That is our passion, and yes, some do come and are instantly inspired, but the value is different for us all.

So how do we ensure that there is more than a sugar rush for this second tennis boom? Maybe we should get off our haughty umpire's chair and look outside to see what drives people to stay in sports.

Pillars of Great Programs

It doesn't matter if you are deeply into Maslow's hierarchy of fundamental human needs or a more populous Tony Robbins version. The fact is that sport was not initially designed to create great global superstars or warriors to worship; at its heart, it's a vehicle. So how do you design a program that meets everyone's needs rather than focusing on trying to find the one diamond in the rough that will bring you adulation.

Competition

Years ago, my 2.5 level ladies' team played in a friendly league. It was a contradiction as I have never witnessed more Amazonian determination than in these ladies; friendly it was not, but at least there was no blood. When we mention competition or even tournaments, many people think this is something for the elite, but play is at the foundation of competition. Everyone should have the opportunity to experience competitive opportunities that meet their needs in terms of level and socially. Tennis was formally the lead in creative formats, mixers, and rotations, all designed to get people to play and, crucially, meet and mix with others. Now we struggle to arrange any competition without a rating number or ranking points attached to it. Meanwhile,

Pickleball is picking up the playbook and replicating what we used to be the best at. This is not knocking Pickle; it's simply pointing out that while we were focused on digging every plant up in the garden and categorizing it, we left the good gardening book on the bench.

If we want to keep our boom going, we have to be human about competition. Recognize that not everyone can win, but everyone wants to feel valuable and appreciated. Do your competitions do this? Does everyone have a place in your program where they can test their skills, meet others and enjoy the challenge without pressure? For years the most popular version of tennis in clubs was doubles, a team game, but now I am unsure.

Coaching

I used the word coaching rather than instruction intentionally. Coaching is to take a player from one place to the next, and that has to be somewhere that they want to go. More than this, coaching is about helping someone to grow. It is rarely about right or wrong or fixing something and, more often, about improving or evolving something. Coaching means making everyone feel like their time with the coach was valuable in their growth.

This learning process is more emotional than logical, so we must consider how we make people feel. Do we celebrate successes, avoid comparisons with others, and get excited? Tennis has always been presented as a game that has to be taught, it's challenging, and that challenge is worthy. There is a reason that climbers put a flag at the top of the mountain because the climb is

tough, but for players who are not spending their life with these huge goals, we need to find lots of small flags, shape the climb, and make sure that our players are excited.

Social

If you are in the US, I challenge you to walk through any town or city center and see how many badges, team logos, and emblems you see. From high school to college to professional sports, on and off the field, people use these connectors to illustrate their connection, loyalty, and, in some cases, opposition to others. It's tribalism, and as we have our root perception of tennis as an individual sport, we are not very good at it. And yet our members tell us that league matches often involve a trip to the local bar afterward, and juniors like to go to some tournaments as much to hang out with their friends as to win. We know social connection, belonging, and identity are critical, but what are we doing?

From a program perspective, how do we become the center of the universe for social connections? How does everyone in your facility work to make people feel like they belong once you belong, you never leave! Does your front of house act like a receptionist or a concierge? Does your committee or management step up and create events? Does your sales team stop once the member has signed on the line or work tirelessly to ensure we deliver? And finally, do you as a coach understand that this is as much a part of your job as teaching a forehand?

Practice

This term needs more explanation than some of the others. Unrecorded play is



valuable whether you call it matchplay, club night, or just open play. Play allows us to experiment, create, and most importantly, refine and maintain skills in an environment that is not under the microscope. While lessons have become the dominant menu item to improve, the practice has been largely forgotten, and yet it is still something of enormous value. Ironically valuable enough to be managed, scheduled, and supervised. And while that might seem like a contradiction from the original concept of open play, it may be something that acts as the glue to make the other pillars more valuable.

Maintaining the Bubble

While we may now have pillars, the secret to keeping the bubble up is understanding that each has little purpose until you connect it to the others. When you take lessons to prepare for a tournament, practice to make what you learned in lessons more sticky, play a tournament with the intention of working out what you want to learn next, and finally understand that each and every one of these opportunities is a chance to connect with your tribe you keep the integrity of your program structure and make sure everyone's needs are met.



Mike, is the PTR Chairman Appointee and Executive Director of Tennis for SPORTIME Clubs in NY where he oversees programs at 13 tennis facilities and manages coach education and career development for a staff of nearly 200 coaches. He also maintains his role as CEO of Evolve9, a sports development consultancy, specialising in youth sports programs. A Level Five LTA Coach, PTR International Master Professional, and USPTA P1. Mike was also an LTA Master Tutor, ITF Expert and PTR World Professional of the Year in 2007. Hailing from the UK and has been a coach for more than 30 years. As a coach and tennis consultant around the world he has worked and delivered training in over 80 countries, supporting the development of tennis in five continents. He has been a keynote speaker at three ITF Worldwide Conferences, and presented at multiple USPTA World Conferences, PTR International Symposia, multiple National Conferences and is a regular



PADEL IS TAKING THE WORLD BY STORM

by Marcos del Pilar

PADEL, the fastest growing sport in the world that you had hardly ever heard of.

We are experiencing the explosion of a new sport trend in North America in the last months. The sport of Padel is taking over the media and lots of new Padel facilities are being announced as we speak. Lately, everyone is coming to you telling how exciting and addictive this sport is, and you can stop to read about it in newspapers all over the USA. What is going on? Why is

everyone so engaged?

Let's put a little bit of background to understand why all this is happening and what the possibilities are for all of us to place ourselves where the future is headed.

The sport of Padel was invented in Mexico in 1969. From there, it was quickly developed in Spain and South America. But in the last few years, it has become the second most important sport in Europe after soccer



with 60+ National Federations, almost 40 thousand courts, and more that 25 million players worldwide. And expectations are to double these figures in the next 3-4 years.

There are a few reasons that justify this exponential growth. Find below, even when briefly, some of the main leverages of what I usually call **“THE MAGIC OF PADEL”**:

Very social and inclusive

Being played in teams, and in a small space, it creates a great atmosphere for social interaction and a “hanging out” experience. Both men and women, from all levels and ages can enjoy a competitive experience with tons of fun.

Low barriers of entry

Very quick and easy to learn, it is a very “level equalizer” sport where everyone can play from the very first moment. The rules are very easy to understand being similar to tennis.

Big celebrities

The continuous support of influencers, well-known personalities, super stars and athletes is providing more and more promotion to the sport: Beckham, Djokovic, Messi, Daddy Yankee, Haas, Del Potro, Serena Williams, ... are only a few.

Really fun and addictive

When you try once, you will be willing to keep playing every day. That is my personal big promise.

Beautiful Infrastructure and better use of the real state

Padel courts are an amazing addition to Racquet Sports centers. They are a very interesting way to upgrade your facility while offering space for players/members to engage with a better use of the land. About 3 courts (12 players) in the same size of a Tennis court is boosting the ROI X6 at least.

Great fitness

A very good way to burn calories in an aerobic activity that is great for your health.

Big exposure from international

Competitions:

From WPT to Premier Padel and the PRO PADEL LEAGUE in North America, the numbers of the streaming are growing non-stop. Epic rallies, tight competitive games, and fantasy shots are getting millions of fans totally engaged on TV every week. And more to come.

Very profitable biz model

Padel has been proven to be a magnificent biz model. We might discuss it in further issues but just to mention that most of the projects find their breakeven point before the end second year with very significant revenue streams and cross-selling strategies to be explored.

Emerging markets

Best is still to come. With the upcoming development of some of the most important markets in the world, the Padel Industry will become a multi-billion dollar one very soon. The United States, Middle East, and Asia will drive a significant investment in the next few years.



PADEL is the fastest growing sport in the world that you had hardly never heard of.

And now that we understand where all this explosion is coming from, it is time to think ahead, strategize, and position ourselves where the future is headed. See below [some opportunities for you to think about to get involved in the exponential growth of Padel:](#)

Many job and investment opportunities will arise soon on the different verticals below. Let's get ready!!

Construction and Court building companies:

To be part of the next big sports trend in North America. Expectations are to reach 25-30K courts in the following years in the USA.

Facilities

Ownership and management of Padel facilities have proven to be a very profitable investment. Great and quick ROI with many revenue-generating strategies. Valuations are going higher and higher along the way and Padel has incredible room to grow in America. This kind of investment will provide profitability as well as different exit strategies in the mid/long term.

Retail

A new entire industry to provide equipment to millions of new avid players willing to improve and to get a high-end competition to follow. Fans will be able to engage with players of their own city, the next generation of Padel celebrities on the continent.

Padel Coaching

The sport is in very HIGH-DEMAND of Padel Coaches to benefit from the big traction of the sport. That big mass of new fans will need the next generation of ambassadors to lead them into instruction



and different teaching programs. A new scenario with plenty of opportunities to be explored. Coaching Padel is definitely a new career in the USA with high-income positions that need to be filled as we speak. Get ready asap to be able to apply to these great opportunities.

Broadcasting and streaming

We expect a big creation of new Padel contents to engage with your audience and monetize in different ways (TV rights, gambling, advertisement, streaming...). All these companies will experiment an increasing demand of services with very interesting opportunities.

Sponsors

All kind of brands from different sectors to become a leading actor in the Padel world in North America by getting attached to the values and growth of the sport under a high-quality competition designed to be successful in the long term.

Technology and data-driven businesses

Endless options connected with technology and data collection to capture opportunities regarding North America-based players and fans. Platforms will work based on "network effect" but with this new emerging community, all these kinds of companies will have a bright future for



sure. Those fans and players will become consistent and recurrent clients that will engage with their different offerings.

We are tremendously excited about this!
Thanks again for your passion and support!

If you want to know more, please feel free to contact me directly. My mission in life is to grow padel worldwide while creating opportunities for others and I will always be

happy to help every one of you interested in getting more involved somehow.

Looking forward to seeing you all very soon.
Bests Padel experiences ever.



Marcos del Pilar is a former Tennis and Padel Pro Player and Pro Coach. He has 25+ years of coaching experience and managing racquet sports facilities. He is now a trainer of trainers for tennis and padel coaches and is in charge of the Padel Certification in the USA. As of 2023, Marcos is a graduate of the Director of Racquet Sports at the University of Florida and a speaker and published author.

PTR & GRSA UNITE, PROVIDING THE TOOLS TO IMPROVE YOUR FUTURE

It's no secret that **PTR** has been taking care of coaches across the globe with initiatives and incentives that provide education, support, and continuous innovation in order to give their members the best tools for success. For this reason, the union with **GRSA International** as global certification and education partner is a step forward in helping coaches not just know more about the stringing process, product knowledge and science behind stringing, it's also possibly provide a new income stream.

We all know that seasons change, business goes up and down and it's always good to have other options to help us earn a living. Knowing more about stringing, the tech behind the service and how it benefits players, will essentially help provide an even more in-depth service to your clients. Knowing why a ball reacts differently with certain strings, tensions, combinations of string, string patterns and more just adds to your professional all-round service, if we add to the fact that you can also re-string rackets, then you're definitely on to a winner.

In this first stage of the partnership, **GRSA** are offering a very special introductory offer to all **PTR** members. As an active **PTR** member, you can sign up to **GRSA's** business membership for €99 and receive 2 online courses absolutely free. You'll be able to start from the beginning, getting the base knowledge of how to string a racket and move up to a more advanced level.

These courses are online and valued at over **€300**, this also includes a certification exam.

If this weren't enough, until Sep 15th, 2023 and exclusive to **PTR** members in the US, the first 500 to sign up for this amazing offer will also benefit from a special string and accessory pack from **HEAD** valued at over \$80! If you'd like more information about this great deal, you can contact **PTR** through normal channels, or you can visit the **GRSA** website and click on the **PTR** banner.



We were looking for the perfect addition to compliment your career

We found it, with **GRSA International**

**JOINING
FORCES
4
YOU**



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- ◆ **INCLUDED:** 2 online courses to get you started or improve, valued at \$375
- ◆ The first **500** receive a complimentary string pack from **HEAD** valued at over \$80
- ◆ Add a new income stream & service to your business




Tennis and Social Media: A Match Made in Heaven

by Gavin Glider

It was July 2019. The day prior I was running a tennis summer camp in Yarmouth, ME, and I had rolled my ankle. In boredom while laying on my couch icing my grapefruit sized foot, I decided to open an app on my iPhone that I rarely used—Instagram. I had fewer than three hundred followers and followed well over one thousand accounts. As I scrolled down my home page I stumbled upon a tennis coach promoting a major racket brand thanking them for some free equipment. This piqued my curiosity. What tennis coach wouldn't want to receive free equipment in return for taking a few

pictures? If other coaches and players could do it, could I too become a social influencer?

The first few months were grueling. I read articles, talked to influencers, and, through trial and error, worked to get my follower count up. By the end of the summer I had landed a brand deal, and by March of 2020 I found myself in Indian Wells, just days before the nationwide lockdown, hitting balls with pro players like Kei Nishikori and taking behind-the-scenes photos at a major brand photoshoot.



***Let's work on the
pronation and rotation
during the serve***

At the start of the pandemic lockdown I had approximately 2300 followers. As I write this article, I am about to pass the 30,000 follower threshold. I have learned a lot in the last few years being a tennis influencer. I've gone from hunting brand-deals to realizing the power of teaching those who don't have access to quality tennis instruction. I've found the right balance between product endorsements and helping my followers become better players. While tricky and frustrating at times, there is a great deal of value to using social media to grow the sport. Here are a few lessons to help you use Instagram as a business tool for tennis.

HAVE A BUSINESS GOAL

If you are going to successfully utilize social platforms for your tennis business you should have a clear goal. The content you post should therefore work towards that goal. Are you trying to increase brick-and-mortar (or website) business or are trying to create a business out of social media?

If you are trying to grow your on-court business or business for your club/program, your posts should largely be directed towards a local audience. You'll need to find hashtags and trends that are big in your area to tap into. You want as many people in your area to not only see your posts but want to engage with them and you. Keep in mind, if you are working towards local business, national trends become less important as do very high follower counts.

If your goal on social media is to earn income or get brand deals you need to be prepared to work. Having a social portfolio that makes you attractive to brands is important. Brands want to clearly be able to see your benefit to them; they want to see

how your content make people want to buy their products. This includes a high follower count and high levels of engagement.

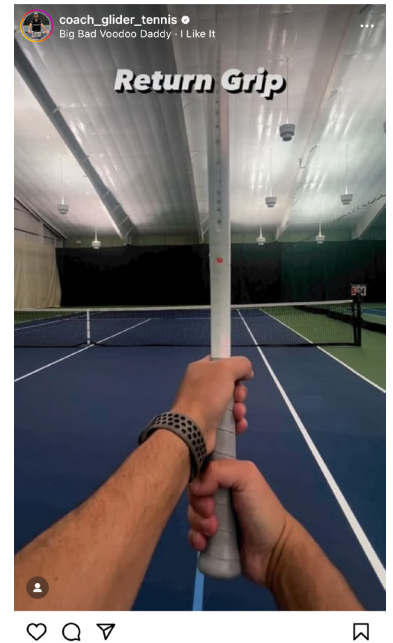
KNOW YOUR NICHE

One of the biggest mistakes you can make in the current world of social media is to have an account that lacks identity. What separates an influencer account from a private account is specificity and novelty of content. You need to offer your followers something that is reliable and that they cannot get elsewhere. If your brand is tennis travel, be prepared to regularly travel. Growing a following based on tennis travel then immediately abandoning it for something else is not a recipe for success. If your brand is comedy then keep your videos funny whether they are teaching or pointing out relatable situations that tennis players find funny.

My brand is Coach Glider Tennis. My followers come for quick tips and gear advice. Sometimes I am promoting a specific product from a sponsor, but for the most part, I am trying to make them better tennis players. Sure, it's nice to include a picture of my wife, cats, or five month old baby on my stories to make sure my followers know I'm human, but that is not my brand. My brand is tennis education. They know and trust that I am trying to make them better tennis players. Providing predictable content solidifies a para-social relationship vital to the success of any account.

NAVIGATING THE ALGORITHM

To me, the hardest part of navigating the world of social media is riding the ebbs and flows of the algorithm. Social media



platforms have constantly changing algorithms that promote certain accounts to those not following them already. The algorithm is largely based on trends that grow and change over time. There are weeks where my engagement is through the roof and I am gaining 100+ followers per day, and there are weeks that it is a slow trickle. How you handle it depends on how you use your social media. If you are using social media as a source of income, you need to make sure you are constantly staying on top of trends. Which songs are being elevated to feeds when featured in Reels? Are there effects or edits that get bumped to the top of home screens? This takes market research and the ability to adapt your content to trends while still staying true to your brand. If you are not using social media for a portion of your income through paid promotions with brands, my advice is wait out a drop in engagement. You can drive yourself crazy worrying about what you did wrong to change your growth. In reality it's not you, it's just the algorithm. My experience has been that as long as I stay true to my brand, continue to post high quality content with regular frequency, and engage with my followers, I always net high growth and high engagement.

Four years after my social media journey began, I have come to realize that the power of teaching tennis can be amplified by social media. What started as an interest in brand marketing turned into a platform to amplify my true passion—teaching. Social media platforms can be used to help players around the world get access to quality instruction that they might not be able to find or be able to afford. It is a way to help people laugh and connect to the game of tennis. It can bring the global tennis community closer together through a shared love of the game.



Gavin Glider is Head Pro at Apex Racket and Fitness in Portland, ME where he oversees a teaching staff of 14 pros and helps run the performance academy. He is a Global Social Ambassador for Wilson and Luxilon and has also partnered with a variety of different brands for social media content. @coach_glider_tennis

The Business of Tennis

by Scott McCulloch

Tennis is driven by passionate, caring professionals. Those of us executing day in and day out with a true love for what we do are who make the sport what it is today. As good stewards of the game, we also have a responsibility to recognize the business of tennis in order to keep the sport growing by attracting new players and retaining existing customers. And as with any business, it is up to you to deliver a successful, engaging product to as many customers as possible.

Understanding the business of tennis, and what it takes as a tennis pro, director of tennis or independent contractor to meet the demands

of the business, can best be explained through three key areas: pro, program and resources.

PRO

Not surprisingly, the business of tennis starts with us – the pro. How can we as teaching professionals set up and deliver a positive tennis experience? A great first step to how to deliver a positive tennis experience by completing a Level 1 certification, which is designed to develop essential coaching fundamentals. Once you've learned the "how-to", start to build your technical and tactical



knowledge of “what to”. What should you be teaching? What does the modern tennis player need to succeed? Take the time to research the latest techniques and strategies of our sport so you are well-versed in not only the fundamentals, but the skills that will help take players to the next level.

Once you’ve built up your tangible abilities as a pro comes the simple yet challenging task of teaching players how they want to learn. How can you share your expertise in a way that resonates with individual players? Much of this will come from being willing to learn yourself. Listen to feedback, take the time to reflect on sessions with different clients, and be willing to adapt to the variety of players you will encounter throughout your career. Above all else, don’t be afraid to let your innate passion for the game shine through. At the end of the day, a pro who loves what they do will always be more successful over someone who lacks enthusiasm for the profession.

Finally, and equally as important as the on-court skills is the off-court skills. A pro committed to understanding the business of tennis has a responsibility to invest in themselves off the court. Become more valuable to yourself and the club/community that you serve by investing in your skill set off the court. Start to develop and working knowledge and understanding of financials, budgeting, social media, reservation systems, operations, marketing, and how to either build or manage a website. I see on a daily basis a lot of pros that focus only on the on-court skills, however the most successful pros and a lot of those forging forward in our industry are the pros learning and investing equally as much in the off-court skills. The irony of it as well is the people that we teach tennis to are

often the ones that can be direct access to the knowledge we need to learn and are generally happy to offer some mentorship. Become a student to learn the business of tennis and be open to coaching as much as you are asking your student to do that on the court.

PROGRAM

I often see pros ask each other, “What program is successful at your club?” I am all for leveraging your industry connections to develop new ideas and offerings that may apply at your own facility. However, copy and pasting a program from another club at your own facility will inevitably flop, because this approach fails to consider the full on-court experience. A program should be more than just a set of drills. If you want to build a successful program start with the simple things and all the details and execute on a daily basis to the highest possible standard. As soon as something is not simple it becomes hard to build on it and it will not be delivered at high level or consistently.

Foundationally, your programs should seek to fulfill every step of the tennis journey. Existing players will need classes that challenge their development in the sport and keep them eager to continue growing their skillset. Oftentimes, play options are a good solution to retain existing players because it gives them a fresh, competitive environment to challenge their learnings against new players.

Meanwhile, it is equally important to design programs that will attract new customers. Typically, these programs should be carefully crafted beginner offerings that simultaneously cover the tennis basics while

building excitement for the sport. At Cliff Drysdale Tennis, we run Tennis 101 sessions which span just four classes and are staffed with the best pros at each facility so players can fit the classes into their schedule and leave with a top-notch impression of our teachings.

The business of tennis demands that we deliver at the highest level and go out to better ourselves on a daily basis with the best programs as we are not competing against other clubs but yet we are fighting to keep the attention on tennis rather than other sports and lifestyle options. In order to keep the attention on us we need excited passionate pros delivering the best programs at the highest level.

RESOURCES

Last but certainly not least, resources are essential for scaling your offerings. The term “resources” is intentionally vague, because there are virtually limitless resources available to you as a pro. YouTube a budgeting tutorial, or Google best practices for marketing a service. Invest in technology that can make your job easier, like Excel for organizing everything from budgets to drill sheets, or reservation systems that can take

the hassle out of booking your on-court time for the day.

Create standards for how you want to operate so as you bring on more staff members, they have clear principles to follow each day. You can't be on every court at once, but you can train individuals to deliver with the same caliber a player would expect from you.

Similarly, have a vision. Outline goals that you have for growing your tennis business, adding staff members, and developing best practices that permeate throughout the industry. Think big and always be curious to learn if there's a better way of doing something. The tennis professional community is tight-knit, and we have the privilege of shaping our sport with the offerings we are executing on a daily basis.

By understanding these three areas – pro, program and resources – you will have a firm foundation for your pursuit of the business of tennis. Above all, don't forget that you are a part of a fantastic profession that is growing every day. Invest in yourself and what you bring to our fantastic sport, and the rest will take care of itself.



Scott McCulloch, a native of Sydney, Australia holds a bachelors degree in Sports Management from Sutherland College. Scott was a nationally ranked junior where he was coached by former World Number One John Newcombe, and his son Clint Newcombe. Scott has worked extensively with many legends of the game both on and off the court from coaching top ranked players to the development of tennis programs and club management across the country. With nearly 20 years of teaching tennis and his background in building and managing clubs of all sizes, McCulloch brings a wealth of experience, training and leadership to Cliff Drysdale Tennis. In his role as President & COO, McCulloch oversees all the operations for 63 clubs across 13 countries across both the PBI and CDT portfolio. Scott is regarded as one the tennis industry pioneers in today's tennis climate specializing in all aspects of tennis management operations and serves on the USTA national committee and is a Certified PTR Professional.



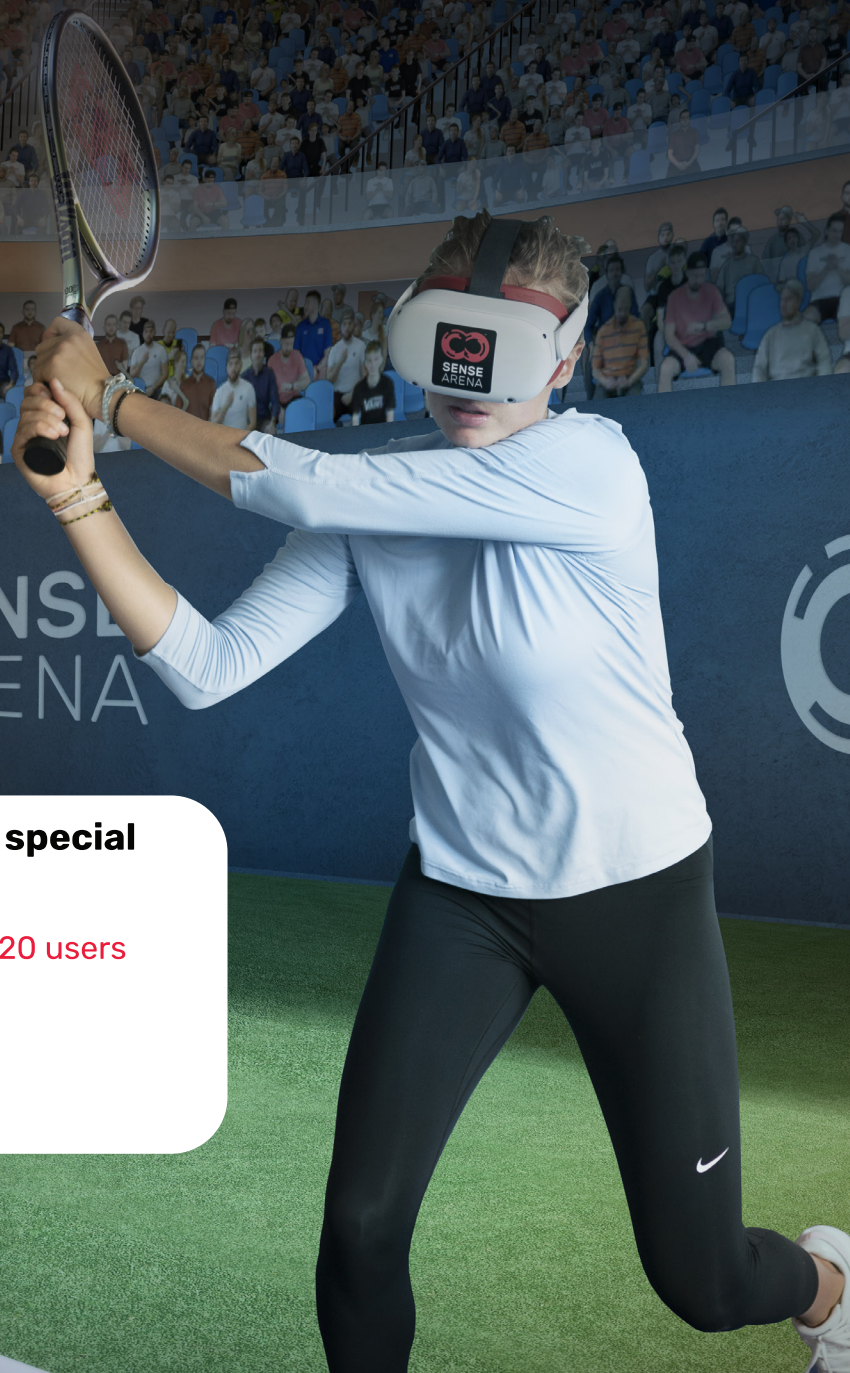
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Can Tennis Follow the Lead of the Major League Baseball, NBA, and MLS Soccer?

by Denny Schackter

Our tennis industry is going through some very tough times. Certainly the efforts are there to maintain players, but we are losing a good many of our senior players to pickleball. Many of those tennis players were not tennis players in the first place. Twenty years ago we had a dip after platform tennis surged. In that surge, we lost a great many folks in their 30's and 40's many of whom had stopped playing tennis altogether. These are indeed tough times for tennis numbers. One bright spot is the strength of high school tennis. Those players are showing up. Our challenge is to keep them playing.

I bring up the overview of play because, while participation is indeed a challenge, the industry's biggest challenge is maintaining and growing the tennis teaching professional ranks. Specifically, the aging of the American tennis teaching industry is rising at an alarming rate. The USTA, PTR and the PTA are all making concerted efforts to educate, recruit and promote the industry to young people, but it is a tough battle, especially recruiting accomplished players, who are much needed in clubs and facilities to work with aspiring high school players. In my view, the average American college tennis player is not gravitating to



the tennis teaching industry. The reasons are many; hard work, variable hours, lack of a decent income, lack of benefits and little upward mobility to name just a few.

Where is the low hanging fruit to gain some teaching numbers? It is the large number of foreign tennis players attending and playing at American colleges. Truthfully, there is a profound resentment in the tennis industry on the large number of overseas tennis players playing at United States universities and colleges. The reason the number is large is because we are not producing enough high performance domestic players to fill college rosters. Hence, the large influx of the world's best young players is here. In addition, in most foreign lands, athletic participation choices, are in comparison, modest, as contrasted to choices here in the States. One other fact that hurts tennis at this time is the low birth rate in the US that seems to be lower each and every year.

What the industry has to do is to keep the graduating foreign players here and train them to be tennis teaching professionals. The group graduating each year, who wish to stay here, could certainly find work at our nation's tennis facilities.

How do we keep those candidates here after their playing days are over? The answer might be in the next few paragraphs.

A question I have is "how can Major League Baseball, The NBA and Major League Soccer operate here, year after year, with rosters stocked with foreign players?" For the record, based on the latest stats, is that Major League Baseball rosters have 27.1% foreign born players, the NBA 25.1% and Major League Soccer 56.4%. How can those pros participate year after year in this

country and yet a tennis teaching pro has to leave, for the most part, even with help, after 3 years? Plus, we need tennis pros more than we need pro baseball, basketball and soccer players!

What's the answer? It is, of course, money and navigating the system. Pro teams certainly have a legal team or have contracted those specializing in immigration law, to keep those players here. Tennis governing bodies have elected not to afford this process, have elected not to garner resources to pursue this option, or have simply ignored this opportunity.

One of my former students at the University of Wisconsin went on to become a Major League baseball exec. I wrote to him asking how baseball players can stay year after year. His answer is, "baseball has a staff that works with the players to gain Visas. There applications, coordinated by each team, is begun in the off season for arrival in March. They can stay only thru November. In addition, players applying for a P1 Visa are treated differently than coaches. Coaches have a stricter protocol to go through. Also, families are not allowed to be in the states unless there are circumstantial reasons to do so. In that case, a special appeal has to take place." The key factor is this P1 Visa. According to the official U.S. Citizenship and Immigration website, "an athlete must be coming to the United States to participate in team events and must have achieved significant international recognition in the sport. Obviously, with tennis, this is a tough description because most of the foreign tennis players are not international stars. That brings us to the coaches' designation. This is a much stricter protocol, but achievable if the most knowledgeable people help tennis with this issue.



While investigating this article, I came across some valuable information from an immigration law firm, Jaensch Immigration Law, in Sarasota, FL. They have supplied up to date information to sportvisaamerica.com. The section pertinent to my thoughts is called the H-1B visa. This is for workers in specialty occupations. Stated is "The visa is issued for up to three years and is renewable for a second three-year period. The visa will permit the athlete to work for an American Company in a position that normally requires a university degree. Sometimes this will work for an athlete who wants to work as a coach or instructor, but not always." Certainly this deserves some investigation by our tennis governing bodies.

The need for teaching pros is dire. American kids just do not see feeding balls as a career. However, I know from experience, having worked with former foreign born

college players, that many have the desire and passion to want to teach here. Their alternative is going back to their home countries, which, for the most part, is not attractive for income.

I hope those of us in the industry can capitalize on this opportunity. Your thoughts?



Denny Schackter is a long time tennis advocate. He was a college coach at the University of Wisconsin, an industry rep for Wilson Racquet Sports and has, or is, been a long time volunteer for USTA positions locally, Sectionally, and Nationally. He owns Tennis Priorities which attempts to recruit young people to the tennis industry. Denny is a member of the PTR and PTA and resides in Waukesha, WI



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LET'S INNOVATE TO CREATE FABULOUS & FUN RACQUETS EXPERIENCES

by Kim Bastable

I missed it. My chance to see the famous Savannah Bananas in my own neighborhood went by in May, and I missed it. I'm so bummed.

Who are the Savannah Bananas, you might ask? And why does it matter, you might also ask?

Well, they are only the most exciting sports entertainment phenomenon since the Harlem Globetrotters went big. They are a circus combined with a baseball team that, since 2016, has been providing a fan-friendly – SOLD OUT – experience that has put a new twist on the traditions of baseball. While also putting a team in the Coastal Plain League, this year, the Bananas took



their show on the road from Georgia and played 3 games in my hometown of Kansas City.

Although I wasn't there, I heard it was sold-out craziness where the outfielders often broke out in synchronized dances, many players wore various innovations to their uniform, and the "YMCA" tune blasting through the speakers meant everyone – players included -- danced. Oh, and their traveling squad to KC included a pep band, a princess in a ballgown and a team magician. And props. It's never unusual for a batter to head to the plate on stilts while the ball boy emerges with a step stool for the umpire.

One of the players was quoted in a CNN article in May to say that when he started, said he was, at first, skeptical, thinking "Is this even baseball?" But then you adopt the mindset, and you realize it's really cool and fun."

Back in Georgia, there is a huge waiting list for tickets, so big they kindly say on their website that there is VERY low likelihood that you'll ever get tickets from the waiting list! Hence the traveling Premiere team was born, putting the fun on the road.

Now that is what we need in tennis! Sold out programming, with fun, new twists on tradition!

Thinking outside the box hasn't ever been that easy for tennis players. It took a long time to get the tie-breaker installed. While "Banana ball" rules limit their games to 2 hours and eliminate all boring times in the game, we, in tennis, just finished an almost 5-hour epic Wimbledon men's final. I wonder who is right?

Leaving Grand Slam tradition alone, ask yourself "what can I do at my club to become more innovative?"

In our class at the University of Florida where we educate future Directors of Racquet Sports, we include the best-selling book, **The Power of Moments**, by Chip and Dan Heath, as a curriculum item. This book gives several business examples, similar to the Bananas. It helps us realize that there are many innovative places that have made customer experience the top goal.

Jesse Cole, the owner of the Bananas, says "Fans First" is the ultimate catchphrase they live by. Chip and Dan Heath would be proud. One example the Heaths' give is small LA hotel called the Magic Castle Hotel, which provides many mysterious and fun experiences, including a special phone by the pool called the "Popsicle Hotline." Kids can just pick up the hotline and popsicles are quickly delivered, white-glove style, poolside. Other surprises include a free laundry service and free, 24/7 vending of candy and treats. A magician often shows up at breakfast. The Magic Castle is rated #11 in LA, currently by Trip Advisor, and the Ritz-Carlton there is #34.

So: The experience DOES matter!

Making magical, special, powerful customer

experiences is one of 10 Modules covered by the Director of Racquet Sports Certificate Course at UF. It's important for Directors but, really, it's important for **everyone** on staff to be creative and consider how they can put tradition aside and make tennis experiences super-duper fun. Music? Dancing? Magicians? Stilts?



The experience
DOES matter!

Covid gave us several million more players who came out because they needed fun. Are we still making it fun for them? Google search for the "Savannah Bananas," and watch a few videos before your next club staff meeting. And read **The Power of Moments**. Both will inspire you.

Then send me your new fun, innovative ideas to make your program experiences special and powerful.

I'll publish them in future articles because, just like the Bananas out traveling the country spreading their fun, we need idea new tennis ideas to spread, also!



Kim Bastable is the instructor of the Director of Racquet Sports Certificate Course and the Director of Professional Tennis Management at the University of Florida. She earned her NCAA All-American Honors as a Gator player and earned her B.S in Finance in the early 1980s. For 35 years she has been leading players and programs from 10U to high performance at many clubs and levels.

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TRUE PROFESSIONAL

by Ajay Pant

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to observe tennis pros at various clubs and academies all over the country. There are several good, even great, teachers. Then there are the select few that I term “true professionals”.

True professionals are not necessarily the highest skilled players or the most analytical with on-court teaching. However, this group makes me proud to tell people I am a Teaching Pro. True professionals dispel every stereotypical negative myth about our profession and are ambassadors for our sport. I have listed some qualities that are necessary

for a candidate to be a true professional.

TALKS WITH NOT TO MEMBERS.

A true professional greets and speaks with all members, whether they are taking lessons from him or not. True professionals make others feel important. They remember little details that make people feel good. For instance, a true professional may say, “So Jane, tell me how Joshua (her grandson) is doing?” True professionals genuinely care about people, members and non-members, and it shows in how they speak with them.

They have no ulterior motive. They are not directly selling anything.

RETURNS PHONE CALLS.

True professionals return telephone calls, texts, and emails within 24 hours. This may sound like common sense, but it is not! Ask the teaching team at your club if this really happens and I promise you will be surprised. Sure, we all say we should do it, but then come the excuses. I use the analogy of a second serve with this facet of being a true professional. Either you get the ball in the correct box, or it is a fault. No excuses!

RESOLVES CONFLICTS WELL.

Understands that conflict can be a good thing and must be resolved in a win-win fashion. This applies to conflict both on and off the court. It's easy to be nice, but you must be nice and be able to resolve conflicts. This requires a sense of balance and diplomacy. A true professional is an expert at resolving conflict. In fact, some are so good at it that they look forward to the challenge!

During the drill, a member saying she "does not like a drill" exemplifies conflict resolution on court. On further probing, the member's reason is simply that she "does not like it". Most pros, being human, would respond with a dissertation on the merits of the drill. "You must come in on your serve in doubles. That is what good players do." A true professional, however, finds out the real reason for the member's dislike of the drill by asking non-threatening open-ended questions. "What exactly might be better for you in the drill?" "Tell me if this drill ties

in with your goal to be a better player." Then, the true professional does not get defensive. S/he empathizes, "a number of my students initially felt the same way about this drill." S/he reassures, "and every one of those students improved their doubles play in two weeks."

Off-court resolution can be trickier. After all, members pay us to tell them what they are doing wrong on the court! Confrontation is a learned skill. Correct practice makes perfect.

MASTERS TIME MANAGEMENT.

True professionals are masters of time management. They do not take the path of least resistance or make excuses. "I did not finish the assignment because I was too busy on-court," is not something you will hear from a true professional. A true professional plans his work and works his plan. S/he does not suffer time wasters gladly. S/he respects the value of other people's time and does not waste it.

Some top time wasters are:

- Not prioritizing daily, weekly, and monthly assignments.
- Not attaching a time frame to how long you will spend on a specific task. An example is planning to work on a tennis variance report, which will take a full hour, between a lesson that finishes at 10 and another that starts at 11am. This is a recipe for disaster.
- First, after your lesson, it will take 10-15 minutes to get to your desk. By the time you've checked emails and texts and said hello and been disturbed by colleagues (yes, plan on that!) it will be 10:30. Not enough time has been allotted to complete the hour-long task.

Why not plan to work on this report from 7-8am, before the day, and all the interruptions that come with it, begin?

- No organized filing system, on or offline. A sure sign of this is a lot of paper and post-it-notes lying all over the desk.
- Saving the least appealing task for last or doing unimportant tasks just to avoid tackling it. My mother used to say, "Do what you dread first and then there will be nothing to dread."
- Gossiping with members and fellow teaching professionals. I am not suggesting you become anti-social, however, if you are still talking about that 120 mph serve you hit at a park district tournament in 2000, you might need some help in this area.

MAKES EDUCATED, LOGICAL DECISIONS.

A true professional can make intelligent decisions. Specifically, s/he understands the decision-making process including:

- THINK before deciding. There is conclusive data to support my theory that the mouths of several of my fellow tennis teachers work independently of their brains. THINK before telling a member, "I can't believe the ball machine is acting up again. That's the second time today. Management should really do something about that."
- It is more important to be fair and respected than to be cheaply popular. Let's face it, our students think we can walk on water just because we can teach them how to volley. In our business, it is easy to be popular! Besides being popular, a true professional is respected due to his or her ability to make fair decisions.
- Write down the pluses and minuses

of deciding before making it public. Benjamin Franklin used to do this and just look at all the fair and wise decisions he made.

- Once you have made your decision, act on it! Do not procrastinate implementation!

IS COMPUTER LITERATE.

True professionals have a basic working knowledge of computers, especially word programs and spreadsheets. In this age, to not know how to create a spreadsheet or access and work with appropriate weblinks is unacceptable. A true professional will also use computers for lesson plans, payroll, tournaments, email, etc.

Understands a profit and loss statement.

A true professional can look at the big picture beyond the confines of a tennis court. S/he understands what it takes to make the club business successful. A true professional understands the following examples.

- Friday night mixer with wine and cheese and a price of \$25 per couple and a net loss of \$400 is not a good idea, irrespective of how much the members love the event. The members would like it even more if the price were zero!
- Private lessons make a club's payroll to revenue line go up dramatically. Conversely, a group lesson will make this important ratio go down. If you want your business to succeed, keep payroll to revenue as low as possible.
- Teaching private lessons during prime time is a waste of prime-time hours and hurts your bottom line.
- If you fail to collect money for lessons, it is very hard for the Head Pro to pay you

for the hours you claim on your payroll. If you collect zero dollars, you get paid zero dollars!

- Contrary to popular belief, profit is not a bad word. Profit is what allows you to pay your mortgage and provide the best customer service for your members.

IS HUMBLE.

A true professional is genuinely humble or has learned to hide his ego about his teaching and playing ability.

A true professional does not talk incessantly about all the world class players s/he has worked with. S/he

does not name drop, nor does s/he go on about whom s/he has beaten as a player. Rather, s/he focuses on the students and their progress. This is not to suggest that a true professional doesn't have an ego. There is a distinction between a strong ego (good thing) and a big ego (not such a good thing).

A true professional is very secure about his or her teaching. When a student questions the logic behind a drill, the pro does not get offended. Instead, s/he sees this as an excellent opportunity to show all the students that they too can question and even criticize without any repercussions. This is also a chance to show the student who raised the question that you really care

and will spend time to explain. Using our sport science models, a true professional is a cooperative style coach as opposed to a dominant or submissive style.

When a teaching pro is talking ad nauseam about his playing, I love to say, "It is obvious that you are a very skilled player. It seems strange that I have not seen you on television lately." The point is that a true professional does not let his playing ego get in the way of being an effective teacher. S/he can empathize when a beginner is having trouble with a serve grip or when a 3.0 doubles player will not come in to the net.

So, are YOU a true professional? Take the good old "Mirror test". Look in the mirror and ask yourself the question. More importantly, answer the question honestly. Do not attempt to mask the truth with excuses. "I was too busy today to stop and greet John in the pro shop" is not the way a true professional thinks.

If you are managing other teaching professionals, ask yourself the more important question - "Am I training my colleagues to become true professionals?" Unfortunately, we sometimes have the classic "blind leading the blind" syndrome.

On behalf of Life Time, Ajay welcomes your comments or questions. You may contact him at apant@lt.life.



Ajay Pant, As Vice President Racquet Sports for Life Time, Ajay currently oversees 33 clubs with tennis, 30 clubs with squash and 120 clubs with pickleball. Prior to joining Life Time, Ajay was Senior Vice President Operations for the Junior Tennis Champions Center (JTCC). He was also the National Tennis Director for Tennis Corporation of America (TCA)/Midtown clubs. Ajay is one of 14 tennis pros who have been designated Master Professional by both the PTR and USPTA. He served on the PTR Board of Directors, and as the two term Chair for the USTA National Ten and Under Committee. Currently a USTA Coach Developer, Ajay was also honored by PTR as "Pro of the Year" in 2004, the Tennis Industry Association as "Person of the Year" in 2018 and USPTA as "Professional of the Year" in 2019.

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