



## The Tough Transition from Playing to Coaching

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It takes a certain type of person to be a great coach. Having worked with several over my career, it's pretty clear that the best coaches have a defined structure and a wealth of knowledge to back their viewpoints on the tennis court.

After retiring from the competitive tennis world, I figured that coaching would be a natural progression, and something that would come completely easy to me. After all, I've worked with coaches throughout my career, and spent thousands upon thousands of hours training and competing. Easy to figure out, right? I have been sorely mistaken.

As a player, you can develop certain tendencies that would make it seem that the entire world revolves around you. Everything you do on the court is about YOU. It's pretty much on your shoulders to decide a weekly training schedule, the food you eat, the tournaments you attend, the people you surround yourself with, or when you go to bed at night.

In coaching, your job is to make your students look good. It's about THEM. It's on you to come up with the structure, a training plan, and to ensure that the tennis fundamentals are being correctly taught and executed. It's up to you to positively affect the student and to have them grow and improve steadily as a player, both mentally and physically. In other words, a great coach has to be selfless. Admittedly, this has been tough for me!

I remember when I first started to play tennis and how difficult the learning curve was. Coordinating your wheelchair to a moving ball while holding a racquet is not the easiest thing to do in the world! I loved the feeling and the sense of accomplishment associated with learning a new tennis stroke or tactic. I especially enjoyed it when I felt that I had the approval of my coach.

Since retirement, I've been focusing on obtaining my coaching certification through Tennis Canada. In September, I obtained the "Instructor" certification level and now I'm on my way to obtaining the "Club Pro 1". The process is not nearly as easy as I imagined, and I have a deeper respect for our coaching system along with the work involved. I'm treating it like a university course and I'm completely nervous for my final exam in a few weeks!

As a developing coach, I've learned that the resources available to coaches across Canada are really impressive thanks to the Tennis Professionals Association (TPA). Furthermore, I've had the opportunity to learn how to be a coach with the help of coaching facilitators, including Andy Sutton and Scott Hurtubise. Both of them have been great to learn from, and I'm not just saying this to score bonus points on the final teaching exam!

In my next blog, I'll discuss the process associated with being a coach and some of the challenges I've had along the way. And in the meantime, I'll be busy studying!

- Joel Dembe, Tennis Canada National Ambassador

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