

Competing in Summer Conditions

- [00:05](#) J: Welcome to the compete like a champion podcast. You're here with Dr Larry Lauer, mental skill specialists, and coach Johnny Parks with USTA player development. Today we're going to dive into mental strategies for competing well in summer conditions being that it's summer.
- [00:19](#) L: Summer time! My favorite time of the year.
- [00:21](#) J: Absolutely. Before we get into this, we want another shout out to Kate, who's our producer for today cause Mick's still on extended holiday.
- [00:29](#) L: Yeah. I don't even know what he does anymore. What does he, what does he do?
- [00:31](#) J: I don't know. I mean full time vacation goer.
- [00:34](#) L: Is that what it is?
- [00:35](#) J: Maybe.
- [00:35](#) L: Man, he's, he's living the good life. What is summer? He needs a vacation. He does work hard.
- [00:39](#) J: Yeah. I guess he's allowed one. Though maybe not two or three.
- [00:43](#) L: Now, he, he better get back here soon because Kate's going to take his job, as I said before.
- [00:48](#) J: And Kate's kicking his butt right now.
- [00:51](#) K: Yeah. Once I learned the music, we're all, we're all set.
- [00:54](#) L: Kate's in! Kate has appeared on the podcast.
- [00:58](#) K: Hello, it was a pleasure.
- [00:58](#) L: Well, thanks for jumping on there, Kate.
- [01:00](#) J: Yeah. So, uh, yeah, before we dive into this too, I wanted to give a big shout out to the listeners, to you guys out there listening to this. I mean it's, uh, it's absolutely unbelievable. We, we go around the country and go to different events and different tournaments or camps and, you know, getting, uh, the feedback from parents and players. And we had an event here in June and one of the kids were scared to come up to me cause he's like, he went to his coach, his coach was like, Oh, can you just go say, you know, maybe have a little

conversation with him. He's like, Oh, I can't go up to him. That's the guy from the podcast. And I was like, you gotta be kidding me. All right, well...

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L: That's hilarious. They clearly don't, didn't know you.

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J: They obviously didn't know me, but you had another sort of player come up to you and...

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L: Yeah, no, this girl, Gabby, we were in DC and she was at an event there, I think with Angie [inaudible] and Tony Mule. I brought her up to say hi and uh, we had a conversation about how she listens to the podcast. So Gabby, I hope you're listening to this one. Uh, keep listening. We appreciate it. And, uh, she gave me an idea for a future podcast, so...

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J: That's awesome.

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L: Well, uh, but yeah, good luck to you out there. I hope you're, you're hitting them well and you're happy.

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J: And we strongly encourage that. I mean if you have any topics out there that you really feel like we need to explore, hit us up, you can find all our, you know, our contact details on our website playerdevelopment.usta.com. You can find my email, Dr. Lauer's email if you, if you have ideas. Also, obviously on Instagram at [team USA tennis](https://www.instagram.com/teamusa_tennis) is our Instagram. You can always throw his ideas in the comment box there or direct messages and we'd be able to take that feedback and see what we can do. So you know, one future podcast to look out for is based on equipment. That was one request we've had as well. So, um, we've had a few others too, so we'll be exploring those in the uh, in the near future here.

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L: Tennis equipment by the way.

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J: Tennis equipment.

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L: Yeah. Not like construction...

[02:42](#)

J: Right.

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L: ...Equipment or, yeah, no tennis equipment. So, but yeah, no, I think obviously we appreciate everybody listening and the ideas help because you know, sometimes we're really trying to search for things that are interesting to the listeners. So, um, and you're, you're the ones out there living it, so let us know. We like it. So any feedback is great. So yeah, anytime we get some of this we, and we'll take the critical comments too because we want to get better. So.

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J: Absolutely, always looking to get better. So let's dive in. Summer is here. We're in the midst of it.

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L: Wooh, and it's hot, isn't it?

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J: We've got national tournaments coming up for the juniors. We've got US open coming up and obviously there's all the summer series for the, for the pros that are going on at the minute. So it's only only right that we, we dive into discussing the the summer conditions and how to take those in our stride, how to prepare for them, how to deal with them so that we can still perform well. What do you think?

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L: It's amazing how weather plays a huge role in sport and you can look a lot at a lot of different sports that are played outdoors like football and soccer and then tennis. And I've had the opportunity to travel to several tournaments this summer and it's been, it's been hot. And just to watch the players deal with this and I'm empathetic because I'm sitting there and watching and I'm just sweating and roasting and somehow I'm not losing weight, but I'm still sweating a lot. So, it's probably because I'm sitting and watching too much tennis, but, so I'm empathetic. Man, this is what they're going through. And they're doing this for two, three, I watched at one point in time and at the clay court national championship in Boca and two boys playing. One was going three hours, the other one was going almost four and it was well over 90 and it was very humid. So the conditions are making a difference, right? And you got to prepare for them. Cause if you don't, it's too late. You have to prepare for these summer conditions and that's whether you're a young player and you're just going to your group session and it's outside or you're actually going to a tournament and playing. You want to make sure you take care of certain things so that your body can do what you want to do and certainly your mind can be in a good place with it. But I have seen a lot of evidence that the summer heat is making a huge difference. It's been... How people respond to the heat has been the difference between close sets and people kind of going away at the end of sets. People not having hardly any energy at all when they come to their match and really struggling with the heat and having to see the trainer and then others who are doing quite well with the heat. So really interesting. I don't know all of what their preparation was, but definitely the summer heat makes a big difference. And obviously the other time that this comes up is for, on the pro side, is Australia the beginning of the year, but these conditions almost assuredly affecting the results of the match and the way of the players are playing them and you need to prepare for it.

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J: Awesome. So let's dive into that. How do we prepare for them?

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L: Well, first, I mean I'm not the expert on you know, what someone should eat or what they should drink. Obviously we have people who do that here. Coaches should have a knowledge that we're going to actually dive into that subject more down the road. But I think first obviously drinking lots of water, making sure you're hydrated before you go. Making sure you're eating a healthy, right? And you're eating enough. Hate to see it when players don't have breakfast before they go out to the court, they just have a bar. And I think you gotta have some good foods in your bag that you can go to as you play. I mean, obviously

there's different things that athletes prefer when they're playing in heat, it's not easy to eat. Um, and maybe gels and things of that nature can help you but, and then sleep, you know, sleeping, getting lots of sleep, getting your rest, making sure you're recovering, especially if you're playing multiple days. Um, you got to make sure you're getting rest because you're putting yourself on a stress. So those things, those aren't necessarily the things I really want to talk about today, but you have to do those things to be ready for this hot and humid weather that players are experiencing. Okay. But I want to focus more from the psychological side of things.

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J: Okay. Yeah. So obviously another, I guess another way to prepare is to actually train in hot conditions.

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L: Absolutely.

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J: So, you know, good examples is it's very well documented like fed before the Australian open. We'll take off to Dubai from his preseason and spend however long out there in order to get used to those conditions. But again, so besides, you know, hydration and fueling the right way before practices before matches, et cetera. What are, what are some other instances here that, you know, maybe some of the items that we can throw in our bags or things that we can use that can help in dealing with the heat?

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L: Yeah, I think, you know, having those cooling towels or helpful or getting ice and putting it in a towel I think is important. Making sure you have enough water and sports drinks. And again, we'll have to have someone who's an expert talk about that. I'm not going to get into that, but having these things ready to go and you don't want to get to the court and be half an hour in and be like, Oh, I didn't bring my my drinks. You know, so then at that point it's probably too late and you're only trying to play catch up, which isn't good in this heat. So extra changes of clothes, very important because getting those, the sweaty, wet clothes off and being able to put on something fresh has a huge psychological effect. But also physically as well when you let your body cool a little bit more, right. And, and so I think these kinds of, even these simple things, towels so you can wipe off, you know, you need to have these things handy and ready so that you can manage the heat. And that's really what you're doing is because nobody really wants to play in 98 degree weather. You know, they don't want to have to be in that situation play. They'd rather be in 75, with a slight breeze and in the sun, but that's just not the case in the summer and a lot of these places where the players are playing, so you need to have a plan. It needs to start before you ever get there. And part of that is training in that environment so we can build up those habits. So you kinda climatize, you can get used to the experience so that when you are in that situation, it's not abnormal.

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J: Well then they're building up a closer level of comfort. Right? I mean I don't think playing in that heat over a sustained period of time, I don't think it's ever going to be 100% comfortable to everyone all the time. So it is uncomfortable being out in these conditions. And you know, if you had to just show up on

match day at a tournament and your first experience is playing in those conditions, I mean you're going to be extremely uncomfortable, which then plays into a lot of different factors. Right? So their emotional state of mind, how they think when they are under those more extreme stresses. I guess. So you know, when you're thinking about that, how, you know, building up that comfort level has to be part of the goal, right?

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L: It is. And, and it, you know, like you said, you're, you're spot on Johnny. It's not like you're going to be overly comfortable with the environment. You, you get used to it. Right? And it's still uncomfortable. And what you're doing is not only are you preparing yourself physically to be in that environment and your habits so that you can manage it, but psychologically as well, you start to get used to it and you sort of desensitize yourself to it. Not completely cause it's still uncomfortable and you're still hot. And if you haven't taken care of some of those things we mentioned before, then you are going to struggle. But at the same time your mind is not going to be preoccupied as much with the heat because what happens is, your mind likes balance, homeostasis, comfort, right? They want to be in a comfortable position. That's what we kinda search for and these conditions are not comfortable. So when the players are uncomfortable it creates these urges, urges to get out of the situation, urges to maybe go faster. And like when you watch a lot of tennis and you are watching in these hot conditions as well, what did you see in terms of the way the players were playing if they weren't managing the heat very well?

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J: Well I think first you see that they get irritated quicker. The other thing that I see too is, is the way that they play becomes a little less structured in terms of, what I mean by that is, is that their game plan tends to go away. So it becomes more about just hitting balls back, maybe more survival mode, just putting, trying to get more balls back in play as opposed to trying to be having that plan, be proactive and actually trying to execute that plan. So essentially the, you know, what I attribute that to is that the mind gets overwhelmed with so many different things going on. It does get preoccupied with many different things. So the game plan kind of falls away. Yeah. And that's one other aspect that I see, but mostly those two is that irritability level goes up and that their ability to execute a game plan goes down.

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J: I agree 100% and so we know that hot conditions, okay, they're conducive to more emotion, anger, frustration, irritability, uh, because of that discomfort. And so your mind is not only focused on what's uncomfortable, but then you have all these emotions that come with it and now you're managing that, right? And so it's not a surprise that you would see players playing differently. A lot of times what I see, especially in the hardcourts, they play really fast, big serve, big first shot, point over, right? Whether I missed or I hit it, but it's boom, boom. You know, and that's about the extent of what I want to do there in his heat. But at the same time, in terms of the competitive side, you have to understand your opponents going through the same thing. And if you, when you remember that, if you can think about, look, I don't have to play 30-40 balls like I did on the clay, but I do need to structure my game, right? Enough that I allow myself to

construct a point because there's a good chance my opponent is not going to want to stay in there. If I'm willing to run and then I'm also moving them, then that's going to be a huge advantage for me in many matches because your opponent also is dealing with this heat and they're not necessarily wanting to do all that running. So if you can get out in front of the point, gain advantage and make them move, that's a huge advantage for a player in these conditions.

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J: So that comes down to habits. We talk about habits a lot. Yeah, a lot of different habits that we can create in between points, routine habits, journaling, you know, lots of different habits we're trying to create. This is essentially creating a, a habit of increased comfortability to the environment. So therefore we don't become as irritated and another habit of, in order to execute our game plan, we've got to make sure that we are training our mind in those conditions to write, to think under those increased stresses in the environment. So as we come to look at that and in, in trying to improve these habits, we need to change our focus. Right? And we need to think about some actual things that we can do. And I know we, you know, we've kind of brushed up on this before, you know, just, you know, in conversations and it's something you told to our national coaches a lot, but what are the, what are sort of four things that we can do to, to overcome this or to deal with it or you know, embrace it. I know you've talked about this, right? You've got to embrace those conditions. What are the, those four things that you like to talk about with, with the athletes that you talked to and the coaches?

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L: Well, yeah. And keeping in mind that as a mental coach, my job is to try and help them to find advantage in, in situations and use their mind in a proactive way to gain that advantage. And so in these hot conditions, humid conditions, there are a lot of advantages because A. Players may not come to the gate fast because they haven't really been preparing the way they normally would sitting inside in the AC. Maybe they didn't do, didn't do their full warm up or go as hard, right? So you can catch people early by coming out fast and coming out physical and really ready to go. And then obviously sustaining that intensity and that effort level over time is going to give you an advantage, especially if they look at you and they're like, wow, this guy, he looks like the weather is perfect and he's happy and he's doing well and I'm struggling over here. So from a mental side you can gain great advantage and that's what you had to think about in terms of embracing these conditions. Cause nobody again wants to play in these conditions. But there's a great advantage to be gained by managing them well and looking at it differently. So what are some of the, you asked about the four things. I think number one, if you're going to adapt to and in this environment and do well, you have to take more time. The heat is another level of stress that you're dealing with, right? And so your heart rate's up your, your breathing can be shallow and accelerated your sweating. I mean you're, you're experiencing discomfort. You need to take more time to regroup. Not that you'll get comfortable, but to regroup enough that you can move your focus from, oh it's so hot, I can't do this to here's what I'm going to do in the next point and commit to it. So you slow down. A lot of times in these situations, you see the players rushing fast because again, it's that urge. It's

uncomfortable. I want to get out of this situation and that can even be a subconscious thing. They're not even aware of it many times. So to me, you see a lot of rushing in the heat going fast, routines if the structure of their game, the way they play the points goes out and usually their routines go out the window too. So you gotta, you gotta make sure you're taking time. Also use the whole change over time period.

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Made sure that you are able to get the cooling towels, taking the time to slow your breathing, bring your heart rate down, toweling off, you know, a knee. Even like the guys that you can change shirts obviously. So there's things that you can do as you take your time between points in the changeovers to regroup, but your goal is always to be ready to play the next point. And the heat and the humidity provide a huge distraction to that because no point in time are you comfortable, but you know what you, what you have to do what you want to do and you're willing to embrace that situation to do it. So that, that's one thing. I don't know if you have any thoughts on that, Johnny, but.

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J: No, I think definitely, I mean when you think about take more time, you really have to utilize all the, you know, the time that you have in between points, the changeovers, the end of a set to, to recalibrate to, you know, so that you, you can start the point as mentally and physically fresh as as you can. In order to do that, you've got to make sure you take the time that you're given, you know, there's gotta be times where maybe you're, if you're embracing it, embracing the environment and it's really not affecting you as much, then great. Then you can maybe establish a little bit of a faster rhythm because your opponent might not be used to it, in which case then you're already hurting them. But there's a difference between when you're embracing that and when you're dealing with the conditions and you notice you're dealing with them a lot better than your opponent, then that's where you have to have that awareness to then apply that strategy or you're not dealing with the environment as well. It is on your mind. It's something you are thinking about, in which case, like you said, then the rushing then kicks in. So, you know, certainly there's, there's something about embracing the environment and feeling comfortable in it enough where you can then use it as a strategy against your opponent.

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L: You gotta be tough, right? I mean, you gotta be tough minded because you might come out and play poorly and be down a break early. And that's where you start to see things shift. The player comes out with the right intentions, and they're trying to embrace the situation. But then they get down and their opponent, maybe he's playing well, or they realize that their opponent's ready to battle for three hours. And it's like, Oh man, I don't know. Now the doubts start coming in. Now the rushing happens, the uncomfortability raises, right? And these are the times where you have to take more time. Going faster only works when you're playing. Well, when you're in green, we talked about greenlight. When everything is going good, then you can go faster. But as soon as things get sloppy, as soon as you start making mistakes, you have to go back to a normal pace or a slower pace because you need to, you need to recover and you need to be able to be clear and committed to what you're going to do

in the next point. It's always what you have to do between points, whether you're doing that in eight seconds, 10 seconds, or you're doing that in 25.

[18:12](#)

J: Awesome. So that's taking more time. Well, what's the second one? All right. So now you're taking more time and one of the things you really, really should do, players, okay, is take your towel out to the court. I mean, there's no reason why we don't have a towel out there. You're going to need it in these conditions just to wipe off to get the sweat off. But at the same time your towel can be a trigger, can be a stimulus for other things. It's going to cause you to take more time because you're going to have to walk to your towel. And, secondly, using that towel to wipe off what just happened and get into your breathing, making sure that you're doing diaphragmatic breaths there, that you're doing slower breathing, you're trying to get more oxygen into the body and the more that you oxygenate your body, the more that you can think clearly. And that's so important because, again, and he's in comfortable environments. If you go fast, you never give yourself a chance to regroup and you have to slow down these deeper breaths. And we talk about breathing all the time with the athletes here. You know what's a quality breath? I mean some very basic things like inhaling through the nose, out through the mouth. There are some different ways to do it, but you want to engage your diaphragm or you want to, they talk about belly breathing. So when you inhale, there's an expansion of, not only your chest, but your, your ribs kind of spread. And your, your belly comes out. And that is what we're looking for in that situation. Cause now you're going to get more oxygen and you're gonna get a deeper breath and then don't forget about the exhale. Make sure you're exhaling out, completely getting all, all the toxins out, complete the cycle slowly. A way to think about it is if you're blowing up a balloon, which is the inhale, and then you let the air out slowly on the exhale like you would out of the balloon and it makes a funny noise, right? So you're trying to really get to that point. And in the way I've talked to players about it is, you know, when you're running sprints and you're panting and you're, you can't catch your breath. And then there's a point in time where you're able to go, if your coach gives you enough time to do that, ah, okay, now I'm ready. Right? There's that moment. You know what I'm talking about JP, that moment where you're like, I'm ready to take this next sprint on or this next point. We only have 25 seconds to do that. But that's what you're trying to get to is that moment of pause where you're able to go, ah, okay, now what am I doing? Is it necessarily totally comfortable? No, but you regroup enough. There's a pause where you're able to catch your breathing, you're able to do a diaphragmatic breath and you're able to think clearly about, okay, what is it I need to do here in versus letting your irritability cause you to rush or to try to play the point within the point fast to make poor decisions, to remember what your strengths are, what your game plan is, and try to commit to that in that situation. So you got to breathe if you're going to thrive out there, if you're gonna embrace this environment, you really have to breathe a lot. You don't just do it when it's a long point. That's obviously a good time to take more time and and make sure you're recovering with your breath, but you also, you want to do it regularly getting these more diaphragmatic breaths in between points because improves recovery, more oxygen, you're able to slow things down and you're able to clear

your head better and start to commit to the next point. Yeah. As you, as you're describing all that breathing to thrive as the person that comes to mind the most that I think does this probably better than anyone and I just think to the times when he won his Australian Opens was Novak. Novak is probably the one and then I'm sure there are others, but he's the one that comes to my mind. He's probably the one athlete that you can visibly, as a fan watching tennis, is the most visible with his deep breathing. Big one through then and so like your chest, right, with the balloon that you just mentioned. He does that all the time. He does it when he, after he's had the, the long exhausting points, he, you can really visibly see him do that, but then he also, you know, he does that when he's under a bit more pressure as well and takes his time. And so, seeing that, I mean he's one person I would say to get a good example of who does I think really well is, is him.

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L: I think if you want a great example of that, just go back to his Wimbledon final versus Nadal, which I think was 2011 when he just became number one in the world. And then he was playing Nadal and people were saying, well he's not the actual number one cause he hasn't, you know, beaten the number one or whatever the talk was back then. And him coming out with great posture and then, you know, he uses his breathing to really keep his posture. You see, you know how his posture's really, really good and he uses that breathing to create that proper posture as well as he gets into his return stance or as he prepares to play. But he also, as you said, uses his breathing to compose himself. And he talked about this a lot and in that match against Federer to [inaudible] to follow this year how he, he was really happy at how resilient he was. And a big part of that was how he composed himself, taking time, breathing, encouraging himself. These are the kinds of things that you must do in these uncomfortable situations, whether it is you're playing in a final and you're nervous and things aren't going exactly the way you want or you're playing in these summer conditions that make it so uncomfortable from the first ball that you're constantly sweating. You're constantly at a higher level of stress, your heart rate's up and your managing the situation. So the breathing itself has to start from before the match and go throughout the match. And, and players will say, well Larry, I, um, I'm doing my breathing and I don't see anything we want to see, again, take a look at Novak. But really that big breath, seeing the belly expand, see that actual kind of pursing of the lips and the air, coming out and being able to hear it even, you can see when a player is doing it purposely because they'll slow down, you'll see kind of the nostrils, you know, at work. And then the expansion and the breathing out. There's an actual changing of the posture, right where the shoulders go back to chest expands. It gets us into that power posture and that then helps to create more positive thinking as well. So I can't say it enough. Our mental team, Bob and Mark and I talk about the breathing all the time with the players as well. The coaches do as well. But it's something that we must do a better job of. And when you're playing in hot conditions, you do not wait until the third set, do it from the first point you recover well. So you're to keep your stress level managed so that you can last for however long you need to.

[24:20](#)

J: Awesome. Okay, so one, take more time. Two, breathe to thrive. What's numero tres?

[24:26](#)

L: Okay. So the third thing is be present with the challenge and it is a challenge, right? It's not comfortable as we've been saying, but we really need things to be comfortable to perform? No, we don't. Because athletes are doing every day, performing in uncomfortable situations. If you're looking for the comfortable, then go do something easy. But if you want to do something great, you're going to be uncomfortable on some level, there's going to be stress, there's going to be nerves, and it's all about the way you look at it. If you look at it as a challenge that you want to embrace and you start to become present with that challenge. So instead of worrying about am I going to survive this heat How am I going to feel afterwards? Am I going to throw up? Am I going to get sick? Stay present. So by accepting what is and how you feel about it, okay, it's hot. Both guys have to deal with it, right? So it is what it is. I want to try to get an advantage in this situation. Here's how I'm going to do it. Get your mind back on your task, you're going to have to take time. You're going to have to breathe to be able to think this way and get excited about out competing the opponent. This is what I tried to do and obviously I never played at the level of the players that I'm working with today, but I wanted to play in the heat because I felt my, I was more tough minded than the people I was playing against. And I knew that I was really ready to run and work and stay out there as long as it took to win. And typically that's all that I needed in that situation because the other person's like this, this heat's just too much. You know, it's, it's rough. And they start getting irritable, they start losing focus, they start dropping their energy and voila, you win. Now let's be clear on something. This is not me saying you should do this at the expense of your own health. If you're struggling and you're not able to recover enough between points, meaning you can't catch your breath, meaning that you and, and I'm not going to be the medical doctor here, but you're getting dizzy, these kinds of things, you need to stop, okay, so be smart. But if you've trained for this and you're prepared for it and you're doing fine, you're just uncomfortable, then stay present with the challenge. Take it on. Uh, be excited about the opportunity. Outcompete your opponent. Stay present with what you're doing each and every single point. You're going to have to have good routines. And again, you put it all together. The point ends, breathe to recover. You're going to have thoughts out there like, this is too hot. God, I can't believe I missed that. Now I've gotta, you know, now I lost my break. I'm going to have to play more. Or geez, I just lost the first set and now it's gonna take three sets to win this match. All right. Accept the challenge. I want to try and do this right, but stay present. You're going to have thoughts. Use your breathing to recover. Have good posture. Get back to planning. The next point with commitment and then the final thing, Johnny, the fourth thing is energize yourself. One of the mistakes I saw some players making was that they would really go low energy almost maybe as a way to pace themselves or to save up the energy they felt they might need later in a match. So walking slowly between points with maybe the body language down and just kind of letting everyone know they're hot and they're tired and they're just really low energy. Unfortunately, low energy between points usually leads to low energy during the point and the really, the way that

between points should flow is when the point ends, you're going to be at a higher intensity, right? You just played the point, you then recover and that drops somewhat to a lower intensity, a lower energy, but not all the way down to zero. That to some level, this is when you're at your towel. This is when you're doing your breathing. This is when you're starting to think about the next point, but as you decide what you're doing for the next point, you start to energize yourself. That walk becomes brisker maybe a little bit faster. Maybe you bounce on your toes, you energize yourself, you encourage yourself, you do something to pick up the energy. So what you don't want to see is an even line, I stay at a high level and I'm going fast and I'm rushing and then I play fast, not good. We already talked about that or I'm playing with low energy and I stay low energy between points and it just stays that way. That's not good either. There has to be a modulation or a change in that high intensity, high energy during the point recovery. Bring it down and then charge it back up before you play the next point. Does that make sense? Right? But you have to recover, but I think a lot of times, again, players are making the mistake of going too low energy, maybe to pace themselves, to manage your energy. But what I know is if you want to have energy, you have to expend energy. You can't have, you can't just save it up by not moving your feet and think that that's gonna work. You gotta be on your toes. You have to be energized. You have to be encouraging yourself, be emotionally engaged, have some energy. Start out the match with energy. You know, I mentioned earlier that your opponent's dealing with the same thing. So if you come out, I'm not talking about rushing, but again, high energy, taking time to recover, but then having lots of energy, bouncing your step, being really excited about the next point at the what makes sense for that player, but he's a little bit different. You want to get back to that, even though it's hot. Will there be some managing that? Of course, when it's 75 and perfect weather, then you're probably going to have, feel like you have more energy. You're gonna be less tired and I get that, there's reality here, but at the same time you have to energize yourself. You have to manufacture some of this energy.

[29:24](#)

J: Well, it's just making sure that we've got the physical and mental engagement before the point starts. So it's a very, very rare scale to be able to have the ability to switch it off for very brief portions of time, like in between points and then be able to switch it straight back on if you are, if you are exhibiting or showing a lot of low energy in between points. I mean a very, very rare skill. A skill that probably takes years and years and years and years to develop.

[29:54](#)

L: A Sampras likeability.

[29:55](#)

J: Sampras likeability, Fed likeability. But again, that's probably a skill that you know when you go through learning periods with that, right? You probably, if that's short demeanor to go around slower, you've probably played matches where you felt that you just had no energy. So next time you go out you might overload it and overdo it based off what you're used to doing and then you start, you start playing with it and managing it better. But to provide that consistent of being able to do that is a very rare skill. So I know I would rather,

you know, especially with the juniors, I'd rather be preparing for the habit of making sure that we're creating the right amounts of energy and engagement before the points starts and not, and not taking it too low.

[30:34](#)

L: Right. Yeah. No that's a great way to put it. And I think the players that are able to do that, they have big weapons. I mean a big serve, a big forehand, something that allows them to win some points quickly and then they're able to recover or they're able to go in this more slow kind of methodical way. And we're not talking about like Nadal slow, cause Nadal is high energy, high intensity. He just goes slow between points. He lets it come down and he ramps it back up, right? Djokovic the same thing. We're talking more about low energy, really kind of not having much of a skip in their step and in between points, but then able to play with energy. Right? Pretty rare. And I think you have to have big weapons a lot of times to be able to use that kind of approach. And it definitely isn't one that we recommend to juniors because what we find, like you said, is that the better energy, the better intensity, more often going to play better. Now, one thing that I want to add to this and that is that a lot of times players are looking, they'll say, I want to be calm out there. I'm like, okay, well I don't think you're, especially in these hot humid conditions, you're not going to be calm. It's emotional, it's stressful, but it can be very fun because it can be very fulfilling to take on the challenge of the elements and come out and perform well. And so not necessarily looking for calm. You're looking for composed, and this is the word that Djokovic used as well at Wimbledon. And then this is again, is where you get to that moment where you through your breathing, you slow down, you're clear about your plan, you commit to it, you accept whatever you're dealing with, you embrace it, and you're ready to go again with good energy and good intensity and your breathing is there to modulate that. So if you find you're revving your motor too high, I mean your stress is up and it's staying up, then you have to use deep diaphragmatic rhythmic breathing maybe by like counting it, in to three, out to three, this kind of thing. To bring that stress level, your heart rate down, right? You have to, you have to calm yourself so that you can find that composure to get back to the optimal zone. But also, again, was we talk about avoiding low energy. A lot of times players aren't demonstrating enough energy. So to do this deep rhythmic breathing, it may not help enough and they might need to charge up their breathing. They may need to go with faster breaths because they're not expanding that energy. They're not exerting themselves. Yet when you're going into hot conditions, think about the French Open finals, that's a good example, not that it was overly hot, but when Nadal and Thiem came out, they were grunting from the first ball, they were moving their feet, they were intense. It was like it was are third set and it was awesome. The intensity. And that's a piece that I think a lot of players, if they are able to do this, they gain a great advantage, coming out, being on your toes, being energized, bouncing around, engaging emotionally early, maybe with a fist pump or come on and grunting and exerting yourself. A lot of times a juniors on the other side of the net are not ready for that kind of intensity. At the pro level, not so much, but you can still gain an advantage here by doing that. Uh, but certainly at the junior level. So if your energy is low, you have to expend more energy. You gotta be

grunting, you gotta be breathing a little bit faster maybe to get it going, pumping yourself up. Obviously people bouncing on their toes. We talk about like being like a boxer, bouncing around, breathing faster and getting yourself excited and encouraging yourself. Patting yourself on the leg in a good way, that kind of thing. These things get the energy going, get the intensity up. And so you as a player need to be aware, is my energy too high, meaning I'm carrying too much stress, too much intensity, and therefore I'm rushing or I'm not thinking clearly. Maybe I'm anxious or is it too low and I'm a little bit flat. I'm not moving my feet. Now remember, moving your feet can happen on either end of the spectrum when you have too much energy and nerves and, and you stop moving your feet or when you don't have enough, but you need to know why things are happening the way they are and that your breathing is there to help you modulate that energy level. Is that clear?

[34:24](#)

J: Yeah, absolutely. And as you're talking, I'm thinking about well, energizing. Absolutely. Absolutely get it. Grunting, breathing a little bit quicker. If our energy is low, that helps us. That's almost like a, you know, like a physical standard, get yourself going. But it doesn't take away from the fact that we still need to mentally have a plan as to what we're doing when we step up to the line. And I think sometimes there's a failing, you know, and you see this in a... I saw it when I was a, you know, volunteer coaching in college for a little period of time. You almost see like, Oh, the strategy is to grunt. Like that is the strategy. You step up to the line. It's like if you're grunting, that is the strategy to know that I, that you're giving full effort and, but that, but that's not the strategy. That's to me, more of a standard. I expect you to do that in order to make sure that you are energized, but you still need to have a strategy, a plan in place when you do that. So combining, energizing yourself with that, but then making sure you're still having a plan and are stepping up.

[35:23](#)

L: Great point Johnny. And again, I always go back to what, what is the goal of the between points time period and that is to be present, to be committed to a plan and to have positive energy that's ready for the way we talk about it. And so whatever you do in between points or whatever you do in the changeover, you want to get to a point where you know exactly okay, exactly is a strong word. Your committed to a strategy or committed to a plan when you step to the line, it could be a hundred degrees and, and hot and, but I still have a plan and that's what you got to get to. And these conditions create a lot of emotion, a lot of irritabilities we talked about, uh, worries about being able to withstand this kind of heat in these conditions. But you gotta be able to get through those things and get to the point where you say, okay, this is what I'm doing. This is how I'm going to play the next point. Whether they're thinking of like a serve-plus-one or where are you going to put your server return strategy? Something. Because that brings commitment in a smart way to your game, to your strengths, to your game plan, to problem solving, right? We see problem solving go out the window in these situations because they're so hot and so uncomfortable and wanting to get out of the situation. So these things, these four things we talked about, taking more time, breathe to thrive, okay, be present with this challenge and embrace it, and really avoid that low energy by

energizing yourself in between points. Um, I think if you can do those four things and you've prepared yourself for these conditions, you can gain an advantage on your opponent and really hopefully thrive in these hot and humid conditions.

[36:50](#)

J: Well and you've mentioned this before, but by doing that, right, ultimately the goal is to compete like a champion, no matter the conditions, no matter because it's been, it's my belief that a competitor, people want to say, I'm a competitor. I'm a competitor. Okay, well then that means you compete no matter what. Right? Because I use, I always go back to Ray Lewis. He's the one of these people like to listen to and and hear what he has to say. But he competes no matter the conditions, he will bring it, right? So if part of your persona, what you believe about yourself, what you value is to be a competitor, then you need to be able to do that in any condition that you go into. Again, within reason that is not going to hurt you. Right? And so that's what it comes back to. Are you doing the things necessary to compete like a champion in this kind of environment this summer? Don't think you can just show up and you're going to be fine. You got a plan for it, you gotta train in it, and then you gotta have your during the match plan. It doesn't have to be complicated, but there has to be some things that you're doing, like taking time, using a towel, doing more breathing, energizing your feet and getting back to a clear plan, which is essentially our routines we talk about all the time with the players. Follow your routines. Don't go away from them, make them better in this kind of environment We, we say this a lot unfortunately, when we watch matches, people are good when things are good. Well yeah. When, when things are going well for me of course people are going to do well, but how are we going to be when things are not good that I'm hot, I'm tired, I'm playing my second match. I don't want to be out here. Are you going to compete or are you going to go away and that's only a question you can answer for yourself and I know what I want to see our players do and I know it's never a perfect thing. Not that we're going to be perfect out there, but we have the intention and we give the effort to compete like a champion. No matter the conditions.

[38:45](#)

J: Bringing it strong when the lights come on.

[38:47](#)

L: Whooh, did you like that quote?

[38:49](#)

J: I love that.

[38:49](#)

L: I probably...

[38:50](#)

J: It sounds like a cheers, here's to bringing it strong when the lights come on.

[38:51](#)

L: And no one could see this, but he just raised his Gatorade bottle. This guy. Oh yeah. It's Friday.

[39:01](#) J: I'll cheers to that when I next have a bevy, which might not be till you know, 2030 or something. But anyway.

[39:08](#) L: Whew. Okay.

[39:08](#) J: Well new kiddo coming along. Got to keep it mellow.

[39:12](#) L: Let's go brother man. Congratulations.

[39:14](#) J: Cheers.. Alrighty. Well Dr. Lauer as always phenomenal. Some, some four simple key points to take away but complex sometimes maybe in execution but definitely a starting point for, for all of you out there that are competing, juniors competing in national tournaments this summer. Those, you know, you pros listening in out there that are competing in the summer series and maybe got the U S open quality of your soap and coming up where obviously the conditions can be extremely hot and humid there. Take these ideas into account, make sure you're applying them in your training and, and obviously you know, your overall goal here is you are trying to compete like a champion. No matter the conditions. So prepare for that and take it to it. Take it to 'em this summer.

[39:54](#) L: Let's do it. Yeah.

[39:55](#) J: Alrighty. So as we wrap up here, thanks again Dr. Lauer, another fantastic episode. Shout out to Kate again, our producer and our uh, our other producer we have, Amy, Amy Barnhart, who does a phenomenal job on our website, creating or applying all the resources on the website, organizing in a way that's easy to find. A couple of different sections on the website, playerdevelopment.usta.com, coach resource pages, the player resource pages. You'll be able to find information on nutrition articles, hydration articles. We can also probably put a link in the show notes for you so that you can go get a direct link to, to those resources. And then maybe Larry, just maybe, we'll be able to put up this maybe a little document here on competing in summer conditions for the listeners too as it's a good one. So that's it. That's a wrap for today's episode of compete like a champion that was competing well in summer conditions. We hope you took some tips and things to apply. Until next time, Dr. Larry and I are signing off.