

THE EXTRA EDGE

Every player is seeking something extra to help during the toughest matches. **NATHAN & GISELLE MARTIN** provide six training essentials to help give you an edge.



EXTRA EFFORTS: World No.1 Andy Murray understands that a varied approach to fitness can help improve on-court results.

Preparation and being willing to create effective change when it comes to fitness can be the x-factor needed to improve results. Commit to some, or ideally all, of these training essentials to help achieve your best on court...

Endurance training

The lack of a good cardio base is like building a house on weak foundations. Adequate cardio fitness enables athletes to maintain peak performance during long matches, recover quickly between points and hold concentration throughout a match. Performing a cardio-focused program at the beginning of a season is great but unfortunately it won't cut it - this continually needs to be built on. Run, swim, cycle or play another sport consistently for 30 minutes or more, one-two times a week, at 70 per cent intensity.

Shadowing

This is one of the most under-rated pre-match warm-up methods. Try and shadow for two-three minutes prior to playing matches, alternating between all shots such

as forehand, backhand, volley and overheads. It's not only a great warm-up, but it also prepares the mind. Former world No.1 Justine Henin would spend a good 15 minutes prior to every match shadowing. Other players learnt to get out of her way in the gym, especially when she was 'hitting' a wide forehand. Henin would have her game face on and use shadowing to warm-up her body, switch on her brain and open up the muscle memory channels.

Five sets of 30-45 seconds with 20 seconds rest between, aiming to build up the intensity with each set, is recommended.

Rest days

It is so important to have regular rest days - and this means full rest! Most players feel they need to hit every day so they don't lose 'the feel', yet resting the body is important to help it recover and develop. This is the time when physical gains are actually made. Switching the mind off tennis and focusing on something else is just as important. This is healthy as it mentally freshens and refocuses the mind. Players often find they hit better after a rest day.

Skipping

This very simple but effective warm-up is possibly one of the best exercises. It is way better than a stationary bike as it is more specific and challenges co-ordination and stimulates the neuromuscular system. This was always Steffi Graf's favourite exercise - she would skip on a soft gym mat (do you know how hard that is?) and sometimes skip up to 30 minutes at a time. Can you skip for two minutes without making an error?

Deceleration drills

Most players only concentrate on acceleration, yet deceleration drills are important too. Accelerating and being explosive on court is more difficult if a player is not decelerating effectively. Being unable to decelerate well results in not setting up shots properly and being caught out of position, which puts pressure on overloaded joints.

Seeking and accepting honest feedback

Getting feedback from other coaches and players provides

a different perspective on what needs to change and helps identify strengths. To make the most of this, be prepared and willing to listen and make some changes. **ATM**

For more information on effective warm-up programs, visit tennisfitness.com/free-warm-up. There is also some great tennis-specific deceleration drills at agilityfootwork.tennisfitness.com/



STAR TRAINERS

NATHAN AND GISELLE MARTIN, of Tennis Fitness, have been in the health and fitness industry for 20 years. They travelled on the WTA Tour for numerous years and also worked at the Sanchez Casal Tennis Academy in Barcelona, Spain. They've worked with Sam Stosur, Svetlana Kuznetsova, Jennifer Capriati, Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, Monica Seles, Martina Navratilova, Casey Dellacqua and Lleyton Hewitt. For further information and for previous articles, visit tennisfitness.com.