

Beat Underperformance

Underperformance in a match is the result of isolated missed execution(s).

By Cesar Andrade

You're playing a tough (or weak) opponent, and you're making unforced errors, and/or your opponent is hitting great shots--we've all been there. Rather than focusing on the basic skills and training that are now part of your DNA, you lose focus. The key to finding your focus is to understand these are isolated moments in time and these errors do not represent your overall performance. The mindset should be, "I can fix this as quickly as the next point" by getting back to the basics of the sport.

A prime example for underperformance is loss of FOOTWORK. Footwork is the heart of tennis and typically the first skill lost when the mind reacts negatively to poor execution. Without this critical skill set, players become unbalanced both physically and mentally. Below are examples of what players experience without proper footwork:

1. Poor shot selection from bad positioning.
2. Lack of confidence in swinging.
3. Racquet head speed decision-making is hindered.
4. The 3 points above make your opponent superior to you in that moment.

Players must learn to recover from point to point, set to set, match to match when poor performance enters the 6-inch court between their ears -- their brain! The goal is to recover in a shorter span of time after every experience. And this is what separates the good players from the great players.

"Greats" CONFRONT the challenges.

"Great" athletes are laser focused, both in practice and competition, on how to overcome challenges. They don't give up and certainly don't make excuses for their performance. Win or lose, only you are responsible and can control your level of performance. When in doubt, the "greats" go back to basics and confront the obstacles in their path.

Defeat Underperformance by Using the Basics.

THE BASICS DEFINED:

- 1. FOOTWORK:** Your footwork must be at its peak performance, for every point, with the highest effort possible.
 - 2. TRACK THE BALL:** Watch the ball, track it, hit it, and don't overthink it. This exercise focuses on what is important and blocks out all the nonsense.
 - 3. PRESENCE:** Appear calm, cool, and collected under all scenarios--head high, chest out, fake it if needed!
 - 4. FEARLESS:** Want the point more than your opponent and prepare to execute the next play with authority. Don't question your decisions. Believe in and follow your training.
 - 5. ANALYZE:** Is my opponent fast or slow? Have a big FH? Have a weak BH? Any weapons? Tall or short? Try to pick on and exploit any weakness you can find.
- TROUBLESHOOT!**
- 6. USE YOUR TOOLS:** True performers learn to win with whatever tools are working well on any given day. No excuses.



Without the **BASICS** it's impossible to perform to your fullest potential. The **BASICS** are fully under your control regardless of your opponent. Win or lose, walk away from the match knowing you gave it your best fight, your best effort, your best performance. And that, is the most rewarding feeling for any athlete of any sport.