

Your coach plays a vital role in meeting your performance and tennis-specific developmental goals.

COACHING EXCELLENCE

A qualified coach is a professional who has the formal coach education, elite tennis knowledge, skills, ethics, and appropriate personality to help you meet these goals. It is essential to recognize the traits of a qualified coach to have the best possible coach-player partnership, whether you are hiring a new coach or improving your current partnership.

Checklist: Characteristics of a Qualified, Professional Coach

- Effective communicator
- Hard working
- Good listener
- Ethical
- Certified to coach
- Understanding
- Eager to learn
- Technically solid
- Analytical
- Motivational
- Supportive
- Confident
- Balanced
- Friendly
- Consistent
- Respectful
- Positive attitude
- Creative
- Adaptable
- Honest

What Are The Strengths And Weaknesses In Your Game?

The easiest way to identify how your current or future coach can best meet your current performance and developmental needs is to identify your strengths and weaknesses as a professional athlete. Using this chart and a scale of 1-10, (1 = poor and 10 = excellent), rate your performance and tennis development routines and identify your goal ratings (where you want them to be):

ASPECT OF YOUR GAME	CURRENT	GOAL
STROKE MECHANICS AND TECHNIQUE		
MATCH STRATEGY AND TACTICS		
PHYSICAL FITNESS		
MENTAL FITNESS		
EMOTION MANAGEMENT		
SCHEDULING AND PROPER PERIODIZATION		
DISCIPLINE		
ORGANIZATION		
ENJOYMENT		
OTHER		

When you identify your strengths and weaknesses, you prioritize what you need to improve to perform at a higher level. A suitable coach can help you meet your identified performance and tennis-specific developmental goals. Your goals will change as you adjust and hone your skills; therefore, regularly repeat this exercise to evaluate how your current or future coach can continue to help improve your performance.

Use Teamwork To Reach Your Goals

You and your coach must work as a team to set performance and tennis-specific developmental goals: Tactical, Technical, Mental, and Physical.

- Identify what goals are being met and what goals are not being met and COMMUNICATE clearly and assertively with your coach on your observations.
- In consultation with your coach, consider consulting with an outside specialist, to work on specific tactical, technical, mental, or physical aspects of your game. For example, a biomechanical expert can help with your technique; a psychologist or counselor can help with your mental game.
- If you and your coach have tried a variety of positive and proactive approaches without achieving your goals, it may be time to make a change.



Communication Is Key

Clear communication is essential in the professional coach-player partnership. Effective communication helps you set, act upon and achieve your goals and will include:

- Defining the coach’s roles and tasks.
- Coach-player work as a team to regularly set and act on concrete performance and developmental goals. You and your coach can do the above exercise separately and together, to compare the assessment of your skills and agree on goals.
- Resolution of any communication issues between you and your coach that may negatively impact your on-court performance.

Roles of a Coach may include:

- Strategist
- Friend
- Confidante
- Role model
- Encourager
- Teacher
- Motivator
- Facilitator
- Organizer
- Leader

Tasks a Coach can perform may include:

- Book practice
- Book hotels/travel
- Maintain equipment
- Record match stats
- Scout opponents
- Scheduling (entries and withdrawals)

KEEP THE RELATIONSHIP PROFESSIONAL

“Dual-role” relationships, when both personal and professional relationships exist, can be complicated. Examples are parent/coach and coach/boyfriend. It is difficult for players to choose to end one aspect of a dual-role relationship without a negative result. For this reason, dual-role relationships are discouraged in the Player Support Team (PST) Code of Conduct.

“EVERY PLAYER IS DIFFERENT, NOT ONLY IN STYLES OF PLAY BUT ALSO IN THE WAY THEY VIEW THE GAME AND THE WAY THEY PROCESS INFORMATION. A COACH NEEDS TO BE ADAPTABLE AND OPEN-MINDED. A COACH ALSO NEEDS TO LISTEN TO THE PLAYER AND THEN WORK TOGETHER TO FORM THE RIGHT PATH THAT WILL SEE CONSTANT IMPROVEMENT.”

-DARREN CAHILL (FORMER COACH ANDRE AGASSI)

Time For A Change?

When you believe it is time to end the player-coach partnership, be honest with yourself and your coach.

- Be professional, polite, and precise. Thank the coach for working to improve your game.
- Meet any contractual obligations you have incurred.



HOW DO I SEARCH FOR A QUALIFIED PROFESSIONAL?

Do your due diligence! These steps may help you make a safe, smart choice:

- **Ask experts for recommendations:** query certified and esteemed professionals in your National Federation or Coaches’ Association or others who are knowledgeable about coaches in the professional tennis industry.
- **Analyze:** Once you’ve identified what you want to achieve with a coach, compile a checklist to determine if the coaches you interview meet your needs.
 - Include potential “pros” (positives) & “cons” (negatives) of this coach to help you make your decision.
 - Ask to see the person’s coaching qualifications, licenses, and credentials.
 - Interview the potential coach, on- and off- the court.
 - Speak with several references, like other players who have worked with the coach or the coach’s National Association before you employ the coach.
- **Contracts:** Get independent, professional legal advice before you or your parents sign any contracts or agreements.
 - Make sure you clearly outline the period of the contract, rates of pay and any bonuses, and what expenses you will pay. Check with your National Association or other players if you are unsure what is reasonable.
 - Include a trial period in any contracts to help:
 - Ensure you are both comfortable and happy with your choice.
 - If it does not work out, that either party can exit without penalty.

The ideal player-coach partnership enables you to reach peak performance. Together with the right coach for your needs, you have a winning team!