

Welcome to the Essential Tennis Podcast.

If you love tennis and wants to improve your game, this Podcast is for you. Whether it's technique, strategy, equipment or the mental game. Tennis professional Ian Westermann is here to make you a better player and now here's Ian!

Hi and welcome to the Essential Tennis Podcast-- your place for free, expert tennis instruction that can truly help you improve your game.

Today's episode of the Essential Tennis Podcast is brought to you by Summersetsportsperformance.com.

I wanna talk briefly about that intro that I just did. Do you really believe that you can improve your tennis game just based on a Podcast? I really believe that it's possible. I believe that the information that you guys get on the show can help you improve your tennis game.

Now obviously you're not gonna be able to do that just by listening. You have to fulfill your end of the bargain as well by going out and working hard at your game and implementing the things that I talk about here with my guests and by myself as I answer questions.

But I really do believe that you can improve your tennis game just by getting good information like you can find here on the Essential Tennis Podcast-- going out working hard and putting in the effort. You really can get better and that's why I do this show. I want to help people enjoy the game of tennis more and improve. The better you play the more fun it can become.

So thank you very much for joining me and I truly do hope that the show can help you improve. Today, myself and my good friend Royce are going to finish talking about tennis professionals and more specifically the ones that you want to work with in our opinions.

So let's go down to business. Sit back, relax and get ready for some great tennis instructions. [music] [music] [music]

My guest today on the Podcast is my good friend from college Royce Sternquist. Royce welcome back to the Podcast.

Royce : Thanks buddy, thanks for having me again.

Ian : Absolutely. Good to have you back on the show and the last time Royce was here we talked about the top 3 things to look for in a tennis professional that you don't want to work with. In starting that show Royce and I were on planning on doing the top 10 things to look for in a pro you do want to work with and don't want to work with.

But as things typically go here on the Essential Tennis Podcast, we kind of took double the time that we were expecting. So today is going to be kind of part two in that topic and we're gonna talk about the top things that you guys should be looking for when trying to choose a tennis professional to invest your time and money in. Tennis lessons can definitely be expensive and I know that's a reason, a big reason why people listen to this show is because they're looking for good information and solid instruction but don't necessarily have the funds to go find a tennis professional and pay them for private lessons.

For those of you who do have the luxury of being able to do that, you want to make sure that you pick somebody who is really gonna give you the best use of your time and the best use of your money.

So Royce and I both have our top 3 things to look for and we'll see-- some of our things may overlap a little bit we'll just kind of have to wait and see as we talk it out. And Royce, let's go ahead and start with your list. What's your number one thing that in your opinion we should be looking for when choosing a tennis professional?

Royce : Well, I think that any teacher in general-- one thing that will separate one from another is one who really recognizes the individual learning tendencies of their student or their client and they're able to tailor the instruction to that learning style... To maximize their learning potential and the reaching of their client's goals.

Ian : OK. So what kind of different learning styles or different types of students in your teaching do you typically see. Give us some examples.

Royce : I have some that are, I wouldn't call them high-maintenance, they're more verbal and.. .

Ian : OK.

Royce : Can understand kind of a, they just do a much better job of understanding things you know by asking a lot of questions or just I'm able to tell them to do something

[05:00]

Royce : and they can pick up on it. You know whereas, there are some that are a little bit more hands on literally speaking, you know where I have to show them-- both in terms of you know certain movements within myself or to show them and kind of show where they need to be with their correct body position on certain strokes etc. Just kind of being able to go, OK, this is how they learn because able to not just have that cookie cutter mold of teaching and being able to adapt.

Ian : Right and for those listening who may want to go take lessons, it's important to find out or think about ahead of time, maybe what ways that you think that you learn the best and some people learn more by doing, some people more by talking and listening, others by watching demonstration and being able to copy and so yeah, there's definitely a lot of different learning styles and teachers have teaching styles as well.

We talked about this a little bit in the last show that Royce and I did together. Different tennis pros tend to approach things kind of naturally from a certain perspective or through using one of those tools by demonstrating or by you know, physically helping somebody feel what to do by helping them out with a swing path etc. Or by talking and I agree with you Royce, a good instructor can jump back and forth from teaching method to teaching method based on how a student learns. And that's not easy for a lot of pros to do and some pros are kind of stubborn, so yeah this is a good one for sure. Anything else to add about that?

Royce : Oh, no I just think that you know, as you said, that it's important for us as the teaching pro to be able to have that fluidity within our teaching abilities to really make that distinguishable for each specific client as oppose to forcing the client to adapt to our teaching style.

Royce : Sure, but you definitely want to find someone who has that fluidity and that flexibility to teach.

Ian : So how can we tell that a tennis pro has that ability or not? Is there an easy way you know, to test that or what are we looking for to see if that's the case?

Royce : I honestly just think it's the matter at that point of trying to get out on the court and seeing if as a client, they're able to adapt with your learning style. You know I wish there were an easier way to do it but I don't see one that that immediately comes off.

Ian : OK. All right let's go to your second topic then. What's your second thing to look for in a good tennis pro?

Royce : This goes back a little bit, a little bit to what I just said. You want a teacher then I don't care if we're talking elementary school or you know, tennis instructor or what have. You want to have the ability to show and don't tell.

Ian : What do you mean?

Royce : Well you know, there are times where yeah some people are you know auditory learners or what have you but you want to be able to show them some things rather than you're saying swing from low to high or do something.

Ian : Yeah.

Royce : You want to be able to show them and tell them in a different context that will help them see the whole pictures and see kind of what you're describing.

Ian : Yeah.

Royce : You don't want to get all technical and say " hey you're gonna put the racket down at 45 degrees or what have you and come up, you know, just say you know be able to say you know what,

aren't you gonna imagine you're tossing the tennis ball underhand or something you know in terms of, so they start to get a better visual pictures in their mind and there's something that they're much more apt to remember you know as well as something that they have you know, a previous experience with so they can start planting that seed and let it grow from there.

Ian : Yeah that's a good one and that kind of coincides very closely with your first one about being able to teach different types of learners and yeah, sometimes as a teacher myself and you too I'm sure, we kind of have to search for each individual person the best way to explain it so that they get it because not everybody you know computes information or input the same ways, and so yeah a good tennis pros is going to have a lot of different analogies or things for you to think like Royce just said, you know it's like throwing a ball underhand for some specific technique or other relating to a tennis stroke and a good tennis.. .

[10:00]

Ian : professional is going to have multiple ways to explain to you the same thing in case you don't get it the first time because there's gonna be some pros that you might take a lesson from that will try to get you to get something and if you don't get it the first time, if that's all they have and there's like well "you just kind a have to get better at it", you might wanna look for somebody else. That sound accurate?

Royce : Yeah that's right. That's completely right. It's one other reason why one of the first question that I ask someone when they start taking lessons with me is, " what other sports do they play."

Ian : Yeah I asked them a lot.

Royce : That is one thing that I always tried to be aware of, so I have an idea of their background, so I can make those analogies and you know those are things that they're able to understand and make the correlation too.

Ian : Yeah, I'm lucky to teach at a club where golf is very popular, it's more popular than the tennis side of the club really. And being a golfer myself, I'm able to use a lot of analogies that way because there's a lot of similarities between golf technique and tennis technique as far as use of the kinetic chain pronation or supination stuff like that.

So yeah, a good tennis pro should be able to make analogies and explain things in a way that make sense to you, specifically you! Not everybody else besides you, but you the student ' cause that's why you're there, you should be able to learn stuff that's applicable and that makes sense.

Royce : Completely agree.

Ian : Alright. Moving on to your third one there, and did you say that you have 4 actually?

Royce : Yeah, one is just the general passion for tennis and the job as an instructor you know. That should be not withstanding.

Ian : Let's save that for last and if we have time we can clunk that in with a bunch of other general "no, no's", I think for tennis pros. Let's go on to your third topic then.

Royce : This one for me is really important you know, both coming, you know from my background as a tennis instructor but also as kind of growing up, playing a lot of tournament and everything that I as a tennis instructor try to celebrate the small successes to achieve the larger goals.

Ian : OK.

Royce : You want to be able to look at the big picture but also have those smaller pictures, those smaller goals that you're able to achieve. You want to keep coming back out so you're always feel like that you're seeing some improvement, you know and ultimately the end will just justify the mean. I don't remember the name of it, but you know those pictures, you know that might look like a dolphin jumping out of the water, but when you look closely at the picture it's you know, a bunch of small pictures of whatever.

Ian : Yeah.

Royce : You know what I'm talking about?

Ian : Yeah, there's a name for that but I don't remember what it's called but there's kind of a famous one of Yoda, you know what I'm talking. There's a photo like that of Yoda and it's made up of like several hundred, you know, Star Wars scene photos (not that I'm a Star Wars nut). I know what you're talking about.

Royce : That I think you know is something that is real important. Tennis can be quite frustrating at times, you know and you want as a client to have an instructor that will celebrate those small successes with you-- to say yes you're going to get frustrated but you are you know making progress. To they're giving their reassurance and everything and they keep moving forward and not get stuck in a bad move and want to be turned away from tennis.

Ian : Yeah, that's definitely important. As teachers we definitely want to make sure that our students can see that they are making strides and they are improving because that's, I mean that's why they're there. That's why people come out to spend time with us is to get better. So yeah if you take lessons from somebody for I don't know for 4 or 6 weeks, you know one time per week and just not feeling like you're improving or that your understanding is any better or that techniques have improved, you might want to look elsewhere. I guess that's probably the flip side of that one.

Royce : Yup.

Ian : Alright anything else on any of those three Royce?

Royce : I can't think so. I'll be curious to hear what you've got.

Ian : yeah and this is really interesting actually because all three of mine are completely different. So I'm glad that I had you on the show because we kind of get two perspectives here. So yeah, it's interesting to compare our lists for sure.

[15:00]

So, I'll start from the top of mine and I'm borrowing this phrase from a financial expert that I'd like to listen to. His name is Dave Ramsey-- I listen to his Podcast. But he likes to use a phrase where he says that "the people that you really want to work with in the financial industry, you know like CPA

or whatever, are people that have the heart of a teacher and not of a salesman. And I feel like this is very applicable to tennis pros as well.

You're going to run across a lot of tennis pros who have been in the club industry for quite some time and they are a great personality, they're fun to be around, they're very easy to talk to but they're kind of there just to entertain. And that's not the kind of person that you guys want to look for.

You want somebody who really largely kind of goes back to what Royce was talking about-- his fourth point, kind of having a passion for it. But it's kind of different. You guys should be looking for somebody who is there because they love to teach. They enjoy the instructional process. They're there because they enjoy seeing their clients get better. They enjoy seeing their students improve and they should be there because they are a teacher--not because they were good at tennis and you know, it was kind of an obvious career choice and they're just kind of floating along and collecting a checks. You guys should be looking for somebody who loves to teach and really is taking an interest and is investing in your game very closely. What do you think Royce?

Royce : Oh I think that's completely right. The one thing I would add within that though, is you don't want to find someone.... At least the way I look at it. You don't want to find someone that neglects the relationship aspect though. . .

Ian : Yeah that's true.

Royce : As much as someone might love the educational process in teaching tennis etc. that if there's no relationship that's ultimately developed, I think in some ways that can be actually detrimental to the facilitation of the learning process.

Ian : Let me ask you this though. How many pros have you actually seen that are on that side of the spectrum where they're you know, really serious and intense and they're good at the tennis part but just have no personality. How often do you actually see that?

Royce : I've seen that a few times .

Ian : OK.

Royce : They're good instructors, people that know what they're talking about but they don't relate well or people don't just care for them.

Ian : Alright .

Royce : It's one of the things that you know, you want to be able to kind of have that passion but also be able to relate and be able to really connect with each and every person that you teach with.

Ian : I guess for me personally and this is a personality thing. Listeners you may feel completely different or you may gravitate more towards Royce or myself and don't get me wrong, yeah it's great to find somebody with good personality and somebody that you just enjoy being around in general and being a good teacher to boot, but personally, I mean if I to choose one or the other I'd much rather have a drill Sargent, hardcore type of guy who has a no personality at all but is a very good teacher and is going to work you hard as opposed to the other side spectrum which is you know you're kind a shmoozer or stereotypical country club pro type of person.

Royce : That I completely agree. It's just one of things where I would just say that go for a quality... You want to add value, you know I mean from a teacher's perspective, because we are salesman you know, in and of itself that is part of the job that we want to add value to ourselves and to the client you know? And you wanna be able to have the relationship and that adds... I'm not saying to shmooze, but you want to be able to say how are the kids or you know, knowing your client's name, your name [inaudible]... Where you have that relationship not just like, "Oh hey you're lesson at 4 O'clock [laughter] .

[20:00]

Ian : but that's what I do though, what's wrong with that?

Royce : Alright. You know everyone by their social right? [laughter]

Ian : 3 O'clock get over here! [laughter]

Ian : Yeah, I definitely preferred more towards the regimented side of the spectrum which is strange because I work at a country club and so it can be kind of frustrating for me to balance that sometimes.

Not that I'm a mean person but I guess I just like to get business done when I'm on the court. But yeah this is personal preference but I do agree that there definitely should be some kind of balance but that probably depends on what you're looking forward to.

Anyway we can probably talk about that for a while. Let's move on to my second point here and this relates a little bit to one of yours Royce. You were talking about the Yoda posted and my second one here is that your teaching pro should have a long- minded approach to your game.

Meaning that when you're going for a lesson they should be able to tell you whatever you're working on specifically in terms of tactics or technique or maybe even footwork or conditioning. They should be outlining like literally with you, they should be outlining where this technique fits in with your overall game and how it's gonna help you improve long term.

Tennis is like Royce was saying earlier, tennis is difficult and it takes most people a lot of time and effort to really become competent at and so don't expect to go in there and take you know, one or two or three lessons and have big parts of your game completely changed especially as it pertains to technique.

It could happen but you should be more expecting that you're working on things that are pretty tough fixes and your pro should be able to tell you here is how this is gonna benefit you, you know 6 months or a year from now is my plan that you're able to use this technique and implement it in this way and they should have a general long term approach to how they're trying to help you and develop you as a player. Am I making sense Royce?

Royce : Yeah my question that would have to input is do you run into any problems given kind of the immediacy the people want to be able balance that aspect with your teaching?

Ian : Yes. [laughter]

Royce : Fair enough.

Ian : Yeah definitely and I'm getting better as a teacher at communicating when I start working with somebody on a specific stroke-- especially if it's a relatively new client and we haven't been together all that long. I'm getting better at communicating to them, listen you know on your serve you're using you know an Eastern grip, I'll explain to them you know technically this is why it's not as good as a Continental grip. This is why a Continental grip is better, it helps your body work more efficiently and these ways you know XYZ and then I'll tell them "listen you know, it's going to benefit your game a great deal if you can become good at this.

However you know just for your information it's very possible, this could take you really some effort and investment in time and practice and energy and I'm getting better at letting people know listen this is not going to be an overnight thing because most of time it's not. They need to be prepared for that . But yeah sometimes that can be a challenge, people can get frustrated that they went and paid \$60 for a lesson and they didn't immediate become better. I think sometime people kind of expect that I should just give them some kind of magical instructions and they just get better.

Royce : We wave a magic wand on them.

Ian : Yeah .

Ian : Yeah, anything else to add to that?

Royce : I think we all have, as teaching pros, we all have different stories of clients that you know, we try to express what will benefit them in the long run and they get frustrated because they don't have that immediacy. The immediate results to see for it. They don't like the idea of taking care of three steps back to take 10 forward. . .

Ian : Yeah definitely.

Royce : You know that is in and of itself difficult-- going back to what I was saying, to celebrate those small successes to kind of achieve those larger goals.

It becomes difficult but that's something you definitely would want to, you know, a pro to be able to do to keep your attitude positive, to say, "you know what, it's OK to take those steps backward because in the end you are going to greatly benefit from them.

Ian : Now you're right. Yeah and there is responsibility on both the student and the instructors side of the equation here. It takes, it takes a patient and good instructor to be able to move a students through those phases and be able to help them learn a new technique like that. And it takes patience and investment and effort and time on the students part as well. So, yeah it's not easy.

Tennis lessons should come with some kind of disclaimer... [laughter] to make it, to make it easier on us. [laughter] Royce: There you go. That's your new website... Just creating a teaching contract. [laughter]

Ian : Yeah i can come up with the legal tennis pro documents [laughter] They can be the tennis elbow waiver [laughter] .

Royce : [inaudible] Ian : Yup.

Royce : There you go, that's your new endeavor .

Ian : It's not bad actually. I should think about that. [laughter]

Alright, and on to my last one.

And this is kind of a broad statement and it's something that can be difficult to judge but I really feel I need to say this [laughter].

My third one is that in looking for a good tennis professional, they need to actually know what they're talking about [laughter] when it comes to tennis.

Their instructions should make sense to you-- it should be logically sound. Whatever steps they're asking you to go through and the way that they explain it should make sense with how your body

works. It should make sense in relations on how you see players that are better than you swinging the racket or how you see good players playing. It should make sense.

I've seen throughout my somewhat short career, as I go from club to club and watch tennis pros at other facilities that I don't teach at. There are some pros that are like, kinda have pet instruction or ways of teaching that don't make any sense to me and even worse than that, I sometimes hear a student question a certain instruction or a certain technique and hear the pro not really have an explanation for it and they'll just kinda say something like "you gotta trust me on this one."

You know that's just kinda how the way it is. If something doesn't make sense to you please ask your instructor. Ask your teaching pro why? Ask them the question why and they should be able to immediately explain it in a logical and rational way. And if they can't to me that's really a red flag. You need to find somebody who really understands the game in terms of technique and strategy and whatever else you're trying to get better at.

Don't just take their word for it because they have a piece of paper on the wall at the club and I might be a little controversial with this one but are your thoughts on what I'm saying?

Royce : I generally agree. Obviously there are going to be caveats to that. [inaudible] to his own accord [inaudible] but he knows how to teach.

Ian : Yeah .

Royce : So there are going to be people within that. But also you know, I do agree completely that a tennis player, should be able to ask why and I do highly encourage people to be quite confident and try to understand what it is that is being taught to him.

In large benefit though for you as the client... in the grand scheme of things I would say probably ninety plus percent of the time you're gonna be out on court you're not gonna be with your teacher. You know so it's important to understand what they're teaching and why they're teaching you, so you can start to put a better grasp on it so you understand it the times when they're not around, which is more often than not.

After all that being said I would also caution you know that if you're going to be inquisitive, let them give you their response and don't try to argue with them per se. You know to be able to understand it and to have a discussion about. If you want to go down that path, but don't kind of ask and then say "Oh they are wrong". That's detrimental to the relationship and the learning process.

Ian : Yeah. We could definitely do a whole separate show just on being good student . [laughter] This is. Seriously. [laughter] Cause there's poor students out there unfortunately and it can really hamper your development you know, I'm trying to be serious about it and really trying to get the most out of the game as you can.

Well we'll leave that topic there, and I just want to go through.. We're basically out of time.

But I want to go through just a couple of other, I guess basic or general things. The last time you and I talked Royce... I just want to make another point here. The last time you and I talked was about poor tennis professionals and I got a message on the forums from a tennis dad, whose son is a good high-level player. And you and I had talked about basic things like not being late for a lesson. Not talking on your cellphone during a lesson.. you know things like this.

And he wrote on the forums and said there is this local pro who is pretty much late for every lesson. He kind of screws around on the courts. He'll text or check his voicemail on the court. But he says he trains virtually every top level junior in that geographical area and all the kids seem to get better. So, his point was kinda like wow... You know maybe it's not really that big of a deal.

A lot of the things that Royce and I are talking about.. it kinda comes down to personal preference. Some of these due and some don't. But when it comes down to kind of the passion part of it, and really taking it seriously and being a professional. It's kind of a subjective. Me personally, I can't stand stuff like that. But you know, if you're getting what you want out of it then that's fine. Royce, what's your input on that.. The teacher being passionate about it in general .

Royce : I think that it is the personal preference. There are obviously going to be exceptions to the things you and I say and describe..

Ian : Sure.

Royce : But for me, you know it's important to have that passion, to be able to express it and be professional about it. It's not just a job. It is a career choice we've made, you know, so it's important for us to have that professionalism that is evident. It helps to add value in every aspect of a word.

Ian : Yeah.

Royce : If those people are getting out of it what they are looking for, then by all means. Would it be something I try to avoid? Yeah. But it is what it is. In the grand scheme of things, I would really just say, you want to see someone who has the passion there, you know about tennis and about teaching and really tries to show that and let it become evident in both in themselves and I guess in the relationship they try to build-- both personal relationships but also the relationship with the game, you know .

Ian : Yeah. Alright good stuff Royce. We're gonna wrap this show up. Thank you very much for coming back and finishing up this topic with me. It's been great talking with you about it and I hope our listeners enjoyed the topics.

I think it's really interesting conversation to have and one that I can't really remember seeing any blog post about it or on any other Podcast or anything. So, hopefully people find this information and our different prospective really useful.

Royce : Again thank you. I also like to just say to please feel free on the forums, over at essentialtennis.com, that if you have any comments, please do share them.

Ian : Yeah.

Royce : It could be interesting to get other peoples perspectives from a client. As well as those that we have that are teachers on the forums as well to kind of give their input. ..

Ian : Yeah, that's a good point. Royce and I are speaking from side of the fence-- I agree, it would definitely be interesting to hear input and feedback whether you agree with us or disagree or whatever. It would be great to hear from you listeners about this topic. So go to the forums and let us know what you think in the Podcast section. Royce, thanks so much for your time. Great to have you back on the show and I look forward talking to you again soon.

Royce : Alright, thanks for having me. [music] .

Ian : Alright, that brings episode #82 of the Essential Tennis Podcast to a close.

Two quick things before we wrap up the show.

First of all I want to remind you guys about the second week of my Facebook fan contest and you can win a free Babalock strung with [inaudible] natural gut string.

Just go to the front page of Essentialtennis .com and click on the contest image for details. That contest ends this Sunday which is going to be the twelveth. I 'm sorry the thirteenth of September-- I'm going to be announcing the winner on the fourteenth, a week from today.

And lastly, myself and Dr. Jack have been talking. We want to do a show with some listeners. We want to do a live recording with some listeners who have questions about sports medicine, about injuries, maybe hydration, or nutrition, maybe strengthening your body or stretching.

Topics like that having to do with sports medicine and if you'd like to talk with myself and Dr. Jack. Lots of people ask Dr. Jack questions on the forums has having to do with injuries, etc.

And this is gonna be a better format because Dr. Jack is going to be able to ask you guys questions and really get to the kinda of a heart of the issue for a lot of things much more quickly.

So, if you would like to participate, please send me an email at ian@essentialtennis.com and we can have you be part of the show.

Alright. That does it for today's episode.

Thanks very much for tuning in. Take care everybody and good luck with your tennis. [music]
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