

The Essence of Coaching with Dr. Paul Lubbers

- [00:00](#) Hi, I'm Gordon Smith, CEO of the United States tennis association 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 skills specialist, and coach Johnny Parks with USTA Player Development. Today's episode, the essence of coaching with Dr. Paul Lubbers. Paul, welcome to the podcast.
- [00:26](#) P: Glad to be here. Thanks Johnny.
- [00:27](#) J: Awesome. So before we get into this, just wanted to kind of big you up here. Not that you need bigging up, but so Paul, I've got down here and and you, you wear many different hats and in many different capacities and you're a mentor to pretty much everyone in, in player development. But I've got here you were a player, teacher, coach, writer, speaker, researcher, spoken and presented at many top world organizations associated with tennis. I pretty much will just put you down as a master generalist. Is that fair?
- [00:54](#) P: Sure a Jack of all trades, master of none? Is that what you mean?
- [00:57](#) J: Absolutely. No, no. But no, I mean we, uh, you know, I always love having conversations with you. I know many people are able to connect with you when we were able to. Uh, but the, the great thing as well as you have a lot of institutional knowledge about, you know, how, how we kind of go about our daily business and how to get from A to B and give a lot of insights. And so I know a lot of us are very appreciative but we're excited to kind of dive into sort of your, your, your area of expertise. I'll sort of hand it over to you, give us an insight into your journey to get where you are now as, as director of, senior director of coaching education and sports science.
- [01:26](#) P: Well yeah, thank you Larry and Johnny for having me. It's an honor to be with you all. When you use the word institutional knowledge, I think it just means you've been around a long time without getting fired. Um...
- [01:36](#) L: Well done. Well done. Congratulations.
- [01:39](#) P: But I think with that there is a sense of a scope that I have with player development, with coaching and, and tennis. This year actually marks my 20th year with the organization.
- [01:51](#) L: Wow. Congrats.
- [01:52](#) P: Over 35 years in tennis. And certainly I've taught and coached at every level of tennis, researcher, PhD, you know, bad player. Um, so I do have a pretty well rounded approach to, to coaching into the game of tennis. And I, at first I always

thought that was a weakness in that I wasn't a specialist, that I wasn't, you know, when I was hired, I walked into a room and in that room, my first presentation I ever had to give was Vic Braden, Jack Groppe, Stan Smith, Nick Bolletieri, I mean, Dennis VanderMeer and these were specialists. I mean these were the, the, the top of the top. And I was presenting to top players, former players, and I felt pretty humbled. And I don't wanna use the word inadequate, but I, I wasn't of that stature. And as time has gone on, I've now learned that being a generalist and having a perspective on a lot of different areas is actually a good strength and it served me well in my journey. The way I approach helping coaches get better, the way I approach helping players reach their potential. The way I help solve problems and look at challenges comes from a really integrated approach where I've drawn a lot of different knowledge bases and a lot of different experiences and a lot of different people's wisdom to approach a challenge or a problem or a situation. That has served me well and I think it's, it's a lesson for all of us. I know Johnny, you've been reading a book by David Epstein called range that's just come out a little while ago and you can delve into that a little deeper, but that premises, the difference between somebody who's a specialist in something and a generalist and certainly you've mentioned I fall in that generalist category and with each area, with whether you're a generalist or a specialist, they're strengths and weaknesses, right? We'd certainly, we need specialists in our world. We need people who can do some things extremely well. I mean, I don't want somebody who is a journalist doing my open heart surgery, right? I want a specialist. I want somebody who knows what they're doing and is an expert and has done it thousands and thousands of times and can solve that issue, that challenge of fixing a heart on spot. But in our world of tennis, it's not life and death and I think a generalist approach is really important.

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J: It's interesting, in that book it talked about having birds and frogs, like birds take that sort of global aspect, can see everything down below, see how things connect and they're able to connect the dots. But then you've got the frogs that are down there in the weeds and they see the flowers around them and the details that are going on within that. And basically part of that premise of that example was the generalists and specialists need to work in harmony together in order to achieve the maximum that they can get out of whatever their goals are.

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P: Absolutely. Like in player development, Larry, you're part of this model as a mental skill specialist, sports psychologist, we have our performance team model and the performance team model around an athlete is a group of individuals that have the best interest of that player in mind to help them reach their potential. And in general, that performance team is made up of specialists, right? A strength and conditioning specialists, maybe a medical doctor or a physical therapist or an athletic trainer, a sports psychologist, a data analyst, and the list can go on and nutritionist people who have this knowledge domain that can apply their specialty to help that player reach their potential to get better, whatever it is, right? What needs to be addressed in those areas. But guiding that, guiding that as a coach who's looking at the overall perspective,

the generalist view to tie those things together and may help make you know, lead that process.

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L: Yeah, I think my, my title has specialists in it, so I think we know where I lie on this. But nonetheless, bringing in this concept of generalist in, and I think Paul does a great job because he mentors me on trying to look at the whole view of everything. And maybe it's, it's, it's nutrition, maybe it's strength and conditioning, it's physical. Maybe it's, it's something else. Maybe it's technical, tactical and try and look at the whole person, right Paul? I mean, when you, when you look at somebody and you try to determine how to help them, you gotta look at the whole person. And that's something that I think a lot of the good coaches do. They're able to look at the whole person and dissect what is it? Instead of just taking one worldview and saying, well, everything is this, you know, kind of, you always talk about the hammer and a nail. If all you ever see is a nail, you're going to use the hammer all around a hammer, then you're going to hit the nail, right?

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P: I mean, the best coaches, you know, the really the essence of coaching. I know that's the title of the podcast we're having. The essence of coaching is for someone, a coach, to be able to decide at any given time, at any moment along a player's pathway of development on what is the priority that needs to be addressed. Because time is the commodity that we all deal with. Tennis coaches have programs, kids come one time a week, two times a week, whatever they come, for whatever hours it is in a, in a week, they come to a program, they come to the court, they come to a coach, and now the coach has to decide what are we spending time on to help them improve, to help them along this journey. And so every day, I mean if I, if I just look at tennis from a technical point of view and everyday all I spend time is on technique and that's all I do. There's a whole myriad of things that are going to be left untouched that will limit that player in their development. And so therefore this idea of being a generalist and looking at the, certainly the details of a player's game and who they are, but taking this broad approach to say, okay, what am I going to do today with these athletes to help them along this journey to improve faster and maximize time and make them well-rounded in their development?

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L: So this goes into how a coach then looks at how they are going to coach their player, what they focus on, but also how they learn, right? So, you know, I remember Chip Kelly, who's coached Oregon, Philadelphia, uh, different places, but talking about, he had a group of people he would go to, that were on his shortlist if he needed information in a certain area, different sports sciences, but then it always came back on him to make the decision, right? And he had to integrate that and decide what was most important, what was most relevant. And then also how to practically relate that to his staff and to his players.

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P: Well, I think it's great if you're, if you have that as a resource, wonderful, right? But for the tens of thousands of tennis coaches in this world, a lot of them are, have their clubs by themselves and that conversation has to be had with yourself or maybe with another person you know, or another pro in your

club because some of the decisions you make are really important because we're looking, as we go through this process, you're looking at improving performance and development, but we also want athletes to stay healthy, right? Physically healthy, mentally and emotionally healthy. And if we're looking at this pathway of elite development, which player development's all about and you know, maximizing potential development, there are some things in decisions that are made that are really important and serious that can affect health and happiness and this whole developmental process.

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L: So it's safe to say you believe Paul, that on these teams, you ought to have a generalist that can see the whole picture to be able to make those decisions.

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P: Yeah, I believe, and often the tennis coach is that person. I mean, the coach is the one who spends most, more time with that individual, right? Um, if they're traveling, if you're competing, if when they're winning, when they're losing that person is the, normally is that person who takes that, that lead.

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J: So that's even more the case then for for being a generalist in that environment. I mean we're, we're fortunate in our environment, we get to collaborate both generalists and specialists, but in out there, in there, it's, it's, I guess it's a tricky, tricky balance of how far you can take your generalist approach, but then getting to a point when maybe that athlete, that player needs then to go see a specialist along their development pathway.

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P: Sure. That makes complete sense. I mean that's why good coaches know they can't do it all, but they have resources. So I'm in town and we have a tennis program, but I don't have a strength and conditioning coach and I don't have an athletic trainer. I don't have the funds to have the best sports psychologists in the world, Dr Larry Lauer, and my [inaudible].

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L: We got that right, Mick? That's recorded?

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P: But I have, I, I've been proactive and I know where people are that can help me so that when twice a year I want my athletes to have a functional screening and go through the high performance profile to look for areas of injury, you know, potential injury and strengths and weaknesses. I know an athletic trainer that I can bring in to do the HPP so that we can do a functional screening. I know where there's a sports psychologist that I can contact, they don't, now with with technology, you don't have to be in the same community that this work can be done over the phone. But so I think there's a, there's the simple process of having resources that you can connect to. One thing I want to talk a little bit about is the idea of a generalist and what that means. All it means is having a broad knowledge base and it's the idea of going from a novice in tennis to an expert. And this idea of going from a novice, normally novice to somebody who doesn't have experience, doesn't have a lot of years in the sport is new to it and an expert is somebody, not necessarily with a lot of experience but has some experience in years and time in. But the, the best coaches study, the best coaches are always learning. The best coaches I know are turning over every

stone they can to understand this approach to, they don't want to become a strength and conditioning coach, but gosh, what do they need to know. Principals of, of how strength and how improvements happen. And so they, they delve into the idea of, of biology and physiology. They don't need to be a sports psychologist, but they need to understand how emotions work. And so they study these things. So the best coaches delve into these areas so that they broaden their base of knowledge so that when they're in the competitive environment, when they're in the training environment, they have resources to draw on to make sense of what's happening, if that makes sense. And it's really evident today. We have a coaching fellowship program here in summer. We have six coaching fellows coming in and they've just finished their college careers and they want to be coaches. And if you were to take it, they're, they're novices in many ways, right? They're novice coaches. And so if we were to have them look at a player and evaluate them and what's happening versus a coach for 30 years, what would their, how would the judgments be different? Hugely different because the novice doesn't have all this knowledge to draw on. So I think to be a really good generalists, there needs to be diligent, intentional work and covering these different areas of human behavior, of, of performance. Certainly technical, tactical, you know, the biomechanics, the physiology, all the sciences have to be touched on. And certainly how the game is being played at the top. But to me that's what a generalist, how you become a great generalist is actually with intentional work.

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L: And there's some dangers from the specialist approach, right? Because you not, you might not be aware of your biases or assumptions, you know, you, you're looking at one thing one way all the time or you're only reading in one area or talking to certain people. You're going to answer the same question, the same or different questions the same way often. Right? And we talk about how people get started in coaching, right? And they start coaching the way they were coached. Especially many, many novice coaches or coaches who don't have this opportunity like the fellows have right to come in and work with a lot of great coaches, including yourself. That seems to be rampant in the U S anyway. People coaching like they were coached. And then I think the other issue and have you talk about this. Remember our good friend Dr. Tom Martinek and you know, sending physical educators out into the schools and, and realizing that there was a philosophy that was being taught at the university, but then they would go to the school and they would take on the philosophy of the teachers in the room, right? That environment versus what they were trained to do at the university. So there's kind of these two things I think when coaches get started. One is that they tend to lean on what they know, which makes sense, why wouldn't you? And secondly, we tend to take on the environment that we go into these subjective warrants that we used to talk about at the university. What are your thoughts on that and how, how important do you think that is?

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P: Well, it's really important. It goes back to I'm in the United States that coaching is something people fall into. It's not maybe their first choice in, in our country, college tennis is rich with great players. And, and if you look at our

staff, almost everybody's probably played college tennis and our coaches at some level, if they didn't play, they played professional and when they finish their college career or they finish trying to play professional tennis, they stop and they fall, they fall in love with this game of tennis. And so a natural segue is to go into the business of tennis. You can make a great living as a tennis coach, right? And so all of a sudden people jump in and they're coaching tennis and the only thing they fall back on is their playing time and there's there, it's not professionalized in the academic preparation that it is around the world. Now that's changing with the USTA and changing with our partners, the USPTA and how how coach preparation and teaching professional preparations is going to take place. And starting in 2020 there's going to be a 1500 hours of education needed to become a teaching professional and which is core curriculum plus experiential learning. And that experiential learning is going to be with a mentor, if you will, which is what happens in student teaching preparation, right? You go through educational programming, you learn your subject, you talk, you discuss, you, you are aware of all the different things that make that make up a good coach. And then you get to go out in the field and practice under somebody who's really experienced and think that's the model that is really important. And to identify individuals who are in the profession that can be leaders, that aren't solid mentors, that have been doing it successfully for many, many years. So I think that that part is really important.

[14:41](#)

J: Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. And I think giving them a head start is something I think every person deserves. I think whenever you go into a field, the better well prepared they are, the less, the less we're, we can break down the barriers so that they only do what they've always known, which we know isn't, isn't always the case.

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P: I was fortunate to have really good coaches in all the, I, I played all different sports, whether it was, you know, basketball, tennis, what have you. I had really solid human beings and coaches that helped me along the way. And then when I got into the teaching profession, when I got in, the USPTA actually had a mentor program that somebody had a sign off on your preparation and the people who did that, who were your mentors back in the mid eighties, they took that job seriously. And I was really fortunate to have people in my life that kind of guided me through this process of becoming a teacher and a coach. And then as a college coach, I had strong athletic directors I worked under that, that helped guide me in decision making. So I was really fortunate to have people that invested in me and, and uh, were really well grounded.

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J: Absolutely. And that, that way it kind of stops us from just staying stagnant and reaching a status quo of where our level is at and we just maintain that over periods of time. And, you know, one thing I got out of the, uh, the book, the range book is, is how we should always have one foot in another area so we can figure out how to connect a lot of the dots. And, and in order to do that, you've got to go through, like we talk about with a lot of players when we want to put them in an environment of failing, coaches have to put themselves out there. And in order to do that, we have to be vulnerable with that makes us vulnerable

to put ourselves out there and actually go through material and things that we don't know that much about. That's uh, you know, for a lot of people that's a pretty scary environment to, to be in. Uh, and by doing that though, some of the research that that Epstein came up with was saying that actually going through struggle to get from A to B leads to more long lasting learning in the long run. Then just going from A to B as quick as possible with saw that narrow focus and not understanding how it connects the dots. And that's essentially like memorizing something for a test. Then you forget the information and you move on or struggle through it and even come up with the wrong answer. But when you then figure out the right answer that has a lasting, deep, deep impact on you when you're connecting the dots in your brain.

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P: And in our society, how hard is that? Everything is outcome oriented. I mean the schools are focused on teaching to a test so that you gain entry into a school so that you can then achieve your degree, so you can have an outcome of a job you want. And that's a very different model than learning for learning's sake to understand something deep, right? And that process of failing and struggling and trying to learn something deeply takes time. It does take time to become a great tennis player, you know, 10 years, 10,000 hours of rubbish, right? I mean, it's just an average, just an average, right? To become an expert in something. But it's a long time. I mean, when we have kids that are great at 12 and the average age of a top hundred players, 28, 29 that's a huge gap. And there can't be, there's not a test to pass that you're going to be great or not. It's about the process of learning and developing and having tennis become part of one's life, right? It's a lifestyle for a family or a child and it's a process of getting better, right? And dealing with those struggles through that entire pathway. And that entire journey is how improvement happens.

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L: You guys realize you're swimming upstream here, right? Against the strong current because early on people want to see winning because it makes them feel good. Immediate gratification and sole idea of the messiness of learning and failing and then learning how to deal with that. And that information is not, not what people are looking for, to be honest. And it really works against our coaches in this country because they need to show results often very quickly.

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P: But, and I agree and I disagree, Larry, because certainly part of what we're trying as counterculture. Martin Blackman, our managing director played on and talks about it all the time when we were trying to do is counter-culture for kids to be, to sacrifice technology, to sacrifice things in their lives, to be disciplined, to eat right, to behave right, to be professional and do things that are counterculture, swimming upstream. However, really good coaches, really top coaches are very clever with scheduling and how you schedule a player and the levels of matches they play can then distribute the winning and loss appropriately, right? I mean, I hear Richard Ashby, one of our great, great coaches and wonderful, one of the best human beings in the world on our staff. He talks about how you schedule maybe a third, a third, a third, right? So a third of the matches a player is going to play they're going to lose. They're playing above their head. They're going to be, they're probably going to lose a third.

They're going to win, for a young player. And then a third, depending on what happens, they may win or may lose 50 50 and so does distributing the, the developmental experiences along the way in a methodical way can keep the carrot so that the winning is part of it, but not the driving factor. So, and I'm not saying you manufacture it, but you do. So you can, you can have training blocks, you can work on technique or tactics. You're gonna be really intentional with the process of getting better and use the competitive experiences along the way to balance it out. Does that makes sense?

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L: Oh absolutely. I agree a totally with that.

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P: And so I think that's against the sea. That's how within the culture of tennis we can manage this idea of instant gratification.

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L: Yeah. You see a lot of people though managing it the other way, just for instance, success.

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P: Chasing, chasing points, chasing winning. Winning, you know, winning is everything. Absolutely.

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L: At the cost of development.

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P: Absolutely.

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J: I think being able to show that plan is, is a good way of, whether it's to the parents trying to convince a parent is showing them how you can give up that immediate short term success so that they can see the longterm benefits. Right.

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L: Well I think the plan is huge because you gotta be able to explain it as a coach. Here's why we're doing what we're doing. Here's my philosophy. What I believe develops people long term. Right. You know, do you have to explain this and here's why we're going to play this tournament where they might win this thing and they might not, you know, we don't want to just stack the deck for them to always win. We don't always want to stack the deck for them to lose because they need all of the experiences and learn how to deal with them, including the 50/50's where, who knows what's going to happen, you know? And they need a lot of those experiences as well. But the, the plan is huge Johnny, because if you can't explain the plan and have something to back it up, anecdotal evidence of other players who have done and other coaches who've done it or you know, if you can draw on science, it's tough for a parent I think to stomach that because they're going to have to deal with seeing their child fail and make mistakes and see other players move faster when they're watching. Like, wait, what's wrong? And I'm a dad, we're all, you know, we see our kids and it's like, man, I want them to be successful right now and I have to check myself, well wait, it doesn't really matter right now. It matters later if if she or he wants it to matter and that's where you got to check yourself.

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P: And Larry and I were speaking earlier, in tennis, there's never, I mean there's never a good time to put the flag in the ground and say, are we successful today or are we failing? There's never a good day to put the line down and say, are we better now or are we worse because it it, it keeps going. I mean, this, again, I'm saying somebody is good at 12 and they want to be a top hundred player and the average age is 27, 28. It's just this long journey. And winning and losing happens every day, but that's not how you gauge whether you're getting better, whether you're getting stronger, whether you're being more resilient, whether you're developing character. That's just, that's an ongoing process.

[22:07](#)

J: Developing that mindset then to understand that if you're failing, doesn't that come with a certain requirement though that if you set up that environment where failure happens though, you don't want failure to just kind of fall by the wayside. Right. In that there needs to be somebody there that helps guide that athlete, the player through that learning so that at least they're not just failing, but they don't understand why. So that, that as well as something that can be a difficult environment. Because if somebody is not there to really pick up on that, then it's tough for that athlete to really then start connecting the dots, which believe that's what we do as coaches, right?

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P: I think we have to, I mean I listened to you and I love the question, but what is failure? Disappointment for a young, for young people? I mean what is actually failure? Is it losing? Because I think that's really important and, and for us to decide, you know, what is failure and what is success? It's easy, wins and losses? No. Is it that you try something new and it doesn't work, is that failure? Is it that the coach gives you something to get better at and you practice it and you come back and you're still not better? So I think it's really important how it goes back to the coaching philosophy. What a coach believes in, the essence of what coaching is and what is failure and what is success. I don't have answers for anybody on that, but it's really a personal part of a program on what failure and success is. And maybe that's not even part of the lexicon. Maybe they don't even talk about failure and success, but certainly struggle. We used the word earlier, struggling to learn. You know, I was sharing with the fellows, we asked the fellows who were instrumental, whatever, they're instrumental moments in their life that affected why they wanted to get into tennis or who influenced their coaching. And I shared stories that it was the coaches who cut me from sports and three times in my life I was cut from, I was a basketball player in college and I played tennis. But along the way I played college. I played basketball and tennis and I showed up in seventh grade and I went to the lists, see if I made the team and I was cut. Right. Eighth grade I made the team. Ninth grade I was cut. And it was, those were great lessons for me along the way that I couldn't control what other people thought about me. The coaches were evaluating me and they deemed me not appropriate to be on the team. Now was I disappointed? Absolutely. And I remember my parents, you know, being sympathetic and talking to me about this process and they said the only thing you can do is what?

[24:12](#)

L: Get better.

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P: Get better and keep trying to get better. So that drove me in my life. This idea that I, the only way I can affect what other people think about my work is by getting better. And I think that could've been seen as a failure, right? Maybe I did. I probably saw that as a failure. But that failure drove me to get better and I had people to support me. But I think those are, those are struggles that help learning happen and, and really good coaches allow for struggles, allow for quote unquote failure. But then are there to help pick up and support and push. And that's, you know, Larry, you can talk about resiliency. That's what resilience is about. About falling down, getting up, trying to get better. And those are the character traits we want in, in tennis players.

[24:55](#)

L: Because tennis is a game of mistakes and errors and all that good stuff. It's all a part of it. It's a messy sport. So if you can't get through that, then you can't get through tennis. And that, that's why in New York we started with helping kids learn how to deal with their errors, with their mistakes and respond well to them cause staying open minded and staying coachable that was the key. Can you keep learning even though you're making mistakes? Because if you can, you can become really good. If you can't, you don't have a chance.

[25:22](#)

P: And there's a circle, isn't there, right? So the stronger a player is, the more physically fit they are, the better they're going to be at dealing and not being fatigued, right? Well, we know that the mental and emotional stuff breaks down when?

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J: Through fatigue.

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P: Through fatigue, I mean everything's connected. And that goes back to, you know, technical, tactical, physical, mental, emotional. All of these things line up together and affect each other all the time. And that goes back to our premise of like a generalist needs to understand all these different areas and how they affect what's happening in a young players life, on the tennis court, off the tennis court, the way they compete, the way they deal with struggles. And there's always something influencing something. And again, the best coaches, the essence of coaching is being able to decide, well what you teach when and why you're spending time on it. And so I hear you, I always think in the circle they all connect and at certain times one is more important than the other. And how how you distribute your time as a coach is to me is really important.

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J: I mean, these are really great insights, I know we're, we're running short on time here, but as we, let's say we always like to leave the listeners with something, what's some really key advice then? I mean a lot of what we're talking about as well is how a coach having a growth mindset because we always ask that of our players, right? And talk about players with a growth mindset, but in order to I guess demand that out of your players, we have to show them what that looks like and one of the best ways can be the lead by example with that in how we're learning getting better as coaches. What is some advice you can leave some of the, leave the coaches that are listening into this.

[26:47](#)

P: I think to take an inventory of yourself to really think about who you are as a coach, and I hate to use the word strengths and weaknesses, but maybe about what assets you have, what, what are you really good at, what are the things that need to be developed and become really self-aware. I go back, there's a study by these guys, Tharp and Galamore, 1979, where they looked at coach John Wooden and they coded every single practice for a year on coach Wooden because he was the best coach, right? He still has 11 NCAA championships. UCLA, he's never been beaten and they wanted to know what this great coach did. So they listened to every practice, transcribed it, and they coded everything he said because they wanted to know what kind of feedback he used. And feedback has effect on the person, it has an effect on self esteem, and has an effect on what you learn, how quickly you learn. You know, motor skills, technical skills, and the feedback that coach Wooden had was data rich, certainly sculled, certainly yelled at them. Sometimes he punished them, but anytime you use the negative things, he always followed it up with rich instruction. So Larry dadgummit, you've made that mistake again, how can you do that, you dumb guy. Then he would say, then he would say, then he would say...

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L: I'm used to that.

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P: Now. Then he would say, now come here, here's what you have to do, here's the, here's, now he gave the positive feedback and instructed. And so I think even coaches being aware of the words they're using and the feedback they say it and, and, and the words they use on a daily basis. So really taking the inventory of who you are, what the feedback is, what are your strengths, what are your weaknesses? Cause then if you take inventory, you can start developing different areas.

[28:22](#)

L: So fascinating. I was just listened to John Kessel from USA volleyball and he talked about words that he took out of his language that have created a certain impact psychologically on the player. Right? Like always and never. You will never be able to do that. You always will be that way. And that's kind of labeling them and making them feel like they can't change. Right? So your language as a coach and just having someone actually listen to the way you coach, right. Another coach to help you, uh, is a great way to learn.

[28:49](#)

P: And that was, that was going to be my second.

[28:50](#)

L: Oh sorry.

[28:51](#)

L: No, you're right. But I think that's the second advice is to find somebody who can be your coach, somebody who can give you honest feedback, somebody you can reach out to to come and watch your practice, to come and watch you with your athletes and give you honest feedback. It's really important to, and that goes back to mentoring and finding somebody to mentor you and somebody to coach you because that's how we get better. That's what it's all about.

[29:12](#)

L: So how does someone out on the grounds here in America find a mentor, coach work and they find these people?

[29:17](#)

P: Open your eyes and look.

[29:18](#)

L: They're everywhere, huh?

[29:19](#)

P: They're everywhere. And again, I think in the tennis coaching community, sometimes in in a certain city we see other clubs and other programs as competitors and we view them as competitors cause our players play against them. And it's a business model. And one of the things we always tried to do and break down in our coaching education programs is that everybody needs each other. Cohorts of experts, cohorts of teaching pros learning to communicate and build each other up is how everybody gets better. A rising tide lifts all boats. And so in a, in a community you, you may see a teaching pro across town or a coach who your players are always playing against. You see them as adversary. They can become your best friend. They can become an ally. They start talking about professional development with them. But you have to be open to it. You have to change your mindset on that.

[30:03](#)

L: So if you're someone who's a specialist then to become a generalist, there's certain things you're going to have to do, right? And this is what you're pointing out. You've got to open yourself up to other ideas, maybe to criticism and to try something new. And maybe you will fail at first. Or maybe you're, you're going to get criticized when you try something.

[30:20](#)

P: We were talking to the coaches or here for the NJTL playoff. And I was talking to them about the game of tennis. And the game of tennis starts on a diagonal. Every time. There's a serve and a return, and it happens on a diagonal, yet across the country, players start drills standing in the middle of the court and they start hitting the balls down the middle of the court to each other. And then we go to the angles, because we're talking about maximizing time. So my question to them is why do we, why do you do that when the game of tennis is played the other way? And their eyes were bug-eyed because they'd never thought about that simple concept to how, and I said, you're unlearning, you're not learning. So if they play tennis every day, every day they hit the ball a hundred times out of the middle of the court. How many times is that over a year. That's thousands of times where they're practicing something that has nothing to do with the game of tennis. And that's just one different way to look at how we do the things we do. The game of tennis starts on a diagonal. Maybe we should start the points and the practices and the way we feed on a diagonal and everything. Not all the time, but that's a different concept that these coaches never thought about. So it's being open to different concepts and looking at the simple things we do every day and trying to get better at it.

[31:32](#)

L: Outstanding. Wow. Lots here.

[31:35](#)

J: Awesome. Fantastic stuff. And just sitting back learning so much. So thank you for joining us, Dr. Paul Lubbers. We greatly appreciate your time.

[31:43](#)

P: Thank you, dr Lauer.

[31:44](#)

L: Appreciate it.

[31:45](#)

J: So, so we have tons of resources, about for coach, coach education, coach development on our USTA Player development website. That's playerdevelopment.usta.com. Check it all out and we'll speak to you next time.

[31:59](#)

P: Appreciate it. Thank you.