



UNITED STATES TENNIS ASSOCIATION

Understanding the Role Parents Play in Junior Tennis: Phase 2 Survey of CTC Coaches

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INTRODUCTION

- Parents are controversial subject today in youth sport. USA Tennis High Performance coaches frequently report problems with parents including shying away from competition, pressuring, and interfering with coaching.
- Yet, coaches recognize that parents are essential to developing the talent of young tennis players. They also have the ability to teach life lessons and skills through the sport.
- A paradox exists. Parents need to be involved and yet not too involved where they are detrimental to the experience youth have in tennis.
- Little scientific information exists regarding parenting junior tennis players.

PURPOSE

- The study was designed to better understand the role that parents play in tennis success. Specifically, junior tennis coaches were sampled to identify effective and ineffective tennis parenting behaviors relative to parents' interactions with players and coaches, and provide strategies to facilitate effective player, coach, and parent partnerships.
- The goal of this phase of the study was to generalize the findings from Phase 1 to ensure that the issues raised are relevant to junior tennis as a whole.

METHOD

- A national survey of 300 coaches attending the USA Tennis High Performance Competition Training Center Coaches Workshop in January of 2003.

WHAT DID THE STUDY FIND?

Who were the 132 junior tennis coaches surveyed?

Average Age: Male: 40.5 Years of Age Female: 39.0 Years of Age
Gender: 125 Male 7 Female
Ethnicity: Caucasian: 84.0% African-American: 7.0% Asian: 3.1% Hispanic: 3.1%
Years Coaching Experience: 17.3 Years Coaching (Range: 1-50 Years)
Average Number of Ranked Players Coached:
12.1 Sectionally Ranked Players
4.0 Nationally Ranked Players

Importance and Role of Parents in the Development of a Junior Player

- Coaches reported that parents are very important to junior tennis success (M = 4.56, on a scale of 1=not important to 5=extremely important).
- 35.86% of parents were perceived as actually hurting their child's tennis development.
- 58.58% of parents were perceived as having a positive influence on their child's tennis development.

Perceptions of Parent Behaviors in Tennis

Parent-Child Interaction Problem Behaviors

7 "Most Extensive" Parent Problems	Mean
Overemphasizes winning	3.54
Holds expectations for their child that are unrealistic	3.50
Coaches child (without training as a coach)	3.45
Criticizes child	3.43
Pampers child too much	3.41
Pushes child to play tennis	3.32
Tells child not to lose against less skilled opponents	3.22

6 "Least Extensive" Parent Problems	Mean
Uninvolved in child's tennis	2.22
Argues frequently with officials	2.21
Doesn't allow child to play in doubles	2.18
Involved in confrontations with other parents	2.15
Unconcerned with the child's development	2.12
Withholds love when child performs below expectations	2.05

➤ Note: An extent rating of 1 = not at all, 2 = infrequently, 3 = sometimes, 4 = frequently, and 5 = all the time.

WHAT DID THE STUDY FIND?

7 "Most Serious" Parent Problems	Mean
Overemphasizing winning	3.79
Criticizing child	3.77
Lacking emotional control	3.71
Parent's ego being determined by child's performance	3.67
Holding unrealistic expectations of child	3.59
Pressuring child in practice by sitting on-court and making comments	3.57
Reacting to mistakes by yelling at the child	3.55

5 "Least Serious" Parent Problems	Mean
Doesn't allow child to be involved in other sports/ activities	2.93
Unconcerned with child's development	2.85
Enters child into too many tournaments	2.84
Doesn't allow child to play doubles	2.64
Uninvolved in child's tennis	2.53

➤ Note: A seriousness rating of 1 = not serious, 2 = slightly, 3 = somewhat, 4 = serious, 5 = extremely.

Positive Parental Behaviors in Interactions with Their Child

7 "Most Extensive" Positive Parent Behaviors	Mean
Provide financial support	4.43
Provide logistical support	4.32
Provide tennis opportunities	3.81
Provide socio-emotional support	3.79
Provide unconditional love and support	3.72
Make sacrifices so child can succeed	3.65
Emphasize hard work	3.64

5 "Least Extensive" Positive Parent Behaviors	Mean
Provide positive feedback following matches	3.00
Exert little pressure to win	2.99
Push child in a positive way	2.97
Use motivational techniques	2.90
Showing an understanding of the sport	2.89

➤ Note: An extent rating of 1 = not at all, 2 = infrequently, 3 = sometimes, 4 = frequently, and 5 = all the time.

7 Positive Parent Behaviors with the Greatest Impact	Mean
Provide unconditional love and support	4.54
Provide logistical support	4.36
Hold child accountable for behavior on-court	4.33
Provide financial support	4.28
Emphasize positive attitude	4.20
Model values	4.18
Provide appropriate discipline for poor sportspersonship	4.13

➤ Note: An impact rating of 1 = no impact, 2 = little impact, 3 = some impact, 4 = much impact, 5 = extreme impact.

COACHING IMPLICATIONS

Perceived Problems/Roadblocks Parents Create for Coaches

5 "Most Extensive" Problems/Roadblocks Parents Create for Coaches	Mean
Parent lives through child's tennis	3.08
Parent goals for child are not the same as the coach	2.91
Parent result-focused because of high financial costs of game	2.91
Parent knows little or nothing about the game	2.88
Parent ignores coach's request	2.83

7 "Most Serious" Problems/Roadblocks Parents Create for Coaches	Mean
Parents lives through child's tennis	3.92
Parent goals for child are not the same as the coach	3.52
Parent philosophy and values are not consistent with values of the coach	3.51
Parent undermines coach's discipline of the child	3.49
Lack of open and honest communication between parent and coach	3.48
Parent result-focused because of high financial costs of the game	3.44
Parent doesn't support coach's decisions	3.44

5 "Most Important" Ways to Foster Good Coach-Parent Relationships	Frequency
Communication	104
Trust	53
Cooperation/common realistic goals	38
Respect	31
Honesty	26

➤ Note: A total of 348 themes (or quotes) were offered by coaches, which were grouped into 28 separate ways to foster coach-parent relationships.

3 "Most Frequent" Recommendations to Inexperienced Coaches for Developing Relationships with Parents	Frequency
Foster 3-way player-parent-coach communication	23
Be honest but sensitive when interacting with parents	23
Establish expectations and boundaries	21

➤ Note: A total of 261 themes (or quotes) were offered by coaches.

5 "Most Useful" Strategies for Working with Junior Tennis Parent	Mean
Being honest and open	4.76
Building trust	4.68
Listening to the parent	4.58
Defining the parent's roles and responsibilities	4.40
Educating on positive parental behaviors	4.38

➤ Note: A usefulness rating of 1 = not at all, 2 = slightly, 3 = somewhat, 4 = useful, and 5 = extremely.

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