

## Nebraska High School Coaches Clinic

### INTRODUCTION:

- Playing and coaching experience (**Self-Motivated and Curious**)
- Coaching Philosophy: 3 focus points for a coach to build a winning team
  - o **Create a Vision-**
    - creating a vision to me is part of creating a positive culture
    - a culture that focuses on winning the right way
    - not taking shortcuts
    - players that desire to see the team win more than themselves
    - also understanding, their contribution to the team is important to the team's success
  - o **Coach with Consistency**
    - Consistency doesn't mean that all players and all discipline is treated equally (impossible)
    - The consistency I am talking about is the mood you bring to the team/practice each day
    - The team relies on you to set the mood of the practice
    - 4 things we focus on as a team and coaching staff include
      - **1-Have Fun 2- Stick Together 3- Eliminate Distractions 4- Flip the Switch**
  - o **Build Confidence**
    - Verse in the Bible that poses the question: **"Can both freshwater and saltwater flow from the same stream?"**
    - Though there will be moments of praise and then moments of great frustrations- We as coaches need to limit the negativity that is shown and spoken to our players
      - Our speech and body language shall be used for encouragement and building up one another

### **Coach To Your Players Personality:**

Playing to the likeness of your personality is often the best winning tennis strategy. We also all have a side to our negative personality type that only comes out when we feel uncomfortable, insecure, and when we lack confidence. We also have a personality type that is dominant when we feel comfortable, secure, and feeling confident.

My coaching strategy is learning how to recognize what each player does when they feel confident and then also when they are feeling insecure? For the insecurities, there are cues recognize and when you see those cues- need to recognize them and help them **flip the switch** to "behaving, feeling and performing on the court" normal again.

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### "The Energizer Bunny"

- high energy, very pumped up person:
- Might see this when feeling confident and in control - **fist pumps, high fives if playing doubles, would hear this: "come on" "lets go", also see them usually walk with a swagger, head up, chest out, etc.**
- this player is usually in control often with a **quicker tempo** to the match- this player in order to be successful, needs to **establish themselves as the alpha male** on the court quickly in order to feel good and to play well. **IMPOSING**
- **When lacking confidence or playing bad-** might see (now these are your CUES you should be looking for): **SARCASM!!!!** - "you idiot" "you are playing so bad" "I hate tennis" "excessive rolling of their eyes" throwing their hands up in the air, bouncing racquet on court, etc.

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### "The Stoic German"

- even keeled, quiet person, little emotion, sometimes even shy, yet very confident
- when playing well and confident: **see the same look on their face and look of determination in their eyes, a look of focus, a look of calmness, a look of "nothing you do will shake me or phase me"**
- Often play well when **properly calculating their risks**
- **They play the percentages**, good 70% first serve %, 80-90% return of serve %, willing to play **8-10 balls crosscourt in a rally before selectively approaching on a short ball or taking the ball down the line**
- They often **do 2-3 things really well** and stick with those strategies throughout the duration of the match because they **believe they can beat you with that.**
- this person is also the person **when not playing well** can get the feeling of **intimidation** quickly and may in the early years have larger **fears of competition**
- **will hide and go away. let the other player dictate the points**
- **get even more defensive-** the ball will now start to land shorter in the court, double faults will occur, and they have tendencies to feel helpless on the court because they have a **lack of options or weapons on the court.**

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### "The Crock Pot or The Slow Starter"

- the personality of I need to get to know someone well and feel comfortable first before I come out and show my true self. I need to warm up really well before I can get hot.
- **the first 3 games or first impressions are most important for them**, this will dictate how they often play the rest of the match. they are the people **that let the other person make the impression first before they decide how they are going to think, how they are going to feel, and respond.**
- They play with taking very few risks in the first 3 games of the match.
- They want the opponent to make a lot of mistakes early in the match so they can build a lead before taking any risks.

**CUES for disaster:** - Cues for this player is **less obvious in terms of personality**, but rather just mere observation of what is happening on the court in each point.

- Their game isn't going according to plan (often due to not having a clear game plan) because they are missing before their opponent, or their opponent is dictating too much of the point allowing them to successfully win points easily.
- Other cues: hitting too many second serves, giving away free points, missing opportunities to take a risk and go on the offensive and WIN a point

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**SOLUTIONS TO HELP COACH THESE PLAYERS TO REMAIN IN THEIR PROPER STATE OF MIND AND PLAY A MATCH THAT BEST SUITS THEM:**

**“The Energizer Bunny” Solution:**

- quit telling the player that is full of energy" to **"stay calm" "Don't get too anxious or worked up" "Be RELAXED"**
- Your coaching will become counterproductive. They need to have their energy. If they lose that, they are then only shots away of starting not to care and will give up.
- Don't take them out of Character.
- Instead, I suggest you teach them to learn how to **channel their extra energy into something positive.**
- Accept being anxious, embrace being pumped up. This player needs to learn the ability to become the alpha male on the court.
- Points are played in a slightly quicker tempo when winning and slightly slowed down (but not too much)- when losing.
- This player is often vocal on the court. **Allow them to be vocal, allow them to beat their chest a little bit after a good point, but teaching them a handful of things that they can actually vocalize.**
- **Do not allow them to vocalize negative self-criticism. Do allow them them to pump themselves up or beat their chest when executing a match strategy or tactic successfully.**
- They do need to release some of their negativity. **Allow them to do that with a "come on" or "lets go ..." but not a sarcastic remark such as: - "you never make your first serve" "how could you miss that shot" ...etc.**

- This person can become a roller coaster on the court.... **Think of a roller coaster:** climb climb climb climb climb (anticipation/lots of energy in this).... then after the climb comes a **BIG drop**... but there is now momentum built so they can keep going forward... like a roller coaster- drops don't last very long before they eventually rise back up- **hopefully quicker and stronger so the next drops aren't as BIG!**
- **The climb is the vital part of their process.** This is where they build their confidence so they can make the drops less of a negative impact.
- This player needs to be a somewhat more of a **simplified thinker... give them 2 or 3 tactics or mental strategies to focus on.** If they occupy their minds with more than that, **they become overwhelmed easily** because they are already emotional by nature. Coaching this player can look like this:
  1. not allowed to have any kind of reaction between 1st and 2nd serves - no shaking head, no comments, 0 reaction- only allowed to focus on next task at hand - putting 2nd serve in. This minimizes sarcasm before the start of points. Focus on Process not on result. Caring about results is what is making them anxious.
  2. negative reactions are often **impossible to completely eliminate from this players game, but negative reactions cannot have sarcasm in them,** it has to remain realistic where the player keeps perspective (example: **come on Jake, focus more on that shot to put him away- lets go its time to be more aggressive - here we go, start putting more balls in play!**) - these can be said with some fire, with even some anger in the voice- but they are realistic expectations where they keep things in perspective - - **start with a term like come on, lets go, here we go, etc.**
    - rather than the "you are missing every ball" "are you serious, you can't put one first serve in" or the unrealistic expectations prior to the match that sets you up for failure "make all of your returns" "make your first serves" (how many? all of them?) "you CAN'T miss that shot" "you HAVE to make that ball"... losing perspective, thinking they are incapable of ever missing
- 1. Focus on a tactic that is easy for them to successfully accomplish- then encourage them to cheer for themselves every time they execute that task.
  - This allows them to cheer for themselves in a positive way on a frequent basis rather than only cheering for themselves only on big points.
  - when the task seems somewhat easy to them- their cheering will be done in a balanced way, preventing them from getting unnecessarily over-excited for just one point that they lose.
  - - - **this is the roller coaster climbing process**

**Example: Rory McIlroy: Winner of British Open – 2 words: Process and Spot**

### **"The Stoic German" Solution**

- **"What fear is to one man, is adrenaline to another"**

- We are essentially misinterpreting nerves to being fear. Fear to one person is to hide and to the other is to fight or to compete.
- This player can appear to have it all under control, but when pressure comes and they haven't learned to control their emotions will get VERY NERVOUS!
- Quit calling it Nerves and quit calling it Anxiety
- Call it what it is: **Excitement!**
- This player- remember the cues can be timid, intimidated and easily when things aren't going well, feelings of uncertainty or ill-equipped to win (feelings of inferiority)
- **Read an Article: The feeling a player experiences while serving for 5<sup>th</sup> set for the championship match at Wimbledon is the same feeling as if a 1,000 pound Grizzly Bear was chasing you down the street! Hook monitor up to you. Reactions and emotions will be the same! Excitement.**
- Don't tell this player to "not to get nervous!" "relax" "calm down"
- Don't fight the battle that you cannot win...it will not work.
- **EXAMPLES: Maria Sharapova (strings), Rafa Nadal (Underwear/lines)**
- **Doing anything they can to take mind away from situation for even a short while. That routine they do is the "process" they are focusing on.**
- Not being a scoresman, but rather focusing like Rory did- focusing thoughts on the process!
- Embracing the excitement by channeling it as adrenaline and focusing their minds away from the score, the situation, and focusing on something simple and easy like your strings or your underwear- before you enter back into the match!

### **"The Crock Pot" Solution**

- To change slow starts, you need to be the player to make the first impression.
- Even if your strategy is to be consistent and wait for the other player to miss- that only works if you have established dominance on the court.
- If your opponent doesn't feel your impression of dominance, they won't feel the need to force anything and will reduce their errors, and often times allowing them to be selective on their terms when to go for shots.
- Instead if you can dictate points better in the first 3 games by playing slightly more aggressive with spin and depth (rather than hard shots close to the lines) and even sometimes increasing your willingness to come into the net, dominance can be established.
- This gives you the opportunity to force more errors and have a lead, allowing you to play your consistency later where they begin to force their shots and making unforced errors.
- You can still be patient and wait for them to miss, but you need to have a presence on the court. Make some kind of positive impression. Force errors by working on depth and spin with your shots. Being consistent with those strategies can help get the player out of the slow start trend.

- This player also requires a warmup that may be much more vigorous than the rest of your team.
- They don't need the longer warmup to calm themselves down, because they too will be **The Nervous Type, and sometimes the longer they have to think about the match- can often be detrimental.**
- Rather they need the more vigorous warmup. Sweating more, getting their heart rate up from working hard physically rather than working hard emotionally. 2 different types- - physically – heart rate gets up...emotionally (excitement) only your pulse is racing.
- This player too needs to focus on a PROCESS
- Processes can come from focusing on a tactic or a performance goal. I want to go to the net 2x each game for the first 4 games of the match.
- If the slow starter struggles with consistency, performance goal could be I want to play my first 3 shots deep middle with spin before I try to move my opponent.
- Each player is different, but giving them 1 or 2 focus points - that relate to a process for them will be key.

Being in touch with your players personalities can be key in their success. Understanding the proper things to say to them to help them get back "in the zone" again, I hope these strategies or suggestions can be helpful with your on-court coaching. That's the end of my notes for this session. Thank you.

### Winning Doubles strategies and winning doubles teams:

- Teams- roles need to be defined (often times these teams work best if you have a leader and then a supporting player- or if you put 2 leaders together, that only works if they both have the ability to recognize when to lead and when to support)
- If in earlier session- don't want 2 Crock Pots together (2 slow starters), need an energizer bunny as a partner- lift the mood, make the first impression for the team.
- 2 German Stoic players work as long as one of them is mature enough to control the overwhelming emotions or "excitement" of the match.
- With any of these player combinations. The focus has to be that of a team. Thinking unselfishly on the court.
- We all know the selfishness that looks like "I am doing everything for this team" "my partner is making all of the mistakes"
- **But the other kind of selfishness** can be just as devastating to a team: "I'm **sorry**" "My bad" every time they miss a shot they are apologetic and begin to think they are making all of the mistakes and put more pressure on themselves to hold their own.
- We teach our players not to say I'm sorry on the court to their partner. Everything has to be thought of as "WE" thought of as a "TEAM" "Togetherness"

- The Goal in doubles is not to find ways for yourself to win the point, but for you to focus on **how to help your partner win the point**. Sooner you can learn that aspect, your team gets better.
- Winning doubles teams win points from proper set-ups, not one and done tennis shots. - - when practicing doubles - we often time practice in drills the starting shot with practicing serve-returns or we practice the finishing shot- - practice drills as the poach at the net, down the line passing shots, or even overheads.
- Need to focus more on the "**SET-UP**" - this is where players start to learn "**Cause and Effect**" - if I hit this shot, this will happen. This is where they learn how to play as a team by helping their partner win the point.

**\*\*\*\*How to practice the "set-up" in drills/ practicing the set-up shot also teaches doubles strategies and tactics??**

1) start with players playing a low ball to the feet of opponent at mid-court and partner poaching their opponents pick up ball at the net

2) intentionally return a serve down the line directly at the net player- this ball is often volleyed crosscourt to your partner - where your partner should look to finish and attack their shot back at the unexpected net player (2 balls at net player) strategy to attack weaker player or weak 2nd serves

3) practice down the line lob to make your opponents switch, player that hits this lob should follow the ball into the net, partner drops back to prepare for returned lob so they can hit an overhead at mid-court while player that hits the lob prepares to poach the net in the middle

4) practice i-formation while serving - if players are uncomfortable in this formation, it is advised that the strategy is for the net player to remain in the middle straddling the center line (not moving away from the middle of the net). Also it is advised that they first start out by doing "I" only on the side that allows the server to move to their most dominant stroke!

#Example: Ad-Court - Server has a dominant forehand- going I on the ad-court eliminates having to hit a backhand from the return. - practicing the tactic of going I on this side and hitting the first forehand ball down the line and then following it into the net. Partner remaining at the net should be prepared for a lob (mid-court overhead) or anticipate the crosscourt ball to put away at the net.

5) Doubles Strategy - 3 Rules of 3:

Rule #1 - Do NOT cover the line until you have been passed down the line "3" times by one player



Rule #2 - After "3" Dueces- the next time you receive advantage when serving, you must go I-Formation

Rule #3 - No more than "3" crosscourt rally balls may played to your partner before poaching at the net. By the 4th ball, you must poach.

\*\*\* Poaches are most successfully executed if done on the first two shots

---Anticipating where the ball will cross the net is where you move to. Not just moving to your right.

**Stepping away from doubles and talking about singles a little bit now:**

**1 bit of coaching advice:**

**You are not the most important player on the court. Your opponent is.**

**Your job is to find out what makes them uncomfortable and make them uncomfortable the whole match. That is why the worst coaching**

**advice you can offer is "Play Your Game!" NOOOO!**

**Leads into How to beat a pusher:**

**If you make yourself the most important player on the court against a pusher you WILL LOSE!**

- Pushers are usually by definition: retrievers, athletic and quick on the court, consistent, very resilient and love to compete
- It's not about tennis for them, it's about competing and winning.
- When playing a pusher, be prepared to play a lot of balls and win the point 3x before actually winning point
- Beating them requires patience and set-up (or as we discussed earlier- a process)

My Focus Points to Beat a Pusher Include Focusing on this process:

**Control/Hurt/Finish**

- **1) Control**
- What does Control Look like?
  - o You have your opponent moving more than you
  - o Their shots are being retrieved to the middle of the court
  - o You feel rhythm of the point
  - o The most important part of **Control** is recognizing when you are in control
  - o Too often control isn't recognized until it is too late.
- **2) Hurt**

- First and foremost **you cannot hurt** your opponent **until you are in control** and actually recognize you are in control!
  - We know in control means your opponent is moving more than you and there shots are beginning to be hit shorter in the court and returned to the middle.
  - **Now you look to hurt your opponent "the pusher"**
  - **HOW?**
  - **By opening the court** (hitting them off the court) (**moving them outside of singles lines**)
  - This is how you hurt them.
  - But the most important part of **Hurting your opponent is recognizing when you have Hurt your opponent.**
  - They are hurt when they are outside the singles lines or in some cases moved far back from the baseline.
  - **This sends the pushers state of mind in retrieve mode**
  - This means they are **ready to run** and will often look to return each ball when in trouble with a mini-lob, giving them time to recover.
  - If you start to see this...They are **Hurt.**
  
- **3) Finish**
- **Finishing a point is often done at the net, especially against a PUSHER!**
  - You are looking to follow the ball in that opens the court for you.
  - The problem is pushers love to lob.
  - The key to reducing the effectiveness of their running and their returned shot when "hurt" (often a lob) is to not always follow the ball into the net that is your "short ball"
  - Rather learning to follow the ball that is struck well from the baseline- this is something that has to be felt when the ball is leaving the strings. Do not wait to see if the ball was hit well, pushers are too fast and it is too late.
  - Coming in behind a ball that is hit well by you from the baseline catches your opponent more off-guard.
  - If the ball was hit short and you only approach the net on these balls, your opponent is always prepared to pass or worse yet, LOB you!
  - Following the baseline ball **allows for the opportunity to begin the process of the finish with a mid court volley or mid-court shot**
  - Next in the process, because pushers are often retrievers and runners- look to play the mid-court volley or if you don't get close enough to the net, but have a short ball, play these shots **behind the pusher!**
  - After you pull them off the court, they are looking to run down the open court shot.
  - Beating a Pusher requires the Control, Hurt, Finish Process.

- Following well-hit baseline shots to the net
- Playing mid-court ball behind them and finishing ball off the court on the next shot.

Beating a pusher essentially comes down to Winning the Mid-Court Ball or as we call it **“Winning the Middle”**

**Mid court balls are hit out of the triple threat position... like basketball (disguised – pass,dribble, shoot)**

**Have the ability to play all 3 types of spins from this position- (rolling ball off the court/hitting through the ball down the line/playing underspin on the ball with a chip shot, drop shot, or mid-court volley.**

**Practice Winning the Middle- practice the different spins, practice coming in behind baseline shots.**

**A successful practice is one where your players at some point felt uncomfortable. If they didn't feel uncomfortable they didn't improve, they didn't learn that day!**

Help with designing a practice for these players is teaching them to make daily goals for each practice.

**Importance of setting goals:**

**Performance goals and outcome goals**

**Performance u have control over, outcome controlled by others and how well you manage and execute your performance goals**

Designing a practice that makes a player feel uncomfortable on the court can include have them practice reaching a certain performance goal.

Performance goals need to be able to be easily measured and not focused on the result.

Example:

- Attempt to go to the net 5x in drop-hit game to 10. (attempt) not win
- Play one slice or chip shot by the time each rally reaches the 5th rally ball
- Serve a minimum of 3 first serves up the "T" each service game
- Attempt one lob return each return game in doubles
- Attempt I-Formation 2x each service game in doubles
- Serve and volley 2x each service game
- LIST Can go on and on for them!

I hope these suggestions can be helpful. Questions???

