

## Essential Tennis Podcast #110

Announcer : Welcome to the Essential Tennis Podcast. If you love tennis and want 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 : 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 ProTranscript.com which is a provider of Interactive Transcripts, and tennistours.com.

Thank you very much for joining me today and I want to let you guys know about a free way that you guys can get some tactical and strategical instruction from myself and Royce, another certified tennis professional who posts at the forums at essentialtennis.com. Next Sat and--actually I'm sorry this coming Sat.-- March 27th at 09:30pm EST we're going to be doing a live video web conference and during that conference I'm going to be playing some singles video from a member of the forums at essentialtennis.com.

And, Royce and myself will be going point by point and giving them strategic feedback and instruction. You can watch this for free and get all of the tactical information and advice and instruction that we give. Just send me an email at [ian@essentialtennis.com](mailto:ian@essentialtennis.com) and I will tell you where you need to go in order to watch this and take part in the strategy session. Again, that's this coming Sat. The 27th. So, shoot me an email and I will tell you what to do to take part in that.

Lastly before we get on with the show I want to tell you guys about the winner of the flip cam. That is Gabrielle in Venezuela. He's 8 years old and entered the contest to win that flip cam and his name came up on top of the list. So congratulations to him. I've been emailing back and forth with his father Carlos and I look forward to getting them that camera so they can start using it to improve both of their tennis games. So, congratulations guys.

Alright. Let's get going with today's show. Sit back , relax and get ready for some great tennis instruction.

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Ian : My guest today on the Essential Tennis Podcast is mental toughness expert David Grumping. David welcome back to the podcast.

David : Thanks Ian. Thanks for having me. It's good to be back.

Ian : Yes. I'm glad to have you. I can definitely say without a doubt that some of the most popular shows that I've done on the podcasts so far have had you as a guest. People really enjoy talking about mental toughness topics and how to be better out there on the court and be tougher , not choke, not be anxious, not be nervous, and maybe dealing with a partner, a double partner who is difficult to deal with. These types of topics. Why do you think mental topics are so popular amongst tennis players?

Ian : I think one of the reasons is because there's not a lot of access to mental tennis information and training out there. It's really easy to go to the club and get a lesson on your backhand or your footwork. But, it's a little more of a scarcity a short supply of mental tennis stuff. So, and it's also so many people really struggle with it. So, I think it is something that is easily popular because there's not much out there. But, there is a lot of demand.

David : Well, I'm really glad I have you back on it. And, those of you listening, David and I have done many shows previously. I think 5 , maybe even 5 or 6 with you guys sign up for the archives at the

podcast page at [essentialtennis.com](http://essentialtennis.com). You can find all the previous shows that we've done together and lots of really good topics that we've talked about.

And, today the first thing that I want to go over with David is I want to do a little overview of what David is going to be doing in terms of the next Essential Tennis Clinic which is going to be held in Baltimore Maryland on May 28th, 29th and 30th. David is going to be on the court with me helping me teach during that clinic and we're going to be doing an off courts training session as well that's going to feature David doing a mental toughness workshop.

So, David why don't you tell us a little bit and give us kind of a little taste of what exactly your going to be talking about to those people who happen to attend the clinic in May?

David : Sure. So, the first thing is , what we're going to cover is the foundation for mental toughness. Just like when they start to build the building they put the gurgles in first, and the structure of the building inside the bone. So, that's the first thing we're going to cover.

And, just having that, Ive shown just that to people and they've gotten huge amounts of value for their tennis just in terms of even having an idea within a framework for mental toughness. That's the first rule I'm going to lay out for everybody. It's very simple, very easy to understand. I do it with 8 year olds with the framework and they get it easily. So, that's the first aspects. Then, in a lot of the podcasts previously I've talked about nasty benefits like eating a Twinky, junk food that gets us stuck in no mental toughness. Right?

Ian : Yes.

David : And, so the next piece that I'm going to cover is going over exactly what these nasty benefits are and how they relate to tennis. And, we're going to give a comprehensive outline of them. There are not many of them. And, having that and their tennis for having that in their tool belts to refer to is a huge asset in terms of looking back here and it's wrong, something's not working, looking at these makes a huge difference towards getting yourself unstuck.

And, using the Twinkie example again, getting non fat. So from then with the framework and then the nasty benefits what we're going to do. We're actually going to do a not literally but quote unquote on the court exercise for an area of your tennis where you want to improve an aspect of your mental game. And it, we're going to work with dealing with the nasty benefits and specifically people are going to get a chance to pick an area where they have a complaint in their tennis. And, this can be a complaint regarding a surface. I don't like cheaters. My forehands' bad. I'm in a slump. My second surf's no good. I get distracted when this happens. I don't like the sun. The wind annoys me. Any complaint a tennis player can have.

So, we're going to do an exercise to cause a huge gain in this area. Because, when someone has a complaint in an area of their tennis it's next to impossible , it's not impossible to actually cause progress in that area with the complaint still there. So it's an exercise that takes the complaint apart. And, it's very useful and in the end I guarantee , I promise that you'll come out with a whole new game plan that's going to blow you away out of the exercise.

Ian : Awesome.

David : That's what we're going to cover in the workshop and that's my promise for the people who are there. It's going to be good. I promise , promise, promise.

Ian : It better be good David.

David : Yes. I know.

Ian : Well I'm really excited about the format that I have set up in the morning that Sat the 29th we're

going to be doing several hours of on court instruction and we'll going to have lunch together. We're going to get back on the court, do several more hours of on court instruction. Then you're going to do your mental toughness workshop and following that we're going to have a singles and doubles tournament which I did at my first clinic as well which is a lot of fun. Everybody gets to compete and David and I are going to be kind of walking around, doing kind of coaching on the courts.

So, I think that having back to back your mental toughness workshop and then going right into some competition and point play is going to be really cool for people to get this focus and information and learn how to be tougher out there and then go right out and practice it with you and I on the courts, there to kind of help them out and guide them through it. So I think it's going to be a huge value for people.

David : Yes that's perfect. It's a great opportunity for them to practice what we just went over in the mental toughness workshop. That's great.

Ian : Yes. Well, let's get going with some questions from people on the forums. By the way I can't wait for that clinic David I think it's going to be great. By the way there are I think there's 5 spots left at this point. So if you guys are interested in signing up for that clinic and spending time on the courts and off the courts with David and myself, shoot me an email at [ian@essentialtennis.com](mailto:ian@essentialtennis.com). Or, just go to [essentialtennis.com](http://essentialtennis.com) and click on clinics and there's information on how to sign up right there.

Now, we've got 2 questions here from people on the forums for you David, and there are, David told me before the show started that they are closely related. So, I'm going to go ahead and read both of them. The first one is from BB in North Carolina and she wanted David to talk about how to keep intensity and focus up when you're in a slump, when you're in kind of a down section of time in your game.

Also, Mark in San Diego said that he would like recommendations for what to do and what to think about during change overs. He said this is probably different for singles versus doubles but, he wants to know what to do during change overs. Now, I am not quite sure how those are related, but David I'm looking forward to seeing how they're connected.

David : Sure. So with our mental tennis, It really depends a lot on what we're focused on. It's pretty much what the crux of when you get deep down to it, your mental game is good if you focus on something really useful and powerful. And, it's not going to be that great on something that's not.

So, there's always a choice that you have to make minute by minute of what you're going to be focusing on.

A lot of times we get on the court and we kind of go on to auto pilot with our minds and our focus and that's actually the opposite of what you want to do. It takes a huge amount of mental effort to really stay in this zone and stay mentally tough throughout a match. And, part of that is constantly choosing to be mentally tough or not be mentally tough. And, you deal with that choice every minute. It's very broad and general choosing to be mentally tough or not mentally tough and there are all kinds of new answers and specifics to go along with that.

But, in the end you have, there's a choice to have an intention to win which is what I would call be mentally tough. Or, a choice to be in a trap. And, one of the traps could be complaining to yourself. A lot of times players will complain to themselves during a match, which is what we'll cover in the clinic.

But, it also causes slumping and it's something that you may be, may be really useful during a changeover. That's the broader part this. So, getting down to the specifics to keep up the intensity and focus in a slump it first takes getting out of the slump. And, this relates over changeover. If you're in a slump or if your at a changeover and it's going badly there's a really useful tool that I recommend and it's really asking yourself what are the facts here. It's going over the facts , I'll get into what I mean by that in a second. It's a really useful way to get yourself up out of the muck of no mental toughness. You know what I'm talking about here, right?

Ian : I'm very familiar with muck yes.

David : Me too. So, it's asking a simple question, getting simple answers to yourself here. What are the facts here? It's a great way to get up out of the muck. The facts could be what the score is. I'm not hitting my forehand how I want to. My first serve is going in well. It's sunny out. I'm playing on clay. Those can all be examples of facts. In doing this you really want to be aware and promise me you're not keeping interpretation in here with asking what the facts are.

So, an example of having an interpretation in there would be my forehand's really bad today. Or, my player's really, the other guy's really annoying. Those are not facts. Those are things mixed with interpretation. That actually will not have you, that will have you get deeper into the muck.

Ian : Those are opinions basically.

David : Right. Yes. You want to keep your opinion out of it with this. And, you want to get very black and white. What are the facts? It's something that a dog doesn't have opinions would be able to see. Right? If I had a dog and stuff. Anyway, something to do over changeovers and to use when you're in a slump is to figure out what are the facts here. It's very sobering once you really get to it. That's the first step.

Then what's really useful, and I talked about a second ago is you're always choosing. You always have a choice. An intention to win and mental toughness or complaining or being in a slump. Whatever your focus is that's keeping you in a slump. Once you really get to the facts, it's a choice of what's my game plan. I'm going to stuck back with my game plan.

Or I'm really focused on being aggressive today. I'm going to go focus on that again. The chances are if you're in a slump or if you are at change or it's not going well your focus got derailed somewhere. This is a really useful and simple tool set to get you back on track and be mentally tough. You just have to use it.

Ian : So it's kind of just a matter of taking a step back, I guess, and looking at the big picture, and saying this is true. This is true. This is true. And, then looking at those things as a whole and kind of picking the most worthwhile one ?

David : I mean you don't even have to pick one of the worthwhile ones. One of the worthwhile facts, you could come up with I'm playing on clay. The score is 5 - 2. And, it's sunny today. And just really focusing on that will give you the opportunity to regain and then chose again what you're actually going to focus on. Like I remember today I was actually going to focus on breaking the person's back hand out.

Ian : So the main thing here is to get our minds off of our own, I guess, opinions or subjective thoughts?

David : Exactly. Or, pull yourself out of the muck of the complaint that you have or your opinion about your opponent or even your double's partner. It's a quick and simple and easy technique to have you do that.

Ian : I've got a question about something that you said when you were kind of setting this up. You made the statement that good mental toughness, or I guess mental play, why you're playing tennis is not something you can do on autopilot. It takes mental effort.

Now, is this something that we can practice kind of like a good forehand stroke technique? Is this something we can practice enough times that maybe eventually it could be on autopilot? Or, is this just something that's always going to take, I guess, conscious effort?

David : Yes. So, that's a really good question. In a lot of podcasts that I referred to is the mental toughness muscle. Right? And, it's just like you have endurance for our fitness in a tennis match. Your body gets tired or your body stays energetic. It's the same thing with your mental toughness muscle. And, practicing it in matches and in competitions and competent settings is an opportunity to grow that muscle and grow your mental toughness endurance.

So, the stronger you can get that muscle the easier it is to be mentally tough quicker , be mentally tough for longer periods of time. So it's something that takes building.

But, once you're stronger at it, it gets easier and easier. But, it always will take focus and intention to be mentally tough. Unfortunately it doesn't ever get super easy. If it was super easy then everybody would do it.

Ian : Yes. I think that's really important to point out. It's not going to, can we kind of look at this in the same way as good stroke technique where it's kind of a one in a million shot that you're just going to walk out on to the court and just do it right the first time?

David : Absolutely.

Ian : I don't mean to discourage anybody out there. I mean let's be honest--the technique part of it is tough and if you don't have somebody guiding you along the correct path then just figuring it out and just doing it the most efficient way is something that takes a lot of natural talent and ability. Do people have that chance of having natural ability of being mental tough as well? Is it kind of the same thing as physical talent?

David : I mean, Yes everybody has their own natural and self developed aptitudes and skill and mental toughness as is. And, it's an area that can always be developed. You can look at it like I think a really good analogy would be really good athleticism. If you're naturally athletic, then you may be able to pick up tennis a little easier.

Some people have a natural aptitude towards mental toughness. You may be able to pick it up a little easier. However, I don't want anybody to get discouraged. Maybe you don't think you have a natural aptitude for anything. With mental toughness you can, you just have to work at it and I guarantee, I've seen people who have turned around from awful in terms of a mental game. They just put in the effort and work that it took , and if we think about it, how much time do we spend working on our stroke production? How much guidance do we get on that? 100's right?

Ian : Yes.

David : And then mostly how much effort and attention do we put on our mental game? Not that much. Right?

Ian : Yes.

David : And the way I break down the areas and other people have different break downs, that's fine. But, the way I break it down is simple for developing your overall ability to win. It's a circle that's divided into 3 slices like a pizza. So in one sector there's your skills, your stroke production, how well you move your feet. Things like that, your skill.

Then you've got your fitness in another. And, at last your mental toughness. A lot of people work on all of them a lot except the mental toughness aspect. So in working with the mental toughness and growing that muscle and practicing it and doing the exercises that we've laid out a lot, here in the podcast it's an opportunity to grow your overall ability to win and practice and area that very few people do grow .

Ian : Good stuff. Let's get back to how that relates to keeping intensity when you're in a slump and you said first of all you have to have the intention to win. We want to find out what are the facts. Be objective in our thinking. Then, remind yourself of what you wanted to work on that day or I guess what your focus is tactically. Was there any other steps after that?

David : Yes. So, there are no more really steps to take but I want to tie it all together a little bit more. And, the ability to which you can maintain your intensity and your ability to which you can get yourself out of a

slump is directly proportional to how strong your mental toughness muscle is and how practiced it is. So, to keep up the intensity and something to do when you're at a changeover and it's going well, is it's a little bit different.

So, when you're at a changeover and you want to keep up the intensity, or you're not even at a changeover, the first thing, a huge factor, is to pat yourself on the back. Look how good I'm doing. Give yourself a little bit of a break from exercising the muscle and really focusing on it and putting intention on your mental toughness. That's always a trap. It happens quite a bit. That is one thing to avoid first.

Ian : Yes. It's tempting isn't it? I mean you may be at a break or at 3-0 in the first seven and you're like, 'Man, I'm doing awesome.'

David : Right. Yes. You're great. It's going to be like nothing. It's going to be easy. This all goes back, I remember we had a podcast a long time ago to how to avoid choking. It's all the same thing really. And, it's the same thing with thinking you're doing well on the court really.

So, what you want to do is to occupy your mind and not give yourself a break when it's going well over a changeover and to keep up the intensity. You want to, one thing that's really useful is to talk with yourself about what's working in an objective manner. Well, what's working? I'm moving my feet well and I'm really focusing on tumbling the guys back hand and I'm focused on being aggressive with my serve. Great. That way you know what to keep up.

I talk to a lot of players who their on a changeover and man I'm doing awesome this is great, I'm in the zone , and I'm like that's great what are you focusing on to have that happen? They're like I have no idea. Then they don't have as much access as they could to keeping in the zone.

And, getting it back once their out. Because they don't know what to actually focus on. That gets back to you have to choose what to focus on. If you don't know what to choose, you can't choose. Your mind will choose for you and that's actually a very dangerous practice.

Ian : I want to get more into that but, first I want to remind listeners of my sponsor of the podcast which is tennistours. Com . They sell ticket packages and along with accommodation to all of the grand slams and all of the other ATP Masters 1000 events.

The next one coming up actually is in Miami, the Sony Ericson Open. If you guys go to tennistours.com you can check out all the different packages they have. Everything from, basically every possible price point they have from luxury boxes to just regular ground passes and when you guys use the promotional code Essential with a capital E, that's Essential with a capital E , you guys will get a \$25 discount off of any purchase that you make at tennistours.com.

So, definitely go check that out and thank them for their support of the Essential Tennis Podcast by purchasing your tickets through them whenever you guys go to professional events which are definitely awesome for you guys to go check out as you continue to improve your game. Now, let's keep talking about being in the zone. I find it really interesting because that was kind of a really big buzz word or phrase a couple of years ago.

And, I am sure it still is, is how can I get in the zone? I find that interesting that so many times when players are interviewed after an obviously incredible match for them and they get asked about that, they don't really seem to have any meat to whatever they're talking about.

It's just like you were saying, it's the player you were talking about that they were in the zone and then you say why and it's like, 'I have no idea but it's awesome. It's fun'. Then before you know it they kind of come crashing down in the next couple of games or maybe the next match after being in the zone.

How likely is it that we can actually find a certain thing or maybe a grouping of things that when we focus on it, it gets us more likely to be really focused like that?

David : One of the cool things I should mental toughness is that it gives you an opportunity to choose if you're going to be in the zone or not and get better and better at getting yourself in the zone when you want to. In the likelihood on your own of doing that is slim.

But, just like if you practice a really great inside out forehand. You practice and you practice and you practice and the more you do it, the more likely that it is that you're going to be able to nail it more consistently in a match.

So, the more you practice your mental toughness and really practice the tools that we've been going over in podcasts and even Ian the more amount of training you can get, especially at getting deeper in the mental toughness training like we're going to, I don't mean to selfishly plug here but in the workshop. The more you can get tools like that and use those tools, the more you're going to be able to get yourself in the zone when you want to and need to. Does that answer the question there?

Ian : Yes. Definitely. I think that should be really encouraging to people listening that you guys have a chance if you focus on the right things and in the right ways to be in the zone or be really focused and play in your best mode, more and more often. I think that should really make you guys excited out there that with the right information, how fun would that be to be able to go out there and figure out how to play to your peak? Even just a little bit more often than now and if you can double it that would be incredible. This is such good information.

Now, I want you to tie this together and you've kind of made some small connections here and there about talking during changeovers. And, I'm starting to see how this fits in now. But, can you tie what you're talking into what Mark in San Diego asked about what to talk about during changeovers?

David : Yes. So with singles, if you feel like it's not going well, with singles you want to do , you want to go over what the facts are and then remind yourself what the strategy is. I talked about it pretty extensively about a minute ago. Shall I elaborate on that? There's not a whole lot more to cover with that one.

Ian : No. Yes. I think you got that.

David : If it's going well, again, there's that trap of this is awesome. I'm doing really well. This is in the bag. This guy's got nothing. It's going to be easy. So, you want to avoid that trap over. The thing about changeover is it's good and it's bad. It's good because you can rest. You can regroup. You can talk to yourself.

But, it's also bad because you can talk to yourself. And a lot of times when we're just sitting there on our own our thoughts starts to run rampant a little bit and it's actually very easy to get caught in the mental toughness trap.

One thing to really, I think have the gain is to occupy your mind so it doesn't mess you over. So, we can all think of a time when all of a sudden a thought hit us and we get really nervous before a match. All of a sudden a thought hit us and then the match goes to pack.

So, part of it is occupying your mind so those don't happen. Right? You want to really go over it's going well. Thank yourself. What's working now? What am I doing well? What am I focused on? Then you really want to remind yourself and make sure that you're still focused on what it's been that's had you do so well up to now.

Ian : So be specific it sounds like is a key thing here?

David : Yes. So, if I'm in a changeover and it's going well I can think well I'm making the guy run around a lot and I'm playing really aggressively off the ground. So that's what's working. Great. What am I going to keep focusing on? I'm going to take it to the next level on being aggressive. So, that would be one thing you do over a changeover. This is something and it's really the only difference between singles and doubles here, is you can with doubles you can do it out loud.

Ian : I suppose you could in singles there. [laughter]

David : And you want to, this is something back from the doubles podcast that we did in December, that the good thing about having a doubles partner is that you have someone to work with and talk with about this stuff.

And, someone to remind you that what are you focusing on right now. It's really useful. I mean there are also plenty of pit falls too. But, with doubles on a changeover talk with your partner. What's working right now. What are we doing poor? What am I doing poor? What are you doing? Alright we're going to keep focusing on it.

You can talk each other up. Then there are all kinds of, I don't know how much I want to get into it if one player is playing well and one player is playing badly. I know that was one of the questions on the forums but, I think we covered a lot of that in the last [inaudible] podcast. So it's kind of redundant.

Ian : Yes we did. Well, let's go ahead and just wrap everything up. We've just got a couple of minutes left. But yes, listeners please go check out our previous shows if you haven't already. We've gone over so many different topics. And, it's just really good information. So just check out the podcast archives at [essentialtennis.com](http://essentialtennis.com).

Let's go ahead and just kind of put a bow around all of this and kind of bring it all together if you will David.

David : Yes. Absolutely. So, in the workshop we're going to be doing a really powerful and useful exercise on handling complaints, which is one of the main aspects and things that have you get in a slump and playing badly. You're not only going to get to handle a complaint right there live and it cause your mental toughness to go to a new level, but you're going to get the tools to do it for future complaints. Alright?

In terms of what we talked about today, something that causes slumps or being stuck in complaints or some other stuff too , complaints are a huge player in that. So, what we're going to be doing in the workshop is going to be huge for not only giving you tools to get out of a slump, but also I keep saying at the end think about what you're going to focus on. You're going to come up with a killer game plan that's going to really blow you away, in the workshop in Baltimore.

And, that's something that you can use from then on to focus on that's really going to have you be in the zone and be mentally tough. And all of that supports having and focusing on an intention to win which really is what mental toughness is in the long run.

Ian : Awesome. Alright. Well, David thank you very much for your time. Thank you for doing another episode with me. We put a lot of stuff out there and I think it's really cool how we continue to have new questions and we kind of rehash certain topics and things that we've gone over in other shows. But, it's kind of fun seeing how it pertains to different circumstances and singles and doubles and kind of our tennis games in general. So, thanks so much for coming back on the show. Before you leave please tell us where we can find you online.

David : Yes, absolutely. It's [www.Sports.Gemexecoach.com](http://www.Sports.Gemexecoach.com)

Ian : One more time.

David : Yes. [www.sports.Gemexecoach.com](http://www.sports.Gemexecoach.com)

Ian : Great. Well, I look forward to doing the clinic with you in May. Those of you listening who are interested in spending a weekend with David and myself please shoot me an email or check out the clinic's page at [essentialtennis.com](http://essentialtennis.com).



David thank you again. It's been great talking to you. I look forward to spending some more time with you on the show again in the near future.

David : Yes it's going to be great. I really look forward to the clinic too. People who already signed up and people who are looking to sign up it will change your game I promise, I hope we see you people out there. In huge numbers.

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Ian : Alright our message for this episode of the Essential Tennis Podcast episode 110. Thank you very much for joining me today and hopefully my conversation with David has been helpful to you. I want to do some shout outs now to a couple of really important people this past week that donated to Essential Tennis and to the podcast to help support everything that I do on the website.

First of all, Cheng in Massachusetts \$15. Chris in Texas \$20. John in California \$10 donation. Gary in Florida \$50 donation. Calvin in California \$5. And, Kimberley in Texas began a \$5 per month subscription donation. So, thank you to all of you guys very much.

And you know what? I really appreciate all of these people a lot. I've decided that every week I'm going to give a free Essential Tennis shirt to the person who donates the highest amount. The highest single amount. That means that this week my first week, Gary in Florida you're going to receive a free Essential Tennis shirt. I want to show my appreciation to you guys for your support.

That goes for next week and every week here on out. If you donate the most that given week for the podcast then I will send you guys a free shirt. Thank you guys so much for your support.

If you're listening and the podcast has helped improve your game please consider sending a donation to Essential Tennis. It does not have to be very much to help. Just go to [essentialtennis.com](http://essentialtennis.com) and on the front page on the bottom right there's a box that says donate. So, thank you very much.

Alright. That does it for this week. Thanks again for joining me. Take care. And, good luck with your tennis.

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