This report is written by

Tomaz Mencinger

http://www.TennisMindGame.com

-- Feel free to pass this report to your friends and tennis fans --

This report is a special bonus for subscribing to the TennisMindGame Newsletter, where you receive Tennis Mental Tips every two weeks

Interested?
http://www.tennismindgame.com/tennis-news.html
How one thought can change your whole game

If you are not satisfied with your tennis, have you tried these solutions:

- tried to fix or change one of your strokes alone or with a pro
- engaged in practice with zillion drills
- played with better players to challenge you to higher levels of play
- studied video analysis from top professionals
- turned over half the internet for the ultimate solution for your problems
- bought a new racquet to give you »more control and power«

And if you haven't advanced to your expected levels there may be something else holding you back – your MIND! Your mind can be your greatest enemy or your best ally – you just have to know how to direct it. If your mind is occupied with irrelevant thoughts about your goal (which in short term is hitting the ball in the desired target) there is a big chance that you will miss the next shot.

But there is a very simple (I didn't say easy!) and elegant solution to this problem – you need to have a winning thought in your mind and a backup answer. A what?

Ok, ok, here they are:

1. Can I hit a good ball?
2. If the answer is no, then play a preventing shot.

What is a good ball? It depends on your level of play but there is always a good ball on all levels
- with kids on mini court playing the soft balls
- older kids who play only twice a week
- competitive junior players
- club level players
- very good club level players
- professionals
- and all the levels in between...

All of them have the same basic tactic: going for empty space or at the weaker side of their opponent. And the ball needs to have some pace – that's why it's a good ball. If the ball does not have enough pace, then it's just a passive rally ball.

Which pace is the right one – not to over hit but not to push? Observe your opponent when you hit to the empty space: if he is not completely comfortable, then your shot is good. It's that simple. And if your opponent is not completely comfortable there is a good chance that he'll miss or give you a really good opportunity to finish the point or come to the net. This should be your main goal when you want to play good tennis – keeping the opponent uncomfortable.

If your main goal is to hit winners you'll probably miss too many balls because the risk is too high. If your main goal is never to miss, then you'll beat about 80% percent of players near your level, but you'll rarely win a tournament or beat a really good opponent.

© Tomaz Mencinger – All Rights Reserved www.TennisMindGame.com
player. If you want to become a winner, you need to constantly put your opponents under some pressure until they »crack or fall«. Basically, a good ball is a controlled attack. Not going really for corners or lines just trying to keep your opponent under constant pressure.

What is a preventing shot? And why do I call it this way? Because it implies purpose! Most coaches talk about three distinct types of play – attack, rally and defense. Attack and defense are clearly understood but rally is usually understood (but maybe not meant from the coaches!) as a passive way of playing. It's like »Oh, my opponent has played a deep shot crosscourt, and since I can’t attack it I'll just rally it back and wait for the next opportunity«. This way of thinking is too passive and it's reflected in your strokes and movement. You just hit the ball back and wait. You have no clear purpose. When you think about preventing you think about how to prevent your opponent from attacking. You are more aggressive, more courageous, and more deliberate. Your shots have greater length and pace. You now really try to prevent your opponent from attacking. You may even hit a good ball when just trying to prevent an attack.

Defense must also contain an element of prevention – too many players just put the ball in court when the feel on defense. But it just sits nicely in the middle of the court waiting to be hit for a winner. When you defend with prevention in your mind, you are not only defending from a current position but already preventing an opponent from subsequent attacks.

All of the above mentioned levels of players can play a preventing shot. It's usually long ball down the middle or crosscourt. It needs to have good height and pace if you want it deep.

Now imagine playing a point – the opponent is just about to hit his shot and there must already be the first question in your mind – Will I be able to hit a good ball?

How can you know that already? By many factors:
- were you on attack, good ball, preventing ball or defense?
- how far was your opponent from reaching your shot?
- is he still moving or is he balanced?
- is that his better or weaker stroke?
- ...

After he has hit the ball, you need to confirm your initial anticipation and ask again – Can I hit a good ball?

How to decide?
- can you get to the ball comfortably or under pressure?
- is the flight of the ball high, low or just right?
- is ball coming towards you going fast, slow or just right?
- is your stroke reliable enough to hit a good shot?
- ...

Of course all these questions and answers just flash through your mind. Reading these takes time but in reality your decision can be made in a split second.
beginner this takes practice and your perception of the situation will improve and so will the speed of decision making. And the sooner the decision the more sure you can be, that you'll make the shot.

If you decide that you cannot hit a good ball, then you play back the preventing ball.

When is that?
- when you are on the run
- when opponent's shot has pushed you well beyond the baseline
- when opponent's ball is very fast, very high or very low
- when you feel yourself out of balance
- when the ball is going straight at you and you have to move away
- ...

So play back the ball and either it's a good shot or a preventing one and start another cycle – anticipate what your shot has »done« to your opponent, what he will probably reply with and then see and correct if necessary your anticipation and reaffirm your decision – then do it!

Once again here are the steps:

Can I hit a good ball?
- Yes! DO IT!
- No. Play a preventing ball.

Can I hit a good ball?
...

Keep practicing! Remember - if you are just going to "try" this, I you'll probably fail. But if you will actually USE THE WINNING THOUGHT UNTIL YOU GET A DESIRED RESULT, your game will change dramatically.

The operative words here are UNTIL YOU GET A DESIRED RESULT. Not IF you get results but UNTIL you get a desired result. If you use this as your bottom line for measuring your success, you will be light years ahead of 99% of the players who are "trying" to play better, but never succeed.

See you at the winners' presentation!

Tomaz Mencinger
http://www.tennismindgame.com

Make Your Mind Your Best Ally
If you found this mental tennis tip useful (and you will actually USE IT ☺) then you would probably want to see a whole collection of best mental tennis tips.

**The Mental Manual for Tennis Winners**
*How to master any mentally challenging situation during a tennis match!*

http://www.tennismindgame.com/manual

I've read the "Mental Manual for Tennis Winners" and it's excellent that you have gathered mental tips from world tennis experts. I've been working with my coach on tennis psychology for quite some time and have read many books on this topic.

I believe that if you really want to improve your tennis you have to put in a lot of effort in different areas and psychology is just one of those important ones. Watching and commenting a tennis match is much easier than playing it. Many people don't realize this since they have never been in a similar situation.

I hope young players will use your manual and that it will help them improve their tennis game.

Katarina Srebotnik
Best Sony Ericsson WTA singles ranking: 27
Best Sony Ericsson WTA doubles ranking: 19
Winner of 4. Sony Ericsson WTA singles tournaments
Winner of 11. Sony Ericsson WTA doubles tournaments
Winner of 2. mixed doubles Grand Slam tournaments

http://www.tennismindgame.com/manual