



WILANDER ON WHEELS presents...

HOW TO BE THE BEST PLAYER YOU CAN BE

QUOTES YOU MAY NEVER HAVE HEARD

NERVES: CONTROL THEM

TACTICS OUR WAY

STORIES FROM THE TOUR

**HOW TO PRACTICE
PROPERLY**

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AND MATS WILANDER**

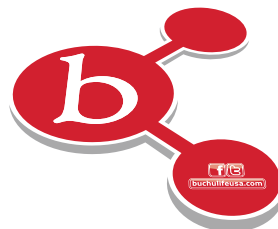


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Welcome

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WELCOME TO WILANDER ON WHEELS *HOW TO BE THE BEST PLAYER YOU CAN BE* eBook! For the last three years, Mats Wilander, former World Number 1 tennis player and winner of seven (7) Grand Slam singles titles (three at the French Open, three at the Australian Open, and one at the US Open), and one (1) Grand Slam men's doubles title (at Wimbledon) and Cameron Lickle, Naval Academy graduate and inductee to the USNA Sports Hall of Fame (2003), have been traveling the United States in a recreational vehicle bringing the fantasy of hitting with a former World Number 1 to people's backyards! We have visited more than 250 different clubs and have had more than 5000 WOW participants! As long as there are people and tennis players who request us, we will continue to travel to you!



Lieutenant (LT) Cameron Lickle
May 2008. San Diego, CA.

We are continuously asked by participants how they can possibly remember everything they have been told during one of our WOW sessions. Due to the frequency of such a question, we have decided to present to you our first Ebook.



Mats Wilander (Former World Number 1, 1988)
Arthur Ashe Stadium. US Open 2012.
(Photo by Tim Brown)

At this moment, we need you to do one thing for us. We need you to stop trying to emulate EVERYTHING you see on television. Just like with the internet - everything you see on TV is not always necessarily true. And by that, we simply mean that the top professionals do not always use the best form. These men and women "get away" with horrible technique merely because this is what they do for a living. They have learned to "bend the rules" and break the laws of tennis that YOU, the average layman and player striving to become better must adhere to. At this very moment you are:

- 1) Looking to gain a tactical advantage over your opponent.
- 2) Looking to improve your game in an attempt to achieve your maximum potential.
- 3) Looking to become the best player you can be.

No matter at what level you are currently playing, there is always opportunity to improve. It is time to put the ego aside and embrace the sport of tennis for what it offers at every moment. In 1988, Mats was the number one player

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Mats Wilander and Cameron Lickle with WOW RV1 in Sun Valley, Idaho. December 2010.

(Photo by Tim Brown)

in the World. But if you think there was nothing he could have improved upon even then, you would be wrong!

Every moment spent on a tennis court is both savored and sacred. Give us a rectangle with a surface that produces a bounce and a center net - we could be entertained for hours. We both love playing tennis anytime and with anyone. Outside of family and friends, tennis is, and always has been, the largest part of both of our lives. Mats used to take pride in making his opponents worse by picking on their weakness. He has now switched mentalities and strives to improve people's weakness in an effort to make them better players.

Here are WOW' beliefs on how YOU can help yourself become the best tennis player you can be! Throughout this Strategy for Success, you will read personal stories and experiences from Mats in an effort to help you understand why WOW feels the way that we do. Once you fully embody WOW beliefs, we can ensure you will see drastic improvements in your game. Bear in mind, these improvements will not be instantaneous; however, if you dutifully implement them, over time, you will notice the difference. Not only can this literature help your game grow but it could get you back on the right track with something that has gone awry! This eBook, however, is not all encompassing. The topics addressed in our first eBook *How To Be The Best Player You Can Be* are what we at WOW believe to be initially the most important aspects of your game to try and implement change! Once you have implemented these changes and feel you are well on your way to mastering the below topics, hopefully we will have released the second installment of: *How To Be The Best Player You Can Be Volume 2*. Good luck and please enjoy!

Quotes

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MATS QUOTES:

1) For the last 30 years people continually ask "What does it take to be a professional tennis player?" That is the wrong question to ask. The correct question should be "What did it take to become the best tennis player that I became?"

2) The tennis score is so ingenious. It's not a matter of how many points you win but winning the right ones.

3) Tennis can be used as a tool to help you become a better person!

4) Don't ever show negative emotion. It lets the other player know that he may be closer than he thinks.

5) Tennis is not an individual sport it is a team sport, you have your forehand, your backhand, serve return. If something is not working, avoid it.

7) Your identity as a player is not how you end up winning the point but how you reset and what your game plan is every time the point resets.

8) Sometimes it is good to be on the bottom!

9) Smartest players in the world are the players with the biggest repertoire. It is hard to be smart if you only have one shot.

10) Tennis is not about hitting the ball inside the lines or over the net. It is about having control of the ball with your racquet.



Mats being interviewed by Las Vegas NBC weatherman Kevin Janison at Cosmopolitan, Las Vegas, NV. March 2011. (Photo by Tim Brown)

11) No excuse for lazy eyes.

12) Play to the level of your opponent. You must learn to adapt to every style and tempo of player.

13) Pay respect to your opponent. Do not say "I played so badly."

14) Heart gets you to the ball... your brain (habit) makes you recover.

15) When I am on a court...I think of nothing else but tennis.

16) When you go for it...go for it by 3% not by 20%.

17) Out of respect for your

partner, after you miss a shot in practice, you are not allowed to miss again until he does.

18) To me, losing and learning are the same word. They mean the same thing.

19) When I play, I hit and then hope everything works out in my favor.

20) Tactics are not something that need to be done all the time. You just implement tactics at the proper time and try to win ten out of ten of those points.

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IMPROVE YOUR PRACTICE: OPTIMIZE YOUR PRACTICE: HOW MATS PRACTICED!

13 Tips to improve your practice for yourself and for your practice partner:

1) QUALITY: One thing is for sure, if you play with quality, you will get better...everytime! If you just keep playing in order to maximize quantity, you could actually get worse as a player. Your technique will begin to fail due to fatigue and you will begin forming bad habits. I would rather spend one (1) hour on the tennis court and never stop moving than spend two (2) hours on the court with breaks. Maximize your time on court. It is a luxury and a privilege to play the game, treat it as such. When you practice, "your heels should never touch the ground." ABM (ALWAYS BE MOVING) Although we said you cannot mimic the professionals in everything, this is one instance where you must mimic their movement. They are always moving. In fact, the next tennis match you watch, only watch one player, not the ball traveling back and forth. If your "heels touch the ground" while a ball is in play your poor quality of practice will groom match play bad habits.

2) JOG WHILE BREAKING: When I practice, while picking up balls, I always jog. Although many of you use that time to catch your breath, I see it as an opportunity to get stronger. First, by running to retrieve balls over the course of an hour, you can actually spend 20% more time hitting shots. Second, when you play a match you will never run to retrieve balls. Your body will recover more efficiently between points as it is used to running. You will notice the aerobic difference. PRACTICE days should always be harder than MATCH days.



Mats jogging with WOW participant at Sleepy Hollow Country Club, Briarcliff Manor, NY. June 2011.
(Photo by Tim Brown)

3) RETRIEVE ALL: When you practice, NEVER only retrieve two balls if there are three on your side of the court. Put every ball on your side into your pocket and demand the same of your partner. If all balls are on your

side, hit a few to your partner, but never let any of them remain on the court. There is nothing worse than having to take a break every 2-3 minutes to fetch balls. Maximize your efforts and play time-be efficient.

4) PLAY EVERYTHING: While "sparring," **PLAY EVERY-THING.** Whether it be a double fault, shot hit long or wide, continue the point with either a running tally score, or once a ball can no longer be saved, count the point then as your own. You will be amazed at the practice points you will play that you otherwise would never have experienced.



Mats retrieving balls with WOW participant Meg Foley at Moraga Country Club, Moraga, CA. February 2013.
(Photo by Tim Brown)

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While practicing, if your partner hits a ball long, do not stop the flow of the rally by catching it. It disrupts the momentum of play and is equivalent to hitting a ball into the net. It is hard enough to find a hitting partner who rarely hits balls into the net, so if you have found someone who is good enough to hit the ball long, exploit this opportunity. Save everything and play everything. For example, Roger Federer plays everything (even in a match). He is always trying to play different balls and is al-



Mats observing WOW participant Sam Vendemias' backhand technique at Courtside Tennis Club, Venice, FL. (Photo by Tim Brown)

ways working on his feel and skill. If his opponent hits an out serve, watch what he does, he spins the ball back to the ball boy. After holding serve, he launches balls from his pocket to the ball boy across the net who catches them like a MLB outfielder. Tennis is not about hitting the ball inside the lines or over the net, it is about having control of the ball with your racquet. You use your racquet to get everything back in play. Own this feature of the game and you will begin to own the sport. This tidbit will not only increase your stamina dramatically but your racquet skills will improve as well.

5) RESEPECT YOUR HITTING PARTNER:

In the 1980s, I played several matches at Madison Square Garden. Playing at Madison Square was not like any other venue. This was for spectator entertainment purposes only and the night would feature two matches with four players. Obviously, with only one court in the arena, warm-up practice before the match was a treasured commodity. Often we all wished to practice at the same time, so we would find

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ourselves on one court together. On one occasion it might be Stefan Edberg, John McEnroe, Peter Fleming and me. I would hit with Stefan on one side while John would hit with Peter on the other. Eventually we would commence playing practice points against one another. We would play two points with our own partners and then rotate. If I missed a ball in any one of those points, I was not



Mats practicing as he would play at Hurlingham Club, London. 2009.

(Photo courtesy of Tim Edwards)

allowed to miss again until Stefan missed. You are not allowed to make an error and then repeat that error directly following the first one. That is rude to your partner and disrespectful of his time. You must respect the game and your partner. Practice smartly!

6) MAKE PRACTICE REALITY: Always practice as you would play. This sounds simple, but I cannot recall how many times I witness players participating in a Wilander on Wheels drill called the “Heart Attack” recover in the wrong direction. When you practice, never recover or retreat after a shot in a direction that is opposite from what you would do in actual match play. What I mean by this is if you hit a forehand (as a right handed player) that brought you out wide from the court, you are not allowed to keep running to the right or retreat backwards behind the baseline. Recover towards the middle...ALWAYS!

7) PRACTICE WINNERS/WINNING SHOTS TO YOUR PARTNER: Practice hitting winning shots, not winners. Two years ago I found myself practicing in Sun Valley, Idaho with my friend who is not a tennis player. He is good enough that he can keep a ball in play, but after three or four ball rallies, he would rip a “winner” to the corner. I thought this to be unintentional until the fourth occurrence. When I inquired as to his intentions, he replied that, “He was practicing his winner.” In complete disbelief of this thought process, I responded that he ought to “try to make winners by hitting them to me.” In practice, tell your

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Mats demonstrating high-low at Club de Tennis and Squash, Quebec City, Canada. August 2012.
(Photo courtesy of Tjerk Bartlema)

tain is even a conceivable thought, you might as well not have practiced at all. You should pride yourself on the ability to run yourself into the ground! Make practice an aerobic exercise. The harder you work in practice, the easier you have it when you play matches.

9) PRACTICE HIGH LOW: The easiest shot for professionals in tennis is the overhead. Why? Because of the angle. Have you ever seen the study that shows what John Isner sees from the baseline? It is what I see from the service line.

When you warm up/practice hitting overheads, never initially stand on the service line. In a match, I would never lob you if you stood that far from the net. Begin at net and retreat properly (Cross-over step, not back peddle) to hit an overhead. When the overhead comes back to you, do not catch the ball and feed another. This is a great opportunity to work on your hands and feel with your lob.

(Photo courtesy of Tjerk Bartlema)



hitting partner to walk to a corner if you wish to practice winners or winning shots. Then hit your winners directly to your partner. As your opposition gets better, it becomes increasingly harder to put balls past them. Even if you look at the highest level of professionals, the ratio of winners to errors is nearly the same in most positive outcomes. The pressure to hit a winner is too extreme. Try and place your shot in a position that gives you an easier shot. If this happens to produce a winner, great! This is then considered a winning shot! It does not matter how you win the point, only that you do.

8) RUN YOURSELF INTO THE GROUND: When practice is complete, you should not be looking forward to a three-mile hike up a mountain peak. If climbing a moun-



(Photo courtesy of Tjerk Bartlema)

([See video](#))

Second, do not just hit lob after lob to your partner. Mix in a shot or two forcing your partner to volley. In a match you never hit overhead after overhead. The only point I can recall where someone hit more than four consecutive overheads was the US Open match of Jimmy Connors vs Paul Haarhuis in 1991. I am sure it has happened in many other matches but my point is that it is very rare. It will always be overhead, overhead and then a volley. This drill, to me, is the hardest and most tiring of any in the sport of tennis. This will have you in the second stages of breathing within 15 seconds and actually mimics match play.

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10) END RESULT IS NOT IMPORTANT: When you “spar” a practice set against your partner, who wins in the end is irrelevant. NEVER boast about triumph. NEVER gloat to friends after the fact. NEVER spread word that you defeated Joe Schmucately in three sets. Practice is a time to work on and improve your game. Practice your shots that need improvement. Play your weakest shots and work on making them strengths. If you beat a player who is utilizing this tactic, they are getting more out of practice than you are. Why would you ever feel good about victory! If practice matches counted, I would have never been number 1. I have lost more practice matches than actual ATP victories during my years!

11) BE PROACTIVE: If you miss a shot in practice, do not air mimic or try to “groove” your shot after the point has been completed. Take the moment to think about why you missed and hit a safer shot next time.

12) BE IN THE MOMENT: When you practice, nothing besides tennis should enter your mind. If I could somehow teach one person to be as focused as I while on court, it would be like the Dalai Lama providing someone pure enlightenment. Nothing matters to me once I stand between the tennis lines. All thoughts of children, wife, car needing fixing etc. depart my brain. Pure 100% focus on the sport at hand.

13) DO NOT HAVE AN EGO: I have witnessed amateur egos keep themselves from having a useful practice with a player who they believe to be of lower ability. When I was number 1 in the world in 1988, who would there be to practice with if I shared this same mentality? I love playing with anyone at anytime. No matter who is standing opposite me, being on a tennis court is pure joy. You may not believe this but I always have goals while on court, no matter my opponent or partner. If it was my friend who never played tennis, I put pressure on myself to never miss during that practice session. This requires complete and total concentration.



Mats practicing overheads with WOW participant Dr. Jaideep Chunduri at Four Bridges Country Club, Liberty Township, OH. August 2010. (Photo by Tim Brown)

You may think what I am about to state farfetched, but I enjoy returning an amateurs unorthodox shot merely because it allows me an opportunity to see a ball that I may only receive once during a match. I acknowledge that this might not be my best use of time however, anytime I practice I take something away from that moment. I remember watching Rafael Nadal practice prior to a third round match in the 2012 French Open. He served and volleyed for no less than 45 minutes. When have you ever seen Rafa serve and volley? He was practicing that tactic for the one time or chance that he may have to use it! Do not pass up an opportunity to play with anyone!

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MATS' TACTICS AND HOW YOU SHOULD USE THEM:

Tactics are important but do not need to be implemented at all times and on every point. You must play the game as it comes (Play the ball as it lies). What I mean is that the natural rhythm of a match has ebbs and flows. For example, there is a serve, long rallies, a winner, unforced errors, missed returns, winner returns then a shank to the stands. Add many of these moments together and you may find yourself at a 6th deuce where you must win the next point. This is the moment when you implement tactics!

You will not win the majority of points while applying tactics if you utilize them on every point. You should implement tactics, for example, maybe ten times in a match. Your goal: To win all 10 of those points. You go to this when you need it most. If your tactic is to play your opponents backhand, you are not going to play that side the entire time. You will not win 100 out of 100 points. Your tactic will become predictable and you lose the element of surprise.

In an effort to reach your opponent's weakness, you must play his strength. This seems counter intuitive, but it is alright to do so. Players do not understand this. In fact, if you play an opponent's strength and weather the storm of that onslaught, his weakness will actually become more susceptible to attack because he or she has no groove for that stroke. Additionally, if you play a strength and happen to find yourself winning the majority of points, you (as well as your opponent) know you will be the victor. How can your opponent possibly defeat you while you are exploiting their strength?

My most confident weapon, I believe, was knowing exactly what I wanted to do on a tennis court. The tactics I implemented and the reasons behind them made my opponents worse. Below are those tactics I used religiously and would advise you to implement. A disclaimer is necessary that even if I implemented my tactics correctly, it did not always work out the way I wanted. You must commit to your tactics, hit the ball, and hope everything works out in your favor.

COMING TO NET TACTICS:

If you are a fan of mine you will know that Ivan Lendl was one my biggest rivals. We met in five Grand Slam Finals. I won three of those finals. I will admit I was not aware of the following fact until I watched my matches years later, but on each winning match point, I approached the net and watched him miss his passing shot. In the 1983 Australian Open, he pushed his forehand passing shot wide down the line. In the 1985 French Open, I slowly kicked



WOW participant Daniel Levine attempts to pressure Mats by coming to net during a practice set at Delray Beach ITC Center Court. Delray Beach, FL. February 2013. (Photo by Tim Brown)

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Mats interviewing Ivan Lendl for his show *Game Set Mats* at US Open, Flushing Meadows, NY. September 2012.
(Photo by Tim Brown)

my first serve to his backhand which he missed into the net cross court. And in the 1988 US Open, I spun my first serve in again, raced to the net, and he missed his backhand return down the line into the net.

Although I was not attempting in '88 to recreate what had occurred in '83 and in '85, as I honestly had no recollection of repeating this tactic, I obviously maintained the same thought at each moment. My tactics were to move Ivan around the court, get to the net, and put the pressure on him to make a proper shot under extreme duress. I want you to forget everything you think you know about rushing the net and only think as I do. I came to net then and now to end the point one way or another and hoped that my presence would force my opponent into an error. I knew one of three things would obviously occur by coming to net. 1) Either

my opponent hit a winner, 2) He misses, 3) My opponent hits a passing shot to me.

My only intention by coming to net is the hope that my presence will evoke a negative reaction. To help evoke this negative reaction, I am going to make you feel my presence. Although we do not completely endorse what is about to come next (as it is illegal in our sport), but the idea behind your split step is that you are going to leap forward, shoulders broad, and ensure your feet hitting the ground causes a sound loud enough to potentially distract your opponent. Have you ever watched Andy Murray split step while returning serve? It is enormous. As the server, you feel his presence which in turn puts unwanted pressure upon you. Do the same at net!

AT NET TACTIC: Once at the net, I have never tried to hit a “good volley,” nor should you. Just get to the ball. Make it your goal to connect the ball with your strings. Think of yourself as a soccer goalkeeper while your opponent is the striker. You are in defensive mood even though you are acting aggressively. You are protecting territory. When most players approach the net they expect to hit a great volley. This usually results in a swinging volley. Just try to get your volley back in play. The idea behind hitting one volley is that the next one should be easier. Keep hitting volleys until your opponent can no longer reach your shot.

While at net, always take away the “down the line passing shot.” It is the easiest passing shot to hit as the court is longest during this moment and you can hit this shot flat without topspin. How is this possible you ask?

I agree that a cross-court groundstroke gives you the most room for error normally. However, if you hit that same shot as a cross-court pass, your opponent at net will have an easy volley. The cross-court passing shot is nearly an impossible one that involves a ridiculous amount of topspin and a wicked

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angle. Do not close the net more than 5-6 feet in an effort to try and take this shot away. It would be too easy for your opponent to hit a lob. If your opponent can hit this cross-court passing shot, think in your head: "too good," and move on to the next point.

LOOKING GOOD TACTIC AT NET: When approaching the net ensure you have your Stefan Edberg moment! What I mean by this is whenever you are attacking a volley, make yourself "look" as good as possible (Technique-wise). Imagine when you are skiing with someone, it is not the fastest skier you would like to ski with but the prettiest. Stefan had by far the best-looking volley I have seen even to this day. When he came to the net, his presence was frightening and no matter the outcome - I was scared. He was deep in the knees and it seemed like it was all over before he even hit his volley. If you saw Stefan volley once, you did not want to see him volley again because it looked so good! Make the idea of who you are at net better than the reality. Bottom line: It is as simple as trying to make your opponent miss by your mere presence. If you do not have to hit the volley then we are all great volleyers!



Cameron trying to "look good" at net at Bay Head Yacht Club, Bay Head, New Jersey. June 2011. (Photo courtesy Bay Head Yacht Club)

Smoke and Mirrors - Yannick Noah was the king of this. Not that his volleys were horrible, but Yannick made me believe that he was a great volleyer when he came to net as he seemed huge with his dreadlocks and bulldog rush. I felt his presence and the pressure!

The exact opposite of an Edberg moment is a McEnroe moment. Whenever McEnroe came to net, I never felt intimidated by his movement. McEnroe moves unbelievably well but as his opponent, I never saw him move. His movement never disturbed me. It seemed that McEnroe would almost walk/stumble into the net while holding his racquet by his shoes. This made him appear small. I would therefore have a tendency to make him volley because his presence was not intimidating. John would actually draw my passing shot to him. He wanted to hit a volley. He did not want you to miss! His volleying technique was impeccable and he knew it!



Mats with John McEnroe on Atlantic Avenue, Delray Beach, FL. February 2011. (Photo courtesy Yellowtennisball.com)

The only player who can survive a match with McEnroe's presence approaching the net is McEnroe. For you as a player if you have bad technique and you

approach the net like John, you will be passed every time. On the contrary, if you have bad technique and approach the net like Edberg, you can survive at net no problem. Here are two methods to make you appear better than you are!

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Mats demonstrating the importance of a split step to WOW participants Joan Challman and Bob Disbrow at Zenergy at Thunder Spring, Sun Valley, ID. December 2010.
(Photo by Tim Brown)

1) You must work on your split step. ([See video](#)) Never is the split step more important than right now. It has to happen here. Weight 50/50 left and right feet, split step forward just as your opponent is about to strike the ball. Simultaneously, you need to have a thought at what shot your opponent is going to hit. This split step forward will allow your body weight to keep moving forward, making your volley more effective by utilizing your body

weight through the shot. Otherwise you must swing to put your weight into the volley, which is the exact wrong thing to do. Have you ever seen a dog grab a Frisbee? It grabs it as soon as it can. If it waits too long the Frisbee runs out of speed. Same principles apply here. Go and get the volley as quickly as possible.

2) Ensure your less dominant shoulder turns with both volleys (forehand and backhand) but especially the forehand. Do not hit a volley with your chest facing your opponent. Your shoulders must be turned sideways. If holding onto your racquet with your opposite hand forces you to turn your shoulders as you strike a volley....DO IT!

3) Finally, ensure your head turns with your shoulders and your eyes watch the ball hit the

strings. There is no excuse for lazy eyes.

If you implement the above three principles while at net you will create your Edberg moment! This seems simple enough to put into practice, however I repeatedly witness players just flat-out forget to incorporate the aforementioned. You must force/trick/train your mind into performing these movements subconsciously every time so it becomes habit and you can execute without thought.

INVESTMENT FOR THE FUTURE TACTIC:

I constantly preach that tennis can be paralleled to life. Every day I hear in one form or another someone stating "you ought to be saving for



What is wrong here? WOW participant Robert Glanville demonstrating lazy eyes at Country Club of New Canaan, New Canaan, CT. September 2012.
(Photo by Tim Brown)



Mats with Onwentsia Tennis Director Rodney Workman after a round of golf at Onwentsia Club, Lake Forest, IL. June 2012.
(Photo by Tim Brown)

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Mats serving and volleying to WOW participants at Allenberry Resort and Playhouse, Boiling Springs, PA. September 2012.
(Photo by Tim Brown)

retirement.” Any point I ever played in any match was an “Investment for the future” of that match. In my head and in my body language, I always believed I was the most fit player on tour. Whether this was the truth or not was irrelevant. I believed it (or at least tricked myself into believing it) which in turn projected this sentiment onto my opponent. Although players on tour may have been more fit than I, those same players could not withstand the pain of feeling tired. If you believe you are more fit than your opponent, or at least have a higher threshold of pain tolerance, implement this “Investment for the future tactic” into your repertoire immediately!

to put the ball away, I would not. The longer the point lasted the less I cared about the end result, especially if that long rally occurred while leading in any game. I would hit shots to places where my opponent could not and would not just let it go. The shot was just within reach that his brain forced him to attempt a return. Even if I lost this point, I knew my opponent would be more tired than I. My investment would reap dividends immediately (the next 3-4 points) and the full effects would become evident much later in the match. Building momentum whether you win the point or not is crucial.

The score of tennis is so ingenious. It is not a matter of how many points you win but that you win the correct ones. My initial thought of investment is that I was going to run my opponent as much as possible and disregard initial outcomes for the sake of building momentum. Eventually it is inevitable that I will begin to exploit my opponent’s weakness. As my opponent tires his weakness becomes much worse and more apparent. This strengthens not only my resolve but allows me the opportunity to dictate points.

NEVER MISS TACTIC: Whenever I played, every point I played had a purpose. I modeled my game after a woodpecker...peck...peck...peck all day long. I would never come at you like a Bald Eagle but instead would deliver body blow after body blow until I wore you down. My motto when I played was to never miss. In my head, I remember forcing myself to never miss. In 2002, Jimmy Connors was coaching Andy Roddick at the US Open. Andy had just won his match when Jimmy walked into the locker room. The first thing Jimmy said to me was “Mats, not missing is still winning.” My reactionary thought: “of course.” Usually the

I loved playing long points. In fact, as the point progressed in length, if presented with an opportunity



Mats serving and volleying to WOW participant Dr. Jeff Muneses in Woodbine, MD. September 2012.
(Photo by Tim Brown)

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unforced errors are more than winners at any level. On a good day, Federer has 30 winners and 25 unforced errors. In high school it is much worse, maybe 2 winners and 45 unforced errors. Much better to make everything and have your opponent overpower you than you to give him the match on a platter.

IMPOSE YOUR WILL TACTIC: The greatest gift you could give your opponent is to hit an ace while leading 40-0 on your serve. In fact, if I am returning, I hope that my opponent hits an ace at 40-0 so that I am not forced to fight for a point that could be worthless. Of course, if this is match point this thought process should be neglected. If your opponent does strike an ace while leading 40-0, say thank you and proceed to the changeover.

I encourage you, especially if leading in a service game, to serve and volley at least once especially if leading 40-0. This gives your opponent a chance to hit a shot that is not great. Your opponent, at this moment, is not caring. Your opponent is not going to “tank” the shot, but he or she is going to hit some return that allows you the opportunity to groove a volley. Not only does this allow you an opportunity to feel comfortable at net, but will also give you an idea of what your opponent will do the next time you serve and volley. It is a risk-free play.

PREDICTABLE TACTICS VS. UNPREDICTABLE TACTICS: Even though at the beginning of this chapter I stated “you should implement tactics...maybe ten times in a match,” this was my thought process and model for how I played. I implemented unpredictable tactics. This might not suit your game and using unpredictable tactics might not work in your favor. If your game resembles mine, my recommendation is to mold your game around unpredictability but be completely willing to become predictable if the need arises. I would serve and volley at unsuspecting moments increasing my chances of success. It kept my opponent “off balance” and out of any groove he might be creating.

If you fancy predictable tactics and like to serve and volley at the same moment in every game or on every serve like Edberg, depending upon how good your serve is, this could yield both positive and negative results. I knew Edberg was going to try and bounce his serve above my head and rush the net, forcing me to hit a pressured return. If he was less predictable, I would have been able to “bunt” back more returns. On certain days, when Edberg’s serve was slightly less dominant, his predictability offered me opportunities to step into returns yielding me much more positive results. You must continually dissect your own game and the opponent your playing and determine if being predictable works in your favor on that day!

I will say that the worst thing on a tennis court for me was knowing that McEnroe was coming into net behind my second serve. I would have rathered him not be predictable in that regard as I would not have had to worry about missing my first serve or hitting my second serve. Knowing he would rush the net behind his second serve return not only forced me to hit that serve a little longer and a little harder than normal, but his predictability also forced me to make more first serves with less power. Depending upon the day and the opponent, either tactic could be implemented.

SERVE AND VOLLEY TACTIC: If you do attempt the serve and volley tactic, please ensure you serve AND volley! Do not hit the hardest serve you can and race to net. That is not serving and volleying.

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That is serving. Make your opponent play. Make him work. Make him think you might do this again. The serve and volley tactic consists of hitting a serve that allows your opponent an opportunity to return the ball because you want to volley! That is the entire tactical purpose. This serve should be a first serve spin serve with a 90% safety ratio. This equates to a serve at 80% of total power, which is a little harder than a second serve. This also affords you more time to close the net. Even if you lose this point, you can ace your opponent on the very next one!

FITNESS TACTIC: Never lose a match because you are tired. The best players in the world know how much “gas” they have left in their tank. It is much like running a marathon. You will not sprint the first mile. You will pace yourself. Listen to your reserve like you listen to a stroke not working. Be a smart player. I am not telling you to tank a match with what I am about to say, but if you find yourself trailing 5-1 in the second set after having won the first set, conserve your energy for the final set. If it is 40-0 on a hot day, do not allow your opponent to utilize the tactic of Investing in their Future. If you find yourself in a point where you feel your about to become anaerobic, either come to net or hit an aggressive shot in an effort to end the point. This does not mean you should take risks and hit stupid shots as tired as you are. If you find yourself taking unnecessary risks because you are tired, you need to get to a treadmill and improve your cardiovascular abilities.



Wow participant Alan Syzdek taking a training timeout during a WOW session at West Side Tennis Club, Flushing, NY. August 2012.
(Photo by Tim Brown)

RETURNING TACTIC: The greatest returner in the world is the player who returns the most balls. End of discussion. It is not the player who, if he or she guessed right, “crushed” the return. If you returned serve by “guessing,” you more than likely will find yourself near the top of most aced players in our sport.

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If you guess right you can hit a great return. If you guess wrong there is no chance of returning serve or recovering.

While returning serve, determine what serve your opponent favors by taking mental notes of what he or she hits in tight moments early in the match. Where does he go at 30-30? Where does he serve at break point? Is it a flat serve to the backhand or a kick serve to the backhand? Is it a slice serve wide to the forehand or a slice serve down the middle to the forehand? On all big points your opponent most probably is going to hit their favorite serve 9 times out of 10. It is at this moment that you need to pre-determine that if the ball is struck to your strength, you must hit that shot properly. If your opponent serves



Glenmoor Country Club, Canton, OH.
August 2012 (Photo by Tim Brown)



The Edgemoor Club, Bethesda, MD.
September 2012 (Photo by Tim Brown)



Woodstock Country Club, Indianapolis, IN.
August 2012. (Photo by Tim Brown)

to your least favorite shot, you must decide that you will “bunt it” back. Very rarely are you allowed or should you “hit out” from both sides. To take a big swing from both sides is very hard. Even Federer chips his backhand and rips his forehand return. I see too many points at the amateur level given away by going for too much on weaker sides. You can block (bunt) both sides of a return but that may be a little too defensive and will be exploited eventually by the server. Remember, the server originally has the advantage. If you do manage to make a decent return, the advantage is now gone and can sway your way if you implement tactics.

MOVING TACTIC: Believe this or not, but there are very few fundamental differences that separate you and I on a tennis court. These differences unfortunately are massive. One difference is my movement while the ball travels on the opposing side of the net. One of my strengths as a player was that I never “hit and stared” at the shot I had just struck. If I had spent my career watching and hoping my shot would land in, I would have quit this game years ago due to stress. If you watch Federer and wonder how he covers so much court, he is moving almost instantaneously after he hits his shot. Try to emulate this action!

If you were to rank players at any time in history based upon their movement while the ball traveled on the opposing side of the net, the rankings would be the exact same as they stand daily by the ATP. Imagine you are playing basketball. Move without



Mats with WOW participant Shelley Shalev in the inaugural WOW session demonstrating the importance of movement at Dragon Ridge Country Club, Henderson, NV. November 2009. (Photo by Tim Brown)

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the ball! You must embrace the thought that tennis is more about movement than ball striking. If you are able to arrive to where your opponent has placed the ball, you can hit your favorite shot. It does not necessarily have to be hard. Getting to the ball in proper time allows you the opportunity to add more slice or more topspin if you choose. If you do not arrive in time, you should never try to take a big risk unless you have to. Tennis is a game of percentages and those who win the most hit the highest percentage of shots all the time.



YMCA Northwest, Irmo, SC. November 2011.
(Photo by Tim Brown)



Blue Ash Rec Center, Cincinnati, OH. August 2012.
(Photo by Tim Brown)



Little River Inn, Little River, CA. February 2013.
(Photo by Tim Brown)

OUT OF COMFORT ZONE: Never play within your comfort zone. Ever. Just as in life, when your comfortable and everything seems to be occurring around you, it is time to explore different adventures. Same principles apply to tennis. I am not advocating you play 100% outside of your comfort zone, but always play at least 5-10% in a manner that is unsettling. This allows you an opportunity to grow as a player. The smartest players in the world are those with the biggest repertoire. It is hard to be smart if you only have one shot. If you have all the shots you will be able to not only construct the points you wish but to finish them as well. Practice your weakness not only in practice but during matches. Become comfortable with the unfamiliar!



Four Bridges Country Club, Liberty Township, OH. August 2012.
(Photo by Tim Brown)



Riverbend Golf and Country Club, Great Falls, VA. May 2011.
(Photo by Tim Brown)



Midtown Athletic Club, Bannockburn, IL. June 2012.
(Photo by Tim Brown)

Additionally, continually change your tactics even if you find yourself leading 4-0. If you are playing anyone who has tennis ability and a mind capable of rational thought, your opponent will eventually recognize and be able to deflect your tactics. A tennis match is a marathon not a sprint. Rafa could care less if he loses the first set. He will eventually catch you before the race is over if you do not implement change. You should be constantly adjusting your game to keep your opponent off of his.

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AGGRESSIVE TACTIC: If you find yourself in a “zone” even with your weakest shot, keep increasing your aggressiveness and risk by 2-3 percent each shot. This is roughly equivalent to 3 mph on your serve and roughly 1.5-2.5 mph on a groundstroke. Keep in mind that if you are prone or accustomed to missing your third or fourth rally shot and you have now made five consecutive, you are very close to missing. RESET. Make sure you make the next ball (revert to slightly under max play) and begin the process of constructing a point again in your head while slowly increasing your risk yet again. This is exactly how I played. Your identity as a player is not how you end up winning the point but how you reset and what your game plan is every time the point resets.



Richmond Country Club, Staten Island, NY. September 2012.
(Photo by Tim Brown)



Country Club of Orlando, Orlando, FL. March 2013. (Photo by Tim Brown)



San Jose Swim and Racquet Club, San Jose, CA. February 2013.
(Photo by Tim Brown)

SHORT BALL TACTIC: If you receive a short ball with lots of spin (slice or topspin) ensure you spin the next shot back. This is not the time to try and hit a winning shot just because it is a short ball. Not every short ball do you need to crush. Your racquet will come back at the same speed the ball comes back but if you are not able to generate any pace off of that, make sure you spin it back in. By hitting a safe shot from inside the court off of a short ball you can still be proactive! You do not have to “bunt it” back. You can still play a safe shot while being proactive by hitting a shot with depth and placement without risk.



Greenwood Athletic and Tennis Club, Greenwood Village, CO. October 2012.
(Photo courtesy of Ron Steege)



Chartwell Golf and Country Club, Severna Park, MD. September 2012.
(Photo by Tim Brown)



Wood Valley Racquet Club, Topeka KS, May 2012.
(Photo by Tim Brown)

RESPECT THE GAME TACTIC: *DO NOT* be a tennis slob. Tennis is not all about ball striking. It is not okay to miss. We cannot teach that it is okay to fail on the tennis court. Know your game and know why you are doing what it is that you are doing. A player must have awareness and an idea of what they would like to accomplish on the tennis court. What is most important is the overall picture. There are plenty of players who were better ball strikers than I; however, it was the overall gamesmanship that I was better at!

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RECOVERY TACTIC: It is no longer 1975. You are not allowed to recover with a side shuffle back to the middle. ([See video](#)) It is not that this recovery is wrong, it is just not the fastest or most preferred. The fastest most preferred form of recovery is to hit your shot, “cross over” your back foot in front or opposite of the front (ala a karaoke movement) and then explode back to the middle. Not only is this faster, it takes less energy and gives your opponent less time to hit into the other corner.

GETTING OLD TACTIC: OK. Your getting old. I hate to say it, but I am too. How do you compensate for that? Although you may lose a step of movement, there is no reason why you cannot hit the ball better at 58 than 48. Getting old does not mean you are going to strike the ball worse, it means you get smarter - you play smarter, not harder. That is the beauty of life sports. Shot selection becomes exponentially important. You must become more selective with your shots. With age, your racquet skills improve because you are not moving as well which forces you to adapt and hit different, unorthodox shots. This, consequently, adds more to your arsenal.

With age you must become more knowledgeable, experienced and observant of your opponent by watching their play. Embrace the concept of hitting your shot to a place that makes it most difficult for your opponent to return. Target practice. You have either already arrived or are quickly arriving at the moment when you will realize that you might not be as nimble as your opponent and he or she will force you to have to hit a bigger or more well placed shot. Perceive what your opponent does not like to do and make them do this more now than ever!



Avondale Swim and Tennis Club, Avondale Estates, GA. November 2011.
(Photo by Tim Brown)



Four Seasons Country Club, Wilton, CT. August 2012. (Photo by Tim Brown)



Western Racquet Club, Elm Grove, WI. June 2012. (Photo by Tim Brown)

Mind Trick

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JEDI MIND TRICK YOURSELF – BE POSITIVE

In an effort to have the most positive outlook and demeanor on a tennis court, you must embrace the below thought processes:

1) When you miss an easy shot or the easiest shot in a rally, be logical about your miss. What I mean is think, “was I too close to the line? Were my feet right?” “How did I miss this,” has to become the question instead of, “why did I miss this?” Determining what you did wrong, analyzing why you missed and then knowing the cause of failure is the thought process you should experience. Never say “I am better than this.” You must pay attention to your own technique.



Mats hosting JTCC Gala at Swedish Ambassador residence, Washington, D.C. May 2012.

(Photo by Tim Brown)

2) Mentally try and work on correcting your miss for the next shot opportunity, “How the heck did I miss that shot” without the before mentioned thought process does not solve any problems. Very rarely will you hear a professional state that he or she hit a bad shot. They will always say it was the wrong shot. If you play a long rally and miss the easy shot, most players have a tendency to become irritated. I say do just the opposite. Focus on all the positives that occurred prior to that one bad moment. Realistically, how many times are you going to miss that easy shot? Play the same way again. Do not forget what you did to get to that point! Short-term memory really becomes important! You will not miss that shot again!

3) Sometimes it is good to be on the bottom! Not just in tennis but in life. It is all right to find yourself in a foxhole. You must fight your way out. This is when your victories and your triumphs feel most sweet! It is when you are at the bottom that you discover how strong you really are as a person and as a warrior. To me, losing and learning are the same word. They mean the same thing. When I have lost, not only

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in tennis but in life, I have learned much more from defeat than I ever have from victory. The best match I have ever played must have been one that I lost. My best match cannot be one of victory merely because I have no idea how much better I could have performed. In a match that I have lost, I have been pushed to my utmost limit and have done everything physically and mentally possible!

4) While at net, if my opponent hits a winning passing shot, you must turn and “think” too good (not say it out loud) and give credit where credit is due in your head. Never say out loud “too good.” I can not stand for that. Your opponent knows it is too good, you know it is too good, why do you have to say it? A singles tennis court is 27 feet wide. A normal player, at a minimum, can cover 15 feet of court. If you are even slightly above normal in movement, you can cover almost 18-20 feet. This gives your opponent roughly 30% of court to utilize. Odds are in your favor. If your opponent can beat you with 30% of space, that is “too good” and look immediately to the next point without further thought.

5) If you find yourself trailing 5-0 in the first set, you must think that there is no chance your opponent can continue to play at such a high level. He or she will eventually come out of the proverbial “tree” and fall back to earth. Someone recently posted an interview of me from the 16 and under European Championships that I won in 1979 on Facebook. I was playing Henri Leconte in the finals and he led 5-0. The interviewer asked me “were you worried that you were down 0-5 in the first set?” My response then, as it was throughout my career and what it would be today if I was ever in the same predicament, is that I did not think Henri could maintain his same high level of play for the duration of the match. I needed to wait him out. Whether the storm. If I could somehow manage to not lose the match, I believed I would be able to overcome his abilities in the end. For those of you wondering, I did win that match 3-6, 6-0, 6-1. I have said it before and I will say it again, tennis is a marathon, not a sprint. Especially if it is a five set match. For amateurs three sets is a marathon. If I was down 0-5, I never worried. I know tactically I would figure something out and slowly turn it around, maybe not win but for sure gain some ground.

PLEASE NOTE***Be self aware and realize if your opponent is much more talented than you, thought process #5 may not apply and you may be in some serious trouble***

6) You can have good misses. If you are doing what is expected it is all right to miss. Sometimes you can do everything right and the ball just goes out. Some days are like that.

NERVES

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NERVES: CONTROL THEM AND HOW TO

I am constantly asked “how did [you] remain so calm in big moments?” I must say that although I appeared calm, I did feel tension and nerves, but not in the way you may think.

First, I was nervous only in my arm. I was NEVER nervous in my decision making. I would only attempt a tactical serve or shot based upon how my arm felt! I would not try to hit a huge serve if I thought the chances of making it were small. I would hit the serve attempting to illicit the same response from my opponent, but I would hit the serve softer because I knew my arm was nervous. So at crucial moments there was a combination between having a nervous arm and knowing what tactically I could get away with while having a nervous arm.



Mats serving to Pat Cash at Statoil Masters Tennis Tournament in Royal Albert Hall, London. December 2012.
 (Photo courtesy of Tim Edwards)

Second, it is during the first ten minutes of any match when I am most nervous. It is during these moments that I kept myself tense and tight and made as many points in my head “huge” and more valuable than actual worth. The more points you play that are big, the wiser you become and the less nervous you will feel in any match. During crucial moments, 2 sets all, after three hours of playing, the plan of attack becomes so clear. It is pretty obvious where I am going because I know where I won and lost the most points. I am so engrossed into the process that the end result becomes irrelevant. I am not worried about winning or losing. Tennis becomes just about doing the right thing and committing to it.

I am assuming you are much like other players who are loose in the beginning and then tell the same story at the end “I don’t know what happened.... I got nervous.”

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This happens for one reason. You were loose and relaxed at the start of the match. You need to practice being nervous. How do you do that? Make it a big deal in your mind about reaching 1-0 and 2-0. Jedi mind trick yourself to thinking that if you do not make it to 2-0 then it becomes about life or death to make it to 2-1. It puts you on the mental edge at all times. Force the mental toughness. Most people feel nothing at 1-1 or 2-2 but then at 5-5 they suddenly feel everything. Why is Federer the best in tiebreakers? It is because he knows exactly where to play the ball because he has paid attention for the past 45 minutes. You can practice this tension from the beginning by pressuring yourself to pay attention to what your opponent is making and missing. The tactical decisions should become so clear that there is no reason to be nervous. If you make it so it is life or death in the beginning and make it life or death the entire match, then when it is 5-5 you are completely desensitized to the moment. This proves your mental toughness. Whenever I played Ivan Lendl, if he was up 0-30 on my serve in the first game of the first set, I would always think to myself, "if I do not win the next point, chances are he will break me and the first set is already over because there is no chance I will break his serve." The pressure I put on myself at the beginning of each set was intense.

Finally, play through your nerves. If you do get nervous and find it hard to swallow, your heart is racing, hard to move your entire body and a shot just hit the back fence or your shot bounced before it reached the net, it is time to go back to basics. Utilize your entire body while hitting a shot. It is this moment that the open stance is by far your worst enemy. When you get nervous it becomes very hard to make any shot perfect, especially if you

are only utilizing your arm (open stance). Very important to go back to basics; step into and through every shot especially on the forehand side - old school style of step and hit. This allows the entire body to become involved where many things must go wrong for you to miss. When you are getting nervous you need to try and involve as many muscles as possible.



On a drive from Malibu, CA to San Francisco, WOW stops to take in the scenery somewhere on the Pacific Coast Highway. April 2012.
(Photo by Cameron Lickle)

Closing

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CLOSING:

Although the above may seem like a lot of information to absorb, we have only begun to cover all the topics that you as an amateur player must improve upon. Becoming the best tennis player you can be is a process. It takes time. Just like losing weight or getting into shape, you must be prepared for a journey. Becoming the best tennis player you can be is not limited to what we have discussed above. However, WOW believes that these are the guiding principles that need to be initially addressed. Once you implement our winning method into your game, you can move onto *Volume II of HOW TO BE THE BEST PLAYER YOU CAN BE*. Thank you for taking the time to read and implement into your game what WOW believes in! Helping even just one person's game is our true reward! Looking forward to seeing you on the court! Please do not hesitate to reach out anytime for any reason.... especially if it is tennis related!!!!!!



Mats saying hello to three time WOW participant Marta Babson at Saddle and Cycle Club, Chicago, IL. June 2012. (Photo by Tim Brown)

BEST TO ALL WHO LOVE THIS GAME,

THE WOW TEAM

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Best

THE WOW TEAM



Cameron lending support to an injured WOW participant, Gina Sullivan at Winchester Country Club, Winchester, VA. May 2012. (Photo by Tim Brown)

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