

5 Ways To Gain The Mental Edge in Tennis



The mental side of tennis is often overlooked and underused by many tennis players.

The more you improve and the higher level of competition you reach, the more the mental game comes into play.

In this guide, we'll show you five ways to gain a mental edge in tennis.

How Important Is The Mind In Tennis?

Think back to a day when you played amazing tennis...

What exactly went right in that match?

Were you thinking about playing great or simply living in the moment and feeling free with your strokes?

Now picture one of your bad days, when everything seemed to be going wrong...

How much do you think your mindset played a part in that poor performance?



Even at the pro level, we have the extreme examples from both ends of the spectrum:

Rafa Nadal is the ultimate competitor and doesn't know the meaning of the word quit.

Then we have **Nick Kyrgios**, who seems to throw in the towel whenever the going gets tough.

Nadal is possibly the mentally toughest tennis player of all time.

We've NEVER seen Rafa give up or tank a tennis match.

The Inner Battle

When it comes to the best players in the world, Nadal, Djokovic, Barty, they all have one thing in common - mental toughness.

Even when they're playing poorly by their high standards, they're able to win matches purely with their minds.



So many tennis players throw away matches simply because they give up and think “It’s just not my day”.

We often have two voices in our heads.

The Negative Voice

This is the voice that makes you quit. That makes you complain on the court.

When things aren't going well, this voice often pops up to give you the easy way out. This voice will often create excuses for you

“You haven’t played much this season”



“You’re still recovering from injury”

“The dog chewed your favourite tennis ball”

The negative voice will offer you the easy way out of poor performances, the option to give up and justify it to yourself.

This voice thrives in mentally frail players.

The Positive Voice

This voice is the one that tells you to keep working hard in competition, even when things look bleak.

It has the power to give you energy and keep you on the right track.

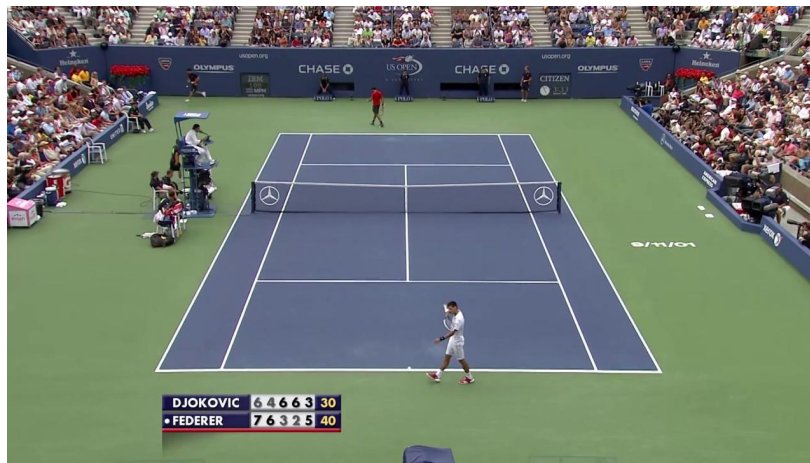
The score can be 6-0, 3-0 and this voice will give you optimism

“You still have a chance in this match, it’s not over until the last point is done”

“If you break back here, you can get back to level in no time”

Hate him or love him, **Novak Djokovic** is the ultimate competitor on the tennis court.

Djokovic has won plenty of matches after saving match points, including his famous comebacks against **Roger Federer** at the US Open.



Often, the mental battle on the tennis court is between these two opposing voices and which one you bring to the forefront of your thoughts.

Five Tips To Gain The Mental Edge

Here are five ways you can gain the mental edge in your matches and ultimately become a much tougher competitor on the match court.

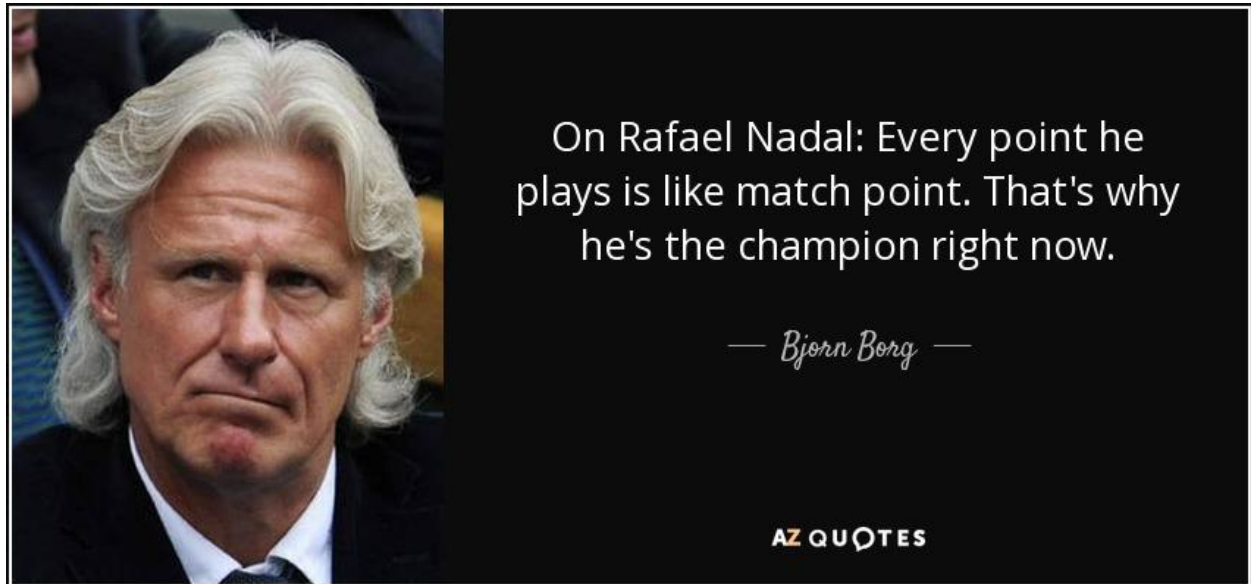
Play One Point At A Time

This all comes down to living in the moment. That easy putaway you missed? Forget about it, focus on the next point at hand.

Thinking about what the score will be if you lose this game? Forget about the score, focus on the next point you're about to play.

This is one of the best ways to improve your match performances.
The better you get at playing one point at a time, the better you'll perform in matches.

Bjorn Borg was asked why Nadal was such a great champion, this was his response:



Borg knows exactly what it takes to win grand slams, and sees the intensity that Nadal brings point after point, match after match.

Analyse - Don't Criticize

One of the best ways to destroy your performance is to be self-critical during points. Missing a sitter can cost you one point, or it can cost you games, sets or even the match.

We all make mistakes, that's part of the game.
The difference is in the way we react to those mistakes.

A top pro will make an error and self-correct as soon as the point is over. This requires you to remain composed so you can analyse the mistake with a clear mind.

Shouting or calling yourself names won't help you perform better.

But giving yourself some positive feedback will help you.

Analyse why you made the error and how to correct it so that if you get the same type of shot again, you'll be better prepared to execute the shot properly.



Pete Sampras was great at living in the moment during matches.

Friend or Foe?

When you're playing a match, you can either choose to have one opponent, or two. Too often, players end up becoming their worst opponents, with negative self-talk

“You're playing terrible”

“Your backhand sucks”

“You’re such a failure, why even compete?”

During a match, there’s nothing better than hearing your opponent attack themselves and become extremely negative.

It gives you energy, confidence and belief when you look over the net and see your opponent yelling abuse at themselves.

Why is one of the main reasons we need to aim to do the complete opposite.

Become your own best friend on the court. Talk to yourself as you would a friend who needs guidance.

Missed an easy shot?

“That’s ok, we all make mistakes, focus on seeing the ball onto the strings and try to make contact out in front next time”

Lost your service game with a double fault?

“Don’t worry, focus on breaking back here and get a bit more spin on your second serves moving forward”

Lost the first set on a tiebreak?

“This is where we need to focus on getting a good start, we can be level in no time. This is where they’ll relax and we need to be super focused”



Be your own best friend on court. It will help you immensely!

Think Tactically, Not Technically

When is the worst time to focus on complex technique?

During a match.

Technique should be worked on and mastered in training, not the match.

A few technical tips here and there, can sometimes help you, but not overthinking your entire forehand swing for instance.

If you're missing too many first serves, a small technical tip like "Focus on driving more using the legs" can make a difference.

If you're late on the return, a small tip such as "Shorten the backswing, meet the ball out in front" can be a game changer.



However, in general, you want to be thinking tactically.

What's your play going to be with your next serve?

How are you going to exploit your opponents weakness on the next point?

This should be your focus, along with small tips that can help you perform better.

The Score vs The Process

Obsessing over the score will destroy your performance.

Thoughts like “I’m two games away from winning this match” are great ways to destroy your focus and get you daydreaming about the outcome.

Anything that will ruin your focus for the next point is a big NO NO.

If you do get thoughts like those, try to replace them with a key word like reset or refocus and get your mind back on the process.

The process is playing one point at a time and doing your best to win that point.

If you win that point, then the next one, and the majority of points played, you’ll win the match.

One step at a time, one point at a time, one game at a time and one set at a time.

Enjoy the process and let everything else happen.



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