



# Tools for continuous coach education.

David Sanz Rivas.

Royal Spanish Tennis Federation.

## ABSTRACT

The continuous education process for coaches is an area of research that is gaining significant interest in the sporting environment, largely due to its impact on professional development, since it is evident that optimization in coach performance will bring about a positive impact on the results of his/her players. This article discusses some of the most common tools in tennis coach education that are used today, using Spain as a case study.

**Key words:** Continuous education, Tennis, Coaches.

**Received:** 1 June 2011

**Accepted:** 2 August 2011

**Corresponding author:** David Sanz Rivas, Royal Spanish Tennis Federation.

Email: [dsanz@rfet.es](mailto:dsanz@rfet.es)

## INTRODUCTION

Sport coach education models in general are closely related to educational models of the physical education teacher. Physical education has a longer tradition and basis within scientific research and has therefore shaped performance models in coach education. (Sanz, Fuentes, Del Villar, 2004).

In fact, parallels between physical education instructor training and coach education programmes have been the subject of a wide range of research in Sport Sciences. Even though their working contexts have unique and specific elements, their specific educational needs are very similar (Araújo, 1994; Ibáñez, 1996; Mesquita, 1997; Yagüe, 1998; Moreno, 2001; Fuentes, 2001).

Considering the sport coach as a technician is related to the similarity between the coach and the teacher, since "the coach acts like a physical education teacher who has to master a set of teaching skills in order to develop the teaching of specific motor skills" Del Villar and Fuentes (1999).

## OBJECTIVES OF COACHES EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

Some of the most relevant issues in the design of education programmes are the objectives that they try to attain, that will involve the acquisition of a number of competencies that are key for the technician (coach). Some authors like Zeigler (1983) suggest the skills that must be implicit in the performance of a good coach. These skills include:

- Personal skills: to organize their own work and in reference to their professional competence.

- Inter-personal skills: to impact the group of people being worked with, motivating them towards a common target. Mesquita (1997) will later refer to these skills as communication skills.

- Conceptual skills: to plan and develop work on the basis of the coaches' knowledge.

- Technical skills: to optimize the performance of the athlete based on sport specific knowledge.

- Complementary skills: a set of skills related to direction, control, management, etc.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD COACH

Considering the characteristics of our sport, we know some of the features of a good coach as pointed out by the ITF (Crespo and Miley, 1999):

- To have a level of play that is good enough to hold rallies with the students, to show the strokes, and to feed the balls correctly, etc.

- To have a sound knowledge of the game of tennis, mastering the basic rules and regulations (scoring systems, size of the court, height of the net, etc.)

- To know the basic teaching methodology for adults and children.

- To project an appropriate image and appearance, be punctual, dress properly, make eye contact with the students as well as show positive facial expression and body language.

- To have a basic set of knowledge on sport sciences such as physiology, biomechanics, psychology, motor learning, sport medicine and nutrition.
- To make appropriate use of voice, modulating its intensity, avoiding monologues, speak with conviction, differentiate tone of voice e.g. higher for a group than for a single individual.
- To have good communication skills, be positive in expression and be interested in the comments the students make, use analogies, keep the attention of the group, use sense of humour, and different levels of language complexity depending on the audience being addressed.



- To show organizational and leadership capacity.
- To be able to keep discipline at all times.
- To understand and support the students
- To act with a philosophy in which success can be secondary for the athlete.

Undoubtedly, no one questions the educational needs for coaches who want to develop their work to meet the best expectations, whether with beginners or with high performance tennis players.

#### EDUCATION MODELS FOR TENNIS COACHES

We can indicate different education models, both initial, that is to say first time education, and continuous, which is complementary, more prolonged and includes experience gained through the years.

Thus, we can differentiate education programmes as below:

- Type of education: initial or continuous
- Type of student (young, adult, expert, beginner)
- Organization that delivers the programmes (private, public, federation, university)
- Methodology (face to face, on-line, mixed)
- Length (credits, hours)
- Venue (single venue, different venues, lecture room, court)
- Degree awarded (academic, federative, not a recognized degree)



A number of revisions and modifications are currently underway concerning sport degrees, and therefore, concerning education programmes for those degrees. In fact, the new legislation for sport coach education in Spain accepts on-line education in some modules of general training and the specific sport modality. This is a substantial revolution concerning the traditional face to face hours the students were required to attend previously.

#### THE EXPERIENCE OF THE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH DEPARTMENT AT THE RFET (REAL FEDERACIÓN ESPAÑOLA DE TENIS)

In the case of the RFET, after numerous surveys made during the last 8 years, we identified that one of the main reasons that coaches do not attend educational events is the lack of time and economic resources. So, we considered the possibility of mixed education formats or even on-line formats for some modules or special subjects (specific examples of these subjects include regulations, equipment and legislation).

Thus, we started a number of on-line educational plans that are proving to be very successful, both from the point of view of the feedback provided by the coaches as well as the number of people enrolled.

We started with themed modules such as sessions on how to use Dartfish software technology, for all coaches who had taken the initial education course. Now we are collaborating with conferences such as the 2nd Symposium of Overtraining. This is a monographic conference on tennis, which will be the second virtual tennis conference that will be launched from the on-line platform.

A final initiative that we have successfully developed is a specific education plan at the International University of Valencia using a University Masters format; 60 education credits within four modules, which as a university based education is independent from but recognized by the federation. This Masters degree has a mixed structure, since there is a practice period in which students have to attend the specialized centres to complete practical work. The remaining education takes place from home and with the high schedule flexibility that these systems allow. (See <http://www.viu.es/web/guest/masters-online/entrenamiento-gestion-tenis>)

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, new educational technologies available today in conjunction with the advances of the internet, have had a tremendous impact on the availability and ease of access to information for coaches. Tools like the iCoach are an example of where coaches are able to access up to date and continuous education resources with ease, thus allowing for more continuous education during the career should the coach choose (Over & Sharp, 2008).

On the other hand, in countries like Germany, continuous education is compulsory to validate the initial education degree. However, this is not the case in countries like Spain where the decision to take up training courses depends only on the coach. Therefore, in the case of Spain- whatever we do to make education more attractive, functional and practical will have a positive effect on the coaches who will have better access to this education- that will ultimately suit their needs with minimal burden. The tools that have been used in education so far, videos, DVDs, books, no matter how valid they might be, will never be as up-to-date as those articles, presentations, audiovisual resources, etc. that are available on the web. As Van Fraayenhoven (2010) suggests, the last decade has seen a tremendously fast evolution in the information available for coaches. Thus, coaches from all over the world can have access to the information available on the web, which is regularly updated in most cases.

The pros and cons of mixed or on-line education (adapted from Lubbers, 2010) can include:

- Continuous updating of contents

- Flexibility to carry out educational programmes (schedules, duration)
- Stored content in electronic format allows fast revision and search
- Greater participation on the part of the students (search, on-line work)
- It is not a total substitute for traditional or face to face education.
- Greater possibilities for comparing and contrasting the information with peers and groups of students
- Synchronization with the education evolution of other training programmes and the new technologies available for coaches.

## REFERENCES

- Araújo, J. (1994). Ser treinador. Lisboa: Caminho (Coleção Desporto e temps livres).
- Crespo, M. y Miley, D. (1999). Manual para entrenadores avanzados. England: International Tennis Federation.
- Del Villar, F. y Fuentes, J. P. (1999). Las destrezas docentes en la enseñanza del tenis. En J. P. Fuentes, E. M. Cervelló, F. Del Villar, N. Gusi y F. J. Moreno, Enseñanza y entrenamiento del tenis. Fundamentos didácticos y científicos (pp. 1-36). Cáceres: Universidad de Extremadura, Servicio de Publicaciones.
- Fraayenhoven, F. (2010). Developments in coaches education. ITF Coaching and Sport Science Review. 50 (18): 19-20.
- Fuentes, J. P. (2001). Análisis de la información y de los planteamientos didácticos del entrenador de tenis de Alta Competición en España. Tesis doctoral. Universidad de Extremadura, Departamento de Didáctica de la Expresión Musical, Plástica y Corporal.
- Ibáñez, S. J. (1996). Análisis del proceso de formación del entrenador de Baloncesto. Tesis doctoral. Universidad de Granada, Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación, Departamento de Didáctica y Organización Escolar.
- Lubbers, P. (2010). Learning methods and types. ITF coaches education meeting. Unpublished document.
- Medina, J. (1995). Influencia de un entrenamiento docente basado en el trabajo en grupo durante la formación inicial del profesorado de Educación Física: Un estudio preliminar. Tesis doctoral. Universidad de Granada, Facultad de Ciencias de la Actividad Física y el Deporte, Departamento de Personalidad, Evaluación y Tratamiento Psicológico.
- Mesquita, I. (1997). Pedagogia do treino. A formação em jogos desportivos colectivos. Lisboa: Livros Horizonte.
- Moreno, P. (2001). Análisis y optimización de la conducta verbal del entrenador de voleibol durante la dirección de equipo en competición. Universidad de Extremadura, Facultad de Ciencias del Deporte, Departamento de Didáctica de la Expresión Musical, Plástica y Corporal.
- Over, S. and Sharp, B. (2008). Information Technology in tennis. ITF Coaching and Sport Science Review. 15 (45): 24-25.
- Sanz, D., Fuentes, J.P., Del Villar, F. (2004). La formación del entrenador deportivo. En Torres, G. y Carrasco, L (Coord). Investigación en deportes de raqueta: tenis y bádminton. Murcia: Universidad Católica de Murcia.

- Yagüe, J. M. (1998). El trabajo colaborativo como estrategia de formación permanente del entrenador de fútbol. Tesis doctoral. Universidad de Valladolid, Facultad de Educación, Departamento de Didáctica y Organización Escolar.
- Zeigler, E. F. y Bowe, G. H. (1983). Management competency development in sport and physical education. Philadelphia: Lea and Febiger.

RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ACADEMY CONTENT (CLICK BELOW)



Copyright (c) 2011 David Sanz Rivas.



This text is under a [Creative Commons BY 4.0 license](#)

You are free to Share - copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format - and Adapt the content - remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially under the following terms:

Attribution: You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.

[CC BY 4.0 license terms summary](#) [CC BY 4.0 license terms](#)