

Watching your own child play tennis tournaments is one of the most emotionally charged experiences that anyone can go through. The tennis court is a very stressful environment and watching your child battle and struggle through a match can definitely test your temperament regardless of how well you control your emotions in all other aspects of your life.

Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- 1. Your emotions will usually taint your observations and will make it almost impossible to stay objective.** Step back after an emotionally charged match and try to develop a clearer picture of what actually happened before you jump to conclusions. It is usually not as bad or as good as you saw it.
- 2. Controlling your emotions is not easy.** Sometimes your child will lose matches getting "tight." Choking is part of the game even at the pro level. If it is hard for you to control your emotions on the sidelines, just imagine what your child goes through on the court.
- 3. A lower ability level does not reflect poorly on you as a parent but a lower sportsmanship level could.** Be tough on cheating, tanking, disrespecting the opponent and temper tantrums.
- 4. It is what it is!** Each match is a picture of your child's performance level on a given day, a combination of things he/she does well and things that he/she needs to work on. Shoulds, coulds and what ifs just blur the picture and stir up negative emotions.
- 5. Losing is a major part of the game.** In tennis, even at the top, professional players lose every week, and handling defeat is one of the most important aspects in player development. Expect frequent defeats. If your child is not losing often he/she is not playing the right level tournaments.
- 6. There is always the next time.** When at a tournament it is very easy to overemphasize the importance of a match. The reality is that there is always another chance. Winning or losing a match does not make or break anyone's career. A junior player will play hundreds of matches. Except for bruised egos – not much else happens as a consequence of losing. A match is just a match!
- 7. Tennis is an individual sport.** Your child is playing – you are not! "We" do not play the tournament. "He or she" does. Although parental support is absolutely necessary to succeed in tennis, your child is the only one competing. Wins or losses are his/hers. The "we" will make it much harder to remain objective.
- 8. It is your child's match, observe but do not get involved.** Let your child and his/her opponent figure things out. Learning to solve problems is an integral part of the game.
- 9. Be aware of the natural progression.** Learning occurs in stages. First, the player is aware of what needs to be done and performance in practice is spotty. After some time the player can execute the skill very well in drills but spotty during matches and poorly under pressure. Slowly the skill becomes more consistent in match play and finally under pressure. Crises under pressure are part of the process and cannot be avoided. Expect some disappointment.
- 10. Sometimes "shit" happens.** Regardless of how well you prepare and compete, there will be matches where everything goes wrong. There is really no explanation and from outside the court it may appear ridiculous, but every competitive tennis player has faced matches where he/she literally "forgot how to play." When this happens, move on. It will save you many hours of frustration trying to come up with a reason.

If handled correctly, junior tennis can be a great opportunity to spend quality time with your children. Enjoy the process, and help your child mature through competition by supporting their efforts.

Any feedback is welcome; I'm here to answer any questions.

Kind regards

Nick