

# 7<sup>TH</sup> WSF COACHING AND DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

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# What type of person is an elite player: How do we identify talent ?

**Jahangir Khan, Rahmat Khan, George Mieras, Sarah FitzGerald, John Milton**

Rahmat Khan said that one needed to look further than talent – with Jahangir there was the love that showed through. He was always at squash – talent does not make a world champion. The champion has something extra. The player and the coach is important. Many look like champions but they do not make it. The champion has squash inside him – they must want to do it. Enthusiasm.

**Jahangir Khan:** His father told him not to play. His family of champions inspired him – he heard others talk about how great they were. A doctor advised him not to play because he had a problem with one of his legs – everyone in the family was playing but him – so he decided he would not play at state level but he was going to play – his father gave him a short racket which became his companion. They made their own court and he played with his brothers – he wanted to play on a real court – his father told him he could only watch – so he used to knock between other people's games behind his father's back – but one day his father watched him – he felt no pain – they asked everyone for advice and then he started playing properly.

At 14 he had his first trip to Europe – when Torsim, his brother, died he became inspired – it gave him strength and he practised even harder.

**Sarah FitzGerald:** her mother spotted her- she started at age 6. When she was 8 she won her first trophy. At 10 she won the Australian under 13 title – magic trophy. From an early age she loved the speed and pace of squash which could be played in all weathers – squash gave her a burning feeling – enjoyment- being active – being involved – the friends – the travel- everything satisfied her. Winning was magic – world ranking – when she lost she wanted to fix what was wrong – she was determined to improve and correct. When she was a child she played 5-6 hours a week, but then started playing 7 days a week

The coach must always be punctual – the players want to get on court – they WANT to learn – when you tell them, they try to change.

Richard Castle commented that there is an inner talent and an attitude as was evident from Jahangir and Sarah. Apart from how well they strike the ball, they had an attitude. How do you change the attitude of others ?

The coach must motivate : J.K.'s brother's death pushed the right button.

Must test the player's determination – if he says he is going to do X then test him to see if he can.

It is a discipline – provide the facilities i.e technically, mentally, physically eg drill him

Use whatever they have and turn them into a winner

Geoff Hunt was always very fit and played length but then he would hit a winner with simple shots

Richard then asked how important are trophies. Sarah answered that she still had her first trophy – receiving something is very important.

Stuart Dixon (Canada) commented that **Jonathan Power** was extremely temperamental – cried when he lost. Through his teenage years he became stronger. 92 got to World Junior final but lost because of fitness. At the team event he was exhausted but he had had 6 tough matches- he showed guts – won all 6. The German coach told him his body was too weak. From 1992 – 2000 he went on fitness courses – got tougher, stronger and met a girl who has changed him around- shows that an influence can change a person

There are always changes in behaviour as one gets older – the change needs to be maintained – by the 3<sup>rd</sup> year then the real potential should show

Character : Both Jahangir and Sarah were the youngest sibling – took the game on with more talent and more drive. As Sarah said as the youngest always had to fight for things and always wanted to be there.

At the age of 16 her mom who had been her coach said that was as far as she could take Sarah so she then went with Geoff Hunt, Heather Mackay and Mike Johnson overseas: also with Rodney Martin, Rodney Eyles and Anthony Ricketts. They were all punctual and she learnt lots.

The coach must gain the trust and respect of the player.

The player must not always listen blindly to the coach. Jonah Barrington was told to eat eggs : he ate them only and got sick

He was also given lots of drills to do by himself – overdid them

There is the ability of listening and the ability to do what the coaches have told them. Must balance the discipline of doing what the coach says.

After injury Sarah went to Jonah and did the exercises he told her to and what would suit her – the champion must have the determination to do things even when they do not want to.

To get to number 1 you have to think you are number 2 – have to create a discipline to train.

Ken Watson added that players need to come through adversity to achieve. One has to be careful about rejecting a player at the beginning – the quality may lie dormant and then “emerge”.

When Peter Nicol was young he was told by Simon Parke to get off the court and go to the back court. When Peter was number 1, he had to play Simon at the Commonwealth Games – he hammered him but in so doing “killed” him by making him run from corner to corner !!!!!

Sarah and Ellie both added that a certain coach has influence at certain stages of a player’s life/development there are certain moments when certain steps are made or taken.

Sarah said her mom realised her limitations and that is when Sarah went to the Australian Institute of Sport. Heather Mackay later had a huge influence on her life. Sarah hated losing it: she had to learn to be aggressive on court. Mike Johnson could not get into her head so he passed her on to Jonah. She was fortunate because each coach knew when to move her on.

Jahangir Khan always had a good coach – he kept on asking what to do – his father would coach from the galleries- Torsim, Asrillah all came in at different stages – to help with training, pressure shots at each different level.

He ran 4-7 kms per day: then went to school and then played the top players who told him his mistakes. He learnt to watch when they were playing.

He was disciplined: training then bed.

They would discuss training at meals etc. Discussed tactics before and after matches.

**BUT ONE CANNOT MOTIVATE ONESELF ALONE**

The coach needs to travel with the player/s.

Richard then asked if there ever was a stage when he felt he could not play or would not listen to the coach.

Jahangir answered that when he got bored he would rest for 3 to 4 days and then start over again.

At the beginning he wanted to become the top player but then he became professional. His first loss after 8 years motivated him again. He needed discipline – he avoided going out because he had to train.

He retired when he had achieved everything and he was happy.

### **Obedience to the Coach**

Stuart Dixon commented that Jonathan Power was an exceptional person – his father was an army Phys Ed teacher – lots of his problems came from his relationship with his father. This improved when he was older but he always rebelled against authority.

After losing, Jahangir’s coach would take him into the gym where he would make him work very hard eg after losing 1-3 to Gawain.

Rhamat Kahn added that there are different stages of hitting the ball eg pressure of training – it is squash from the day you start to the day you retire.

### **The coach also needs motivation**

One needs to get a group of players at a very young age – they are 16-21 before you really know them.

Between 16-18 drugs/sex all have an influence – work with all of them- put your best into them – at

16-18 you will find who will continue – then you know there is “something” there.

Then they hit the seniors - go overseas- they have a job choice, different mind sets – eg top 20 top 10 top 5 or 4 3 2 1.

### **Character, motivation, discipline, determination, passion.**

# The direct and indirect influences of a coach on a player during competition.

## Kristina Pekkola

Kristina had 15 years judo representation. At the age of 18 in front of 75000 people she had a “mental breakdown”. She had been training 22 hours per week and had a complete family support structure.

One needs a role model. Often inner belief can stop a person becoming a champion

One needs to look at: coping with adversity, stress management, self awareness, goal setting, motivation, imagery, concentration, self talk.

Psychologist must have a good relationship with the coach. The right questions must be asked. The player must also have the courage to win. She had been working with a clay pigeon shottist who really wanted to go to the Olympics but a fellow team member said he would never go. Also have to be careful that the coach might have a dream which is not that of the athlete. Some people need time to focus and the coach must be there with them.

Performance State : Must ask the athlete what they want : A negative state is when the athlete is too lowly aroused or too highly aroused  
Where is the optimal state ? the present - people who are stressed focus on the future or the past.

One needs to change their perception – see in what performance state they are.  
With shottist she asked : How do you look ? How do you stand ? How do you breathe ?  
Need to take them to a higher level of performance.  
If an athlete is focussed on the fear of failure they will not win.  
They have to learn new patterns.  
Athletes practise for hours but their greatest fear is that of losing.  
The coach must believe their athlete will win, otherwise the athlete will fear it.  
They must also want to win.

How to perform ? The athlete should perform on their own therefore the athlete does not hear the coach. Every competition is important

Goal – an aim or an end in mind,  
The aim relates to the dream and relates to an outcome

How to prepare for success ?  
There must be a rapport between the athlete and the coach  
The coach meets the athlete in their model of the world  
The coach must match his way of communication to the way the athlete absorbs information. This increases the likelihood that the message the coach sends will be the one the athlete receives.  
The coach must promote trust and comfort between him and the athlete.

Visual – one should look upward – if one cries one looks downwards.  
By asking the questions How does it look? How does it feel ? What do you want ? She went through a number of emotional experiences – one must visualise it through one’s own eyes. One needs to visualise many successful performances and load these memories.

There are different ways of communicating – one must make it simple – the athlete must face their fears.  
One must introduce mental training into an athlete at an early age.  
She has been working with children of 6 years – working in groups and then in individual sessions.  
Teams also need to be able to communicate easily.  
One needs to run management courses – some players can inhibit other players from performing – need to give them skills

If a player is underperforming then one has to sort out the problem – must separate the personal issues from the team issues.

# Practice drills for elite players

## Rahmat Khan and Jahangir Khan

Start at the back and move forward to the front. One to self and one to partner.

Boast from A on left. Crosscourt from B

Swop over

Then 2 consecutive boasts from A cross court from B. Finish with a drop then deep backhand drive

Change to forehand

A to the front, B at the back driving in channel to self: move forward to drops: the add volleys : move volleying:

B boasts then drive to self

A crosscourt

A lob to B on forehand : change to backhand : A backhand drive /boast / high backhand volley

A change to boast for forehand : move across boast from backhand: B hits down the line

B feeding high volleys

B feeding down the walls : A running from side to side with short boasts

Then figure of 8 for A: then reverse angle figure of 8

Coach hits higher and higher from A's short drops : A must try and hit smashes into nicks

Then volley cross court both forehand and backhand

Player can do it alone or with coach

Must be no mistakes or ball bouncing twice

Do routines for an hour

Rallies must continue for at least 5 minutes – don't stop for mistakes;

Work on accuracy and power

Routines teach match practice – practice every day as though it was a match

Is there a sequence? Always start with lengths, then move forward; then to front ; then to tin

Hit 100 shots from each point . Cut the ball from service line forward but racket face open from the back.

Teach safety and accuracy

If you pressurise the player he will make more errors so find a balance – a challenge between player and coach – reward/punishment.

The coach must give continual instruction.

Hitting the ball : down the wall add the crosscourt the 2 down the wall and 1 crosscourt: 15 down the wall and boast- run to the front then hit down the wall then add the drop

Drive from the back : from mid court and then from front

Volley : Right leg on forehand : right leg in front on backhand

Go with left leg on left front

Video Technology

In 1981 used the video to show Jahangir why he lost – great help

Now even more effective

Players must practice deception- if they do not naturally have it then practice it  
Camouflage with the left elbow as it hides where the ball is going.

One can coach deception – practice hard – eg turn to side wall show as if going to hit drop shot but turn wrist.

Players must use the slice and the cut.

Tactical Drills – put the player under pressure eg 10 lengths and then move to the front

3 to back, 1 to the front, boast or drop

The student MUST be able to do what the coach says.

Build up the player/coach relationship

The change of scoring does not necessarily mean change the game. Think 15 **match** points not 15 points

All types of training are necessary : long distance; short distance: endurance “ All types – swimming, weight, mental, attitude.

Rahmat particularly needs speed and endurance

One cannot work all the time – have proper sessions – work hard and then relax, Work 5days and have the weekend off . Swimming is a good way to relax : weight training is good perhaps 3 times a week ,can still do it when relaxing.

A lot of training is mental – if it is good for you, do it.

Players can get too much information from all the coaches and then they get confused.

Training has got more scientific – Jahangir was taken out of his comfort zone – he seemed to develop mental training . Rahmat commented that he would put Jahangir through the same training now. One needs to find an answer for what others are doing and then beat them at it.

A coach must develop his own ideas. Use science as a guideline and then develop a programme.

The player must clear his mind. Every training session is a match – there must be single mindedness- the player must believe in himself

Must learn to play the ball lower and harder. Player must be alert – be aware when pushed into a corner – get out –

Work on each stroke – then mix it with movement and develop the drill – like a chain each link fits in.

The coach must keep calling – improvement takes time – work out how long you have

No mistakes particularly at handout.

SERIOUSNESS in practice matches – 1 hour is better than 3 .

IT is what one puts in practice not how long one practices.

# Effect of culture on athletes

Chaired by George Mieras

**Australia:** There is governmental support for the athletes. In 1985 the Australian Institute of Sport was inducted with the focus on developing juniors to prepare them for international competition. Last 5-10 years the focus has been on developing seniors. There are 8 state based institutes feeding through to the national institute.

Over the last 20 years has been a decline in number of centers and courts . There are 2 doubles courts: there is a lot more competition between the sports. There is a greater emphasis on mass participation. There are family programmes and a recreational emphasis for the family. There is Commonwealth Game status. It is taking a long time to develop a player.

In the 70's and 80's there were children from everywhere – now there are too many choices and this is having an effect on the number of juniors.

Ken Watson commented that we live in a competitive society. There has been a big change in society – schools and institutions are moving away from specialized education to more general education – also happening in sports – enormous range of choices – emphasis on friendly not competitive. It is the parents who are pressurising the children into competing

Singapore : 450 courts and 4 million people : people are looking at sport in a business way ; if a player achieves they get a financial reward. Hong Kong won the Junior women's world - there are certain prioritised sports – table tennis and badminton .There is excellent squash administration

North America/ Canada. Have money : have the coaches: if the athletes achieve, there is the opportunity of scholarship. Have received 150000 Canadian dollars for High performance

Sarah added that sometimes with a grant the players do not produce as everything is too easy but when there is no grant they work harder.

TV is turning many nations into couch potatoes

Asia can only get funding if there are stars. Nicol David gets government funding.  
Pakistan is hosting first WISPA event

Netherlands In 1980's hardly any funding – now assists top players.



# Working with female players and developing them as elite athletes.

## Ellie Pierce

Ellie developed from a player to a National Coach and realised she had perhaps had more talent as a coach than as a player.

### 3 aspects really affect the coaching of the female:

- a) the Double XX - double emotion
- b) The language of Venus
- c) The Femininity factor

### The best things a coach can do:

- a) Positive feedback/encouragement – support, listen, understand
- b) Guidance: good advice: mentor
- c) Good communications skills
- d) Motivation
- e) Honesty

### The worst 3 things :

- a) Negativity - the player gets scared and then freezes
- b) Poor communication skills/ not understanding/not listening
- c) Too controlling – not allowing players to work with other coaches  
Coaches are too provincial – they do not allow players to go beyond their boundaries – need to go to other countries so as to share the information

### Interesting Questions

How does a female not lose a single game leading to the finals of a world class event and then not win a game in the final.

How do scores such as 9-1 9-0 1-9 1-9 10-9 happen at the women's professional level ?

What motivates female athletes ?

What are they busy with ??

Women are victims of their own emotions

The motivation and lack thereof often has emotional “roots”

Women have high expectations – of themselves and are therefore very critical.

Women concentrate on what they do wrong and not what they do well.

Women are critical of the people with whom they work.

### Emotionally women are insecure by nature.

They fear failure, rejection, embarrassment, making the wrong decisions: are jealous.

Get players who do not want to win but also do not want to lose.

Get players who apologise for good shots.

One needs to acknowledge that nerves are there – “let's get through the nerves”

One needs to recognise that the fears are REAL and get the player to trust you as the coach.

“I understand : I hear you “

### The EMOTIONAL FACTORS

It is important that it is not what you, as the coach says, but HOW you say it.

Women want honesty – will take it personally.

Don't ask “Have you put on weight this summer” BUT : “You are looking fit and strong.”

Nurture your athlete through POSITIVE criticism.

Confidence – give the women permission to win “you CAN do it”

Find out what makes her confident on the court eg backhand high volley

Create a strategy using that favourite shot.

Women want to be understood – explain why – give them a purpose.

Women have a way of questioning things – Are you telling me a straight story ? IS it something I can believe in?

It is a learning process – educate them – create TRUST

It is about the JOURNEY not so much the DESTINATION for women.

Men believe they can win far more than women; Women look at the draw round by round.

Must tell them to do it, tell them they can win.

### COMMUNICATION

**Listen - women talk about feelings: men talk about things**

One must listen to what is not said.

ASK ? Women are good at knocking themselves down but get it right – what is going on – ask what they want to do

### SETTING GOALS

Need to define things before you set goals

Coach **must** work with the pupil

Facilitate questioning with the female athlete – do own analysis of the match – they must THINK themselves.

Need to give them a time line – **short term mid term long term**

Need to establish achievable goals from the answers given by the athletes not the coach's own interests

Athletes do not care which gender the coach is.

Most women are uncomfortable with resolving conflict

Often they "SHUTDOWN" because they do not know.

They are fearful of the unknown – so help them.

Encourage them that there is no wrong answer.

Women like to talk and share what is bothering them but the coach must facilitate the talking.

Honesty and transparency are important to women.

They want to know early when they are playing so that they can prepare for the match.

Do not play mind games with them.

The Australian team have a meeting each night where they chat about their opponents and decide on their game plan. They put their country above their individual goals.

Women are not motivated by "power plays" or mind games from coaches

### BODY ISSUES

Female stress – there is always cause and effect.

Weight Issues concerns range from friends to fashion

They need to be comfortable with who they are – they need to be realistic about who they are.

Post puberty girls have around 25% body fat because of high serum oestrogen which creates girls with hips that are to be wide.

Strength training can develop too many muscles which develop weak areas eg inner thigh.

Anorexia ¼ of the girls who attended a holiday squash club had anorexia.

There is cultural approval of being a woman. Developing muscles is not part of that vision.

Female stress is often self induced – they worry about a lot of things but not themselves. Eg friends, parents, laundry. They must learn to put themselves first.

Fears one gets erratic performances as they panic.

**If you can't mend it, you cannot understand it. If you can't understand it :You can't control it. If you can't control it: you can't change it.**

#### Physical contact

For women this is intimidating.

There is a big difference at the professional level in the women's game.

Encourage your athletes to ask for space with their bodies.

**Multitasking:** What do I want ? If you can find the answer, help them prioritise

-is there for many reasons – need to narrow the focus- help them redefine their goals - Become the athlete they always wanted to be.

When a woman chooses a professional sport there are many sacrifices – away from home- loses matches no one to talk to: the reality of being a professional athlete – need a special personality – need friends – need bonding.

How women deal with stress – need to dissect it – recognise it.

Sarah FitzGerald did not often feel homesick -once when she was about 12 and been away from home for nearly 3 months. She "closed" up and could not talk to anyone.

Coach needs to know the player – listen and watch, then start asking questions.

Paul Selby answered about the problems of sharing rooms – suggested let the team decide – also agreement that regardless of room situation the player has a responsibility to their country.

Perhaps take away out of the squash environment – a weekend away.

Women are often scared of giving the wrong answer – encourage them to THINK –

Try to get them to stop apologising – ask them why they are sorry – teach them not to apologise – being in a jungle they must survive.

Build confidence through positive criticism

“When I am a woman” – as an athlete they must divorce themselves from being a woman.

# Promoting Elite Squash through elite players. Identifying the path of becoming a world class player through PSA and WISPA

Mark Chaloner and Sarah FitzGerald

- 1 Do professionals promote the game?  
How and what are the governing body's expenses ?  
Yes, but more can always be done. They are more aware of the personal benefits they can get out and the greater the prize-money the more tournaments there are.
- 2 How do they promote ?  
Through media interviews – TV radio-newspapers  
Commentate on matches for TV  
Court time with juniors, clinics, exhibitions, doubles, promotional times on court  
They can play with sponsors/ spend time in VIP areas/ dinners
- 3 What are the governing bodies' expectations of the players?  
The players shall support and participate: they must dress correctly: their appearance and behaviour both on and off the court must be exemplary  
They must not make any comments or endorse any product which will be detrimental to the game
- 4 How can the profile of the game be raised?  
Elite players must promote the game  
All players adhere to the guidelines  
On and off court attitude and etiquette  
Personal appearance on and off the court  
Make squash awards: M/R? coaches/administrators/- draw up criteria  
Must educate the players in how they talk to the media – should be part of a Life Skills programme  
If a junior is interviewed have a senior present  
Everyone should get involved with World Squash Day  
WISPA also support Multiple Schlerosis

Governing bodies and promoters should run high profile events to give the players more exposure

- 5 How do squash players compare with other professional sports players?  
Favourably

## Pathway to World Class Squash

The circuit today is far bigger

In 1990 77 events with \$1547500 : 2004 146 events with \$1798021 but in 1990 354 members in 2004 348

How does a player get started?

Suggest play PSA/WISPA as a junior – get junior membership

Provides an idea of opportunities

Weeds out those who are not serious

Start with the Challenger events with \$500 to \$5000 prize money

National Closed Championships or Satellite events with \$6000-\$9999

Have 1 star: 1 ½ star”

: 2 star: 2 ½ star: 3 star : 3 ½ star 4 star and 5 star events

WISPA HAVE A Rising Star system

## **The Sports Psychology of working with elite players in rehabilitation after injury**

### **Kristina Pekkola**

( works at Malmo University – involved with sports such as badminton, golf, ice hockey, motor sports, shooting, swimming, tennis, football, handball, 2004 Swedish Olympic team)

### **Expectations**

Most people experience a typical reaction to injury but the speed and ease with which they progress through the various stages of recuperation are different

### **5 Stages of Grief Response**

- 1 **Denial** sometimes an athlete gets injured too often and one is not sure if it is genuine
- 2 **Anger – why** this often happens just before a major event  
1 week before a major event the anxiety level is at such a high level – one needs stress management – an athlete must learn to cope before an event
- 3 **Bargaining**
- 4 **Depression**
- 5 **Acceptance and Reorganisation**

**Self Registration** - With a back injury one must question how many times was it fine  
Everytime one feels the pain one must write it down  
Do it for 2/3 days  
Then change the feeling to a positive feeling – when did it feel good

When an athlete is anxious, nervous, the injury will always be worse because it is a thought pattern

An athlete must be careful not to start training too early

Must have a strict goalsetting programme

An athlete must talk about the injury

Other reactions:

- 1 ) **Identity Loss** depression as they are not part of the practices - the player should still go to practice – the social support group is important – talk tactics - plan for the next season  
Mark Chalenor commented that as a player you feel you can't do anything – the coach Must persuade you  
Beliefs/Innerself : The coach must assist the player to “ believe”.  
Former athlete can be isolated as no-one remembers them. The coach has new pupils and never contacts the athlete.
- 2 **Fear and Anxiety** : If tired, one side of the brain is more dominant so there is a ”mental battle”. The athlete must accept that injury is part of the body.
- 3 **Lack of Confidence** There must be realistic goalsetting – must be careful one does not start too early – one can also become more injured because you compensate
- 4 **Performance** - make exercises interesting – 30 minutes with quality

### **Results:**

- 1 **Increased strengths** may have been training in compartments
- 2 **Reduced Anxiety**
- 3 **An improved attitude towards rehabilitation**

### **Useful Tools in Rehabilitation Process**

#### **Knowledge and Education**

What the injury is

How did it happen

The treatment/rehabilitation

What can the athlete do

What can't they do

Get out of the denial stage or feeling too optimistic

Get down to reality  
Get some others who have been injured to talk to them

**Healing mental imagery/relaxation**

How will body heal in peace if thoughts are stressed  
Athletes' negativity programme – the knee or the shoulder  
Visualise blood flowing to injured area and flushing it out  
Visualisation imagery – some can see better or hear better or feel better  
Try and combine all 4  
Achilles Tendon – the sound when it went – then they feel it  
Need to change the feeling – when hear it and see it

**Manage stress yourself as a coach**

If the athlete is stressed the coach gets stressed – stress is a “virus”

**Stress management** – coping with adversity – often get injured when too tense/too highly aroused  
Muscles are stressed – see things negatively  
Must have realistic goal setting skills

**Social Support**

Sometimes the athlete gets injured because they are scared of losing  
Unconsciously too scared of losing  
Have to win and enjoy – need to educate them to get them through it  
Practice – then go home and enjoy things - do not eat, drink and sleep squash

Must be careful of negative family support  
Taking the his/her perspective (thinking how he/she feels)  
Provide emotional support  
Be realistic but positive and optimistic – pace them – don't be too optimistic

When a top athlete gets injured – the best thing is that they learn to cope/think about the injury/  
learn to enjoy and learn how important it is

Communicate in such a way that the athlete understands what is expected of him/her  
The athlete can't mind read – he/she cannot perceive what the coach is feeling

A Diver got injured – was standing on the board after 2 days visualising - there is a difference  
between visualisation and imagery. Imagery includes sight, feeling. Smell and hearing.

The process is the same for emotive issues and physical injury.

Sometimes a “trauma” can inspire a person

One needs a positive emotion if one wants to achieve – use it for the fear/anxiety before a  
competition  
Can use it in between games in 90 seconds as one needs to break the pattern.  
One needs to practice it and can do it with a group of children

# **The Cannon - Squash Training with a ball machine**

**Mike Way and Dan Martyna**

With a ball machine the concentration is twice the normal. One needs to wear protective eyewear.

Jonathan Power practises on one.

With the backhand drive, it is the easiest feed position

For the younger player do not hit the ball too hard. Have a golden opportunity to correct their technique.

With the more advanced pupils, one can have one hitting, the other catching the ball in his/her hand and putting back into bucket

Examples of drills :

1 Player A returns from the machine while Player B takes his return down the wall

Player B can then vary and do a volley drop

2 Player can catch the return of serve off the wall – needs concentration

Volleying teaches the pupils to follow and judge the ball while catching teaches them to watch the ball.

## **Mike Way**

A few tips on movement

When a professional player hits out of the corner there is a tendency to move off on 2 feet.

Some do split step off the T and when there is an emergency there is a double split.

Most drag their back foot when they hit the ball.

The player usually moves directly to a position where he can hit the ball.

A player must find his own rhythm .

For girls their number 1 source of energy is the forehand.

## **Big Hand**

**Ken Watson**

The new version is made of plastic with a Velcro strap: foam ball:

It teaches a cocked wrist and a firm wrist

The two sides offer the forehand and the backhand

The child feels the joy of hitting the ball

# Practical work with elite players

Sarah FitzGerald and Ellie Pierce

“Feel Good” Basic boast/drive

- 1 Drive to length: volley to length : drop
- 2 Drive/volley/off back wall/volley drop/drop/drive

Do on backhand : add the boast : switch sides

Traditional left foot used in front of court - practising going into the corner with the right leg. Sarah tends to transfer her weight with the midcourt ball

Volley is her favourite shot

Do speedwork to get her eye in by volleying about 2 steps away from the wall. In Melbourne in winter it is cold.

3 volleys down the line – 2 players on short line – change to backhand – hit harder and harder and shorter and shorter

Work the feet but ensure player gets in behind the ball

Put A on short line – coach behind – hit down the line – get A to move back to the T each time

Practise ghosting – push out using leg and try not to drag the foot.

Get in and out of the corner and back to the T – use smaller steps.

In Singapore the coach feeds from the middle - has the balls on the chair with the coach standing behind – the player just runs – the coach changes to drop on both sides followed by drive . Then add the boast – then add deception by turning the wrist – also use the volley.

Ken Watson who has coached for 50 years was more technical – for potentially elite player there is a fundamentally physical technique.

For any given situation there is some optimal technique before he hits the ball he has to be in position.

He added it is suitable for women and juniors to take 2 steps to get closer to the ball

Ellie and Sarah both warned of the big last step when a player lunges for the ball or drags the foot the last step should be of reasonable length i.e. a bit wider than the shoulders.

If one moves left, right, left, right then the left foot must be in the correct position.

They tried having the two feet parallel to each other and hit the backhand but for comfort needed to gradually widen the step to a natural stance.

Ellie added that the quicker you are getting back from the ball, the more efficient one becomes – be careful with movement to the ball.

One needs to get girls to do sit-ups, Girls do not turn well as they do not have enough strength – Mid thigh to belly button is the core where all twisting and timing happens.

Nicol David had spent 6 months with a physical trainer stabilising the core area – one needs to hold the core area still – works with fitness ball – Nicol now moves efficiently: gets to the ball quicker and can volley better.

A small step when shaping to take the ball allows one more ease to move to the ball.

One needs to be in the correct position, then the shot is so easy- TAKE THE BALL EARLY – set it up.

When balanced, one has options – particularly if a woman and off balance, one has problems – men can pull themselves back with brute force.

Yoga is very good – the breathing exercises – sit-ups to strengthen the core muscles



Girls of 15 – the centre of gravity changes – they don't know how to bend – they must keep bending their knees.

## ***How changing the scoring system may change the length of an elite player's career***

**George Mieras/Mark Chaloner**

PARS was introduced with the idea of shorter matches and making it more attractive. With the old scoring there were many back and leg problems which caused the player to give up.

In the USA there is a case where a player is suing his coach for overtraining.

The game has changed in terms of explosivity – players cannot afford to lose points from the start.

When PARS was played to 15 there could be a "quiet" area but now there is NO time.

This has an impact on training which is now more strength based – speed and power.

The men's game has got faster- there is more reward for winning – the intensity has increased.

A study has been done from a few events and times of matches had drooped by 20%.

A big advantage is that sponsors/TV know that the time for matches will fit in certain slots.

Rahmat Khan commented that Jahangir's strength was that he could go on for as long as he wanted. According to Rahmat, actual squash is 9 points. The charm was always "talent" – In the old system one could always fight back. It is a completely different tactical game now- in the old game there was attack and defence.

Nowadays if one is down 0-5 the player gives up.

When Jahangir played Dean Williams he won 27-0 – Jahangir just carried on – he concentrates on one point at a time – his strengths are physical and mental.

Squash is a game of chess now people get backgammon !

Paul Selby added that all junior tournaments are to 9 – need completely different tactical approach.

Mike Way commented that the PSA want something more marketable – the stronger player pulled away in the 15 point game- now the matches are closer. From the coach's point of view whatever the pro's, do the juniors will do - the game is getting faster – we must get faster and teach children to do so – the younger children are already playing more aggressively in the old system of scoring.

With advanced scientific knowledge players are training in a different way.

The old style is tight, deep, length. The top players are playing tight, harder and faster.

The general feeling was that it was crazy having 2 systems.

## Similarities between a musician performing at a world class level and an elite athlete

### Dominic Miller lead guitarist with Sting

There are a lot of similarities- one has to be really good – it is a never ending journey – one never ever achieves perfection – you want to stay on top – there are many others who want your job – learn many styles of music. He is not a genius, he has worked hard.

1 Need discipline and practice – practice – have to do it slowly and thoroughly – some people want to get there too quickly and cut corners – he practised Bach – there is a secret code to music – simple but also very complicated – one can play the piece without emotion – get every note to come out evenly – practise 3-4 hours per day – have a break – then go for fun – then go back and play it better.

To be on top, one has to be respectful of theory – even if talented, one still needs the theory – he developed discipline over time – he is improving – younger talented guitarist could take on his job – so he has to stay on top – is a never ending journey.

He started off at 15 knowing he was going to be a musician – went to Birken College of Music at age 16 – discipline came in then – he became a musician – he learnt the classical guitar.

2 He then went on a mission – one can make it if you do the work – but there is a huge price to pay- success comes at a price – he is divorced with 6 children – he now loves all the things he missed – at 19 he was playing professionally – he also had to work – things did not come easy – his parents supported him with everything .

He wants his reputation to stay in tact – he has to keep goals – he talks at Music Colleges – and is a role model

There is a concept of rest – otherwise there is burnout – being able to sleep and really to chill out is a bonus – he does it through yoga – he has a few people who train him on life – and there have been women who have taught him about life.

Does one get nervous ? there are those who say they don't – he gets unbelievably nervous – have to be prepared – eliminate anything that can go wrong – he practices all day – some sleep before a concert – some call it meditation – he does yoga

3 The level of preparation is unbelievable – for a musician a song is like a prayer – there is a beginning and an end – think of each section as a tune – and then put it together – nerves are huge – one wants to lose oneself – but you have to be there at the right moment Need to know the music backwards – play a tune while listening to TV is the ultimate – one just plays automatically – one wants to be free.

Playing in a band is a TEAM opportunity – make others look good by playing well – same as squash – you want to make your support group look good.

When you bring in new team members – welcome them – worked with Sting for 15 years – One of the advantages when he was the new boy – at interviews you played the new music – play different music – you don't play the whole arsenal at the start – same as sport – save it for the moment when your opponent least expects it - like boxers – like chess

4 How to respect the individual but give them the discipline to handle the nerves – one has to find out who you are – one needs to let the person know you can fail- failure is a part of growing – there is high pressure in sport and music – performance is the pressure – a concert in San Francisco was bad but one in Albert Hall was good – everyone is looking for that “zone”

Sting allows them to grow and make mistakes – with a new person dissolve the raw talent and then build it up again

One needs to find the motivating factor not the choker for that player so that they can win not Lose

5 Dominic is also running a solo career – Sting is allowing him to do this – on stage they are all equal – he has been doing yoga since 1989

American tennis players look “ happy” in their skin – they do not think they will lose.

The real enemy is oneself – enemy is his incompetence – there is the possibility of failure but when he goes on stage he can't fail – he makes mistakes – the favourite is when the band plays in sinc

The musicians travel the world doing shows – just like the players – have to perform whether they want to or not – 2 worst days of the week are yesterday and tomorrow - Today is the

most important – whether game or gig – have to do everything one can to make it a reality – must feel the same whether practising or in the studio – when practising do it for a higher power.

You have this talent what are you going to do with it –

Standard of success /measurement – squash rankings – growing/knowing you have played a new piece – contrast in styles – money is the shallow way – record sales – cheques – happiness used to measure the success – longevity of his career

Need to get better and younger until you die

Longer he has been in the band – consistency has improved – music becomes betterer and stronger-

Sting and he have got better – they work well together

One must REST and have FUN

When he goes away he does not take his guitar or music or computer – one needs a hobby as well – need to do something else – he still gets annoyed – a lot of geniuses come with complexities –

One must clear one's mind at the start of the day eg practice or play music

# Elite Player Schemes within School Education using the Swedish Squashgymnasiet and the Finnish Squash School examples

## **John Milton and Simo Tarvonen**

One needs to look at the suitability of Player Development Scheme in context of the country concerned.

Both Finland and Sweden are geographically big but are sparsely populated

Sweden had 9 million people while Finland has 5 million

One needs for countries with too few quality coaches

For countries with a small number of players

For countries with limited facilities

## **Finnish**

Finland has limited financial resources

12 official Sports High Schools

Helsinki – 50 sport disciplines – 500 athletes aged between 16 and 19 from all over the country

40 coaches paid by the school, national federations and local clubs

High academic level

## **Squash Academy**

Organised by the Finnish Sports Association and the High Schools

3 coaches for squash

4 10 players between 16-19

5 4 players over 20

6 Started in 1986 with Sami Elopuro now produces most internationals – Olli and Timo Tuominen, Juha Raumoli, Mika Monto, etc – Olli still practices at the school

Schedule : 7h30 – 9h30 there is squash training - Tues/Wed/Fri is team coaching and on Thursday the personal coach : 10h00 -15h00 is school and thereafter on Tuesday physical training until 17h00: on Monday and Friday the players have their personal coach and Wednesday and Thursday is team/group coaching

There is a comprehensive development programme which includes: Student Counselling, Nutritional Guidance, Physiotherapy, High Quality Coaching, Antidoping, Health care, mental training, teachers, personal coaches . The network also includes parents , the media and sponsors, overseas players

## **Off Court Goals**

### **Student Counselling**

Combine professional training and professional studies-time managements, flexible solutions  
Counsellor is seen as a coach – ability to see the individual needs

### **Life Skills Management**

Initiative, social skills, independence,

There is co-operation between the different sports and coaches.

With a favourable environment, the right attitude one will get top performance

There must be self belief He did it I can do it too

Need talent, commitment

Need a pool of players for practice and competition

They have high quality facilities, high quality coaches and a comprehensive programme

There is high quality academic education

Physical conditioning

Diet and nutritional guidance

Immediate access to physiotherapy services

On going mental training and development

Sufficient pastoral care – lifestyle

## **Factors that differentiate the good payers from the potentially good:**

True self belief

The ability to accept support

Adaptability  
 Passion  
 Trust

Institutions treat each person in the same way – must try to develop each individual. The brave coach will allow a pupil to make a decision which may be wrong – he must learn from failure

**The Coach’s abilities required in order to develop potential:**

Belief in the player  
 Accept support from specialists, other coaches and the players themselves  
 Adaptability  
 Attention to detail – relying on the coach to be the parent- mood swings –  
 Passion - show the players passion  
 Commitment – the coach must be as committed

**Player development schemes**

- provide the opportunities – don’t produce champions- only the player can become a champion  
 - can provide or do too much for players – build the programmes alongside the players – there is a new batch each year –  
 One always has to adapt the system to each group  
 Perhaps only 1 champion will emerge from each group – if they say they have learnt a lot that is the bonus – one may only have one international team  
 They do not teach the players the dedication to reach the goal – the player must do that himself – they only introduce the discipline that is necessary.

It is up to the player to have the commitment required to be a champion

The Levels they have (SOUTH AFRICA SHOULD DO THE SAME LA)		
<b>Kids</b>	<b>Junior Level</b>	<b>Adult Level</b>
<b>8-13</b>	<b>15-19</b>	<b>professional players</b>
<b>Squash afternoons</b>	<b>high school/squash academies</b>	<b>universities</b>
<b>Primary/secondary academy</b>	<b>national teen camps</b>	<b>squash</b>
<b>Goal – get more kids teams</b>	<b>goal – support players</b>	<b>National</b>
	<b>Trying to reach international Level</b>	

- 1 Player development is the only way for small or undeveloped countries to have a chance of Competing with more established nations.  
 Answer : It is not the only way – a good coach/mentor can develop a player
- 2 Players in a development scheme should not be allowed to use any coach outside that scheme  
 Answer : Disagree – a touchy subject If the criteria/parameters and a contract are set at the start and the player/the coach/the parents know where they stand perhaps but there will be issues which are difficult to resolve - one would need a consultation period – a compromise might be needed.  
 The scheme adapts to the individual – it must be in the players’ best interests
- 3 A talented junior player living too far away from a player development scheme and with no quality support or competition who is not allowed to relocate and live away from home by his parents will never fulfil his potential.  
 Answer - grey area . It is unlikely – player would need a support system – exposure - good coach – perhaps need to educate the parents
- 4 Player development schemes should only accept the best players  
 Answer : disagree – the best group may not be in the long term – others will come through – bring in other players.
- 5 Can an established country with a high density population and a high number of players benefit from having a centralised development programme. – yes
- 6 What are the factors deciding where a development scheme should be based ?  
 Answer: cost of the facility ; base of players: facilities available: support service, amenities: coaches available: good environment/ location: access to international airports

# Contemporary Issues in Elite Player Development

**Ellie Pierce: Geoff Wollstein: Stuart Dixon**

Over the past 15 years there has been lots of change:

Rackets: shoes – this had brought modified technique – improvisation

There has been a real change in philosophy – how shall we play ?

There have been changes in lifestyle – everything is go-go , speed

PARS is a consequence of the change in philosophy – it has taken an element out of the game.

There is confusion as to what constitutes correct technique and there is a wide diversity of opinions.

There is very little scientific based research on squash coaching methods and technique. The opinions are personal and sometimes subjective eg the transference of weight.

Is what the top players do what we should be coaching the beginners ?

What do we coach the players – development up to pro ?

## **1 In the movement to the front of the court which foot is used as the last step and why ?**

Geoff Wollstein

It depends if the player has sufficient time or not ? Is there a right/wrong – preferred/non-preferred?

If there is time the foot you play off depends on the purpose of the shot : so as to maximise power:

Accuracy: options and any combination of the above.

There is an analogy to golf – 2 objectives :power and accuracy. The line through the toes is parallel to the direction.To maximise deception of the foot face the front corner at 90 degrees

## **2 Balance, stability in movement and stroke production**

For purposes of recovery one needs good balance and good stance . With a deep lunge the back leg will drag forward – if balanced does not matter how wide that lunge is

If total equilibrium then one can change the centre of gravity – if moving backwards center of gravity is behind

Need to coach them how to move – tall and short people have different centres of gravity also between girls and boys and at puberty.

## **Volley optimising opportunities**

Ellie Pierce

Are players volleying enough – no they miss the opportunity and are more comfortable going to the back Why don't they volley ? – They do not see it as a link in the chain of the whole game. The players see it generally as a “moving” shot not a winning shot eg Thierry Lincou uses it to move his opponent around.

They are not technically able to have their racket ready or they do not have the belief they can play it. They end up off balance after the volley so thus do not play it.

Some players do not watch the ball as it goes behind them – they have not got the ability to volley.

People are not technically ready –

The positioning on court – need to step in off the T watching the ball – need to anticipate where the ball is – often players do not see the advantage of the volley

## **Drop Shots – should an elite player have a large range of techniques according to the court**

Stuart Dixon

Change in the height of the tin at the elite level has resulted in more drop shots

.Technique does not seem to matter It is the feel, instinct, confidence

How does one hide dropshots?

It is the ability to hold the ball/shot - hit at a different type of bounce – body position – choice when one is in the front – can play a very deceptive drop

There is a difference between the glass and the plaster courts – one boasts more on the glass and there are more opportunities to drop - it creates pressure- counterdrop in front – top spin drop when at side wall