

Mike's Tennis Corner
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**Adapted from *The Courtside Coach* by Dr. Bryce Young
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Believe it or not, more than 2/3 of the time spent on the tennis court is spent preparing for the next point, changing sides, and debating over the score. This means that only 1/3 of the time spent on court is actually devoted to match play. As such, players need to become adept in recovering after a point and maintaining concentration throughout the entire match not just during actual play. According to Dr. Bryce Young, President of Peak Performance Training, tennis players should develop a between point strategy or game plan to gain a greater sense of control and confidence throughout a match. Dr. Young goes on to say that in order for players to maximize their performance on the court that they should adopt a Play, Recover, Prepare, (PRP), self-response mechanism:

Play: During the course of a point, a player should focus their attention on the movement of the ball and the movement of their feet to the ball. In other words, 'flow with the ball'. A player should also maintain their focus through the ball and inside the confines of the court. Avoid large steps and lunges in moving to the ball, as this may cause you to be out of position and off balance. Small stutter steps and effective split-stepping are essential to maximizing court coverage and preparing to hit the ball.

Recover:

After a point is finished learn to fix your eyes on the ball, court, and/or the strings of your racquet. This will help to keep your eyes from wandering and being distracted from the task at hand. Dr. Young asserts that players should learn to "match their emotional recovery (releasing the point) with their physical recovery." For example, when you've hit a winning shot say 'yes'. When you make an unforced error say 'let it go'. This will help you to mentally stay in the match. I believe positive self-affirmation or positive self-talk not only allows you to stay in the match, but helps you maintain a psychological posture that may give you an edge over your opponent. This is especially true in tight situations.

Prepare:

At the conclusion of every point condition yourself to return to the baseline physically and emotionally relaxed. Strive to maintain a positive attitude so that you can effectively set the tempo for the next point. According to world renowned sports psychologist, Dr. Jim Loehr, it is always to your advantage to display an outward sense of confidence. In other words, when you are preparing to return serve look lively, be on the balls of your feet, with your head and shoulders held high. This type of preparation perpetuates a sense of confidence and is an essential component to winning.

Conclusion: Next time you're out on the court try adopting the PRP self-response mechanism and see how it affects your performance. Another good exercise is to watch the pros and see if they utilize components of this mechanism to enhance their performance on the court.