



Women's tennis: training methodology and evolution so far.

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the methodological treatment of tennis as a sport, its different methodologies in history, and their pros and cons. It also includes some statistic data related to the methodology used in current tennis training, and analyses intensity and volume guidelines as well as recovery and other didactic related aspects.

Key words: Tennis, Methodology, Decision making, Modelled training, Practice.
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METHODOLOGY: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

During the early 40's tennis teaching methodology was characterized by its global nature. The coach used to show and perform the stroke, while the student would only reproduce the movement, always followed by a verbal explanation. The student would then perform many repetitions to get an execution as close as possible to that of his/her coach. This methodology was closed in nature. Under no circumstances could the player participate, because everything had been pre established. Once the technique was incorporated, tactical learning would begin.

The second stage, which can be called analytical, lasted from the 50's to the 80's. It was at that time that the analytic method began to be used. It consisted of dividing the technical movements into several sequences. The coach would show each sequence of each technical movement and the students would copy them. Once they had a full command of all the parts of the technical movement, they were grouped until they had learned the global movement. In a nutshell, the problem of this method is that it has little relation with reality, there is little probability for the students to participate in the teaching-learning process. The fact that the individual aspects and characteristics of each player are not taken into account, since they are all treated and taught in the same way.

Current methods are based on observation of real match situations, and we realize that many players play very well

during training, but are not able to do so during real match play. A possible cause for this phenomenon might be the lack of transference of the knowledge learned during training to real game situations. Current methods are fully developed in the next section of this article.

ACTIVE AND PARTICIPATIVE METHODOLOGIES IN TENNIS

Thorpe et al. (1983) consider it necessary and indispensable to have a good understanding of the game, to know its fundamentals and, in order to improve, it is important to put tactics before technique. They state that: "It is necessary to develop a tactical awareness and decision making process in the students, always anticipating the technical execution factors, that is to say, technique must be subject to tactics." If the coach can apply a methodology that is based on the real game, it will help the students to have an extra motivation that will facilitate the transfer to the real game.

Similarly, Crespo (1993) says that with traditional methodologies players get a command of technique in closed situations. The problem starts with an open sport, with a variable environment, in this case, decision making is key.

Bunker & Thorpe (1986), who centre sport teaching on understanding the nature of the game, and on the decision making process, consider that understanding and knowing the game, together with tactics, must precede technique. That is why it is important to create real game situations. This kind of

work increases motivation. Cooke (1999, quoted by Crespo 2007), is in agreement with this mentality when he says: "you only understand something when you are able to put it in practice in different situations and in varied contexts".



Elderton (2008), suggests situation training with a playful perspective at all times. Learning technical movements is key to this methodology, but they must never be learnt in isolation as the learning of the technique alone will be too weak.

As to the open methodology, Dent (quoted by Crespo, 1999) states that open methodology entails more interest on the part of the player because it is centred on the global aspect of the game.

Stojan (1988), states that this training is nothing but the simulation of the atmosphere of a real match. On the other hand, Schonborn (1989) indicates that training must always be as similar to competition as possible.

Likewise, Budó (2009) highlights the importance of a totally globalized practice that takes the training situations as close as possible to the real situations of the game. The length and time of recovery from the exercises must be similar to that of real times of the game. Even Jofre.

Porta, former coach of Carlos Moyà, called his academy Global Tennis just for the fact that he believes in the global work of all four tennis components.

Finally, Campos (2009) differentiates two teaching models in current tennis: on the one hand, the traditional model based on the characteristics of analytical methodology giving priority to the technique and on the other hand the active model or active pedagogy that gives priority to discovery based teaching and encourages players to make decisions.

RESEARCH: METHOD AND RESULTS

An interview of 28 top performance tennis coaches was prepared. Results were statistically analysed with the SPSS 15.0 programme.

The first methodology related question of our study was asked in order to distinguish if coaches of women players who participated in the investigation worked with the same intensity, volume, and recovery guidelines during training and in competition.

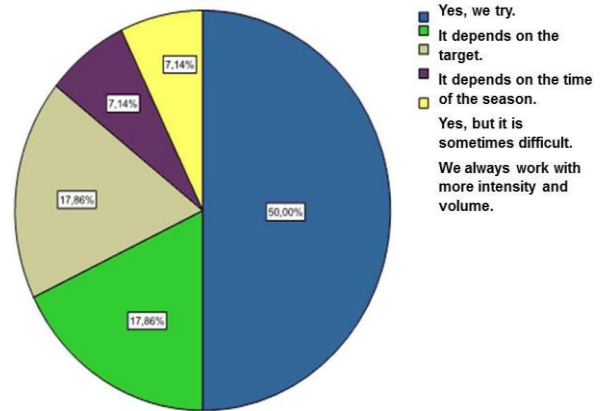


Figure 1. Do you train with the same intensity and volume as in competition?

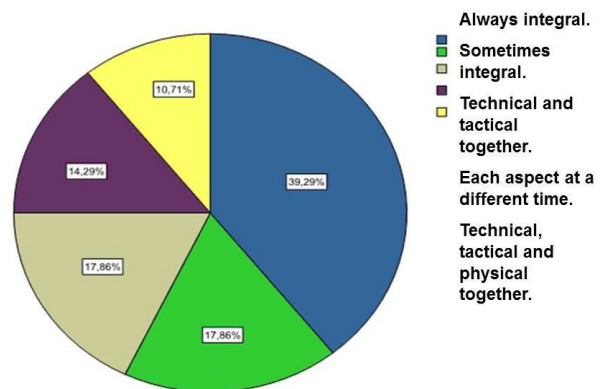


Figure 2. Recovery guidelines

50% of the coaches try to respect intensity and volume parameters. 17,86% state that they bear them in mind depending on the target and on the time of the season. 7,14% always apply high intensity and volume. Finally, 7,14% try to do it but find it hard.

Figure 2 shows the results of the second question in the investigation, training women respecting recovery guidelines.

46,43% state that they intend to respect recovery guidelines as close to reality as possible, 21,43% respect them in relation to the target; 17,86% did not pay too much attention and, finally, 14,28% include the ones who did not pay attention and those who paid some attention depending on the time of the season.

Figure 3 summarizes the results of the question if coaching is an integral whole or each component is independent.

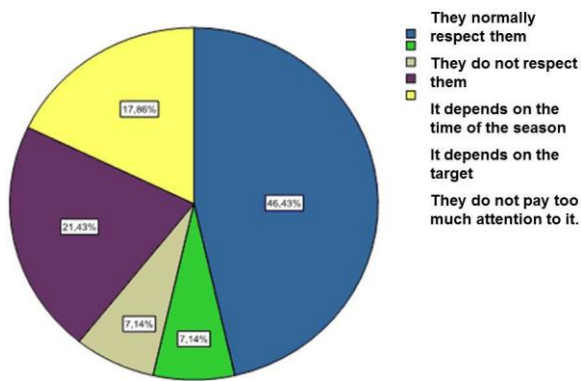


Figure 3. Is training integral or is it not?

39,29% of the coaches prefer integral coaching. 17,86% occasionally work integrally. There is a similar percentage of those who work technique and tactics together. Then, 14,29% work with each component separately.

Finally, there is a relationship between two variables: the type of coach and participation of the players in the coaching process.

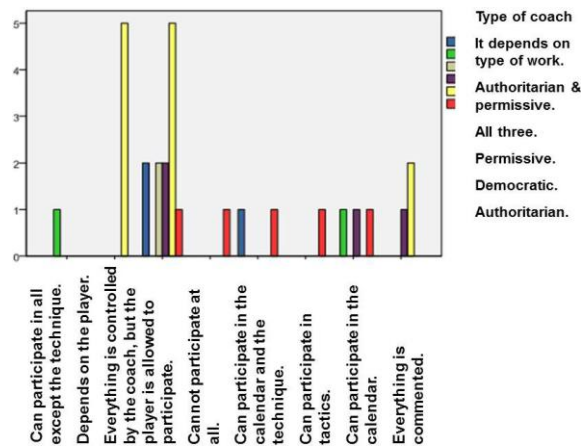


Figure 4. Correlation between the type of coach and the degree of active participation of the players.

We notice that the democratic coach normally keeps control over the process, always offering the players the possibility of active participation, depending on their degree of maturity.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Half of the coaches involved in the study respect, during coaching, the parameters of intensity, volume and recovery that real competition demands. This conclusion is in line with the studies made by Ripoll (1989) and Fuentes et al., (2003).

A little more than one third of the coaches in our study work globally, that is to say, dealing with all four components as a whole. This conclusion is supported by Schonborn (1983), Stojan (1988) and Balaguer (1996).

The democratic approach is the most common among the coaches in our study. Besides, there is a significant relationship between the coach and his greater desire to have his player participating in his/her own learning process. The ideal approach consists of sharing decision making between the player and the coach. This result is supported by Fuentes et al., (2003), Lorenzo (1997) and Garcia (1987).

We hope the results of this research contribute to a better knowledge of the characteristics and needs for coaching female tennis players.

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