

GOAL SETTING

To optimise performance, you have to know where you want to go and what you want to achieve. Motivation depends in large part upon goal setting.

As long as you see yourself moving towards meaningful goals, the chances are high that you will maintain a high level of motivation. In essence, goal setting provides you with a sense of purpose and direction and is an important step toward improving and optimising performance.

Why Goals Work

- Goals help determine what is important to you (provide perspective).
- Goals help maintain and sustain motivation.
- Goals increase effort and push you a little harder to be the best you can be.
- Goals increase the use of relevant learning strategies. To reach your goals, specific strategies (such as hitting with more topspin to keep the ball in play and reduce unforced errors) are implemented.
- Goals direct your attention and action. If your goal is to increase the consistency of your first serve, then you would focus on this aspect of your game during training.

Short- and Long-Term Goals

Both short- and long-term goals are necessary to improve performance over time. Long-term goals provide you with direction; they give you something to aim for in the future.

But short-term goals are also important because they provide you with feedback concerning your progress towards your long-term goal. In addition, short-term goals can be a source of motivation and provide a focus for a player during a match or training.

Types of Goal

1. Performance Goals: Performance goals are goals in which participants focus on process-oriented standards (actions or techniques) relative to ones own best performance capabilities.

They emphasize the PROCESS by which a given outcome is achieved. Another key component of process goals is that the participant has much more control on the achievement potential and successful outcome of these types of goals.

2. Outcome Goals: Outcome goals are goals in which participants focus on the end result (i.e. winning or losing), the outcome, or a PRODUCT-type measurement as the standard of comparison.

These are the most often recited and typically utilised types of goals among coaches and athletes. Players and coaches have only partial control (at best), or little to no control over the ultimate successful achievement of outcome goals.

3. Do Your Best Goals: Do your best goals are obvious from the title itself. The focus is not on specific standards of proficiency, process or outcome other than asking the participants to "give it their best shot", try hard and "do your best".

While it may be easier and more convenient to set outcome goals, research clearly indicates that the performance goals are more effective in enhancing performance.

One major problem with setting only outcome goals is the lack of control players and coaches have over the outcome. That is, you may play the best tennis of your life but lose a closely contested match.

If your goal were to simply win, you would come away feeling disappointed and frustrated. However, if your goal were to play well and improve on past performances, then you would feel satisfied and positive about the match.

This does not mean that winning is not important, since outcome goals can provide motivation, but success should be seen in terms of exceeding your own goals rather than merely beating your opponent.

Goal-Setting Guidelines

As well as setting both short- and long-term goals, there are other certain guidelines and principles that can help make your goals more effective in improving performance. The **SMARTER** acronym will help you to remember them:

Specific – Indicate precisely what is to be done. Avoid vague alternatives.

Measurable – You should be able to quantify your goal.

Accepted – Goals must be accepted as worthwhile, realistic and attainable.

Recorded – Write your goals down. This is the basis of a contract with yourself.

Time-constrained – Set specific time limits.

Exciting – Monitor your progress regularly.

Recorded – Goals should be recorded for reference and to view progress.