

My Child Keeps Losing To Players Who They Shouldn't Lose To!

The first point to make is that the majority of players play better in practice than they do in matches. So, if you feel that your child is not playing as well in a match as they can do, then bear in mind that their opponent may not be either!

If it is your child that feels they should not be losing because they are less highly rated, reinforce to them that lots of results don't reflect rankings or ratings; you could show them a drawsheet from a tournament showing several examples of lesser-ranked players defeating higher-ranked opponents.

There are, however, things that both parent and player can do to help bring out the best tennis in important matches.

Advice to parents

- One of the most common causes of under-performing in matches is players worrying about the outcome and or the consequences of the outcome before and during the match. Reassure your child that the only truly important thing is that they try their best and look to implement their game plan.
- Phrase things positively: talk about the game plan, strokes and court presence that you would like to see; don't start to talk about what you fear may happen.
- Get the player to re-affirm to you what they are looking to do in the match and how they want to be on court.
- Encourage them to go through their consistent pre-match warm-up routine.
- Help them to relax. Do not say things that will increase the expectations on them and do not try to influence any call, point or game.

Advice to Players

- Have a consistent warm-up routine. Use the same routine before you practice and before a match.
- Work with your coach to come up with one or two key goals to focus on during a match.
- Make goals process-related rather than outcome-related, eg, 'meet the ball in front', rather than 'don't serve double faults'.

- Concentrate on and judge yourself by your execution of these goals and try not to worry about what the result of the match will be.
- Before the match try listening to a favourite piece of music to relax.
- During the match take your time in-between points, breathe deeply and slowly, relax your shoulders and feel the tension drain out of your finger tips.
- Remember that it's okay to feel nervous and tense but always try to leave those feelings at the back of the court.
- Play the ball not the opponent.
- During a match, if you start to feel yourself getting anxious, replace your anxious thoughts regarding your opponent with positive cue words relating to your pre-match goals.
- What worries you the most? Losing to a certain player or what other people will think or say if you lose to that player? Play for your own satisfaction and to achieve your dreams.