

THE CONTENT AND THE FEATURES SPECIFIC TO TOP PROFESSIONAL TENNIS

Conținutul și caracteristicile specifice jocului de tenis, la nivelul marii performanțe

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the necessity and the importance of knowing how to play professional tennis, as well as on the features specific to top tennis players' evolution during practice hours. Thus, we could evaluate correctly the role, the importance and the impulse given to developing sport performances through a scientific, complex and effective activity in perfect accordance with the latest ideas and techniques in the sport field especially designed and implemented by the players' coaches.

In order to actually define and use the set of specialized means destined to increasing tennis performances, we must establish a set of selective criteria.

This scientific research creates a demanding and objective filter regarding the vital importance of selecting and using different sets of means which are specialized from the structural and functional point of view according to the top requirements of professional tennis.

Keywords: tennis, sport performances, coach, means and techniques,

Introduction

Nowadays, the special conditions of official tennis competitions are very different from all the other sport competitions and they consist in:

- 1) the competitions system throughout the year (10-11 months/year);
- 2) the number of competitions, which are scheduled weekly (4-5 matches per week);
- 3) major time differences for tennis players;
- 4) diversity of courts (clay, grass, bitumen, hard);
- 5) different type of opponents (offensive, defensive players, a combination of the two)
- 6) the stake of the match consisting in winning a Grand Slam (the big 4 tournaments which take place on 3 continents, with 3-5 sets per match and the winner gets to play 7 matches, meaning approximately 30 sets);

All these aspects about professional tennis competitions show us the importance of this theme, containing many observations, specific registrations and analyses of the game types.

Following an analysis of the professional tennis in terms of game content, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The offensive approach of the technique during tactical moments of the match;
- Initiating, maintaining, combining and finalizing the efficiency factors when hitting the ball;
- Hitting the ball in front of the body,
- Increasing the ball circulation speed, as follows: serve = 210 – 248 Km/h, lateral side (in the back of the court) = 130 – 150 Km/h, decisive volley = 180 – 190 Km/h
- Increased dynamic of court movement (ball positioning and court repositioning);
- playing without the ball (in the active phases of the game): starting, running, stopping, lunges, changing directions, positions permanently adjusted to passing areas and the technique used; which means that the average distance covered by tennis players is 3000-4500 m for 2 out of 3 sets matches, respectively 7500-8000 m for 3 out of 5 sets matches;
- opening large offensive attack angles and using them effectively;
- choosing effective measures for adjusting to the surface or to the opponent's playing style (e.g.: left-handed player) or to different typologies;
- higher percentage of points won and a smaller percentage of errors,
- improved level of resistance to effort, stress, adjustment skills and body recovery, health, food, medication,
- Mentality, motivation, courage, desire to become a real champion, taking risks while playing etc.;

The main feature of tennis game in terms of performance is first of all given by: the dynamism of the game, a better physical training of players, better functional skills of the body, to which there are added a rich and complex arsenal of more efficient technical-tactic versions, adjusted to the individual particularities of each player and to more and more various game conditions.

The issue of practice and official matches has always been of real interest for tennis specialists and technicians who have discovered throughout time and applied with maximum efficiency all currently known game techniques and strategies.

This complex, detailed and scientific project has also included other connected sciences such as: biomechanics, physiology, psychology, pedagogy, the theory of game practice etc. which due to their active involvement in the particular training have removed the routine and the hazard by replacing them with the scientific exactness.

The modern professional game is characterized by a high level of dynamism, rapidity in taking decisions and actions, precision and a high level of technical-tactical ability.

Another major characteristic of modern tennis players is that presently they all have different morph-functional, psychometric and technical-tactical skills which make a great champion, including the following, but without limited to them: a massive body structure, athletic figure, physical skills – force-speed combined with resilience as well as excellent psychological control.

Tennis game consists of a set of technical-tactic procedures performed on various specific movements and ball hitting techniques according to the rules, tasks and principles of the game.

The content of elite professional game is determined by several factors, including the following: the quality of game surfaces, the tennis player's level of training, the efficiency of ball actions during the match, the rhythm, the stake, the player's physical condition, his/her motivation, the crowd's reaction, the weather conditions etc.

Those tennis players that master this entire set of effective technical procedures and tactical strategies (serve and return, finalizing the net point, increasing the ball's speed and opening the attack angles) are the ones that become champions in the modern area of international tennis competitions.

Another main characteristic of modern tennis consists in the fact that the technique is more and more rational and dynamic, individual and complex, which is closely related to the dynamic of the game tactics and to exceptional psychological-physical skills.

Another characteristic of modern tennis is that professional tennis requires the appropriation, perfection and use of a better technique, based on the dynamic laws and biodynamics laws on composing the forces of the body in various actions for preparing and hitting the ball.

The technique and the tactics include the following dynamic elements, among other opportunities:

- Positions and manners of court movement, with a high percentage in reaching the ball very quickly and making a very active game without the ball;
- Ball positioning and repositioning in the court, which are essential for hitting the ball, must be executed without much physical effort but with maximum efficiency;
- Physical rebalancing after hitting each ball, aspect which assures the technical comfort as well as the psychological rebalance between actions, which are key factors for success,
- Synchronizing each part of the body in relation to the ball, handling the racket and successfully coping with bad conditions;
- The action of compensatory movements with regard to the body parts that are not involved in hitting the ball;
- anticipation, correct reactions, good thinking, imagination, courage, stubbornness, attention, tenacity, fighter's mentality etc.;
- Adjustment and readjustment of major functions of the body to effort;
- The tactics, as well as the game technique are influenced by the instruments used by the tennis player (type of rackets, strings, ball even the shoes worn during the match);
- The manners of initiating, maintaining, changing or combining the efficiency factors when hitting the ball (direction, speed, length and effect), which most of the times are key factors during official tennis matches.

Another main feature of modern tennis consists in the player's capacity to obtain the perfect

impact between the racket and the ball in front of the body with a maximum and constant level of force and speed repeated throughout the match.

The technique of tennis is very much influenced by the major role of the torso as a connection between the actions carried out between the inferior and superior part of the body while the abdominal muscles play a major role in assuring all the specific movements in a complex way.

The interaction between the players involves no physical contact between them, as they are separated by a net which separates the court equally.

When maneuvering the ball, the players use the game racket manufactured of different tough materials and they hit the ball with the strings well stretched.

Tennis players must observe the tennis rules for both the serve and the return as well as while actually playing, thus avoiding errors.

When participating to practice sessions and playing official matches, tennis players are very much solicited both physically and psychically.

The complexity of the game increases according to how the tennis players master the game, meaning he/she has to possess excellent technique, have a strategy of his/her own and a tactics which must always be adjusted to the opponent's particular technical-tactical skills as well as possess physical/psychological resilience, not to mention an exceptional physical condition as an athlete.

There is no limited time duration for a match. Tennis matches can last from 1 hour to 4-5 hours and tennis players play both indoor and outdoor.

Sets are composed of games which in their turn are formed of points. A game is considered won when a player obtains 4 points, respectively 15-0, 30-0, 40-0 (the ideal score), the last point marking the end of a game. There can be cases when both tennis players score equal points. The last equality is called deuce, namely 40-40 and in this situation one player must obtain 2 consecutive points, namely the advantage and the decisive point in order to win the game.

Several games compose a set consisting of minimum 6 games won by one of the players. One set may be formed of several games and in case each player has won 6 games, the game continues until one of the players wins 2 more games (or they can play a tie-break).

The number of sets is different for female and male tennis players.

The match starts only after the ball is hit by the so-called serve procedure. Each player shall serve one game alternatively. In the beginning of each game, a player starts serving from the right side of the court, then they serve from both sides of the court, namely left-right, until a game is won. When serving, the player has two shots: first serve and if she/he failed, the second one must be in.

From the physiological point of view, the game is characterized by rapid metrical acts alternated with great precision, with strong shots and a permanent adjustment to change. The players' effort has variations of intensity (the moments of maximum intensity alternate with average effort).

There are five different tennis competitions: ladies' single, men's single, ladies' double, men's double and double mixed.

Ladies play two sets out of three while men play two sets out of three or three out of five, depending on the type of the tournament.

As matches take place before thousands of spectators, the atmosphere is very nice and emotional, not to mention they are characterized by more and more offensive tactics, plus modern techniques involving multiple and effective choices, most of the times adjusted to each player's particularities.

The aesthetic message of tennis is no less than that of other sports, as tennis has a certain charm given by the modern courts where it is played, the materials used by players as well as the specially arranged court, to which it is added the player's outfits which have become more and more complex in terms of colors and fabric. Nowadays, spectators can admire elegant moves combined with intelligence, force and total commitment.

The entire dynamics of the game can take both the player and the crowd through a carousel of emotions and is a real delight for both the eye and the spirit.

The great champions' fine, elegant and complex tennis is the creation of unique personalities, authentic talents who can succeed in turning any action into an act of virtuosity.

It is well known that all all-time great champions did not emerge by chance. They are the

result of hard work with hundreds of thousands of hours of relentless practice, with numerous physical and psychological challenges which go beyond the human limits.

The connection between the coach and the tennis player is very important as well as the teams of specialists who work side by side in order to create and apply different modern and effective ideas and scientific programs.

By the age of 18, more and more young tennis players turn pro. They show excellent physical, technical-tactic and psychological skills, they cope with the tournament's pressure very easily, they master the secrets of offensive game with precise strategies and tactics well-adjusted to their own skills.

In this context, the Romanian tennis specialists are invited to intensify their efforts and work together to re-update all the levels of training and official game, especially for young and talented players in order to create a national modern and effective concept in terms of physical and technical-tactical training, for promoting and helping such players to go as high as possible in international rankings.

All these characteristics of modern game show the necessity and the complexity of physical training which must be a real asset in addition to the technique and strategy.

The numerous information and the nowadays context of professional tennis helped us formulate the characteristics of modern tennis by identifying the game components doubled by the content of the training or, better said, the entire training system.

If we include the essence and the features of tennis game into the training system, we can reach the conclusion that these very features are the basis of modern training, which is the object of both coach's and player's activity and lately the result of a team of specialists in the medical field, nutrition and modern technology.

The methodology and modern training system includes all operational knowledge which the training concept disposes of, which in its turn solves a complex issue and a valuable scientific character including the following:

- the character, content, organizational manners and finality of the player's physical, technical-tactical and psychological training concept, ***for all levels of performance;***
- the dynamic, structure and scientific criteria on approaching the physical and psychological effort during training and special game;
- the criteria, stages and finality of players' selection in the context of requirements regarding the profile of top tennis champion;
- ***the system of identifying the level of training, the physical condition, the issues related to adjustment, body recovery and return to the arena,*** according to the planning of training sessions and taking part in official competitions;
- tailored training and strategies;
- circulation of scientific and specialized information regarding the worldwide trends in terms of training and strategies.

We consider that we identified the main arguments that stay at the very foundation of nowadays tennis requirements which tend to perfect constantly and become more and more scientific.

In our opinion, the attempt to systematize the issues related to the involvement of tennis characteristics in the training and match strategies is not a novelty in terms of theory and practice, but still the approach of problems in the context of modern tennis evolution and our desire to identify the main trends seems to be of great interest for professionals.

If we refer to children's tennis, we must say that there are big differences between them and juniors and especially professional tennis players.

In our opinion, a key requirement of official tennis matches and tennis practice consists in the professional player's increased ability that during both match and practice breaks (moments when the body must recover after an intense effort) he/she can apply better and more effectively the strategies, the tactics and his/her physical skills in order to win.

Conclusions

The content of the game and its specific characteristics represent the key and the structural and functional coordinates depending on which the coach can create the game strategies and the training

plan.

In the context of this research regarding the permanent evaluation of tennis game components and output obtained by tennis players, we can easily see a clear progress in young generations that dream big in this sport.

Therefore, by intensifying and modernizing the content of tennis game in all levels of performance, one can declare that by getting seriously involved in this field as well as by applying advanced scientific resources and technologies starting with the juniors, the tennis game has nowadays reached its peak.

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