What is Compete Like A Champion?

00:04  [inaudible]

00:06  J: Welcome to the first ever episode of compete like a champion podcast. You're here with Dr. Larry Lauer, mental skills specialist, and coach Johnny Parkes with the USTA Player Development. Dr. Larry, first ever episode.

00:21  L: Yes, sir, this is it. Here we go.

00:22  J: Oh, so about, what was it? Maybe six months ago, early in 2018 you came to me and said, Johnny, what'd you think about doing a podcast? I said, well, sounds like a great idea that you know, and you said, no, I want you to help me do the podcast. And I thought originally what? You just want some British sounding guy with a bit of banter to come along and create a bit of a wit on that. But...

00:48  L: It was the main reason, but go...

00:49  J: No, no, no. Seriously. So that's what was the main reason? What was your ideas behind wanting to put this podcast together, you know, and, um, and how did it take off?

00:58  L: Well, I, you know, just going through and thinking about how can we communicate with our players, with our coaches on a regular basis. Because in tennis they leave our campus for large periods of time and they're gone. They're on the road. They, when they go to Europe, for example, during the clay court season, they're gone for two, three months. And communication is difficult. I mean, you communicate in different platforms, mediums, but to get information to them in a time, what works for them is challenging. So I think the main reason as I went through, I wanted to find a way to be able to reach our players who are trained. The national centers are coaches with information that they could digest wherever they're at in the world. You're there on a train, they're on a plane, they're in a car, what are they doing? You know, they just listen to music, which is great, but also they could be listening to our beautiful voices, which are like music as listeners will find out. Um, but they can be...

01:46  J: Speak for yourself.

01:47  L: Oh, I'm not British. Yes. But they can be listening to us. And hopefully we can provide some information that really helps them. So that was probably the first thing. The second thing is trying to get out to the, what I would say our masses, our folks who are interested in high performance and tennis who have a connection with the USTA, with player development and in a way, in a fun entertaining way that we could get information to them that can really help them do their jobs and hopefully, uh, help them, you know, take the next step in
their careers. So hopefully there's ideas that come out of those podcasts that really help people on the ground immediately.

02:22

J: Yeah. When you, when you started asking me about podcasts, I literally had no idea. I mean, I knew kind of what podcasts were, but I was, I don't even know how to access a podcast. And then my wife had to tell me, yeah, podcast, you just have an app on your phone. You just look at them and you can search whatever podcast you want. So I started, started listening to a ton of podcasts. So now my morning's to, you know, to work. And then when I leave work in the evenings rather than listening to the same radio stations that drive me nuts with all the commercials, I'm like, Hey, can I actually listen to some podcasts and people talking about real things. And so to me that was a pretty cool concept. But you know, with the purpose of this podcast, I mean who would you say that we're trying to, we're trying to reach with this?

02:59

L: I would say, it's really the coaches that we want to get to the parents. The players it's not just one group. Um, we want to reach out to all of them with our latest and greatest, hopefully information, how we're doing things. Uh, not that we have all the answers. Let's be honest with the listeners. Right now we don't have all the answers, but we, we try to find out what the answers are. So if we don't know, we'll contact someone who we think is an expert in that area. We'll talk to people, we'll kind of kick ball things around with the coaches as well to come up with best ideas. But what we're going to try and do is for all three of those audiences provide information that can help them in their tennis, in their lives. And, and so that's kind of our commitment. Um, we hope that people keep coming back because they're not only getting something from it, but it's enjoyable. Um, but that's how we're going to be be looking at things is from the coach parent and player perspective. And so I think our listeners can expect that we'll have guests on talking about different sports science topics, about coaching, about parenting, about competing. And I also would expect that, uh, there'll be a lot of times that you and I are just going back and forth about subjects and getting to the bottom of what's really going on.

04:07

J: Yeah, and, and definitely, I mean, I think we're gonna be able to get on some great guests here, whether it's, you know, some of the staff at USTA Player Development or whether it's guests that are working out in the private sector and players as well. Hopefully, you know, we were able to kind of connect with, with all three. I think I'd be great in a lot of different discussion, but give us an example of maybe some topics that we may start diving into, just as a, as a gauge for the listeners on some, on some of those specific topics.

04:34

L: Well, everything, Johnny, is going to emanate from the side of competing like a champion and what it takes to be a champion athlete, right? And specifically tennis. We're gonna focus mostly on tennis. We'll bring ideas from outside of tennis and examples and stories, but we're always gonna bring it back to tennis because that's really what this is about. And how do you perform like a champion? How do you compete like a champion on a regular basis? And whether it's in training or in competition, even off the court, what are the things
that athletes do to be at their best when they need to be at their best? Uh, and so you can imagine we'll get into things a lot around the psychology of performance for sure. Cause that's what I do. Um, but certainly we'll also get into things like athletic development, growth and development, uh, strength and conditioning. We'll get into some areas, they're on nutrition, a lot to do with coaching, the different, um, ways that we coach behaviourally but also different strategies or developments of coaches. How do we develop coaches? We're going to get into parenting as well. We'll speak about it. We'll have experts come in and talk about things that parents can do to help their children, right? And, and ways maybe that they do things that don't help and for sure we want to address the players directly as well. What are these strategies, skills, ideas that high performing players use to be at their best consistently. And I think that's something that they should expect to get out of this podcast on a regular basis.

J: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I'm really excited to get this go in and I think it'd be a great time to not only learn a lot, but you know, just hear a lot of different perspectives as well. And I think that's where we can, when we can grow and learn a lot together, is understanding different perspectives and listening to them, listening to those and, and really diving into both, maybe sometimes both sides have maybe a, um, uh, a situation or a topic and, and, and seeing those different perspectives. But I think what would also be great as, I mean we obviously, you know, there's a, we have a lot of great work being done out in the private sector from a lot of coaches out there and they, you know, we get a lot of questions, you know, thrown our way from a lot of these coaches with how they can help that place further or you know, some mental skills programming or whether it's athletic development exercises or actual drills that they can do with their kids, you know, players, kids pros on court. So I think this is a great platform in order to be able to share those ideas because I think that's where a lot of the growing, you know, our learning and growing has done as in professionally is through discussions over certain topics.

L: Yes. And I hope for it, you know, for coaches maybe that aren't in that environment every day that they or, or parents or players that from this podcast, they can hear us discussing these things out and, and get to essentially a summary of where we think are the most important points and one of the practical applications of whatever science we're talking about. So when we talk about sleep, for example, we want to end by giving them some very clear, specific things that they can do tonight to get a better rest and be ready to practice or compete. So now suddenly idea. And, and I, I want to have that interchange with, with the community because the coaches on the ground have a lot of the great questions. Let's be honest. Uh, you know, the other ones that are really the ones who are out there every day and, and doing the work and dealing with different issues and they, they want to know how to deal with these things and, and what is happening at national. And, um, I'm going to be honest with everybody who's listened to this. Sometimes I borrow, beg and steal from the coaches on the ground because they have great ideas about how to deal with certain things or maybe even other parents or players. Uh, I've got
no issue with learning from others. And, and, and certainly then giving them credit for that because I think there’s a lot of knowledgeable people out there that, that can add to whatever we’re doing here at national and certainly our podcasts. So, you know, hopefully, you know, down the road we’ll, they’ll be submitting questions and actually have a little bit more audience engagement.

J: There’s so many different platforms now to be able to learn or read upon new things with obviously social media and the thing, you know, whether it be Twitter, LinkedIn, whatever, people posting articles about various subjects. I mean, before it used to be the go to school to get your knowledge or go to a library and read a book. And then now we’ve got this great platform, like, you know, again, like social media or podcasts where we can all listen into certain things that we’re interested in, you know, and derive ideas from that. And I think that’s where like we can discuss things but then we’ll kind of go down little rabbit holes, you know, sometimes maybe where we’re really exploring different ideas and that will in turn create more ideas and create certain things that we can kind of build from. And so, and again, I think that’s where maybe some of the best, uh, best learning is done is just through exploring.

L: Absolutely. And I, you know, I think the, if you look at what coaches are doing today too, I, I think back to the story of chip Kelly who had like a list of people. Chip Kelly was football coach, right? He had a list of people that, who are experts that he would go to. So if he was facing a situation in anything internally, they had the answer to that or maybe they thought they did, they would go get advice from this group of experts. And you know, hopefully what we can provide, which may be a lot of people don’t have access to, is that we have access to a lot of experts here at national and we can deliver some of that information in and get that in the hands of our consumers so that they can use it.

Yeah, and that, that was exciting thing for me once I sort of started processing the, the ideas behind doing the podcast as well. I mean, we’re in a really fortunate position about being surrounded with experts and great coaches, great strength and conditioning trainers that have, have been through different backgrounds and expertise like yourself, you know, mental skills expert. We got nutritionists, we have access to our flooding medicine at the, you know, the highest level. I mean we’re very, very lucky. And in order to be able to, you know, take advantage of that, we, we need to also maybe provide, you know, provide what we’re, what we have access to here and give, give. Maybe the lesson is here, insights into what it is that we’re actually do what we do and how we provide, use those expertise and provides opportunities as well too to play as that coming in for camps or training or whether that’s pros training here full time, what do they have access to here that that helps them do that job, right? And like you’re a professional tennis player. That is your job. So you know, what is it the that makes this so, so exciting, but how can we deliver this information to the, to people in the private sector to help them too. And I think that’s, that’s a big, big area that we need to need to keep going down.
L: I think that's exciting and if you're, you know, if you're working somewhere, wherever it is in the country and you're trying to provide this high performance training or just very good quality training to your players, or you're a player trying to train at your best, we hope to provide that information. But also you have a strength and conditioning coach, uh, or, or you're looking for one, are you really getting what you need? Right? Are you able to get the quality that you need? And so thinking about as you're building out your team around you to support you if you're a player or you're a coach so you can get the most out of yourself, right? And so, you know, part of what we are able to do, and I think it, it should be our role at national, is to provide ideas and provide these best practices that are based on science and based on, um, empirically what we've seen happening over over many camps or many, uh, years of, of training. And, and so I think, uh, you, and that's what people can expect that we are going to try and distill things down so that they can use it tomorrow for themselves or they know what to look for when they are looking for, you know, a strength and conditioning coach. Or is that advice on getting really quality, you know, and is this really something I should be doing? And so I hope we can hit on those things and, and help people, uh, you know, who can't come here. How the opportunity to understand some of the things that we have access to.

J: Yeah. No, that's great. And it's a, it's going to be a good journey, I feel. I'm feeling pretty pumped and positive about this.

L: I hope so. I mean that's why I asked you to do this with me. Not because you're going to be negative or a downer.

J: I hope, I hope not.

L: Come on man.

J: Definitely not. Well listen Larry, we, we uh, I think it'd be good and also just for me to understand a bit more. I feel like I know you pretty well, but I think that we need to provide an insight into how you got to your role as, as mental skills specialist for USTA Player Development. Give us an insight into maybe some of your experiences and journey along the way to, you know, that you went through so that we can well so we can get to know you a bit better.

L: Well, this is a going to be a bit weird for me, but cause I feel like you know, quite a bit of this already, but, uh, you know, really starting out in a, in a rural rural Pennsylvania town and, and playing three, four sports and, and not, I, I would say I was really good at everything, but it wasn't a master of any of those. And so, uh, you know, my career ended too early in, in baseball in college, so was really looking to coach. I was coaching as a young person. Even when I was in my teens, I was coaching younger teams and helping coach always enjoyed coaching and ran into this professor at Clarion university, dr Kraus, who
informed me about this field of sports psychology. And I, I'm sure I looked
bewildered when she mentioned it as I often do here at the campus as well. And
I'm like, what will, you know, what is that? It's, it's kind of sounds interesting,
but, and she informed me of, of what it was and was having a special course the
next semester. And I'm like, I gotta be a part of this. And in through that journey
with Dr. Krauss really began to fall in love with this idea of sports psychology.
And in my, my work in the field or coursework, I kept seeing this name of Dan
Gould, Dan Gould, this study that study, the legendary dangle, the legendary
Dan Gould. Uh, from that time UNC Greensboro, he's now at Michigan state
university, but, and they are telling me like, if you could go work with him, you
got to go work with this guy. He's, he's awesome. He's a great guy. The
basketball coach, Dick Taylor at Clarion university also actually went and did
school with Dan. So long story short, I go through the process applying for grad
school. Uh, I go to UNC Greensboro, but I had no money. I wasn't, I wouldn't say
I was the best student. I was a pretty good student. I was a really good student
when I was motivated and interested by something. I go to Greensboro, no
money. But Dan helps me out. Uh, gives me opportunities to do projects, get a
little money here and there. And I just did my best to, um, to just be around and
work hard and just learn as much as I could for in that environment. And you
know, by the second semester I had some money and by the second year I had
an assistantship. And, and so I was immersed, immersed in this whole idea of
sports psychology every day and, and just loved it and was working in hockey
and working in tennis as well. And when I joined UNC Greensboro, we actually
were doing some research in tennis, looking at why coaches do and don’t use
sports psychology information and tennis that's in the books. So I was a part of
this. And, and what came of that was they said, well, we really need a, a more
practical guidebook for training players mentally. This is what the coaches are
looking for. And so that's what we did. We scoured all the books at that time on
mental training and sports psychology came up with what now is the USTA
mental skills and drills handbook. And through that process I became to know
people. I came to know people to USTA. Um, I spent a lot of time with, uh, Dr
Lubbers, Paul Lubbers, who’s here now, uh, senior director of coach ed. And so I
spent a lot of time with him. He was coaching at UNC Greensboro coaching
tennis and actually work with some of his teams. So got to know him. He left to
come to the USTA. I carried on, I worked in hockey for awhile. I was actually a
hockey director and then, uh, went on, did my PhD though I was tired of
running, uh, tournaments every weekend and not being home. So I went and
got my PhD. I was spending a lot of time working with athletes, working with
coaches. Was fortunate enough Dan Gould went to Michigan state university
and asked me to come along. And so I went along to Michigan state university
as I ended up being the director of coaching education there and also got to
spend time with the men's tennis team as well as with USA hockey's national
team development program. Nice. So I was getting a lot of great experiences
meeting a lot of people. I was preparing players, uh, you know, mentally for, you
know, their last two years before they’re going to NHL draft. I was working with
collegiate, you know, division one tennis players plus all the other clients I had
on the outside and working professionally with other organizations to do coach
ed. So I was learning a ton and getting exposed to a lot of great people, a lot of
great ideas. And then, um, I was fortunate enough when this job was created at USTA player development, that uh, I was on the short list and got a chance to interview and I don't know if they'd take it back, but they chose me and I was Sam the fortunate one.

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J: Well they're obviously pretty happy. You're still there.

17:15

L: I'm still here. Right. I don't think they fear no way to get rid of me yet, but it depends on what happens on this podcast. Maybe they will have to get rid of me.

17:23

J: Yeah. Yeah. Well no. So that's really interesting cause you said there you spend a period of time you working with both tennis and hockey. You know, there are obviously to the train or not train either very different sports. So what are some of the differences or commonalities when working with athletes in different sports like that, that you started to started to maybe figure out or you know, does it all come back to maybe one, a lot of different but centralized themes or components of mental performance and mental psychology like well, what was some of the things you discovered when working with both, you know, diff, different sports at the same time?

17:57

L: Well, I would say like most, um, young professionals and training you'll work with whatever sport will work with you. Right. I mean, I had the sports that I love and I played. Um, but I had a pretty general, uh, start work. I work with football, I work with wrestling, I worked with baseball, soccer, uh, I worked with a lot of different sport basketball. I spent many years with basketball at the high school level. So I was getting all of these different experiences. I think it helped me be more well rounded. But then I wanted to, I thought to be able to get where I wanted to be, to work professionally, you know, at the pro level, uh, that I needed to specialize more in two sports. I really fell in love with tennis and ice hockey that I was spending a lot of time competing, spending a lot of time. Uh, I was coaching in ice hockey and was a hockey direct. I haven't done so much coaching in tennis. I left that to the professionals, but uh, definitely spent a lot of time with tennis coaches as well. And uh, you know, I, I think what you, when you really immerse yourself in a sport, you start to figure out some of the nuances. A lot of the, of the ideas, the theories really cut across human performance in different areas. We were talking about this earlier, you know, that whatever walk of life, whatever you're striving for, a lot of these theories tend to withstand that because it's still about performance, right? It's still about being competent and doing a good job. But then you look at, okay, well on a team environment, you know, how is that different than an individual sport environment? I think in a team environment, a lot of ordinary ended up doing, my work was around leadership team dynamics. So creating really close bonds between, you know, different subgroups within the team so that they would function well in a sport like hockey, you have different pairings on defense and different, you know, groups three of three forwards and they spent a lot of time together. So you might be working with them on their specific things, you know, because certain lines in hockey has specific roles or goals and have different
talents. So you start working a little bit differently when you're in a group setting. What I found in tennis is that, you know, with the younger ones, we do a lot of group work for sure to set the mental training base. But as they get older we individualize and customize a lot. So there's still the similar concepts, but we're for that player, we're really digging into what she or he needs specifically to reach their goals.

J: Yeah, no, I, and it's fascinating. You, you do a great job of mixing. I mean, we, we have you working with all of our junior camps as you mentioned. And you know, it's a, it's amazing to see the types of engagement that you get out the players in a group setting because sometimes when we get, you know, players in groups, the tendency is to shut down a little bit because, and maybe feeling a little vulnerable that they don't want to speak up with, with things that they may want to discuss. So I'm providing the opportunity to then get to one on one time where you can actually, you know, I think get to know person better and then also get into some issues, maybe a little bit deeper, maybe no issues, maybe just general like guidance of how to navigate through this, this right performance pathway. As that level increases, they get a little older. There's other things that stop, you know, socially and emotionally start becoming, uh, coming to the forefront of, of things that they do. So how do you guide them along that pathway? So, you know, I think, uh, you know, a, it seems like a really great balance on how you take an individual sport, primarily like tennis, figure out how you can, you know, at one sense bring groups together, which can be fun if, if obviously like you do is brings it with an interactive style, but then remembering it's still is an individual sport. So how do you then as you, you know, customized and individualized as you go along. So...

L: Everybody's got a story. Johnny, everybody's got a story and a history. And I think part of our job was to understand that story, that history, who they are, so that we can have a better idea of, of what they need and to support them in getting that. So, I mean, for me in, in the group sessions, it's all about getting everyone involved. And again, in my training with Dr. Gould, uh, we did a lot of, whether it was focus group research, so he trained me to facilitate in groups plus just drew sheerly through presenting or, uh, consulting and getting feedback from him and him observing that. So, uh, I do think that, you know, the, the coaches that are listening to this, you can do it too, but don't take for granted the environment, the way you do it, the way you ask questions, how you interact with people, the way you follow up, how, how you treat the information that they give you as private as a important, even if you don't think it's important, it's something they chose to share with you. Uh, so I do think, you know, there are a lot of nuances and facets to, to what we do, but hopefully we can share a lot of those things as we go along to help the coaches. But Hey, Johnny, your what's your story because you know.

J: No one wants to hear that.

L: I want to know coach Johnny is here doing a great job, um, with the players and working in our player ID department and certainly doing a lot of, uh, athletic
development work with our players. And I see you out there all the time, you know, taking them through different, uh, movements and, and warm ups and it's awesome stuff. And, you know, I, I'd really love the way you interact with the players. So, but what, what brings you here, you know, in, and what kind of has motivated you to, to get to this point? Ah, that's a good question. I feel like it's a, well, I could go on for a while, so I'll give you the short version. Cause I feel like a, when I think back to all the things that I've gone through, uh, in my, uh, short time, it's a, it's taken me all over the place. And so I think my passion really started, uh, for coaching and teaching. When I was about 14, 15, my, uh, I'd get back from school and my dad would help, uh, want me to help him with, with some of his coaching and his little kids 10 and under eight and under. My dad's a tennis coach, so he'd get me out there helping. And along the way he would show me things like how to put plans together in order to do a good, a good plan, a good session. And then I'll be out there working with literally 10 and under kids like four or five, six year olds and we'd be on the, well in America. It's 36 foot caught with the red bull small rackets. And I just, I just loved helping the kids. It was fun, you know, so I was 14, 15, didn't really know what I was doing, but got a lot of guidance from my dad. So that kind of sparked an interest of, of loving to teach and coach. Now obviously at that time I was playing thinking my background spans. I played a lot of different sports growing up, but just fell in love with tennis. So I pursued that, brought me out to America, went to one play collegiately at university of New Mexico, you know, a lot along that journey. Um, I came out of it and got straight into teaching coaching right after I got into working with some high-performance juniors in New Mexico and that was a great experience. Um, but you know, ended up spending a very short stint at the Southwest section, the USTA Southwest section. Um, and then I had to return back to England goes, you know, there's this small little thing that we call a visa. The, you know, guys like me with would need to stay in America. So, um, as I went back to England, it, it was, it was an interesting turn of events because I literally, you know, I wanted to stay in America. I wanted to be here. I'd started something great, uh, in New Mexico with, with this, you know, program and I wanted to keep that going. But then, you know, as I went over to the Southwest section for a very short stint there, I, uh, had a great time doing that. And the impacted very similar to what I'm doing here, but at Southwest section, you know, um, working with maybe young players and things like that. Anyway, I went back to England and I essentially, like, I lost my, you know, what I considered my home. My girlfriend was over in America and she was working here, uh, and I lost my job. So I was like, I mean obviously not to a huge extent, but those three things were kind of, I felt like taken away from me in one swift letter. So as I went back to it and I thought, you know, uh, I, I felt sorry for myself for a little while and then I, I got myself together, dusted myself off, moved myself down to London, I was staying with my dad at the time and I was like, you know what, can't keep doing this. I'm a grown man. I need to take care of myself and I also need to better myself. So I went down to London, got into a masters program in sports management and that I thought would help me with my coaching and, and you know, just to backtrack one quick second, like when I was in New Mexico, I thought, I always knew I was going to get into teaching and coaching and I thought I'd wanted to pick a degree that I thought would
really help me with my coaching. You know, there's obviously understanding, coaching, but I got into psychology was my major and communication was my minor. And my real thought process behind that was, is I really wanted to understand people of different personalities because if I'm going to teach your coach, you need to understand everyone is different and the, there's different ways of teaching people and how they learn. Um, and then the communication part, like how to be an efficient communicator, how to be able to do certain things that don't confuse or don't, don't kind of take things out of whack. So anyway, so I'll move down to London, did my sports management degree cause again thought that was something that would help me later on in life at the same time as part of my dissertation to complete that. I did it on um, the LTA and um, because I've gone through the LTA system with the tennis and the whatever. So, um, I knew about the, the performance side of, of going through the system. I didn't know anything about really the participation side. So I went to immerse myself in literally a parks and rec program. And that was really cool because it got me back to working with where I really started when I was 1415 helping my dad out was with like four five, six, seven, eight year olds. Also some, some work with adults and that was really cool. So, uh, did that. Anyway, fast forward a little bit. As I finished my degree, I ended up working with some players traveling to futures challenges, which was a real eye opening experience. I mean real eye opening. So if I can go tell a couple stories before wrapping up, I don't want to speak about myself for too long here, but this was an interesting one. So we go to Thailand for a month, right? There's four futures in a row out there. So we're there and you know, we're practicing and it's, you know, what I would call what I'm, my experience growing up, I would say it was in a rough area. So you know, we're experiencing things like riots going on and people throwing benches through government buildings. And then you later find out on the news that like somebody got stabbed in a fight that you witnessed on a bus when you're trying to get to the facility or you know, we spent three weeks in, uh, Israel one time and you know, just to walk from our apartment to the courts every day you're witnessing like the Israeli army kind of storm the building to try. And you know, at that time we went, there was a lot of Syrian refugees flooding over to Jordan and we were kinda right at the bottom of Israel in his town called Ila. So a lot of people were coming through Jordan through Israel and then maybe to get to Egypt or whatever. So, you know, there was a lot of issues with Al Qaeda or ISIS and stuff like that. So every single day we're walking to that facility and there's something going down like serious, you know. And then things like Gaza flying a rocket over the border and missiles come, you know, defense system coming out of the water to try and protect you. And we're all, I, you know, running into buildings with our heads over and you got all the local sitting out drinking their coffees or having a beer just laughing at us all because it's like a daily thing for them, you know? And then I'm going, we're here for a tennis tournament, you know, this is like, this seems like life and death right now, but we're here for a futures tournament and it just shows you are to me was a big eye opener to the type of environments that you have to go through really to make it as a pro that the toughness and resiliency and all that. But for me personally it was a big eyeopener to being like, wow, like this, this is a grind of a life like, and I wasn't
even playing like I’m coaching and you, you’re on the other side of it trying to help players prepare. But it was very eye opening. So when I ended up coming back to America to live with my now wife basically went again back to kind of more grassroots and more of that junior performance side. And that ended up leading me to this role here. Um, at the USTA I knew Jeff Russell very well who was in my role previously kept in touch with USTA. They helped me with a lot of my development as a coach when I first came out of college. So I really liked the strategy that player development was going down as a, you know, supporting role, the supplemental role, especially with the juniors, building relationships with coaches, with players, with, with parents and just essentially helping them. So, um, would’ve been very easy to kind of stay in the private sector and, and, and keep doing what I was doing. But I felt that this could have been a, a great platform to help people, which is something that has always been at the forefront of my mind is, is to kind of give back and, and help others. So that's it in a nutshell.

L: Here we are and now you're doing a podcast, right? And, and so, you know, a few thoughts, kinda interesting. One is one of the things that we will get into in the future is that in these paths that we hear amongst athletes, amongst coaches, amongst high-performers, there's always some adversity in there, isn’t it? Isn't it curious? We just went through in some of the adversities you face, some that I faced. Um, I think every high performer has some of those too, to the point that they got and it's been a big part of their development. Like would you be the same person if you hadn't gone through those long trips in with those pro players and witness some of those things? Or maybe you being forced to go back to England, you know, how, how did that affect where you are today? Right? I mean these things really impacted your pathway.

J: Well, you know, I'm, you know, I think I've brought this up to you previously, but this concept of human performance and this side of it, I mean, we always talk about it in what we do in terms of a tennis perspective, right? Like what's this, what's the toughness? What's resiliency look like, feel like when you're competing at a high level. But I already took those concepts and you know, again, and trust me, I've got a great family that would always back me up no matter what. And too stubborn. I don't really want the help because I want to figure it out for myself. But the sort of stubborn, yeah, we're not, you know, when I go back to when I had to go back to England, that was a very tough time in my life. And I'm thinking, well, I had to be tough and I had to be resilient. And I literally spent my last penny I had in my bank account to go and do this master's program and moved to London. I helped had help and support from friends and a place to stay and all that. So don't get me wrong, I mean, I don't want the listeners to feel like I'm, you know, telling a sob story here. I mean, I seriously am very lucky in, in, what I'm doing. So, and there's a lot of people kind of worse off, but you know, that at that time in my life felt that it was either, you know, we've got to step up and make something happen or I'm going to sit here and feel sorry for myself and go down a different path. So I felt like that did have to be some toughness and some resilience to kind of bounce back from something that really took, I felt like an emotional toll on me at the time.
and probably lead to the reason why I'm losing my hair right now. Just starting that out there.

32:15
L: What the heck happened to me then?

32:16
J: I'm like, you see this hair loss up here? That's because of immigration issues, no doubt.

32:23
L: But you know, it is interesting because, um, as we talk about these things that your story, you know, when I went to UNC Greensboro, uh, I had my parents' support and everything, but I was going to pay off all the costs of going to graduate school and, and being on my own and, and so I was working at the same time. So I think sometimes people feel that they look at high-performance and they want to put a ribbon and a bow around. It's like, Oh, what an amazing life. And everything's perfect and man, high performance is really cool, but it's fricking hard sometimes. And I'm a, I don't want people to feel bad for us. Not all. Cause we were really fortunate, but at the same time you work your tail off and it's really very fulfilling. But at the same time, probably all of us, you go, even our staff and through the players and coaches, there are things that they've gone through that have, they've taken a risk somewhere. They've, they've experienced a sacrifice that changed our pathway, that, that gave them the open the door to this opportunity, right. And created the person who they are, all these experiences and these adversities that they'd gone through that made them resilient. So, I mean, I think everyone here has got an interesting story as you are listeners and you, I think one of the things that we're going to try and do is to bring out some of those stories and, and relate them to some of the things that we're going to talk about in this podcast.

33:43
Yeah. I think, I think that'd be a, that's, that's going to be the fascinating part, you know? And, and just to one more thought on that, I think it's a very natural thing that we have fear over really diving into something with everything that we can give mentally, physically, emotionally, and coming out. Not what would be considered success. Yeah. Right. I mean, tennis, if I give everything I possibly can to this, my mind, my body, my soul, and still not achieve what my idea of success is, whether that's something extrinsic, like winning, you know, winning trophies, winning money or, you know, can I be happy with knowing that I can do everything it possibly takes and maybe still not, you know, reach those actual lawns. And again, not just reaching to tennis, but anything. And I think those are choices that we make along the way. I mean I know just from experience that I've had the, and again don't always make the right choices, but I wouldn't have it any other way where unless I'm giving absolutely 100% into everything that I'm doing, like it's something that has been built into me and I don't think there's any other way, but it's a very realistic thing that fear plays a huge part in, in, in getting to that point where you'll be okay if you don't come out with the result, but you've given everything you could to it. Yeah.

35:00
L: I think you, you've touched on Johnny, the number one thing that all players have to deal with and what holds us back in many ways is that fear of going all in
and then not getting the result that you hoped for. I think that can be paralyzing. That can cause people to not change their behavior or actually do get involved in things. I'm not talking about drugs or alcohol, but self-destructive things from a high performance standpoint. It can be serious stuff like drugs and alcohol, but just not committing to a training block or doing a full pre season or you know, those kinds of things are going to an environment to train that will bring the best out of them. Sometimes players choose not to do those things because of that fear, I believe. Um, but I think it's one that every high performer has to address. Am I good enough? That's the question everybody asks themselves, right? In many different ways, many different contacts and am I good enough and can I get this done? Right? And that's at the heart of, of what you're talking about. When I think about this idea of high-performance, to me, you know, it's striving for excellence. It's, it's trying to be great at what you do. And there's a mindset that champions have, if you had them playing Scrabble or backgammon or they're playing paper rock, scissors, they're gonna try and win and they're going to try to become really good at when they're doing it. Right? And that's what you see. And, and so I relate it to, you know, I, I try to live by the principles that I've learned from the coaches, the sports psychologists, the athletes, that administrators that the great people have had a chance to be around. That if I'm going to take something on, I'm going to bring it, I'm going to bring my best and if I can't bring my best and I'm not gonna do it. So whether it's, you know, coaching my son's little league baseball team, I'm really going to try and apply the principles that we talk about in training players and coaching players. Or even when I was playing tennis, you know, 4-0 at Michigan state university on a, on a, on a club team. It is coming in and we had a group of guys who were sort of playing, not showing up some times they're kind of into it, but they didn't really compete very well and the training wasn't the best and just weren't all in. I'm like, guys, if we're going to do this, let's do this the right way. So, first thing I did is I made everybody go out to dinner after practice. We were going to dinner, we're going to get to know each other, and we formed those bonds and through forming those bonds, getting to know each other, we were able to then have that connection where you could go to a guy in practice, be like, Hey man, let's pick it up because we want to win this weekend. We want to be our best this weekend. Right? And, and so some people would look at me and be like, why would you do that, Larry? Who cares? Well, I do because there's a, a way of doing things that I believe in, no matter what it is. If I want to engage myself in it, then I'm going to do it in the best possible way I can. And part of that is to learn from others and apply from other people that I believe in. And I, I believe do good work and based on science and, and try to apply that to bring the best out of myself, the best for my children, the best for the athletes and coaches that I work with.

37:54

J: Absolutely. I, and again, and so as we take this journey, these are all aspects that we're going to get into the, I gotta be going into compete like a champion.

38:01

L: It's all about community, like a champion competing every moment in practice, in matches in the gym. And you know, it might sound a little weird, but I'm always preparing for the next opportunity to perform. So if I'm a tennis
player, the way I go out, my cool-down is going to determine how I perform that next match. You know for sure that Djokovic, Serena, Sharapova, they know this, they do this right? Let's not kid ourselves and Nadal does this, Fed does this, Murray did this, he's going to retire soon, but this is what we're talking about, right? So it's not just when you're hitting balls, it's about everything that you do and really bringing it. And to do that, you'd need to have the knowledge and the right kind of knowledge. We've gotta be able to cut through the noise that's out there of all these self-help gurus and all these people bringing in this random stuff. What's this based on? I dunno, I saw it work with one person somewhere. To me that's okay. It is what it is and maybe that's beneficial, but what's the science behind this? Have we studied it? So what we're going to try and do is cut through that noise for people and really give them stuff that they can trust in. That's so important to me for this podcast that you know, if you're listening to this, that you can trust what we're saying. Now, is that a money back guarantee from dr Larry? No, because things don't always work out the way we want, but there's a reason why we're telling you what we're telling. We're not just making this stuff up because we have the opportunity to be behind a mic. We're researching it. We're studying it, we're talking to coaches, we're talking to players, we're observing and we're trying to bring that to the listeners. We're trying to bring this stuff to the listeners and if we don't know them, we're going to get somebody who does know it. And if we can't figure it out then well we'll say we, I guess we've got to do some research on that.


39:44  L: Already. This is the first podcast. You want your money back already?

39:49  J: I'll listen for a little bit longer.

39:50  L: Oh, thank you.

39:51  J: Alright, well that's great. I mean I think we can wrap it up there. We hope we've given you an insight into dr Larry and myself and maybe giving you a bit more of an intimate insight into who we are and what we're about. A couple people we need to give a shout out to is Chris, the mic master Michalowski, who's our director of experiential learning here at the campus. He, really, without him, this wouldn't be possible. And Amy Barnhart, who does a great job with all our media digital efforts, with player development. And seriously, without those two, we won't be able to do this. So we're very much looking forward to getting this podcast going. And if you guys have any requests regarding topics and things you'd like to know, you can always reach out to us at. Uhm, look us up on the USTA Player Development website, playerdevelopment.usta.com and on there you'll be able to find the contact to requesting more information or topics for the podcast. Alrighty. Well that's a wrap on today's episode. We look forward to speaking to you next time on compete like a champion podcast.