



# Periodisation in tennis.

Machar Reid, Geoff Quinlan & Craig Morris.

Australian Tennis Federation.

## ABSTRACT

This article focuses on effective planning and periodisation within player development. It explores scheduling trends in the modern game and how that scheduling varies with specific reference to a player's late junior or early professional career.

**Key words:** Player development, Programmes, Periodisation.

**Received:** 8 February 2010.

**Accepted:** 23 Marzo 2010.

**Corresponding author:** Machar Reid, Australian Tennis Federation.

**Email:** [mreid@tennis.com.au](mailto:mreid@tennis.com.au)

## INTRODUCTION

The planning of tennis player development is generally guided by the experiences of the coach or the schedules of the sport's contemporaries (Reid et al., 2009). The merits of different developmental pathways have been illustrated previously (Reid et al., 2007), yet little research has investigated the more intricate roles of planning and periodisation in player development. Indeed, the combination of emulative approaches to scheduling and uncertain micro backdrops (unpredictable playing times and numbers of matches) in tennis heighten the challenge for professionals working to maximise the performance, health, and well-being of the game's players.

Coaches generally want their players to compete. It's no surprise that those same players want to compete! This shared sentiment is often most pronounced between the ages of 16-21. This period encapsulates a player's transition to the professional game; a time where they're eager to compete to earn ranking points, or for that matter, a living. Consequently, it becomes an exercise in not only managing expectations but also determining what's needed to maximise the players' chances of breaking-through. For aspiring professional players, competition is very important but nor is every player a Nikolay Davydenko clone (he played close to 40 events in the first 11 months in the year that he turned 19). Priorities can also lie elsewhere, for example, in continuing to improve technique or in developing the requisite physical skills – and for that, you need time to train.

## PLANNING AND PERIODISATION CONSIDERATIONS

The international junior and professional tours are well established and so observation of the different playing histories of current professionals can be instructive (Table 1, Reid et al., 2009). Using the men's game as a case in point, a close look at the schedules of some of game's best players

during their transition to professional tennis reveals (on balance) more similarities than it does differences.



For example, while the competitive foci of Nadal and Federer in their 17th years are very different, their commitment to tournament play (number of events played) is similar. The parallels are even greater in their 18th years; while the schedules of Roddick, Murray and Djokovic also share a significant bias toward participation in professional events during their final year of juniors.

As evidenced here and in general (age eligibility rules permitting), most competitive players will play in 18-30 international tournaments per year in their late junior or early professional career. When combined with the nuances of the sport (i.e. the abovementioned irregular playing times, uncertain tournament cut-offs and an indeterminate number of matches per tournament), it's clear that this intensive scheduling does not lend itself to the textbook use of periodisation (Reid and Schneiker, 2008).

*Table 1. Calendar of events played by the top ATP players in their 17th and 18th years.*

Player	Year	Professional events			Junior events	Total
		ATP Circuit	Challenger	ITF Futures	ITF	
Nadal	1 <sup>st</sup>	11	9	0	0	20
	1 <sup>st</sup>	18	0	0	0	18
Federer	1 <sup>st</sup>	3	1	0	14	18
	1 <sup>st</sup>	14	7	0	0	21
Djokovic	1 <sup>st</sup>	3	7	6	3	19
	1 <sup>st</sup>	9	4	0	0	13
Murray	1 <sup>st</sup>	0	4	7	3	14
	1 <sup>st</sup>	9	7	3	1	20
Roddick	1 <sup>st</sup>	0	0	0	17	17
	1 <sup>st</sup>	5	5	0	12	22

As a result, the following points are made to highlight how the tenets of periodisation can be applied in a modern tennis context:

- Training blocks need to feature between clusters of tournaments. When astutely planned, this still provides coaches and support staff in the region of 20 weeks or almost 40% of total tennis time to focus on specific (technical, tactical, physical or mental) goals. From a strength and conditioning point of view, it's desirable (particularly with transitioning players) to have at least one block of 6 consecutive weeks for some more intensive exercise prescription. These blocks also provide athletes and coaches the opportunity to rejuvenate by training at home, without the associated pressures of competition.
- The WTA is known to recommend that players minimise the number of times that they compete in more than 3 consecutive weeks with a view to maintaining good health and high levels of performance. Scheduling in this way would also help to attenuate the effects of detraining that have been observed in other tennis populations (Kovacs et al., 2007). The extra cost associated with this approach may make it less viable for some, yet it reflects an important attempt to apply the notion of periodisation to tennis.
- Training does not need to stop during (all) competition. Strength and conditioning programs should look to incorporate undulations in load and stimulus to help elicit adaptations or to maintain performance, even during competition weeks. Kraemer and colleagues (2000, 2003) have variously illustrated the potential value of this approach to exercise prescription in tennis.
- Workload monitoring (in its various discrete forms) has now risen to prominence in most sports. Some would say to the detriment of coach intuition, or even, athlete work ethic; but most others would concede that it's another step toward making every second of each training session or match count. In tennis, our understanding of its potential contribution to player performance and injury is in its infancy. Nonetheless, at the level of the individual, it has started to play an important

role in linking the psychological-physical domains and, more globally, in the modification of training programs.

- Given that players are required to back up 'day in, day out, 'week in, week out', the need to introduce some level of system in to the way in which they recover is key. Granted, the location, the facilities, the hotel, and the match's start and finish time can all shape the options available to a player but there are certain recovery 'one percenters' that can be undertaken as a matter of routine.

## CONCLUSION

Planning and periodising the training programs and playing schedules of tennis players represents a significant challenge. For most players, and particularly those transitioning to the professional game, there exists the need to train and to compete ... and, the lines defining where one (training) starts and the other (competing) stops are sometimes blurred. And it is here where the tenets of periodisation can be applied to assist players and coaches meet both their training and playing priorities.

## REFERENCES

- Kovacs, M, Pritchett, R, Wickwire, J, Green, M & Bishop, P. (2007). Physical performance changes after unsupervised training during autumn/spring semester break in competitive tennis players. *Br J Sports Med*, 41, 705-710. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bjism.2007.035436>
- Kraemer, W.J., Ratamess, N., Fry, A.C., Triplett-McBride, T, Perry Koziris, L., Bauer,
- J. A., Lynch, J. M., & Fleck, S. J. (2000). Influence of Resistance Training Volume and Periodization on Physiological and Performance Adaptations in Collegiate Women Tennis Players. *Am J Sports Med.*, 28, 5, 626-633. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03635465000280050201>
- Kraemer, W.J., Hakkinen, K., Triplett-Mcbride, N.T., Fry, A.C., Koziris, L.P., Ratamess, N.A., Bauer, J.E., Volek, J.S., Mcconnell, T., Newton, R.U., Gordon, S.E., Cummings,
- D., Haut, J., Pullo, F., Lynch, J.M., Mazzetti, S. A., & Knuttgen, H.G. (2003). Physiological Changes with Periodized Resistance Training in Women Tennis Players. *Med. Sci Sports Exerc.*, 35, 1, 157-168. <https://doi.org/10.1097/00005768-200301000-00024>
- Reid, M., Crespo, M., Santilli, L., Miley, D., & Dimmock, J. (2007). The importance of the International Tennis Federation's junior boys' circuit in the development of professional tennis players. *J Sports Sci*, 25, 6, 667-72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02640410600811932>
- Reid M, Schneiker K. (2008). Strength and conditioning in tennis: current research and practice. *J Sci Med Sport*. 11, 3, 248-56. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsams.2007.05.002>

Reid, M., Quinlan, G., Kearney, S., & Jones, D. (2009). Planning and Periodization for the Elite Junior Tennis Player. *Strength Cond J*, 31, 4, 69-76. <https://doi.org/10.1519/SSC.0b013e3181afc98d>

RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ACADEMY CONTENT (CLICK BELOW)



Copyright (c) 2010 Machar Reid, Geoff Quinlan & Craig Morris.



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](#)