

# ITF Coaches Education Programme Level 2 Coaching Course



## Mental training for tournament tennis players

# By the end of this session you should be able to:



- Identify the psychological characteristics of tennis and of tennis champions
- Understand and use the basics of motivation, concentration, emotional control and self-confidence for tennis performance
- Identify the keys for mental performance in tournament play
- Understand and use some principles for dealing with parents

# Mental characteristics of tennis (I)



- Individual game
- No coaching allowed
- High percentage of fast decisions
- A lot of time to think during the match
- Don't know when you start or when you finish the match
- No substitutes permitted

# Mental characteristics of tennis (II)



- Knock out competition system
- Played in different surfaces, continents, different types of balls, etc.
- Recreational tennis: the umpire is the opponent
- Tear round professional circuit (no rest periods during the season)

# Mental characteristics of tennis (III)



- Ranking based on best results during different years
- No time-out decided by the player
- “Silent game”, a lot of concentration is needed
- All shots are important

# Why the mental side of tennis is not practised so much?

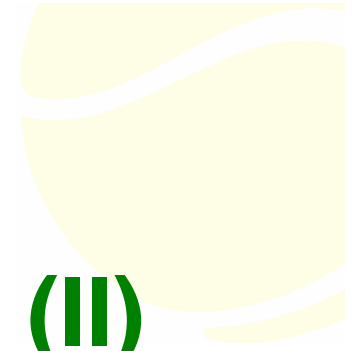
- Mental skills are incorrectly believed to be innate, i.e. that they are impossible to change
- Hard to find psychologists specialising in tennis
- Mental skills were not needed in the past, so why now?
- Coaches don't know how to teach mental skills

# Champions' feelings when playing their best tennis (I)



- Mentally very strong and determined.
- Positive but realistic.
- Highly confident, energetic and ready for action.
- Focused concentration and mentally alert.
- Physically relaxed and calm under pressure.

# Champions' feelings when playing their best tennis (II)



- Effortless and automatic.
- Lack of fear, enjoying the battle.
- In control and fully responsible.
- Enjoyment.
- High need for achievement and drive to win.
- Extremely competitive and playing with high intensity.



# Champions' feelings when playing their best tennis (III)



- Ideal Performance State
- In the zone
- Flow
- Positive momentum

**Concentration**

**Motivation**



**Emotional control**

**Control of  
thoughts**





# Motivation

- Desire to start and then persist at an activity
- ‘Engine’ of all behaviours
- ‘Without motivation, there will be no action’
- Reasons for playing
- Reasons for giving up tennis
- Commitment

# Motivation: Persistence



<b>Main reasons why people play tennis</b>	<b>Main reasons why people give up tennis</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Social interaction,</li><li>2. Fun and excitement,</li><li>3. Feelings of mastery,</li><li>4. Demonstrating competence,</li><li>5. Learning or improving skills,</li><li>6. Feeling worthy and satisfaction gained from improving,</li><li>7. Being with friends or making new ones,</li><li>8. Being part of a team, etc.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Too much pressure</li><li>2. Time consuming,</li><li>3. Boring lessons,</li><li>4. Dislike of the coach,</li><li>5. Lack of playing time,</li><li>6. Lack of skill improvement and difficulty in learning,</li><li>7. Participating in another sport, not challenged, etc.</li></ol>

# Intrinsic / Extrinsic motivation



## INTERNAL REASONS

- Love the game.
- Desire to:
  - be competent
  - master the task
  - be successful
- Play for:
  - inner pride and sheer joy,
  - pleasure, fun, and curiosity

## EXTERNAL REASONS

- Get:
  - tangible (trophies, money, etc.) or
  - intangible (recognition, praise) rewards.
- Internal reasons rated by most tennis players as the most important motives for playing tennis

# Extrinsic rewards and intrinsic motivation



- Help to transform extrinsic into intrinsic motivation
- Are administered but by the players themselves
- Provide information, not control, about the player's competence
- Are given on the quality of the performance, not on the outcome and in the correct proportion

# Motivational problems



- Lack of motivation:
  - For practice during pre-season, for playing in lower level tournaments.
- Excess of motivation:
  - When confronting very important matches or after a series of successive wins.
- Negative motivation:
  - Fear of winning, losing, playing against certain opponents and in certain competitions. Fear of injury.
- False motivation
  - ‘If I lose this match, I will give up, ‘When I lose, I always blame myself’.

# Increasing motivation



- Make tennis fun!
- Keep a daily log of your successes.
- Associate with highly self-motivated players.
- Use of goal setting
- Be positive



# Concentration



- Focus
- On the relevant cues
- Maintain the focus
- During a given time
- Key to control player emotions

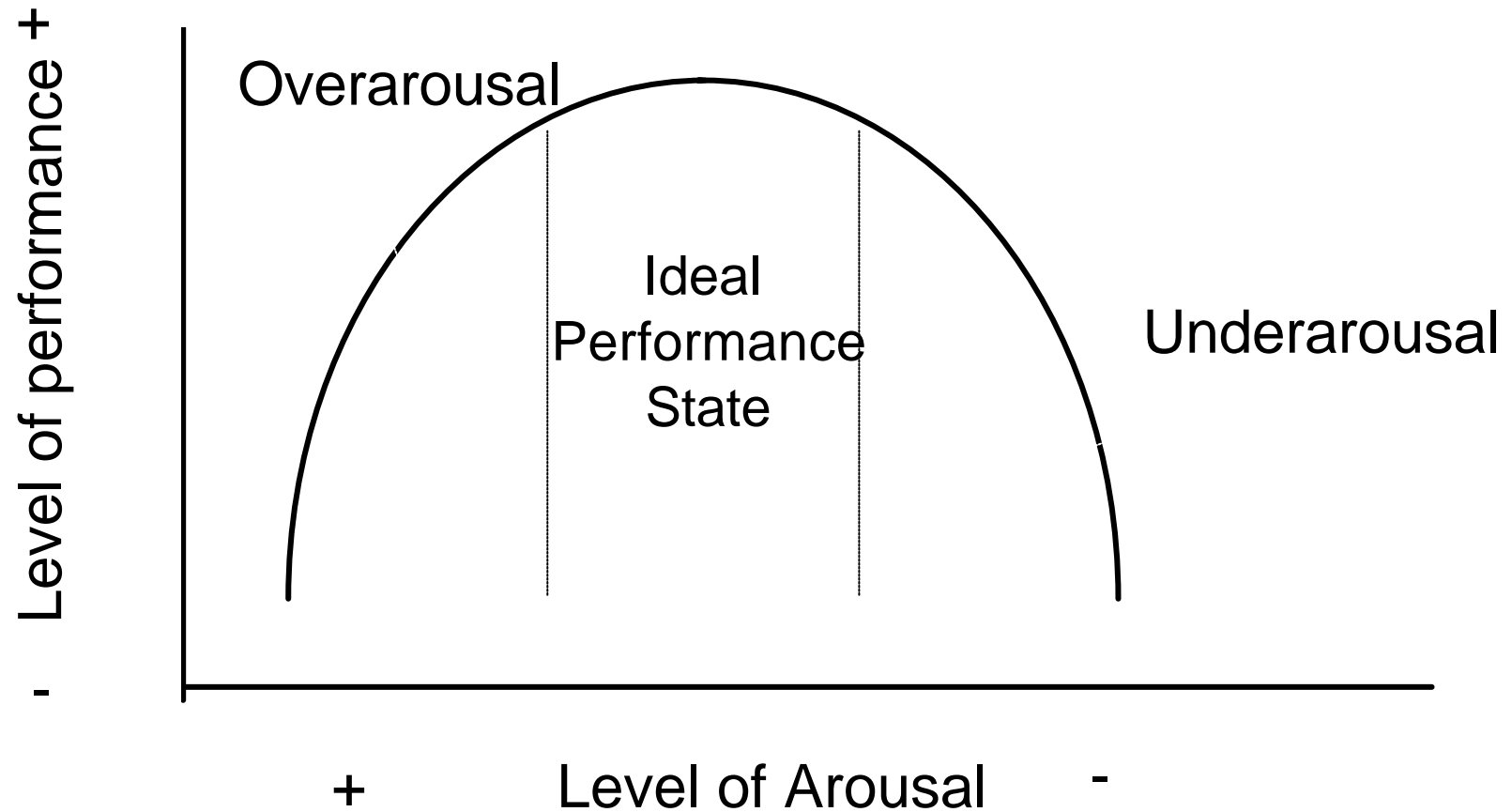
# Types of concentration

		Direction of attention	
		External	Internal
Width of attention	Broad	<p><b>Broad external</b></p> <p>Used to rapidly assess a situation, weather, playing surface, etc. (e.g. doubles exchange at net, to see where the opponent is)</p>	<p><b>Broad internal</b></p> <p>Used to analyse what happened in a game and to plan tactics (e.g. developing a game plan against an opponent, analysing why the previous game was lost)</p>
	Narrow	<p><b>Narrow external</b></p> <p>Used to focus exclusively on one or two external cues (e.g. watching the ball, picking up cues from the opponent: ball toss, backswing)</p>	<p><b>Narrow internal</b></p> <p>Used to mentally rehearse an upcoming performance or control an emotional state (e.g. mentally rehearse the serve, monitor the self-talk and feelings of stress, etc.)</p>

# Problems of concentration

- Lack of interest in the match
- A lot of starts and stops ('dead time')
- Focusing on too many cues
- Focusing on past events or future events
- Paralysis by analysis
- Choking
- Interferences

# Emotional control arousal-performance



# Sources of anxiety



- Fear of failure, e.g. ‘What if I lose this match?’
- Feeling of inadequacy, e.g. ‘I don’t think I’m able to play well today’
- Loss of control, e.g. ‘The chair umpire is continuously making bad calls’
- Body complaints, e.g. ‘I’m feeling very stiff’

# How excess anxiety is manifested



Physically	Psychologically
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Muscle tension loss of co-ordination (muscles too tight).</li><li>• Reduced flexibility.</li><li>• Become fatigued very quickly.</li><li>• Very fast heart rate, shallow and irregular breathing.</li><li>• Legs feel weak (muscular weakness).</li><li>• 'Jerky' rhythm of play.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduced concentration and difficulty in refocusing.</li><li>• Decreasing emotional control.</li><li>• Feelings of fear.</li><li>• Impaired strategy and tactical judgement (poor decision making).</li><li>• Giving up-stop trying.</li><li>• Everything appears to be going too fast.</li><li>• Inability to think clearly and accurately.</li><li>• Increasingly negative and self-critical thoughts.</li><li>• Persistent sense of pessimism about the future.</li></ul>

# How under activation is manifested



Physically	Psychologically
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Feeling that the player has not much energy.</li><li>• Feeling slow.</li><li>• Heavy feeling in legs: no bounce.</li><li>• Moving slowly: poor preparation.</li><li>• Head and shoulders down.</li><li>• Eyes wandering: Watching outside the court.</li><li>• Physically looking lazy.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of concern about how well the player will play.</li><li>• Easily distracted; poor concentration.</li><li>• Low patience and 'don't really care' feeling; no enthusiasm.</li><li>• Lack of anticipation or timing.</li><li>• Sense of 'giving up' and helplessness ('nothing I do works').</li></ul>

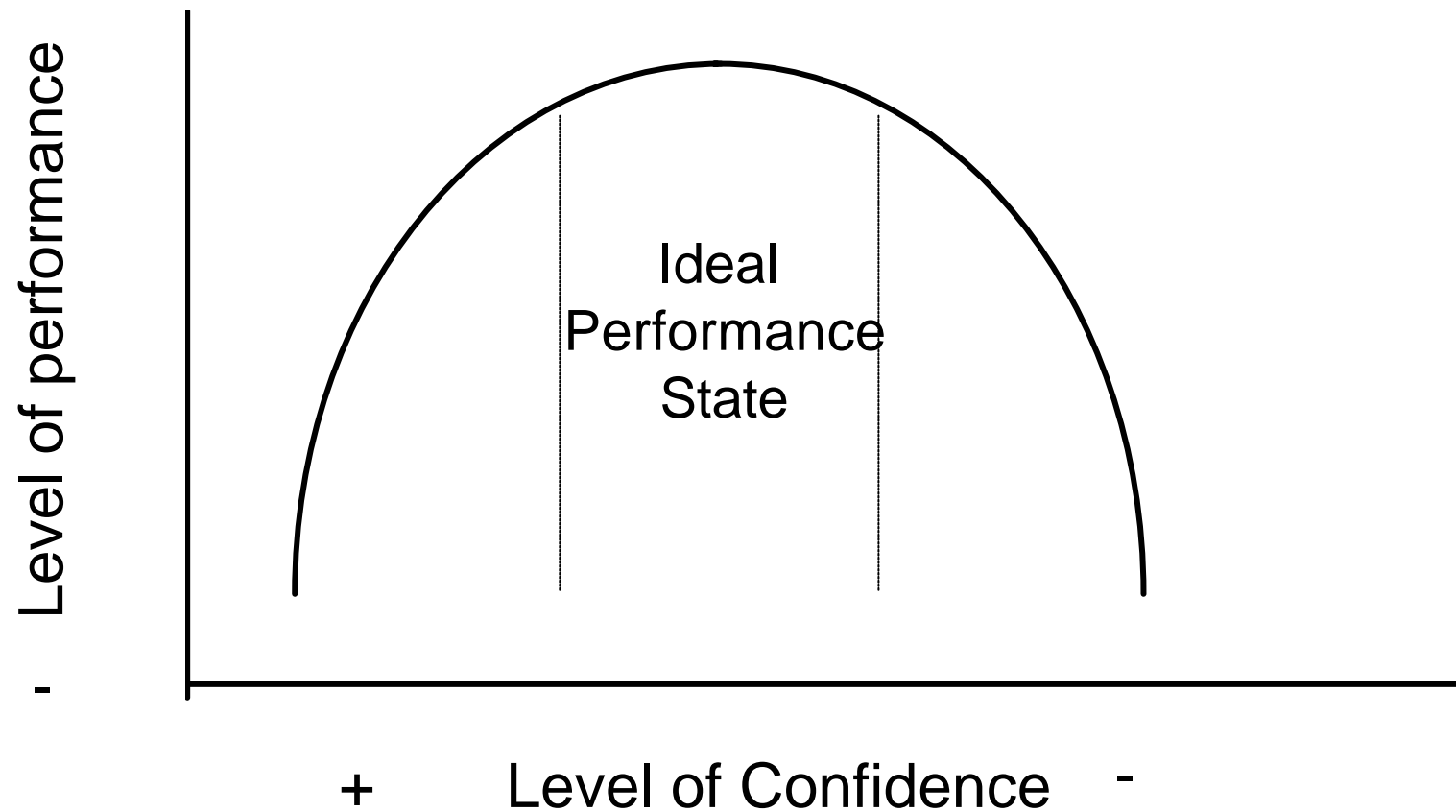
# Confidence



- Self-confidence is the player's expectation of success or failure
- The belief that one can successfully perform a desired behaviour in a given situation
- The most consistent factor distinguishing highly successful from less successful players
- Top players display a strong belief in their abilities



# Relationship between confidence and performance



# Problems with self-confidence

## CANDIDATES' TASK

Give an example of each one

- Events that are bad
- Lack of confidence
- Overconfidence
- Thoughts that create pressure and affect self-confidence
- Aspects that indicate low self-confidence

# Before the match candidates' task



Why routines are good for mental preparation for a match?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



# Routines

- Pre match plan that keeps the player focused.
- Routines to focus solely on the oncoming match.
- Concentration and relaxation.
- Set aside 20-30 min before the match in a quiet site
- Prepare yourself for 'playing in the zone' visualising how you want to play and feel

# During the match candidates' task



In which ways do players emotionally respond during a match?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

# Between points candidates' task



Give examples of what to do in each stage:

- Physical:
- Relaxation:
- Preparation:
- Ritual:

# During changeovers



- Sit down
- Dry off with the towel
- Drink
- Relax or activate yourself depending on your emotional state
- Use this time to adjust your equipment
- Plan ahead the tactics for the next games

# After the match



- Shower
- Don't link winning = success, losing = failure.
- Analyse the match from a positive perspective
- Get one or two ideas from each match
- Analyse the match, no matter what the score
- Write down the match characteristics
- Use visualisation to review what happened



# Dealing with parents candidates' task



Why do problems with parents occur?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

# Tips for coaches candidates' task



## DO'S

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

## DON'TS

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

# Tips for players candidates' task



## DO'S

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

## DON'TS

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

# Tips for parents candidates' task



## DO'S

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

## DON'TS

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.