



Due to the hard work of club committees over the past fifteen or twenty years, the playing facilities at tennis clubs throughout Ireland have been vastly improved. An even more recent development has been clubs hiring a part or full time administrator to deal in the most efficient way with essential documentation, newsletters, website updating etc. As Coach Development Officer for the Tennis Ireland Coaches Association (www.tica.ie), I would like to ask all tennis clubs to look closely at the role of another person who plays a vital role at the club – your tennis coach.

WHAT FACTORS WOULD ENCOURAGE YOU TO PLAY TENNIS?

- 1. Combine tennis with a good physical workout.**
- 2. Availability of lessons to improve skills.**
- 3. Regularly scheduled matches**

SOURCE – International Tennis Federation (2004).

Given the quotes dotted around this page, it becomes clear that the role of the coach within a tennis club is a very important one. How can a club ensure that it retains its coach, or is able to attract a new high level candidate when necessary? Here are some questions I would like to ask you to address in relation to your club, in the interests of developing and improving relationships with coaching staff.

In Ireland we are fortunate to have a large number of highly professional, dedicated and motivated tennis coaches. They play a very important role at all levels of the game in this country, specifically in terms of recruiting, developing and retaining players.

DES ALLEN – TENNIS IRELAND CEO.

Not that long ago coaching in Ireland was on a very ad hoc basis. Few clubs had a Club Coach, and most coaches travelled to a number of different venues on a weekly basis. There have been improvements in this area of late, as many clubs realize the importance and value of appointing a dedicated Club Coach, or a Director of Tennis - someone who is committed on a professional basis to providing an overall coaching service that is designed to meet the needs of all sectors of the membership.

WHY DO KIDS PLAY SPORTS?

- 1. To have fun.**
- 2. To improve their skills.**
- 3. To stay in shape.**

SOURCE – United States Tennis Association (2001).

1. Do the coaches at your club have a written contract, so that everybody knows where they stand?

YES NO

ACTION TO TAKE:

2. Is your Head Coach/Director of Tennis in receipt of an annual retainer fee from the Club? *This type of commitment helps cement the relationship between club and coach.*

YES NO

ACTION TO TAKE:

3. Does your coach have sufficient access to sufficient courts at the crucial times for coaching programmes?

YES NO

ACTION TO TAKE:

4. Most coaches participate in a Continuous Professional Development Programme that requires them to attend workshops and seminars each year. Would your club consider paying the fees for your coaches to attend these events?

YES NO

ACTION TO TAKE:

5. Is your coach a member of the Club? If not would you consider offering him or her an Honorary Membership?

YES NO

ACTION TO TAKE:

6. Does your coach make a presentation to the members at the AGM, and regularly report to the Executive Committee?

YES NO

ACTION TO TAKE:

7. If one of your coaches were taking a Tennis Ireland Coaches Training Course, would your club offer to finance some or all of the cost? *After all it is your members who will ultimately benefit from the coaches improved skills and knowledge!*

YES NO

ACTION TO TAKE:

8. Does your coach have sufficient guaranteed access to your notice boards to effectively advertise coaching services?

YES NO

ACTION TO TAKE:

9. With regard to your website and newsletters, is your coach afforded the opportunity to contribute on a regular basis?

YES NO

ACTION TO TAKE:

10. Does your Head Coach have a designated parking space at the Club? *It's the small things that build a solid relationship – and its the coach who has to carry all that teaching equipment!*

YES NO

ACTION TO TAKE:

I am sure that you can think of many more ways to support your coaching staff that will be specific to your clubs circumstances. If we are to attract and retain the best people into teaching tennis, the role of the coach in Irish tennis clubs needs to be developed further – to the mutual benefit of both coach and club. If I may suggest a first step it would be this: **invite your coach to the next committee meeting to discuss the points raised above and any other relevant issues.**

Finally, please feel free to contact me at peter.farrell@tennisireland.ie if I can be of assistance in relation to coaching at your club.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Farrell,

Coach Development Officer.