

Essential Tennis Podcast #97

Narrator : 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.

Ian Westerman : 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 somersetsportsperformance.com.

Well, the end of another year is coming up quickly and this is going to be the one of the last podcast shows for this year. We've just got one more and this podcast is going to be released a little bit early as I always do when I'm going out of town.

My wife and I are going up to Wisconsin where both us are from to visit our families for Christmas and the Holidays. So this podcast is coming out a little bit early on the 18th of December. I hope you guys enjoy it.

It's going to be a continuation of podcast #96 which is my conversation with Mental Tennis expert David Groemping. Let's go ahead and get right into it. Sit back, relax and get ready for some great tennis instruction. [music] [music] [music] [music] [music]

Let's move to Afinity who is in Saudi Arabia. He wrote and asks, 'How about mental tennis for doubles? Since points and errors for both me and my partner could go around so fast. How do we cope up with everything going on and still focus on the game? How do we deal with our partner if he's insert a negative attitude here?'

[David Groemping] Right.

[Ian Westermann] If your doubles partner has a negative attitude and then he's talking about maybe dealing with errors and maybe specially if you feel like you're letting your partner's down that sort of thing. And then he just add 1 more cents. I'm generally nervous when I'm paired up with somebody specially when my valleys are not connecting. ' So it sounds like really the biggest thing that Afinity that is asking us to talk about is that kind of natural feeling of accountability that you feel towards your partner where you really feel like you have to come up big and not let them down etc which can be kind of a tough mental exercise.

[David Groemping] Right.

[Ian Westermann] What are your thoughts on that David?

[David Groemping] They're actually, they're double do tough is actually it's a really good topic, because for some reason it's very tricky for us. I don't know why exactly. There are a lot of things that we can get stock in and it's actually this is like a this will be 2 partner.

[Ian Westermann] OK.

[David Groemping] When you're if you're partner is in a funk and then if you're [inaudible] partner down here's [inaudible] actually. So if you're partner is making mistakes doing a funk. Doubles one doing is also tricky is there's something on your team and they're right there and you can blame them for if not going well. And you know like a perfect target and we love to blame and keep hold

stuff and not going well.

So the first thing your partner is there they can get a funk and they can make a mistakes. They're going to do that. They can stop is easily, right? Blame to Essential Tennis. So but they don't, right? What you really need to avoid blaming them thinking about how this suck. How they need to play better. All of that, what you really need to do is have your focus on encouraging them and letting them know if all good kind of I know what would coping them up, but you just can't have them be wrong or bad or like they did very wrong or bad in your thinking. Is that make sense?

[Ian Westerman] Yes and that reminds me of something that you talked about, I think it was an answer to the last question about playing to a friend or some of these who's injured. You made the statement that just in being humans in general. We kind of all have an innate desire that want to be light and admired and, because of that it can be kind of difficult to deal with somebody who's kind of in a bad mood. All the way it makes kind of interesting. That it can be a kind of blame them and get an... . The mood of yourself if they're missing.

[David Groemping] Yes exactly. If they're missing and they are in a bad and they're being but not middle in top. The last thing you could afford to do is get on mentally tough and it's really easy to follow them to their wherever they are mentally. The thing is....

[Ian Westermann] The too negative attitude is pretty tough to overcome on the tennis court.

[David Groemping] Right it doesn't make a positive unfortunately, right?

[Ian Westermann] Crop it's too bad.

[David Groemping] That's right. You're right. [laughter] We think that if we had or not allow if we break them. I think they told them they suck. I think they are suck or doing bad or whatever. There's actually going to change them. It's actually to get them like to do something different, right? It's definitely not going to. It will actually that get worse for them. What exactly is the thing if you follow them into a negative mental faith, but also it's really easy for them to follow you into a positive mental faith. The thing is the truth going to insist more.

[Ian Westerman] Yes.

[David Groemping] But what your job is to stay I guess I don't like to listen, but what is positive and stay mentally tough you are they struggling, because it alleviate the pressure on them and it makes to be easier for them, because it's somehow I don't know why exactly works it natural to follow the other person in terms of mental faith.

[Ian Westermann] Instead of positive, how about staying up beat?

[David Groemping] Yes stay up beat. Stay mentally tough. Yes. Rather either one of it, but in terms of the mental toughness if you're really tough or not. It's easy to follow the other person especially if they are negative, but what's easy is to do the top. Do not get down on them.

[Ian Westermann] Sure.

[Davdi Groemping] Because they can if you're down on them they are going to stay to all of them even they are saying anything, but if you're not down on them it let's them get knock down on them or let's them get no one top too.

[Ian Westermann] Yes and listeners we've all seen that doubles partner who afters they're partner

makes a bad error. They might not say anything and say, 'Oh, you're dummy' or 'Man you're terrible today. You're just playing like crap.' They might not say that.

[David Groemping] [inaudible] .

[Ian Westermann] Right. They might not say that verbally, but you can tell easily from their body language. They come to shoulders and drop the head or maybe do the shrug like the all crop. Maybe look up towards this guy and lift the arms kind of deal.

[David Groemping] Yes.

[Ian Westerman] The doesn't help. It's not good.

[David Groemping] It really doesn't help your teammate and once that happens you're in a big trap, because you decide to pump each other up, but that on top you just the other person knows whether you say a lot or not that you think and they sucked. They can't tell. [laughter] We think and it's not saying allowed and I'm going to be able to tell. No way. They can tell. You can tell when your doubles partner is mad at you. You know it's easy. Well, they said you think or not? [inaudible]

[Ian Westermann] Well, I will encourage. Sorry go ahead David.

[David Groemping] I would like to do is what you really need to do is really be a leader and allow them you need to lead they way and mental toughness and allow them to follow regardless what the point you want them. And not blame them. the treat with all of these is just stop blaming your double partner.

[Ian Westermann] Yes. I would encourage our listeners to if you guys don't already watch, seek out and find some good doubles Tennis doubles on TV out of professional level and the Bryan Brothers are a great example of this what David is talking about after one of them double fault the other person will immediately half up and jog back to the baseline and give them a high 5 and it's not that they're encouraging the double fault. They are trying to emotionally pick their partner up and be like, 'OK. Let's go. That's fine. Forget about it and now we're going to move to the next play.' What we want to do here. And that helps your partner so much by just giving them unconditional support and it really helps mentally for them to break out of maybe a bad day or a strict of bad shots or negative attitude.

[David Groemping] Yes exactly and one piece all that's a great thing to do, but one piece all is you don't want to jump run over and give them a high 5. Thinking you have messed out up and you're sucked. [laughter]

[David Groemping] It will have the [inaudible] then you'll just be weird and all that stop [inaudible]. You know what I'm saying? But you want to really have that on your mind also to really being encouraging them and to really stay nearly tough one to do that, because if you're taking through they suck and they did not stop and you may get lost and go high 5 and still going to happen the same factors if you did not follow them.

[Ian Westermann] So we can't fake it?

[David Groemping] No, it doesn't work unfortunately. [laughter]

[Ian Westermann] It doesn't work? OK. [laughter] You have to actually be nice unfortunately guys, sorry.

[David Groemping] Yes be nice to double partner, but not to makes people get excited and that you're playing with your friends. [laughter]

[Ian Westermann] Well, let's stay for that. That's a tough balance. It's tough.

[David Groemping] Tricky. It will beat me anyway to death. [laughter]

[Ian Westermann] No. Anything else David before we go to our last question?

[David Groemping] Yes. if you are that person messing up then have your double partner listen to this podcast. I mean partially the job that partially true, but if you are the person messing up change and you're worried about letting your partner down. The thing is worried about letting your partner down or hoping you're not bring the team down or any of that. That's all again part of that drives to be admired in like by your doble partner.

[Ian Westermann] Sure.

[David Groemping] That's going to help, because they don't it's not going to help if you're nearly going to be tough again worrying about if you're being admired like and they don't really care. They just wants you play well. Is that make sense? Our desire here is you might admired or may or may not messing up and all of that, because on the head isn't something that they're actually really interested. They just want you to play well. And have fun and all of that stuff.

[Ian Westermann] Yes that's a god point. If you are open and talk to your partner about it. They would probably 98% of your time they will probably say, 'Don't worry about it, man. Just go out there and play tough and do your best and yes, you don't have to be perfect. ' They don't want you to feel pressure, because clearly that's not concussive your performing well.

[David Groemping] Right. Yes and see how don't know if they haven't straight, because another person you work with was kind of usually individual.

[Ian Westermann] Yes it's tough. It's very much like a good relationship.

[David Groemping] Yup.

[Ian Westermann] Which is not easy either. [laughter]

[David Groemping] No. [laughter]

[Ian Westermann] Alright, David. Well, let's go on to our last question here probably one of the more interesting one for my self. And this can be a little a couple of minutes here for me to read and this comes from Gary on the forums who lives in Havertown, Pennsylvania and he starts of his question here with a quote from the new Andre Agassi Autobiography and I'm going to read through that and then read his question which is pretty quick, but bare with me for a couple of seconds here while I'll read this exert from the book which I think I really interesting and this is from the book which says, 'A tennis is the loneliest of sports and golf you play the course plus you have a caddie and the game ends at 18 holes.

In boxing, you have a corner man and a set number of rounds. In tennis, you're on an island, with no clock. You can't sit on a lead. You have to win the last point to win a match. But I will say this – I can confidently say that tennis is the loneliest sport that exists. You're out there, you can't talk to anybody,' and talking about singles here obviously.

[David Groemping] Not in doubles yes.

[Ian Westermann] Right. 'You can't pass the ball, there are no time-outs. There's no coaching, you don't have to be good, you have to be better than one person and that one person is on the other side of the net. It's like you're on an island. It's not like boxing where we're leaning on each other and you can feel each other. If you look at a tennis player it's like solitary confinement out there, and what happens in solitary confinement? It always leads to self-talk. You have those Lincoln-Douglas debates with yourself. You talk to yourself and you answer yourself and you tell me if you've ever seen another sport where an athlete talks to themselves as much as they do in tennis. ' Well, that definitely true. And you'll, in watching competitive tennis you guys we'll see all kinds of behavior that would normally be classified as crazy. And could have been insane and as it's completely normal on out of the tennis court, because of Agassi is describing here.

You're all alone and having to tried the problem solve. You've got nobody to help you out and you kind of start little crazy and kind of answer your own questions etc. So here's Gary's question. 'How do you deal with the loneliness of the sport and specifically the eternal self talk? some of the mental issues probably arise simple, because we talked to ourselves too much and think too much about

[Ian Westermann] The score about losing etc? How do we defeat the toughest opponent of all ourselves? Beat.

[David Groemping] So that's the self talk is this thing is will always going to be thinking. Our mind is always going to be going with...

[Ian Westermann] Unfortunately.

[David Groemping] Unfortunately, we cannot turn it off, because the trick, the method. There's no mental smarter to do it. That your mind will always chatter. Otherwise, you'll get board. So there's always a chatter going on and whether we are aware that were doing it aware that we're hearing it or for saying out loud or saying it to ourselves you know a lot in a self talk, but I'm going to address the one that our mind, because we're alone.

[Ian Westermann] Sure.

[David Groemping] That's a chatter or if you're in a traffic or before you fall asleep at night there's that somebody's cheers you up. It goes on and on and you can't shut it up. Now that's one type of what we call thinking, but that thinking has nothing to do with no toughness at all. That actually the type of thinking that it's ran. It just come to us we don't have control over it. We can't stop it thinking. That is actually very contrary to our mental toughness, because that kind of thinking has nothing to do with it. It doesn't care if we're aware of them.

[Ian Westerman] That's interesting.

[David Groemping] And there are all these thoughts that double up and the thing is we they think everything was true. Now are that plenty of thoughts there are not true. [laughter]

[David Groemping] And but I think the trap is we actually like they are true. They don't actually thoughts in your. There are actually tiring randomly and they show the thoughts, right? They cradle as thoughts. We open up someone's head that were not be thoughts. There's do. And the problem is we actually think it's true. Now anybody has a trick. We have these thoughts and we want to get good when you're on the court. Let's begin to hear these thoughts, because you want to hear them. You want to be able to not do them or not listen to a lot of them or a lot of the are not useful like you're suck, you're not doing good, all of that stuff. We say it to ourselves and we think it's actually

true.

[Ian Westermann] Alright and that's an interesting statement to me that you just made. So trying to actually ignore them or pretend they are not there is not going to work.

[David Groemping] Well, what we usually do is actually resist them which makes them more real. You can only resist them if it's real. So actually when we push against them and makes them more real. If you just kind of let them past by and gone then it's gone. Let it done. And there's actually proof that you cannot listen to your thoughts. And proof is I don't know to tell you whether they would been in a store and all of a sudden they thought and they will steal it or if you're sitting at a red light and just like really early in the morning or late at night or something.

[Ian Westermann] Yes.

[David Groemping] And the thought go and both times you didn't do it hopefully most of the time. At least for once for this example.

[Ian Westermann] So let me, I'm just trying to understand something here. So is this in letting these thought past by should this be a conscious thing that were picking those out and say no. No I don't want to listen on that or should this be something that we don't or not conscious out it. We're just kind of let and slide by without really paying attention.

[David Groemping] Oh no, this is middle toughness most of the big time. You definitely [inaudible]

[Ian Westermann] OK. Alright.

[David Groemping] Because just if you just try to cruising and toasting on autopilot. We could do listen to them definitely. It's something you wanted good at this thing which you got. That's so tough. That's going to not help middle tough a bit. And pay a lot of have thought like it was really an interesting thought like I said. And I could choose to buy into it or not, but really it takes not buying in to that tough of double. And there's another type of thinking that really helps which I call intellectual effort. And that's the type of thinking that we don't like to do, because it effort.

[Ian Westermann] And you nailed me there.

[David Groemping] And the [David Groemping] If the type of thinking that if you really done very complex not all mental planning or real hard thinking. And some people they're planning to may or never there's no time, but it's something that you teach yourself if you wanted mentally tough, but if you it's like you're thinking and you're really do feel the burn. It's like look you wait, but we playing.

[Ian Wesatman] Yes.

[David Groemping] That's the kind of intellectual effort thinking that I'm talking about that takes you need to do my own toughness.

[Ian Westerman] So let me ask you this David. The self talk like the actual verbal talking cannot ever be a good thing or a helpful thing to our mental toughness or our mental muscle or is it always self defeating?

[David Groemping] That's a good question. See most of the time that thought to double up do not have any interest in our [inaudible] and the middle tough. Most of the time. A lot of time we trying to think positive and I thinking and we trying tell ourselves really I'm off, I'm off and I'm I can do this, I can, but that's fighting against the thought that what I'm suck I'm going to lose which makes I suck

I'm going to lose that much more real. You know you don't it's like getting in a fight with real was nobody there. It's like fighting from you wouldn't partially in conscience in empty room, because we don't excite.

[Ian Westermann] Good analogy.

[David Groemping] It's like swing punches at the court with negative self talk. I'm off like I do if I'm the man. You don't get your self talk if you're serious in the morning. There's no doubt you'll bet get see in the morning and you're mind. You also I think I could beat this year. I am the valor this year. You don't think that, because you're fault is not like...

[Ian Westermann] Or maybe you don't as I did.

[David Groemping] The general consent is like I'm going to crash your eggs. I can totally finish this [inaudible] eggs to legs I can do this. You know most will, because your thoughts now this egg is kind of tricky and I don't know if I can do this. Almost pretty bad either. It's the same thing.

[Ian Westermann] So is this why inevitably it's seems like not always, but it's seems like inevitably whoever happens to be on the top of the tennis world professionally kind of seems to be boring type some first advert who else has been bored. This seemingly kind of boring personality that never have any reaction on the court and they just eve kill the entire. That's not really a mistake is it?

[David Groemping] I would say.

[Ian Westermann] What is it?

[David Groemping] Well, then after a dramatic players and I would say that the drama that like to add in tennis really doesn't help. And as you know specially Agassi is all the impression to be who wanted watching him that it could just help focus he watch the whole match and how if it tells. He was putting a lot fo effort. It's managing the [inaudible] that was on his head. You could tell all to the guy. That he was really focusing concentrating so hard during change over, during between points and I would lead your event while he was, I don't know they can't even tell me, but he's on [inaudible] , but I waited he was really focused on and he was losing intelectual effort to manage what was going on with his head. That's really real takes me real tough.

[Ian Westermann] Interesting.

[David Groemping] And so it's so boring and kill that means they don't let until you're dramatic on the court.

[Ian Westermann] Right.

[David Groemping] They are probably safely focus on very well which is how they recommend that?

[Ian Westermann] Well, it's interesting to me that other players have been successful well, but seemingly listening to the voices in their head completely. And talking back. Yes its happen Jimmy Connors, John McEnroe, guys like that who are really dramatic to say the word that you did. How come that they are able to be successful even though they are fully gain on conversations with themselves?

[David Groemping] That's a good question. You know I was actually really thinking about this a little early today and honestly I don't know enough about Jimmy Connors and McEnroe. I haven't seen them playing after [inaudible] mark on it, but with Sutton he's not exactly.. .

[David Groemping] He's ranking and his up and he is almost very consistent player.

[Ian Westermann] Yes that's a good point.

[David Groemping] And if it's meant and I think when you've gone get successful if you ask them how he was getting successful. The time when he was really on top of the game. He will have no idea probably. And I think he's so [inaudible]. This is my guest. I hope he's not out there and I think he's very good, but right now there's really something else, but...

[Ian Westermann] You could take him.

[David Groemping] Yes. So if on, but when I was get there that he gets successful and goes off play himself. If he's just that talented and.

[Ian Westermann] Yes I would tend to agree with that statement.

[David Groemping] And I know that there are lot of job that sharing out there, but I think he's gone to what he is despite of mental game as well. I [inaudible]

[Ian Westermann] Joke of it like twinkies.

[David Groemping] In whatever game. [inaudible] loves joking and all of that. I don't know how it's like how far in the world beside focus to tennis.

[Ian Westermann] Of course and what I mean by that is which I'm sure you got, but he's kind of a winner like he likes to pick something that kind of complain about. And he get a little bit that you say or suck in about.

[David Groemping] Totally. Her's really into. I wouldn't emulate his novel game. We're definite not that in our own game, but if you when you look a play like Agassi he's really, really focus on managing what's going on in tennis. We're really a strong in tend to take butt and win. He realizes that he's on the court and the game that he's playing is winning a tennis not the drama game. Not the whatever game that people end of do playing on the court with not have much to do tennis not a blame game. Not any of that.

[Ian Westermann] Right. Well, let's wrap this topic up and in doing so David can you please just summarize your answer to Gary's question which was how do we defeat the toughest opponent of all ourselves that the self talk?

[David Groemping] Use intellectual effort and hard thinking to manage and when I say manage is not buy into the random going up fast that are come into your head, because they are not actually true. You made them up.

[David Groemping] Would be there in not sure answer.

[Ian Westermann] Alright, well, David it's been a pleasure always and also as always this hour has really gone fast quickly and thank you very much for being here. And real briefly I want to thank the people who asked the questions that David has answered today. John in real life, Gary, Afinity, Bryan Mark, Charles O. , and Nam on the forums. All of you guys. Thank you so much for the thought and the time that you put to ask these questions and the rest of you listening who are not members of the forums at essentialtennis. Com you guys are really missing up, because we got a lot of contents and and questions to answer on the podcast here and if you want expert personalize and

answers like we've done today.

Definitely go sign up and David post on the forums as well. I wish you came a lot more often David, because people really like to have you there, but I know you're busy with your own site as well.

[David Groemping] Yes and I wish I could make it by too a little more and also one last thing is what do you think we talked about today. In the next couple of weeks I planned on writing article about a lot of this topics.

[Ian Westermann] OK.

[David Groemping] And I'll for sure post in on my own blog and I'll probably post a good number of them with the Essential Tennis blog. It's not all of them come by my website, stopby at Essential Tennis make sure that it read them go over it and some people like your read things offer.

[Ian Westerman] Yes.

[David Groemping] Then join the Essential Tennis Facebook group and my own Facebook group and specially mine, because it is what you go. I like that one probably that.

[Ian Westerman] Well, at least you're honest.

[David Groemping] Yes, I know. Well, so I also post a lot of articles up there and I get out to notice to people to the fans. They want the new article and check out.

[Ian Westerman] Awesome, alright? Good stuff. And before we sign off David please give us the web address to your website as well.

[David Groemping] Yes it's sports. Gem execoach. Com or sports.

[David Groemping] geminiexecutivecoaching.com. [Ian Westermann] Alright. Well, David Groemping thanks very much for spending your time with us and another 2 podcast series here. Thanks very much. I know that my listeners really appreciate your time and the members at the forums do as well your insights have been interesting and very informative. [music] as always though.

Thank you very much. [David Groemping] Yes thank you. [music] [music] [music] [music]

[Ian Westermann] Alright that does it for episode #97 of the Essential Tennis Podcast. Thank you very much for joining me today. And I hope that you enjoyed the show and my talked with David Groemping. Mental is always an interesting topic to my self and I hope that you found it as an interesting as I did. So until next time.

Take care everybody and good luck with your tennis. [music] [music] [music] [music] [music] [music] [music]