



Glimpsing new opportunities

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ABSTRACT

As they say, times of crisis are times of opportunity. This is undoubtedly one of the most difficult times that the world in general, and tennis coaches in particular, have lived through. Despite the seriousness of the situation, it is very important that the coaches try to find opportunities to grow in this complicated situation. This article proposes some ideas of how coaches can take advantage of new opportunities related to the new world after COVID-19, training, teamwork and the values associated with tennis. Maintaining a positive attitude, the coaches will be able to come out stronger and make tennis do it the same way.

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INTRODUCTION

In this time that we are living, although it may be extremely difficult, we must try to glimpse the opportunities that this pandemic offers. It is evident that this situation has brought with it extremely serious consequences that cannot be ignored, but, even so, one must try to perceive small indicators or signs of opportunities that allow growth both professionally and personally.

This article will provide some ideas, in different areas of action of the tennis coach, that may allow the coach to emerge stronger from this serious situation. To do this, we will discuss the new opportunities that arise, of how the world could be after the COVID-19, of the importance of vocational training, of the need for teamwork and of the values associated with tennis.

- Following this period of closure, people will appreciate further the practice of sport and physical activity, therefore, it is also a good time for people who did not practice sport to join tennis.
- The parents will also give more value to the importance of sport and physical activity for their children wellbeing.
- It will be a good opportunity to bring back those players who left tennis and went on to practice other sports.
- The companies will also assess the health of their workers. Therefore, it is important to create programmes that are compatible with the schedules and needs of this group.
- The social aspect will acquire an even greater value. Taking this into account is essential to develop programmes that promote the social value of tennis.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Prior to sharing some examples of opportunities that coaches can take advantage of, it is important to keep in mind that it is crucial to have a positive mindset and a proactive attitude. If you adopt a posture of negativity, with continuous complaints about the situation, it will be very difficult to have a broad, positive and creative vision of this moment.

If you achieve this positive and proactive attitude, you can take advantage of real opportunities such as the examples shown below:

- Tennis is a sport that has an advantage over team sports, since the training sessions and the tournaments will start earlier. Therefore, in the short term, it is a good time to try to involve the maximum number of players in tennis.

As we can notice in the previous examples, there are a wealth of new opportunities that can be explored, but in all of them communication and promotion are going to be fundamental aspects for the programmes to be successful. It is then important that coaches effectively communicate that tennis is a safe (ITF, 2020), healthy (Pluim, 2007; Fernández-Fernández et al., 2009) and social (Legg et al., 2017) sport.

THE WORLD AFTER COVID-19

It seems clear that the world will no longer be exactly the same after the pandemic. It is important that tennis coaches accept this as soon as possible in order to, by doing so, adapt the game to the changes created by this situation. This time is a great opportunity (almost an obligation) to reinvent yourself, so it is crucial to have a broad vision of the different paths that tennis provides.

Therefore, as suggested in the previous examples, the tennis coach has a variety of options to carry out programmes aimed

at different groups of the population, such as sessions for adults, tennis in schools, coaching of junior, high performance and professional tennis players, organisation of tournaments and events, and a long etcetera. If the opportunity arises, it may be a good time to launch tennis programmes or events that have not been previously considered.

On the other hand, whatever tennis programme is being implemented, there is one aspect that is especially fundamental: creativity. From now on, changes will be experienced in communication with students, in the promotion of programmes, in the routines of lessons and training sessions and, above all, in the use of technologies, where online tools are going to stay for the future. Therefore, those coaches who are creative and adapt better to these changes, by proposing new alternatives and being more efficient in this new context, will have a great advantage.

Professional training and education

These weeks of confinement are possibly one of the best times for professional growth. It is important that the coaches take advantage to study, take courses, or learn languages. Coaches who take advantage of confinement to educate themselves will be better prepared for the future. As with the preseason, where players improve their technical fundamentals or physical aspects, these pandemic weeks have to be the coaches' preseason, where they improve their knowledge and preparation.

On the other hand, it is important to note that new technologies are already practically essential in training and education (Novak et al., 2017). Many of the training and education activities are being carried out online, so, in addition to facilitating access for all coaches, technology is forcing those coaches who had been reluctant to the use of technology for their training, to face these tools and, therefore, in addition to improving their skills in specific aspects of tennis, they are improving their skills related to the use of new technologies.

Teamwork

In tennis, despite being an individual sport, teamwork is crucial during the training process. This pandemic has meant that a large number of coaches and organisations have shared information and resources through conferences, courses, e-books, articles, etc. This has been an unprecedented situation, so it would be very good to take advantage of this inertia and continue working as a team to achieve better training and education opportunities for all coaches, and to establish powerful professional networks that will allow improvement in all areas of tennis coaching.

Values associated with tennis

Tennis has always been characterised by being a sport that allows the sharing of many positive values. Now is a good time to promote that tennis is a powerful product that allows you to share values such as education, discipline or improvement. Many of these values are being necessary to overcome the current situation, making people much more

sensitive and aware of the importance of developing these values for life. Therefore, if coaches are able to convey the association between tennis and these aspects, it is very likely that many parents will choose tennis as the sport for their sons and daughters.

CONCLUSIONS

By maintaining a good attitude and being focused on what is really important, despite the seriousness of the situation, it will be possible for the coaches to manage to grow professionally, reaching levels that today are not so easy to glimpse. During the most complicated weeks of confinement, examples have been seen such as webinars with a large attendance of coaches or record numbers in the number of subscriptions to courses and education activities. This would have seemed incredible just a few weeks ago. Therefore, if in the most difficult moments the coaches have shown such positive and surprising behaviours, it is foreseeable that as the situation improves, we will witness a new stage with new and better programmes, more committed and educated coaches, more players and, ultimately, better tennis.

We have a very valuable product to offer. Tennis is a tool for sharing values, health and welfare. These are aspects that people are looking for, since they are highly valued and necessary, especially these days and after COVID-19. If we catch a glimpse of these aspects, we are effective in promoting and communicating, and we know how to take advantage of our product, we will have very good possibilities of professional growth.

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