

Managing Players & Parents

One Team, Three Distinct Roles

Successful player development requires a strong partnership between the player, coach and parent.

We describe this partnership in the following way:

The player is the pilot.
The coach is the navigator.
The parent is the ground crew.

Everyone is working toward the same destination, but each person has a different role.



The Player Is the Pilot

The player is at the controls.

They must gradually learn to:

- make decisions;
- solve problems;
- take responsibility for their preparation;
- manage mistakes, pressure and emotions;
- communicate with their coach; and
- take ownership of their development.

The player cannot develop genuine independence if an adult continually attempts to take control.

Our goal is not merely to produce players who can follow instructions. It is to develop players who can think, adapt and compete for themselves.



The Coach Is the Navigator

The coach helps the player understand where they are going and how to get there.

The coach is responsible for:

- technical development;
- tactical understanding;
- training design;
- performance feedback;
- setting appropriate challenges;
- helping the player interpret their experiences; and
- guiding their long-term tennis development.

The navigator can provide direction, but the player must remain at the controls.

For the coaching relationship to work, the player must be able to trust and respond to a clear coaching voice. Conflicting technical or tactical instructions can create uncertainty and weaken the learning environment.

THE COACH IS THE NAVIGATOR

THE COACH HELPS THE PLAYER UNDERSTAND WHERE THEY ARE GOING AND HOW TO GET THERE.

- TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT
- TACTICAL UNDERSTANDING
- TRAINING DESIGN
- PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK
- SETTING APPROPRIATE CHALLENGES
- HELPING THE PLAYER INTERPRET THEIR EXPERIENCES
- GUIDING THEIR LONG-TERM TENNIS DEVELOPMENT

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The Parent Is the Ground Crew

The ground crew is essential. Without it, the pilot cannot perform at their best.

The parent provides:

- unconditional love and encouragement;
- emotional safety and perspective;
- practical support and opportunities;
- reinforcement of effort, responsibility and good behaviour;
- support through disappointment and adversity; and
- guidance in becoming a good human being.

The parent's primary role is to develop and support the person. The coach's role is to develop the tennis player.

These roles are different, but equally important.



During Lessons and Training

Parents must not enter the court or communicate with their child during a lesson unless invited by the coach or in an emergency.

This includes calling instructions, correcting technique, suggesting tactics, signalling approval or disapproval, or attempting to gain the player's attention.

These actions—even when well intended—can:

- remove the player's agency to learn;
- distract the player and the group;
- create uncertainty about whose direction to follow;
- undermine the player-coach relationship; and
- negatively affect the learning environment.

Players need the freedom to listen, attempt, make mistakes, solve problems and respond to their coach without continually looking outside the court for instruction or reassurance.

Before and After Tennis

Parents should avoid providing technical or tactical instruction before or after lessons and matches.

A parent's advice may unintentionally contradict what the player is currently developing with their coach. Because a child naturally places enormous importance on what their parent says, even a casual opinion can create confusion or undermine trust in the coaching process.

Helpful parent questions and messages include:

- "Did you enjoy it?"
- "What did you learn?"
- "What did you feel you did well?"
- "What did your coach ask you to work on?"
- "I loved watching you play."
- "I'm proud of the way you competed."
- "You handled that difficult moment really well."

The focus should be on effort, behaviour, enjoyment, resilience and personal growth—not technical analysis or tactical correction.

Supporting Players During Matches

During competition, parents should provide calm and unconditional support. They must not coach through words, gestures, signals or emotional reactions.

Competition is where players learn to:

- make independent decisions;
- solve problems under pressure;
- manage mistakes and frustration;
- accept responsibility for their choices; and
- compete without depending on instructions from outside the court.

The parent's role is to remain supportive regardless of the score or performance.

Keeping Parents Informed

Parents are not to be excluded from the player's development. They are an essential member of the team and should understand what the player is working toward.

Coaches should communicate appropriately with parents about:

- the player's current development priorities;
- the purpose of particular training themes;
- longer-term goals;
- expectations around attendance, effort and behaviour;
- progress and areas requiring patience; and
- ways the parent can provide helpful support away from the court.

This communication creates alignment without asking the parent to become an additional coach.

The coach provides information and context. The parent uses that understanding to reinforce trust, commitment, resilience and perspective—not to deliver the coaching themselves.

Communication Between Parents and Coaches

Parents are encouraged to speak directly with the coach about questions concerning their child's development, participation or wellbeing.

These conversations should occur away from the court and outside lesson time. Concerns should never be communicated through the child or in a way that places the player between conflicting adult messages.

When parents and coaches communicate openly and respect each other's roles, the player receives consistent support without losing ownership of their tennis.



COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PARENTS AND COACHES

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Expectations of Coaches

Coaches must:

- explain the respective roles of player, coach and parent;
- keep parents appropriately informed;
- listen genuinely to concerns about a player's wellbeing;
- communicate the purpose behind coaching decisions;
- maintain calm authority over the learning environment;
- give players room to think, experiment and make mistakes;
- address parent interference early, respectfully and privately; and
- seek support from a program leader when boundaries are repeatedly ignored.

When intervention is required, coaches should assume positive intent while remaining clear:

"I know you are trying to help. During the lesson, we need your child listening and responding to one coaching voice. This gives them the freedom to learn, make decisions and become an

independent player. We will keep you informed about what they are working on and how you can best support them.”

Our Guiding Principle

The player, coach and parent are members of the same team:

The player flies the plane.

The coach helps them navigate.

The parent makes sure they have the support, values and foundations needed to make the journey.

When each person understands and respects their role, the player develops greater trust, independence, resilience and ownership—while being supported by the adults who matter most.