

Creating Accountability and Ownership with Coach Matt Cloer

- [00:00](#) Hi, I'm Paul Lubbers, senior director of coaching education and sports science for USTA player development. And you're listening to compete like a champion.
- [00:12](#) J: Welcome to the compete like a champion podcast. You're here with Dr. Larry Lauer, mental skill specialists, and coach Johnny Parkes with USTA Player Development. Today we've got a special guest on the podcast, Matt Cloer, USTA collegiate national coach. Matt, welcome to the podcast.
- [00:26](#) M: Hey guys.
- [00:27](#) L: Welcome back.
- [00:28](#) J: We really appreciate you taking some time out of your schedule, mate to, uh, to jump on and, uh, you know, we thought today, uh, maybe you can just give us a little bit of a brief insight into your background and how you became to be the, uh, collegiate national coach for USTA.
- [00:43](#) M: Sure. Yeah, I grew up in tennis. My dad is a teaching pro, so it was kind of born with a racket in my hand, so to speak. I grew up in North Carolina, so as around the club around the courts a lot as a kid, uh, was lucky enough to play competitive tennis, uh, had a great junior career and then was lucky enough to play college tennis at Florida state, was an all American there and uh, really just had a passion for coaching. I think that was something that I got from my dad and something that I felt like as a kid I was being obviously trained to be a player but obviously kind of being trained to be a coach as well. And I was lucky enough to get to go sit in on conferences when he went. And uh, yeah. So just really fortunate to have a passion for what I get to do and lucky enough to be here at USTA. Started with, um, the men's side and was working with, uh, Mackie Macdonald for the past two and a half years and transitioning into kind of the national collegiate space, monitoring some of our top prospects and building relationships with them and uh, trying to help them transition to the next level.
- [01:38](#) J: Yeah, that's great. I think that's something we share a background with my, my dad's also a coach. But you also have a brother, right? You have a brother who, who's in the game, coaches?
- [01:46](#) M: yeah, I'm the oldest of four. Um, both my brothers, I have my brother and then two younger sisters. All four of us were fortunate enough to play division one tennis. My brother actually followed me to Florida state, which was really cool. We didn't get to play on the same team together, but I got to kind of coach his teams for my last, his last two years. So he's still involved, pretty heavily involved in, uh, in tennis, runs a small Academy in North Carolina, helps the UNC men's tennis team. So there's a passion for tennis within the Cloer family for sure.

- [02:13](#) J: Yeah. No, that's awesome. It's always nice when you make a bit more of a family endeavor, right Lauer?
- [02:17](#) L: Yeah. It sounds like a tennis family through and through man. Oh, how far does it go back? Your grandparents or great grandparents just started with...
- [02:26](#) M: Started with my dad. My dad kind of was a product of the tennis boom in the 70s. He started playing tennis late and really just had an itch for it and then was lucky enough to, you know, he, he beat down some walls in the, in North Carolina just hitting on backboards and just kept playing and kept playing and kind of, uh, went down to Florida, was, was a coach for Harry Hopman, so he had great experiences down there, did a lot of work with Dennis Vandemeer, you know, he just kind of kept on teaching and I was, we were lucky enough to kind of get to grow up in a, an environment like that. And it was definitely an environment of playing, but also being athletes as well.
- [03:01](#) L: Did you play other sports growing up?
- [03:03](#) M: Yeah, I played a lot of sports. Everything except football. I'm really, really lucky to have grown up in the mountains in North Carolina, so I got to ski pretty much every winter. Played soccer, played baseball. Tennis was something that we were always, that we always did. We had three indoor courts. So in the wintertime we were able to go hit indoors whenever we wanted, but there'd be days where, you know, we'd definitely ski a lot more than we hit tennis balls. So yeah, a very diverse background with um, growing up in different athletics.
- [03:30](#) L: So it sounds like you did tennis regularly throughout the year, but you did a lot of other things at the same time.
- [03:36](#) M: Yeah, that was something that I think was important to my dad. He always just, you know, he didn't want us to just be tennis players. He wanted to have us have different awarenesses, different skillsets. Obviously we are around the courts so much that it was something that we did a lot of, but, and we also developed a passion for it. I mean I was playing my first tournament when I was six years old and I, and I loved it. And you know, to me there's still nothing better than hitting a little tennis ball back and forth on a daily basis. That's for sure.
- [04:04](#) L: We've noticed that cause you're still pretty good out there, man. Gotta give him, give him credit. He's out there working hard.
- [04:08](#) J: Still tearing everyone up, let's face it.
- [04:10](#) L: I don't know. I haven't, I haven't challenged him yet. I don't know if he would take my challenge, but
- [04:15](#) M: that'd be fun, Larry. We should do it.

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L: We should, we will do that. But I need to practice first.

[04:19](#)

J: I'd get all your hockey gear out the garage and suit up for stepping on the court.

[04:24](#)

L: I would to take his serve. All right. All right.

[04:26](#)

J: Okay, so let's get into this. So one thing that I think struck out to both Larry and myself, when we've been fortunate enough to watch you coach and been out there with Mackie, as you say, for the past two, two plus years, as you know, one thing that really was identifiable was how you create this environment of ownership and accountability in the athletes. And having that you've been in the, in the junior realm, the collegiate realm, and obviously the pro realm, how do you create that accountability? But then how do you set the environment in those different settings? What are some similarities and what are some differences?

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M: When I think of the word accountability, I just think of the word responsibility, you know, so just having the player become more responsible for their own games, understanding their identities, helping them understand why things, whether it's hitting a forehand or looking across the net and understanding what the other person on the other side of the net can and can't do. So, uh, and formulating game plans. So just really kind of informing them as much as you can and giving them as much information as possible to allow them to start understanding more about the sport itself. And then when you're creating practices and just having simple, simple plans and simple goals, every time you go on the court, we're just not hitting balls. What are we working towards? There's a purpose for every ball, not taking, you know, a single shot off as much as you can, whether, uh, and then also kind of whether you're using, I love to use film, I loved you stats. So having players watch film, it creates a different kind of awareness. It's like looking in the mirror and you can actually, you know, Oh geez, did I really do that? So I mean I think that just creates a lot of accountability, a lot of ownership through different, you know, different avenues of learning. And I think that's really at the end of the day is just constantly teaching how you know them to get better.

[06:10](#)

L: First thing I hear is awareness, right Matt? You have to create awareness first if you expect someone to be responsible for a certain behavior or a certain concept that you're trying to employ, how does that look, you know, progressively over time from you, you've worked at all different levels, you're working with the junior player and how might that look against a college player or a pro player in terms of what you would expect from them?

[06:35](#)

M: I think you're just different dealing with different maturities. And so I think it's all staged development. I mean, you're constantly teaching. It's like we're raising a child. You're having to just every moment, every teachable moment, whether you're on the court or you're off the court, how can you find those teachable moments to create awareness? So there's awareness, acceptance,

commitment. So you make a person aware and then the next part is do they accept it? I accept that this is something that I need to improve on or I'm not very good at. Or, and then the next part is, is, is the commitment, which probably leads into the ownership. How good do I want to get it at this? Was it my forehand? Is it, I'm not sleeping well enough? Am I not eating well enough? I'm not preparing my grips, my rackets, whatever that might be. And then allowing them, you know, constantly giving them checkups, are you doing this? Are you doing this? And uh, so yeah, just constantly teaching and trying to just constantly make them aware of how they can get better.

[07:25](#)

L: You know, I was thinking about, you know, accountability and, and like you responsibility comes to mind right away. Those are very close terms. And then this idea of ownership and I was trying to wrestle with that. What is ownership compared to say accountability in your mind, Matt? Is it the same thing as it's something, a different level of accountability? How do you see ownership?

[07:45](#)

M: I think, I think they're both pretty interchangeable. I think they're very similar. I think it just probably as you become more engaged to your craft, how good do you want to become at it? And so I think that comes back down to the players' goals and how high do they want to reach and you know, what is that going to take to, to get to where they're dreaming of going. So I think those are pretty similar. But I think it's probably just a deeper dive into how far do I really want to chase this dream.

[08:13](#)

L: Yeah. I think when we say somebody owns something, like there's a level of mastery or consistency, right? That I can repeat this in different conditions or in the same condition over and over again. And so society of ownership. Yeah. Where accountability is, I'm going to do this because I'm supposed to. Ownership is, from what I'm understanding and hearing you is, a different level because I want it because it's something that I want to do and, and I own this, I'm going to make it happen.

[08:39](#)

M: Yeah, it's mine. You know? No one's, no one's waking you up in the morning to say, Hey, you know, we have practice. It's like you're getting up on your own. You're excited about it. What are you, you know, it's not the really probably the program that makes the players, the program plus... What are you doing outside of it? So I, you know, I went and on my forehand, but how much are you dreaming of that forehand when you leave the court? Or how much are, you know, my coach says that I need to run more or I need to eat better, you know? So how really engaged are you to making sure that you're dotting all the I's, crossing all the T's and trying to taking care of all the details that you possibly can.

[09:11](#)

L: So there is a degree of this, then it's off court as well, not just the on-court and I mean we can dig into that JP, but I think the players, sometimes they think of accountability. All right, what am I doing on court? But a lot of what we have to do in tennis happens off the court.

[09:25](#)

M: Yeah. It's, it's definitely, it's not just hitting the ball that has a lot to do with it. And it's how you, uh, how are you sleeping? How are you eating? How are you, uh, you know, if you're a little bit hurt, can I, how can I get better? Can I watch film? Can I use stats? All the details that it takes to, to become a better tennis player.

[09:43](#)

J: I love when you phrase the accountability as it's constantly teaching. And then Larry, you mentioned that the ownership, you're most kind of viewers, that there's almost a level of mastery, right? So it almost seems like we're always constantly teaching and we're using accountability to be able to teach them, to do those, to do the right thing, to meet this training standards that you set. Right. That's what you're holding them accountable to, you're holding them accountable to making the changes that you've been working on in their game or holding them accountable through your teaching to doing the right things off the court. Right. And then over time it's that process between how we can get them to then do those things without coach oversight. Right? Right. So, and there's a lot of different stages to that. First of all, it's a lot of coach oversight. Then it's like how do you pull back a little bit? How do you pull back a little bit more and more until you, then you start to see the player just really doing it because they want to do it now. And it's that process where the coach has to provide that accountability through constant teaching. So I kind of love how that whole process came together.

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L: I'm curious guys, how do you talk about the off court accountability? How do you get players to be accountable off the court? Because we're only with them a few hours out of a 24 hour day. How can we make that happen? What are your, what are your thoughts on that?

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M: I think it comes back down to how driven, how much passion does the player have. I think that's definitely one, giving them little homeworks here and there. I think for a junior player, stick a Blackboard up on your, um, refrigerator. You know, coach wants you to do X number of drills at home and you check it off. Did I do this today? Monday I didn't do it, Tuesday I did it, Wednesday, I did it. And then maybe there's a... I have three little kids. I know if my sons, you know, wanting or needs to stretch every day. He does competitive gymnastics, you know, a little little board up on the refrigerator. Maybe at the end of the month if he's done it every day, there's a carrot at the end of it. I know you just want to kind of, that's the teaching. Oh wow. If I kind of continue to do this and then they start seeing opportunities and I think you can just kind of do that with tennis as well, uh, at any level. And then as the player matures, they start kind of thinking all their decisions become around, how is this going to affect my tennis or how's this gonna affect my performance? Um, so if they can start thinking about their tennis as such, especially if they're really, really passionate about becoming the best player they can be, all their decisions are going to be somewhat centered around, how's this gonna affect me tomorrow on the court? I think it's just constantly growing.

[12:09](#)

L: So the carrot changes over time. You know, it might be ice cream when they're small, right at the end of that month. But then for a pro...

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J: I'd still want ice cream now, Larry?

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L: ...carrot cake?

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J: I'd still love ice cream now.

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L: Well. I think you probably have ice cream, I'm sure. Yeah. So you're, you're changing that reinforcement right? Based on, and eventually it becomes its own reinforcement when they see what it's doing for them on the court, right? And a whole big part of this idea, I think, that we don't talk about enough is delayed gratification because young people aren't good at that. I mean, it's just not there yet. We haven't developed it. We don't understand this idea of, okay, I'm going to practice 30 times to get this result is, no, I want to see it right now. Like if I do these stretches, I want to feel this right now. I want to be able to compete better right now. Or do these gymnastic moves better immediately, right? So then we deal with this issue of a player wants to do things in a good way, but then they don't see the benefit right away to how do we help younger players knowing we're working a little bit upstream with their cognitive capacity too, to think out in the future and realize what it's doing for them. How do we help them stay accountable even though they might not see immediate results?

[13:22](#)

M: I think that's the art of coaching. I think that's, or parenting. It's constantly, again, it's a, it's a teaching opportunity. I think it's a little bit harder maybe now where everything's so instance in the world that we live in. You know, with your phone, you can, two seconds, you can find something as opposed to, I'm not that old, but I was able, you know, I didn't have the, you know, the internet was very new when I was, when I was a kid. So if I needed to find something, I had to read a book or maybe ask, ask somebody about it, where now it's, you know, my kids, it's like, Oh yeah, I'll just look it up on Google. It's like, all right, well, uh, and no, so I think, I think that's something that, you know, that we have to come back a little bit, but just being able to, you know, be patient. I think patient is a, is a word that really comes to my mind when you're, when you're thinking of, you know, raising, you know, raising an adult into... A child into an adult or raising a tennis player is, it just takes a lot of patience and it takes a lot of passion for what you do personally. And then trying to kind of show them the passion that you have that hopefully can kind of bleed into what they do. Trying to lead by example as much as possible. Yeah, it's not easy, but that's, I guess that's kind of why we do what we do. It's the fun part of, of trying to take a player from A to Z.

[14:30](#)

L: Probably one of the hardest jobs we'll ever do. Maybe the hardest, right? For sure. And the most fulfilling, I think.

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J: Delayed gratification is clearly one of the challenges that we face with setting accountability. What have you seen over time, Matt, with these new generation of players versus maybe when you first started coaching or when you were playing, in fact? I mean, I know you just mentioned that, but do you see as some of the challenges in, in this, uh, creating an environment, accountability with the kids?

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M: I think everything is, if you don't like something you can go find something on YouTube or whatever and you can, so I think it's constantly trying to combat, just making sure kids and parents kinda stay on the, the yellow brick road. Supposedly, you know, to Oz. I think there's a lot of times that you can be one way, but I think consistency over time is really a recipe for good things. So I think that patience, it comes back to patience and, and not really. Yeah, I think it's just constantly making sure that players aren't trying to get ahead of themselves and especially parents as well as, you know, I think, you know, uh, parents I have three and a, you know, I'm fans of theirs, which is short for fanatical. And I think sometimes we get so immersed into what they're doing and we kind of get, you know, it's very emotional and we just had to kind of be able to pull ourselves back and just be, okay, let's process and make sure that 1. Are my kids enjoying it, you know, are they getting better? Are they happy? You know, you just kind of stick with the process of it.

[15:48](#)

L: So it's safe to say you have to coach the parents as well in this world, right? Because most of them had something brand new when their kid starts to play tennis at a higher level and there's more expectation right at a level where you would want to put a lot of accountability on them. You know, it's not just recreation anymore, just go and play and we'll pick you up whenever.

[16:08](#)

M: Sure. I mean it's a huge commitment on the, on a parent's part to, to get a kid from A to Z in any sport. There's a lot of sacrifices that are involved. So I mean obviously parents are going to have to drive their kids to tournaments, drive their kids to practices. So you definitely want to just make sure that because they are sacrificing and obviously they want to see the results. I think a lot of the kids that may be parents aren't as, uh, they don't have a tennis background and there's a lot more teaching and coaching involved and really just trying to guide them and lead them and then also trying to make sure that, you know, they're just not veering off the path because you know, they can go to a tournament and they hear that some kids doing this and they're like, Oh wow, maybe our kids should be doing this. And so it's really just trying, you know, really trying to give them the best filtering system that you possibly can to make sure that, make sure that they keep progressing forward. Think once you kind of start dabbling in a little bit, a little bit of this, a little bit of that, then that's probably where, you know, ceilings start to be formed and you know, maybe a road start to end.

[17:05](#)

L: I think you start to lose your way. You lose your focus, right. I mean, focus, work over time is, there's a lot of different ways to become good, but it always

includes hard work and focus, right? I mean that's the consistent part of that, right?

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M: Absolutely. I don't think there's a substitute for hard work. I don't think that there's anybody out there that's...

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L: We didn't find it yet.

[17:25](#)

M: No, I don't think that there, and I don't know if you ever will, whether you're going to be an engineer or you're going to be a tennis player, you're going to have to put in a lot of time and a lot of sacrifice and that's just the way it goes.

[17:37](#)

L: I think that sometimes unintentionally people miss that concept. Not that they, they realize everybody understands hard work is going to better your life and your tennis and whatever it may be, but looking for the next greatest thing or you've got to work smart too, right? Because if you're not staying on the plan and being accountable to some kind of plan, that makes sense long term, you're just essentially grasping at straws and really like you say, creating a ceiling.

[18:05](#)

M: Yeah, I think definitely. I mean, I think that's where the parents and the coaches, there's an organized plan. Where are we going? How are we going to get there? Um, making sure that they're, in the end, it comes back down, the accountability, the responsibility, the ownership, and it falls on everybody when you're younger, I mean you can't drive. So that's where moms got to get you to practice. And then when you're at practice you got to make sure that you maximize your time and you just have to constantly be working as much as you can.

[18:32](#)

J: So switching here a little bit, you've both been, I'm going to ask questions of both you out, uh, to, to Matt and Larry here. You've both been in individual settings, you're in tennis, but you have both also had the experience in the team settings. Is it easier to set the accountability and ownership in a team setting versus individual? Like what are some of the different nuances that you experienced with those two different sides?

[18:57](#)

M: Yeah, I think in the team setting, I was lucky enough to be in college tennis for eight years. One bad apple can ruin the punch. So I think making sure that everybody's on the same page, understanding what you're working towards. And I think that comes back down to the culture of the team that you're working with and making sure everyone buys into the team where they're going. Understanding that, you know, you all are one. Obviously I think tennis being a little bit of a selfish sport, you know, that that's definitely a challenge of building a team in a, from a tennis standpoint and a college setting and, or a team setting. And so I think in a, obviously you're dealing with more, that's where the team is going to have to kind of police themselves. You really need that, the peer pressure of them to hold themselves accountable if, uh, if one of the teammates is a little bit messing up off the court, coach can't be there all

the time and then you can't be there. And the, with your, if you're working with an individual, either, they more police themselves. And I think when you're dealing with an individual, maybe it's a pro player or they're transitioning into playing pro tennis that you're, you know, there's, um, it's, it's very similar. You're just checking in on them. How are they doing? But again, you can't control what they do off the court. So that comes back down to their goals and understanding that the decisions that they're making and where they want to go.

[20:08](#)

L: I think that's a great, great response there, Matt. I mean, I think that it can go either way with groups and with teams because it depends on what expectations, what culture you set up. And if you're able to put a good one in place and get your leaders on board, and I don't mean the ones that you pick, I mean the actual natural influencers in the locker room and getting those people on board with the philosophy, with the mission, what you're trying to do, then I think you can allow the team dynamic, the, the, even the peer pressure to create that accountability. But it can go the other direction as well, very easily if you have influencers who have a different agenda, a different, different goals, uh, for example. So, uh, and I think that's a challenge every, every team has to face. And you know, every, every good coaching staff, every good coach has to establish those things early in the season, making sure that it doesn't become a norm in a team. Yeah, we got, you know, we'd go out and party. That's what we do on the weekend. Even though we have a match. I think Matt wants to touch that one. The partying scene.

[21:08](#)

M: No, I think it's a, it's always something that you're always having to think I'm bad at any level. I think we're human. And uh, you know, I think again, it just comes back down to, in a team setting, what are the goals? How did you recruit those players? What's the culture that you have in place, Larry, like you spoke about, and I think it's, I think it's very similar. If you're working with a pro player, I mean, they're going to have a team and your team might just be your coach and yourself, or you might have a strength and conditioning coach. You might have a full team, you know? So that's where the accountability comes in and understanding that you know, everybody's working towards the same goal and if everyone's working towards the same goal and you know, everyone, there's going to be accountability on everybody and you got to make sure that you keep just moving a dial forward.

[21:48](#)

L: So just one more thing on this. I have a hypothesis. All right, so I've been thinking about this. I think in, in team sport the coach can be, if they want kind of the villain. This is like the Mike Keenan, he used to coach [inaudible]. I'm going to all make them hate me, so they come together and play as one and he did it quite well. I don't know how long that, that was successful long term, but I don't think that approach works in tennis for a while. Like I, that relationship between coach and player is different than what you would see in a high level team sports, let's say, where you're competing, uh, you know, for pro championship or it collegiate, uh, I dunno, what do you think Matt? Do you think you can have that kind of adversarial relationship between coach and

player and actually make it work in tennis knowing that the relationship is much closer?

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M: Yeah, that's a great question. I think it really comes down to the relationship that you have with the player. How, how much do you understand each other? You know, I think when you're in the trenches with each other, whether you're in, you know, you're in Barcelona for five weeks grinding and you know, you start building the rapport with each other, how much trust is there involved in understanding that, Hey man, like I'm not giving you hell. I'm giving you the truth. It just sounds like hell and how much can they handle it? So I think it just comes back down to the relationship. I don't think that there's ever going to probably be where just someone's just like, I mean, you've got to have a little bit of everything. You do gotta put a little bit of sugar on there sometimes, but you also gotta make sure that, uh, they get a kick in the fanny when they need it as well.

[23:20](#)

L: Yeah. It would seem like the tennis coach has to protect that relationship more than a team coach would have to, cause I can just grab the next guy and be like, okay, you don't like it, then I'll bring the next player into play, you know? And in tennis, well you're on the road, this person, you're spending all this time with them. You have to find a way to make it work. And if, if you're kind of going at one another over the longterm, it just doesn't like it would have a chance.

[23:46](#)

M: Yeah, no it did. It probably probably not going to last very long. You know, I guess that is probably one of the greatest things about team sports is there's a bench. Sometimes, you know, I wish there was a bench in tennis sometimes where, um, you know, Hey, you know what you went out there, whether it was from a competitive standpoint, whether it was from a tackle standpoint, um, and you know what, we're gonna you're going to sit on the bench until you, until we figure this out. Um, but, you know, in tennis it's like, Oh, I can go play next week. But I think if there was that mindset of like, I gotta do it right now, or I'm gonna, you know, I'm not gonna be able to play next week. I think I definitely think that could help. So I think that's where the coach has to kind of maybe create the bench for them. Hey, look like this is where we're at. You're not... X, Y and Z aren't being done. There's no purpose to go to the tournament next week. You're not prepared. Um, but that comes back down to the relationship. And obviously sometimes in the professional tennis standpoint, the tennis player is, uh, the employer. Um, so that makes it, you know, it makes it a lot more delicate for the coach to how far can they push those boundaries when, you know, you have to coach of an NBA team and we're a high school team, whatever, you know, it's a little bit more, this is the way that we're doing it.

[24:52](#)

L: They face other, other challenges. Sorry, go ahead. But with contracts and sitting down a \$40 million person or whatever. But

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M: Yeah, no, I mean there's, I mean everyone has their challenges, but uh, it just all depends on the culture of what you're creating, I guess.

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L: I'm excited you brought up that point though, Matt, because that, I was kinda thinking that way too, that, you know, this kind of bench quote unquote, we do that by not having the player go to the next tournament because they're not doing the right things. They're not being accountable or we do that by pulling them out of practice. Not that I'm a big proponent of taking things away from people, but at the same time, this, if we're doing high performance, there's expectations that you're accountable to. If you're not doing those things, why would you go and play? You're giving the person the reward without actually doing the things that they need to do to get to reward. What are we teaching them?

[25:47](#)

M: Uh, yeah, no, I think, I think you're always, again, I think you're, you're just trying to make sure that they understand that if they're not doing things right is that the light at the end of the tunnel isn't, it's not like freedom. It's a train coming at you and you're going to get hit. And so I think that's where they gotta make sure that, you know, there's no, it's not punishment. It's, it's, it's, it's teaching. And I think there, that's where they just have to understand that, you know, we're doing this to help you get better. And I think that's where it comes back to that kind of awareness and the acceptance and understanding the, the greater plan of where you're, where you're trying to go. So, and it comes, I mean, that comes down from a maturity standpoint, from both the player, the coach, the team around them. If you're dealing with a junior, obviously you're going to have to really work through the parents. Um, and, and you know, and there's going to be emotions involved. And I think you just have to be extremely patient and really just be ready to kind of teach your way through it.

[26:39](#)

J: This is awesome. It's been great discussion. I go, I got a couple more before we sort of run out of time here, but are there some like deal breakers for you on that accountability side so that if you're setting your standards and there's players that aren't really upholding those and I'm guessing that's obviously over significant periods of time, that they're continually creating a pattern or habit of not withholding up to these standards. What would you say is, is maybe some messaging to either work through that or whether there is a sort of breaking point where you know obviously the play isn't something what the player wants. The player doesn't want to be held accountable to certain things and but then you have your, obviously your standards as a coach, so where does that all kind of fit into the relationship too?

[27:22](#)

M: I think that all starts in the beginning with the player is really kind of setting those standards early, sitting down before you really get on the court. And understanding this is the way that I like to do things. What is your expectation? That way at least you're all on the same page when, when you're starting. So I think those are really, really important. These are my non-negotiables, this is what I expect. And then I think once those are pretty clear, I think it makes it a lot easier. And then when things do go a little bit South or a little bit sour, it's kind of, you can bring those back say, Hey, we talked about this in the beginning, why have things changed? And obviously, you know, we'd all love the kind of the fairy tale of being with a, being with someone for a long, long time.

But sometimes that might not be the case and someone has to, they might need to go a different way and that's okay. But as long as those, um, as long as you kind of set those standards early on in the relationship and you kind of bring it back to the kind of the core values of how you're going to run the team and what they think, I think, I think things are always can kind of work out in the end.

[28:17](#)

J: That's great. So, so here we got a couple more minutes and uh, again, we really appreciate your time out here, but we always like to leave our listeners with some top tips. So I'm asking, what, what would be your top recommendations for creating accountability and ownership in players?

[28:32](#)

M: I think we're, I think it's just really, I think from a young age, I think it starts, whether it's a kid making their bed, simple things, and then you lead it into how, how does that carry over into your tennis coaches telling you to be more balanced when you hit the ball. So I think just the listening, the respect, I think it just comes back to the character. I think those are, I think those are huge. Uh, when you're developing the accountability, the responsibility, and then hopefully, you know, they grow, have the passion and the love for what they do and they can, you know, hopefully continue to do that for a long time.

[29:05](#)

J: Make your bed.

[29:06](#)

M: I think just be, I think respectful. Understanding that, uh, listening and then just trying to watch and learn as much as you can. And this is a sport of a lifetime and it's something that takes a lot of time and a lot of practice and a lot of effort, a lot of sacrifice. And it's not instant. So I think it, you know, this is a sport that you can, you are going gonna have to, the beauty of it is I've been playing it a long time and I still, I'm still trying to figure it out and that's why I get up every day and get to hit that little yellow ball. So it's a lot of fun.

[29:37](#)

J: You're in it for the long haul. Don't take the shortcuts.

[29:40](#)

L: No shortcuts.

[29:41](#)

L: You'll end up in the lake, especially around these parts in Orlando.

[29:44](#)

M: Watch out for the alligator.

[29:46](#)

L: And there's alligators in those lakes. Yeah. Well, I mean I think this has been a great conversation, Matt, and as you think about moving forward, you know, and, and, and working in the collegiate space again where you're not with those players all the time, how can you help them be accountable to the things that they want to do?

[30:02](#)

M: Well, I think it's just making sure that those relationships are strong with them and their coaches and checking in with their coaches. I think there's so

many great coaches in college tennis and they have such a great support team within their athletic departments from the strength and conditioning to the mental skills too. I mean, they're just, they're just so lucky to, to have everything that they need. And you know what, we're just happy to be able to help 'em when we can. And uh, so I think just checking in, Hey, how's, how's your volley going? If that was something that we were able to work on at a camp or during the summer, what are you working on with, um, with... So I think it's just constant, constantly maintaining those relationships and the communication is extremely big.

[30:41](#)

L: Yup. Absolutely. Communication is huge. So, and a huge part of accountability. And right now Johnny's communicating with me to stop.

[30:49](#)

M: Alright, well thanks guys.

[30:50](#)

J: Well no, obviously we could keep talking, but Matt, thank you so much for, for joining us today. This has been this week's episode of compete like a champion. For more resources, you can always visit our website, playerdevelopment.usta.com and we'll, uh, we'll be recording next time from the US open. So we'll, uh, we'll speak to you soon.