



**Integrated & every day mental
skills training**

Merlin van de Braam

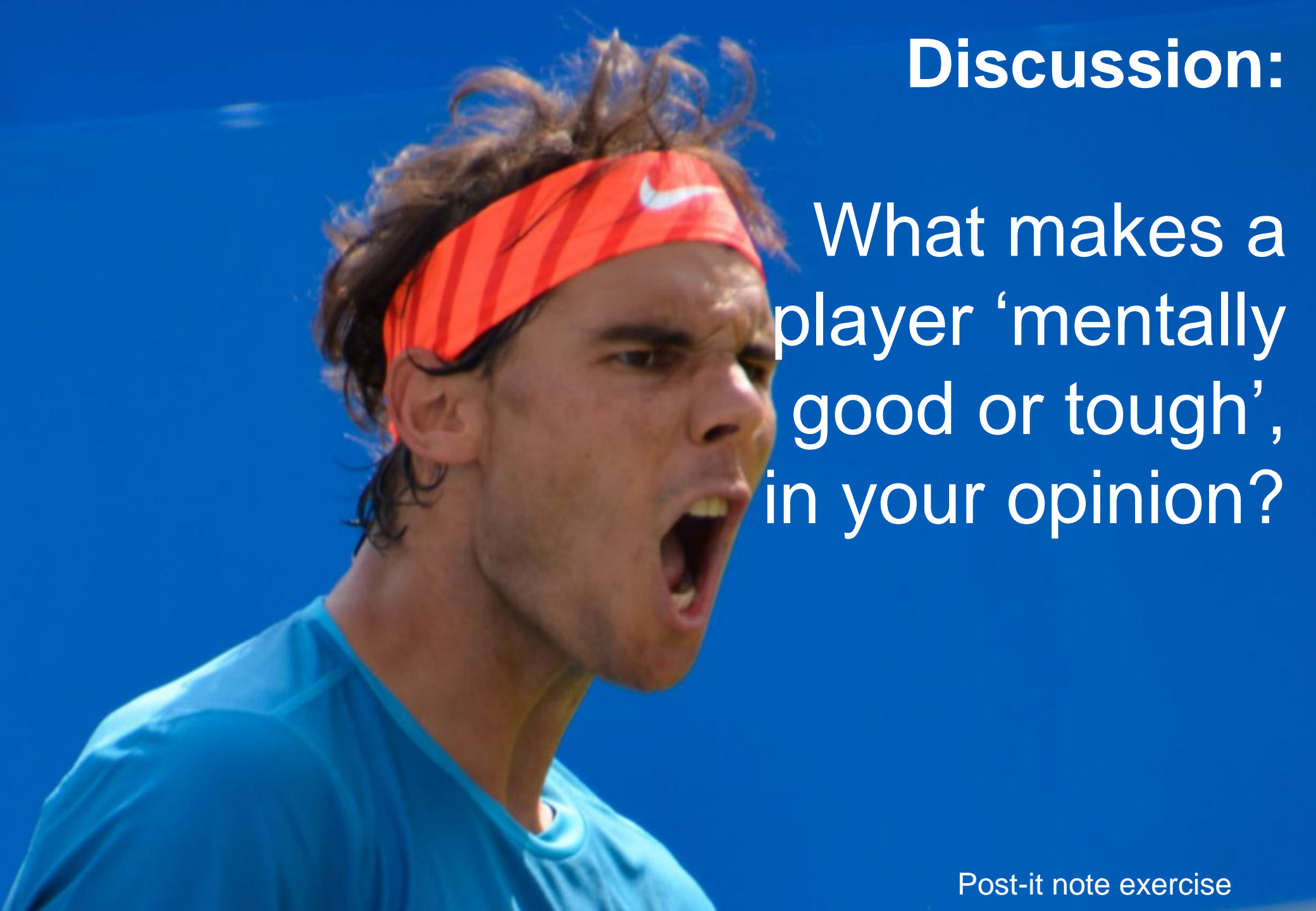
Tennis: Played with the body. Won with the mind.



Objectives of this session

By the end of this presentation you will:

1. Understand the difference between mental skills and mental tools, and the role of both in player development
2. Learn 12 exercises that facilitate the development of mental skills
3. Understand how to introduce basic breathing techniques, self-talk and visualisation



Discussion:

What makes a player 'mentally good or tough', in your opinion?

What do these players have in common?



Agnieszka Radwanska

SINGLES RANKING 74

AGE 29 06 MAR 1989

HEIGHT 5' 8" (1.73 M)

PRO STATUS 2005

PLAYS RIGHT-HANDED

RESIDENCE KRAKOW, POLAND

BIRTHPLACE KRAKOW, POLAND

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None of them had a positive win to loss ratio that year



Robin Haase

Singles Ranking 50

AGE 31 (1987.04.06)

TURNED PRO 2005

WEIGHT 170 lbs (77kg)

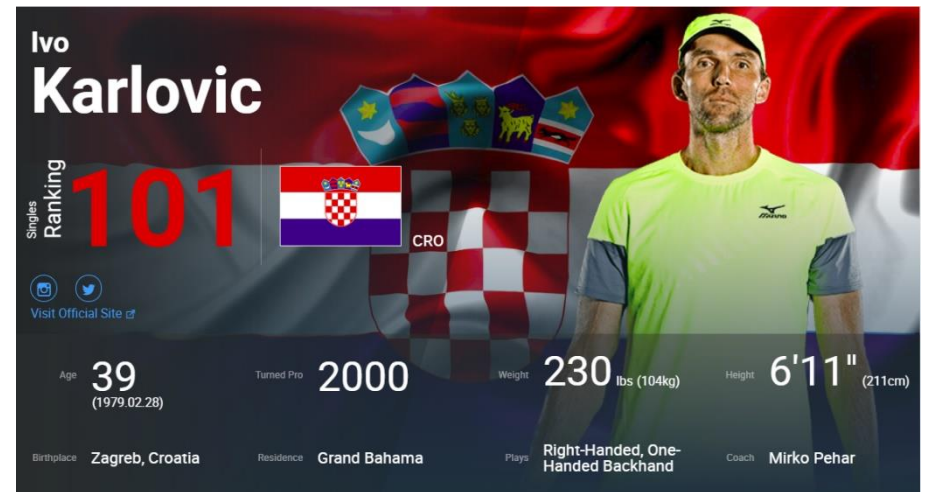
HEIGHT 6'3" (191cm)

BIRTHPLACE The Hague, The Netherlands

RESIDENCE Turnhout, Belgium

PLAYS Right-Handed, Two-Handed Backhand

COACH Raymond Knaap



Ivo Karlovic

Singles Ranking 101

AGE 39 (1979.02.28)

TURNED PRO 2000

WEIGHT 230 lbs (104kg)

HEIGHT 6'11" (211cm)

BIRTHPLACE Zagreb, Croatia

RESIDENCE Grand Bahama

PLAYS Right-Handed, One-Handed Backhand

COACH Mirko Pehar

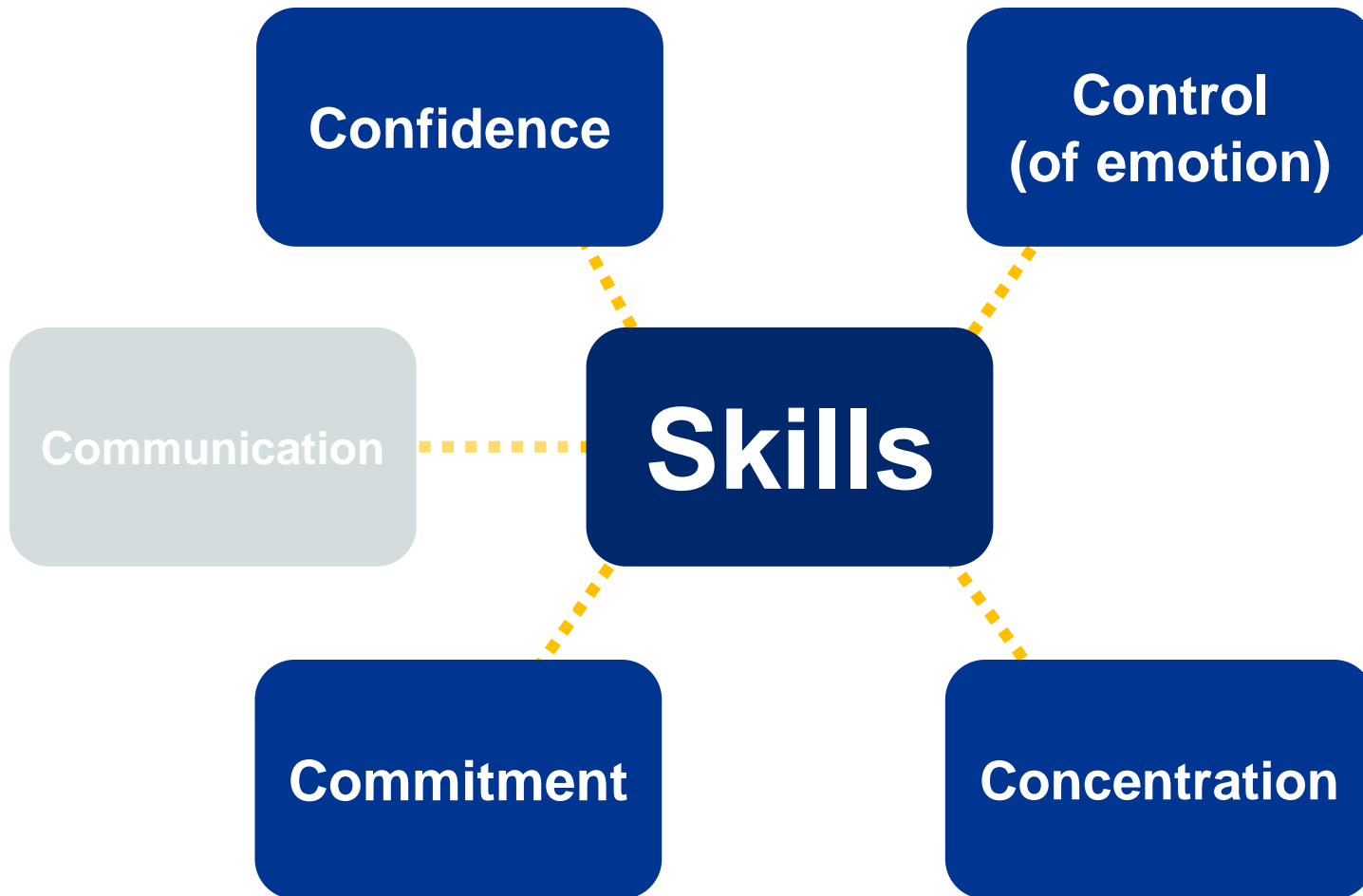
The harsh reality of tennis

“Not a single player ranked between 51-100 had a winning record in 2016”.

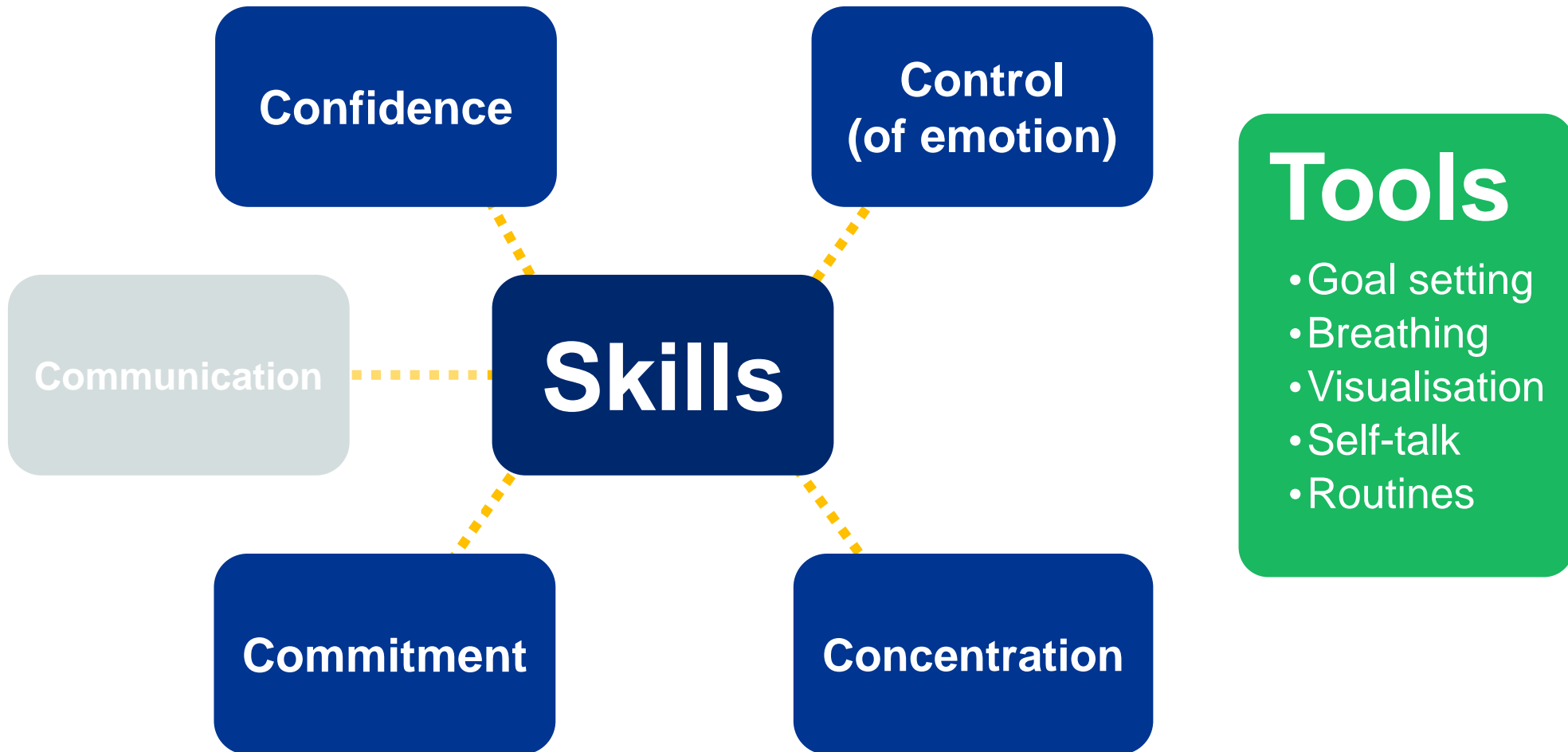
“Federer has won 51% of points in his career. 49% of the points he plays he has lost”.

**WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A
MENTAL SKILL AND A MENTAL TOOL?**

Mental skills vs tools



Mental skills vs tools



Practical exercises:

CONCENTRATION



Concentration is like a
mental spotlight

Concentration

Orange Ball

All coaches on court. Work in pairs. Catch ball with corresponding hand.
Introduce orange ball. Rule = must catch with left hand.

Concentration

Everyball

Count balls made = 1 point. Other player counts errors made = - 5 points.
Write a number on the ball using a marker pen to increase concentration.
Players must read it during the rally.

Concentration

Reading the ball

Depth reading - one player calls out how deep the ball will land, before it crosses the net.

Concentration

Slice – Flat – Top Spin

*Great for odd-numbers when practising serve and return.
Returner turns to face back fence and must declare the spin
used by the server, using only auditory cues.*

Practical exercises:

CONTROL OF EMOTONS

Control (of emotion)

Serve

Nerve



Visualisation

Working in 2s on the same baseline. Four 1st serves in a row are required to win a game. Missed serve = change server. Play a set.

Control (of emotion)

Diamond Points



Breathing

Collect three balls laid out in a diamond, then serve in and play.

Basic breathing technique

Breath in for as long as it takes to read this line



Breath out for as long as it takes to read this line

Control (of emotion)

Paper Chase

Practical exercises:

CONFIDENCE

Confidence

0-40




Self-talk

Play points serving from 0-40. Serving player must choose an affirmation/key word e.g. let's go, come on – must be chosen by the player not the coach

Confidence

Aggressive baseliner



Self-talk +
Visualisation

One score tennis: players have one score that relates to how many shots player 1 has to finish point. Aim is to reach 2 i.e. feed and finish rally in next two shots. Start at 5. Change roles if you reach 8.

Confidence: Win to loss ratios

2:1 to 3:1

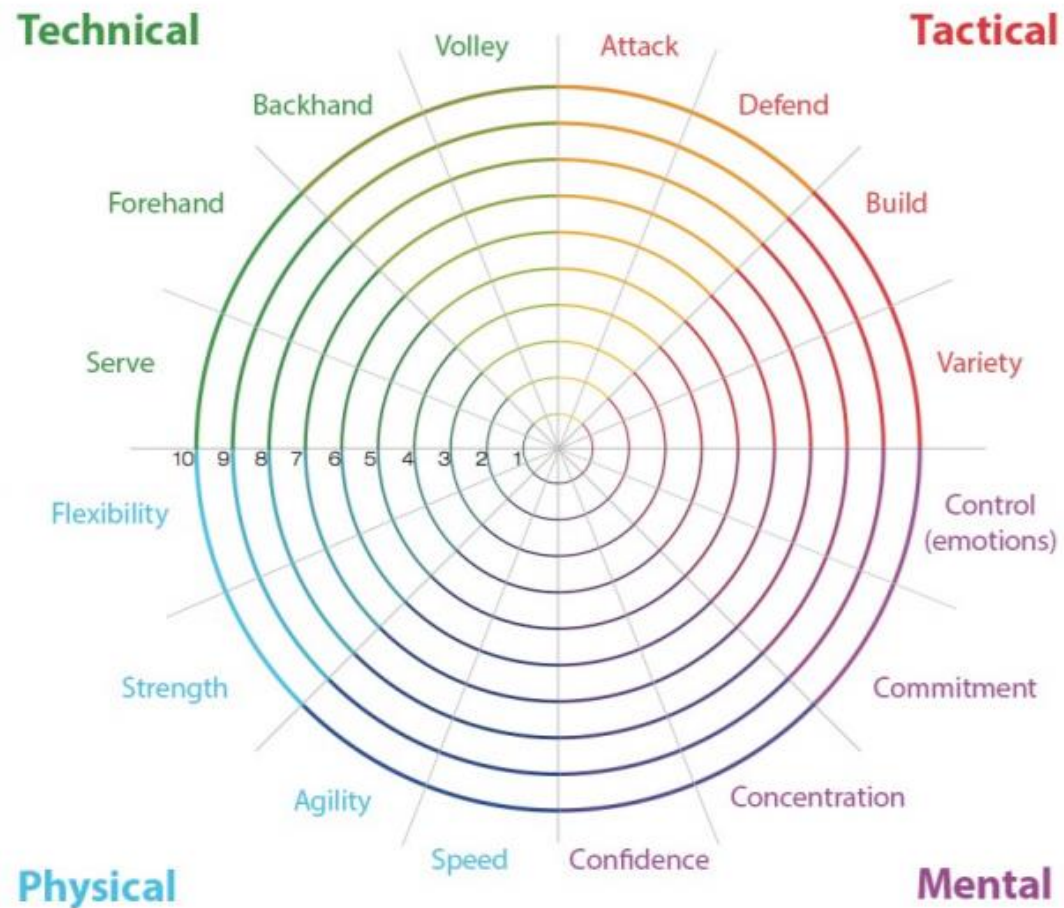
Practical exercises:

COMMITMENT

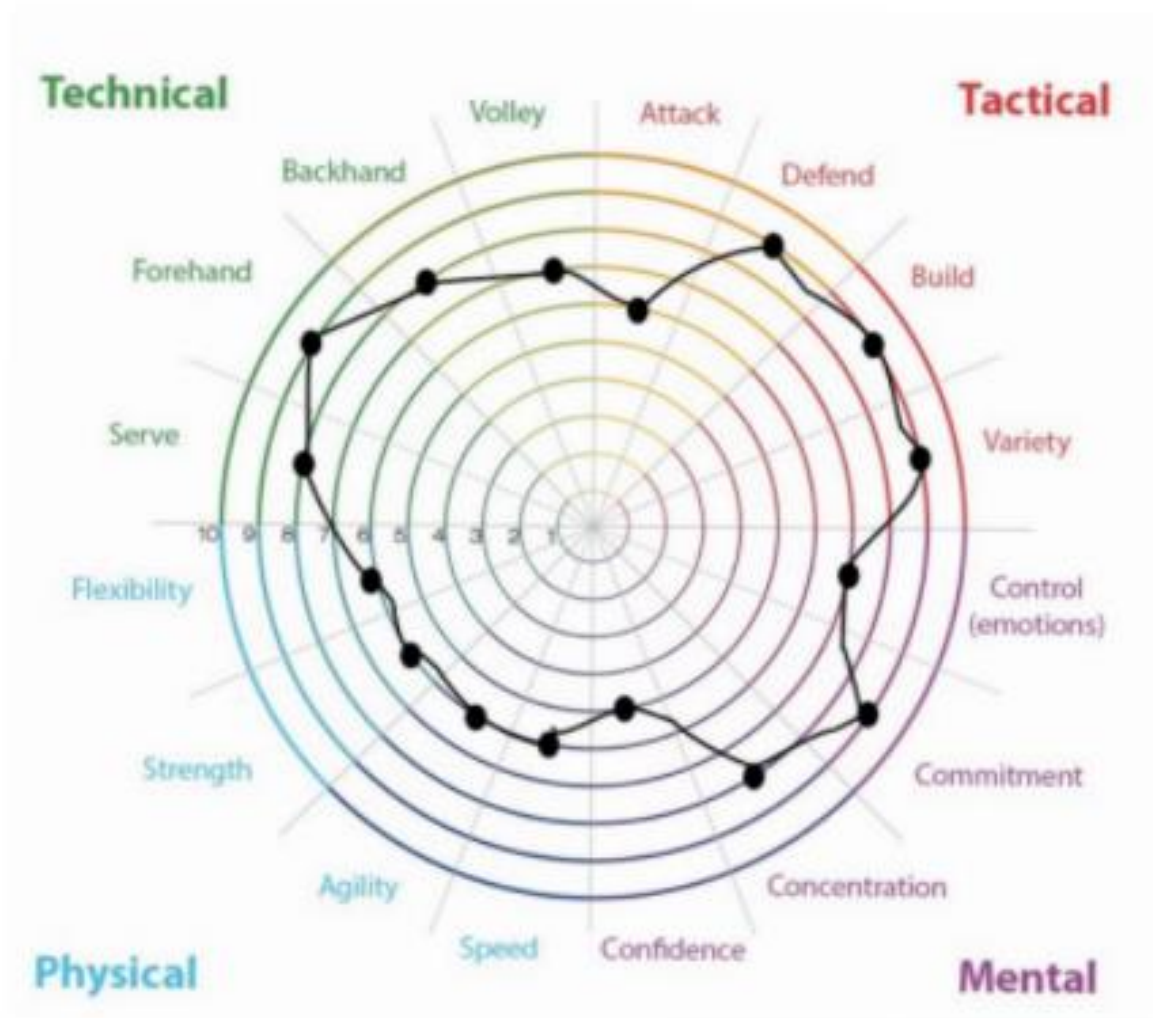
Commitment

Name: _____

Date: _____



Commitment



Growth Mindset

Commitment

Own Goals

Play one game. Returning player must analyse their own game afterward, and devise one exercise to improve one facet of play. Coach can only facilitate.

Squad training principles

1. Structure the environment in a way that enables mental skills to be tested and developed everyday
2. Create player ownership and independence – ask effective questions and listen more than you speak.
3. Create an environment that values personal best, alongside beating others

Other practical exercises & ideas

Playing loose: Player 1 must compete with a racket strung 20lbs below their usual tension

Old balls: Ask players to train with very poor quality balls (attribution training)

Slippery when wet: Tell player to run their racket handle under the warm water tap, then hussle a set from 0-2 down.

Narrow focus - one ball, read the letter after partner writes on it

Wide focus hit to BH, call slice or topspin as it bounces i.e. player is looking at ball bounce but has to use peripheral vision to see racket prep

What can I actually impact as a coach on court?

Thoughts ↔ Feelings ↔ Behaviours

Caveats with mental skills

If you detect a player has psychological issues that go beyond the tennis court, be pro-active in making a referral to a trained psychologist.

Objectives of this session

What have we covered?

1. The difference between mental skills and mental tools, and the role of both in player development
2. 12 exercises that facilitate the development of mental skills
3. Introduction of basic breathing techniques, self-talk and visualisation

THANK YOU!

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