

JTCC Champions Program Parents Meeting

Monday, February 23rd

Ray Benton: Court crunch has become a big issue that we are handling. For seven months of the year we are a 27 court club. For five months we are a 12 court club. There are several paths we are taking to address this issue. We are looking at ways to schedule court time more efficiently. We are looking at adjusting our programming scheduled during the toughest times from January through March when Maryland is using the facility. In the long run, we are looking at possibly expanding our indoor capacity by building a bubble over 4 or 6 courts during the winter.

For next year, we have expanded our community service program. In the contract for the Champions Program next year, all players will be required to fulfill a minimum of 30 hours of community service through our various community outreach projects which include both Washington, DC and our surroundings in Prince George's County.

Vic Braden and Pat Etcheberry have been added as Senior Advisors to the program. Vic and Pat will be visiting regularly throughout the year and will be working with our coaching staff to add their expertise to our training program. Vic will be focusing primarily on the mental aspect of the game while Pat will oversee our entire fitness program.

We have added a small Yoga program on Friday afternoons. This program is deliberately small right now as we want the kids to recognize that the Yoga training is a privilege and to be taken seriously. We have introduced it to our High Performance players first and they have responded very well. We now have two levels of class offered, both on Friday afternoons and limited to 10 players. At this point it remains an invitation only program.

At the end of the meeting, Ray asked each parent for one suggestion of something that we can do to improve the program. We are dedicated to constantly improving our program, and input from the parents is a crucial part of that.

Vesa Ponkka: The coaches feel like the players in the Champions Program are performing at a very high level. We feel that this is the best group of kids we've had in our 10 years here. This is because there are no bad-apples in the bunch that compromise the level of training for others. The coaching staff is working hard and everyone on board is really buying into the coaching philosophy here. We strive to have the best coaches in the United States, (and hopefully in the world shortly). We are always striving to improve our coaching methods and techniques. We are holding coaches education meetings twice each week to make sure our coaches are all on the same page for training our players. Most recently we have been refocusing all aspects of our training to be tennis specific. The USTA has noticed the success of our coaches education program and have unofficially been using our coaches education methods at the other Regional Training Centers, and the national centers in Boca, Carson, and New York.

We have made some changes to our tournament travel policies. First and foremost, we are vastly increasing the number of Mid-Atlantic tournaments that our coaches will attend. This year, we are committed to sending coaches to more than 30 area tournaments. All the coaches at the tennis center are working very hard and have a teaching schedule of six days per week. When you see them at a tournament, they are there on their day off. As far as the national tournament travel goes, we are recommending all players under the age of 15 travel with a parent. Any child under 15 travelling without a parent must be approved ahead of time by us. Also, players will now be responsible for booking their own flights and hotels even if they are planning on travelling with the team. For a complete summary of our travel policies please see the updated document available on our website.

Frank Salazar: Frank discussed the training techniques of our new Senior Advisor Pat Etcheberry, and Senior Director of Competition. Pat will be overseeing our entire fitness program from strength training to footwork and agility training. He will be making regular visits to the tennis center and will be holding clinics for both players in our program and also our members. He has coached 90 Grand Slam Champions and 15 Olympic gold medalists. He will be working with our players at all different levels from oldest to youngest, and will be overseeing the tennis specific aspects of our physical fitness training program.

Frank introduced our new Senior Director of Competition Coach Chuck Kriese. Chuck was the head coach at Clemson from 1975 – 2008. He ended his career as the ACC's winningest coach in history, after winning 11 conference championships and over 600 wins. During his career, Coach Kriese was honored as the ACC coach-of-the-year six times, and was twice honored as the USPTA National Coach of the Year. Since his retirement at Clemson, Chuck has been working as the Technical Director of the Southeast Asia Tennis Federation and oversees the coaching for them in nine Asian countries. While serving in this role, Chuck has become the coach for Noppawan Lertcheewakarn, four time junior Grand Slam champion.

Chuck Kriese: Chuck focused primarily on the mentoring system here at JTCC. His analogy for the mentoring system was that of a mountain of tennis success. The key part of making it to the top of that mountain is the last 20%. In tennis, if you are focused and intense, it is relatively simple to make it up to the 50% mark in the mountain. There are obstacles along the way, and those obstacles are what keep players from becoming great. Once you get to the last 20% is when the obstacles really intensify. In many ways, the last 20% is a climb up a face where you lose sight of the top. You lose sight of what exactly it will take to become great and how far you have to go to get there. Players who are already at the top of the mountain serve as mentors here for those players struggling to make it up the last 20%. They are standing at the top of the mountain calling down to them and telling them they can do it, and how far they have to go, and what they have to get there. These players are your role models for getting up to the top and achieving your goals of tennis greatness. The key to reaching the last 20% is mental and emotional.

For JTCC we are looking to install a three-tiered mentoring system. In order to be successful and maximize your learning, you must be accountable to someone above you, be evaluated by your peers, and have someone below you who you work with to help you. Within our program, we have the ability for every player to fit into this model. Players will have peer mentors that are older than them, their age, and in some cases younger. This peer mentoring along with the mentoring from the coaches will enable players to develop in the most efficient manner. The effect of mentoring on personal development is well documented. Frank and Chuck first met when Frank was 12 years old, and Chuck was his mentor, his college coach, and remains a mentor to Frank today. With the addition of Billy Mertz to our coaching staff, we have a third generation in that mentoring relationship, as Frank was Billy's mentor as he grew up in our program. The mentoring aspect of this program is what will really make the difference in our players' development.

Chuck recommended a book called *The Talent Code* which talks about where greatness is made.

The final point that Chuck made was about tournament scheduling, which is a very important role in the mentoring relationship. We believe in a 1/3, 1/3, 1/3 schedule where 1/3 of the tournaments a player competes in he/she should win, 1/3 of the tournaments he/she should be even with the competition, and 1/3 of the tournaments should have the player outmatched. Through a schedule like this a player will learn how to truly play the game and how to handle both winning and losing. In order to be great at tennis, you must lose. You must lose a lot. Being able to handle yourself on the court during all types of matches is critical. Shot selection and critical decision making will be different when you are playing different types of matches. Unless you play all three types of tournaments, one cannot hope to fully develop.

Q: What is the mentoring relationship?

A: The mentor is the driving force in the player's tennis development along with the parents. The mentor is responsible for making sure that all training – tennis, mental, physical – gets done. The mentor is to communicate with the parents on these issues. There are two formal meetings between the mentor and the parents each year, but communication should be much more regular than that. The mentor is also responsible for recommending a tournament schedule for the player to play.

Suggestions

- Clarify to the front desk what elements of the program are free and what needs to be charged
- Itemized invoices for club charges
- Re-evaluate the makeup policy
- An annual JTCC yearbook

Please feel free to send me any suggestions you have for improving our program at any time. I am always eager to get feedback of how we can improve. WElison@thetccp.com