

MOTIVATING YOUR PLAYERS

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It's very simple. Given the multitude of activities people have to choose from in the modern world, they will only show up for your tennis session if they are motivated to do so.

Motivation is "the driving force that directs actions towards the achievement of a certain goal". Some players are highly self motivated, and will be there – hail, rain or snow. But what can you do to help motivate those who might be wavering a little? Here are my ten keys to motivation.

1. SUCCESS.

Each individual should feel that he or she has been successful at some point in the session. Not necessarily the best, the quickest, the winner – but maybe the one who was first to arrive, or remembered to bring a piece of equipment they were asked to provide.

2. GOAL SETTING.

Players need to have a clear idea of what they are expected to achieve. Goals need to be individualised. They can be tricky to set, because people are not motivated by goals which they perceive to be either too easy (e.g. giant target) or too difficult (e.g. tiny target!).

3. RECOGNITION.

Having achieved their goals in a session, some players will feel cheated if this fact is not publicly recognised by the coach and therefore the group.

4. `NOVELTY VALUE`.

Drills and exercises must be regularly modified, developed and replaced in order to keep interest levels high. Nobody enjoys taking part in exactly the same activities week after week.

5. ATTENTION.

Some coaches tend to spend most of their time with the stronger players in a group, because they find it frustrating to work with weaker players. Other coaches might put most effort into the weaker athletes, thinking that the stronger ones can get on with it themselves. Divide your time equally, or the group you neglect will lose the drive to learn.

6. MOVEMENT.

Tennis involves a lot of movement, and our lessons should reflect this fact. Long discussions - or periods of inactivity while waiting in line - will impact negatively on motivation levels.

7. `POSITIVITY`.

Rather than a comment such as *"no, that's not the way to do it"*, try *"that was a great effort, now heres how you could improve it a little more"*...

8. GROUPING.

It will generally be difficult to motivate a younger child in a group of older children, or an older child in a group of younger children. Likewise for a weaker player in a group of stronger players, or a stronger player in a group of weaker players.

9. FUN.

No matter how hard the players work during a session, they need to enjoy themselves too.

10.IMPROVEMENT.

Perhaps the best motivation of all is when players can see and feel that they are constantly improving.