

# TENNIS COACHING IN FOUR EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

## Transnational Report

Report for the Erasmus+ Key Action 2 Strategic Partnerships Project:  
'Best Practices in European Tennis Coaching'

We analyse the state of tennis coaching and identify areas of excellence in four different European countries:  
United Kingdom, Spain, France, and Portugal.



third  
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international



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# Report on Tennis Coaching in the United Kingdom

## History of Tennis in the UK

In the 1870s, an adaptation of the ancient French sport 'Jeu de Paume' was codified in England. In 1874, Major Walter Clopton Wingfield publicised '*A Portable Court of Playing Tennis*'. This literature codified the game of tennis for modern times. He introduced a new concept of bringing the original format of an indoor court to an outdoor court and designed a ball of rubber that was to be used instead. Later in his life, he developed the modern game of tennis. The modern game of tennis originated in Birmingham in the late 19th century as lawn tennis. It had close connections both to various field (lawn) games such as croquet and bowls as well as to the older racket sport today called real tennis. The rules of modern tennis have changed little since the 1890s. Women's participation in competitive tennis came quickly in the UK. They were already competing at Wimbledon in 1884.

The Wimbledon Championships, shortened to Wimbledon, is the oldest tennis tournament in the world and arguably the most famous. Since the first tournament 125 years ago in 1877, The Championships have been hosted by the All-England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club in Wimbledon and take place over two weeks in late June – early July.

Today, tennis is still one of the most played sports in the UK, especially since the UK hosts one of the Grand Slam tournaments, among the most famous tennis events held globally. The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) is the national governing body of tennis in Great Britain. It was founded in 1988 and is responsible for developing and promoting the standards and rules of Tennis. During the 80's and 90's, they launched their first initiatives that began to raise the public's interest in participation in tennis. This was done by investing in courts, sports centres and coaching qualifications.

At present, The LTA works with over 25,000 volunteers with a mission to grow the participation and popularity of the game within communities, schools and clubs. The LTA invests in programmes and facilities across the country that provide the public with greater opportunities to participate in the sport.

Historically, tennis in the UK has proven to be a sport associated with upper-class members of society. Those with lower socioeconomic backgrounds have faced barriers which exclude them from higher participation in the sport. Whilst these barriers still exist today, the LTA have emphasised their mission to change perceptions of tennis and break down these barriers, so that tennis can be enjoyed in a way that is accessible to all. They focus on finding

talent from all walks of life to nurture and support players to help create a pathway for British champions. The LTA brings together professionals from the tennis landscape to work with coaches and players to develop a more inclusive and diverse tennis scene. They have worked with local communities and brands to promote formats of the game which display tennis as being fresh and modern rather than old fashioned and reserved stigma that is associated with it.

The LTA consists of the President, Deputy President and Councillors. Councillors play an important role in growing tennis throughout Britain and they work and consult with the Council, in line with proposals submitted by the Executive Team to deliver its mission of accessibility in Tennis. The Council represents many of the bodies which are members of LTA, and some other organisations involved in tennis. The LTA has an Executive Team, who oversees the day-to-day operations of the business, and a Leadership Team, which is made up of the leaders of the various departments.

This report is to provide you with up-to-date information on the current state of the tennis coaching standards in the UK with relevant data to support its progression, looking closely at its practices, structure and general direction. We aim to pay close attention to its strengths and areas of excellence again with supported data and interviews. This report is a continuation of our first study of tennis coaching in the UK which you can find at <https://www.eurocoach.online>

## The UK's current global position

Tennis remains in a good position in the UK, with important numbers increasing in all aspects since our last report which includes higher participation levels from the grass route through to performance level, increased group and one-to-one coaching, maintained levels of accredited coaches, increased tennis coaching activity and coaches in primary and secondary schools and improvements in our elite athletes at the top tier.

### Key figures for tennis in the UK in 2022

- Since coming through the Pandemic the UK has managed to maintain 3000 active accredited tennis coaches and 24,046 regular tennis coaches. As you may be aware from our previous report, accredited coaches have a minimum of an LTA level 3 qualification, up-to-date safeguarding, first aid qualified, DBS enhanced checked and essentially are trained, skilled and qualified to coach groups from 4 years and above, individuals, primary, secondary schools, colleges, private clubs and disability.
- 47% of large clubs have seen an increase in taking part in coaching and competitions. Again, in reference to the pandemic, many players are playing catchup in terms of

their participation in the competition. This is particularly relevant to those on performance pathways where their results dictate the outcome of their tennis career. In the Southeast, one of our largest competition providers Tennis Services UK, based at Sutton Tennis Academy reported tournaments at full capacity within an hour of opening entries, and having waiting lists of 30+ people in numerous tournaments up and coming. We interviewed the director David Fuchs to find out more about this increased demand.

- Tennis lessons up 40% after the pandemic, April 2021 the highest since May 2007. One of the largest tennis providers, and leisure social enterprises in the UK, GLL Better reported 17.5% increase in tennis bookings between May 2020 April 2021. We interviewed the tennis Manager Andy Jefferies on the main reasons for this increase and how his coaching team were able to deliver with this increase. (See interview section)

## Qualifications for Trainers and Coaches

### What they do and offer

The LTA offer guidance, training and tools to those directly involved with the sport to help them develop their skills and knowledge. There is an extensive variety of pathways offered to the public that are designed to nurture the next generation of champions and enable players from all backgrounds to develop in the sport. Their courses run from start sessions to first-class support at National Academies across Great Britain. Here are some examples of their active qualifications and programmes:

#### Youth Programme

The LTA Youth Programme is designed to introduce young children aged 4 - 18 to tennis through games and dynamic training. The sessions are run by LTA-accredited specialist coaches who help motivate and encourage children to get active and take part in the sport. The LTA Youth is a progressive programme that focuses on fun, inclusion and enjoyment of the sport with their friends whilst equipping them with the skills and knowledge to play successful games of tennis throughout their lives.

#### LTA Youth Tennis Leaders -

LTA Youth Tennis Leaders is a programme aimed at people aged 11- 18 and offers them the opportunity to develop their leadership skills through tennis. Their role is to support accredited tennis coaches and complete several learning modules that equip them with the knowledge to help with sessions. The programme is accredited by SLQ Sports Leaders and

ensures the core leadership skills of communication, self-belief, teamwork, self-management and problem-solving are adopted by the students.

There are a variety of training programmes available for adults across the UK that allow adults to take part in on-the-court coaching. They are available at all levels starting from the Assistant level to Master Coach. The Adult Coaching programmes allow players to become LTA accredited and ensure that all abilities and backgrounds are included in the training.

- Level 1 – Coaching Assistant – The Level 1 Coaching Assistant is an introduction to tennis coaching. Level 1's are qualified to plan and deliver a structured lesson under the guidance of accredited coaches.
- Level 2 – Coaching Assistant – Level 2 Coaching Assistants are qualified to coach groups of beginners of any age, on their own, under the umbrella programme of an accredited Coach.
- Level 3 – Coach qualification – The Coach Qualification covers the key coaching skills required to be an effective coach to work with beginners of any age in groups or individually. At this level, they can go on to gain Coach Accreditation, which ensures they are up-to-date with the latest tennis knowledge.
- Level 4 – Senior Club Coach qualification – This qualification is aimed at coaches who would like to manage a section of a commercial club or team of coaches.
- Level 4 – Senior Performance Coach qualification – This course is designed for coaches who wish to develop their knowledge and skills to develop international junior players aged 14 and under.
- Level 5 – Master Club Coach qualification – Upon completion of the course, a Master Club Coach will be able to deliver high quality on court sessions at clubs, mentor a team of coaches, and implement and assess a club programme.
- Level 5 – Master Performance Coach qualification – Master Performance Coaches are equipped to work with international performance junior players, aged 11 – 18 years. The course is designed to develop coaches to be versatile and transition between different performance players and environments.

## Player Ranking System

The LTA use a ranking system to help determine a player's level in their country, region or worldwide.

Ranking points are only awarded for Grade 1 (highest) to Grade 5 tournaments, so only these will appear on your player profile.

Different grades of tournaments have different points allocations; there are separate point tables for each age group. To put it simply, the older the age group and the higher the grade, the more points you can get.

- Ranking points are only allocated for 11U, 12U, 14U, 16U, 18U and Open age group events.
- Ranking points are not awarded to players who compete in an event that does not fall under one of these age groups, e.g. 13U or 15U.

Only one set of points is allocated per event, i.e. a player who wins both the qualifying and main draw events of a tournament will only get one set of points.

Any team competition graded 1 to 5 will also count towards your LTA ranking, although points may not be added until the end of the competition.

Your combined ranking is made up of your best six singles plus 25% of your best six doubles results within the previous 52 weeks (subject to play up rules – see below). The LTA Competition Regulations have been modified to extend the LTA Combined Rankings calculation period.



There is one male and one female rankings list and each has age-group filters.

1. Points from international singles events are incorporated.
2. Points from domestic and international doubles events are incorporated.
3. Points from mixed doubles will not be included.

<https://www.lta.org.uk/compete/wtn-rankings/rankings/>

Practices and techniques

Prime Video LTA Youth Girls

The aim of this initiative is to inspire and motivate girls to play tennis. The multi-year programme aims to create a relaxed and pressure-free environment whereby girls can enjoy the game with their friends. The LTA Youth Girls will be an opportunity to support women and girls at all levels within tennis to grow the female workforce. The funding will go towards training coaches across Great Britain to lead tennis lessons and give guidance to other girls. The programme will offer school roadshows, training kits and resources that are specifically designed to help girls progress within the sport.

### Tennis Opened Up

The LTA works on initiatives to encourage inclusion and diversity within tennis. Their 'Tennis Opened Up' strategy emphasises that tennis is open to all ages, fitness levels, genders and backgrounds. The mission of this initiative is to 'grow tennis by making it more relevant, accessible, welcoming and enjoyable, focusing on making tennis sessions affordable and accessible to everyone. Tennis Opened Up will deliver plans and resources to local communities and distribute resources, development models and measurement criteria. Through this strategy, LTA will evolve facility investments and develop qualifications and relevant support to attract more coaches and help them achieve their goals. The LTA will work with players and coaches on the National Age-Group Programme to support the achievement of Individual Development Plan goals in order to create an oversupply of players competing for places; on the Pro Scholarship Programme by age 16, at National Academies by age 14, and at Regional Player Development Centres and Regional Training by age 11.

### LTA Tennis Foundation

The LTA Tennis Foundation is a new tennis charity that partners with brilliant people and organisations to improve lives through tennis. Their mission is to inspire more people from all backgrounds to discover the joy of tennis and invest in people, programmes and places to play. They are driven to promote the sport to disadvantaged and diverse communities where the game is less well-established. The charity has supported the delivery of tennis in schools by providing £250 vouchers for tennis equipment to schools which sign up for LTA Youth - a programme designed to engage children in the benefits of playing tennis.

### Interview with a Coach

Name: Andrew Jefferies

Born: Kingston, London

Where are you based and what position do you have?

Sutton Sports Village, GLL Better, Rosehill, London. I am the tennis manger.



How have you found tennis in the UK in the past couple of years?

Its been really challenging for everyone because of the pandemic, however it has made people re-think how they run programs, plan ahead, make sure everything is operating in a sustainable way and now things are back to normal we have higher levels of retention.

What specifically have done to be able to support the large increase in demand in tennis?

We have been running a number of CPD sessions based around support and ideas delivered from the LTA, we use lesson plans and methodologies from regional level training, and we lower the difficulty of it, which works really well to keep our player development high.

What do you predict for the future of British tennis?

Its 100% on the up, the doubles is becoming so important, so we make sure we teach players all those technical and tactical skills you need in doubles to compete well from bottom to top. As a county coach I know how important doubles has become as it often decides who wins the cup in the last rubber.

Name: Josh Towers

Born: Suffolk, UK

Coaching level: LTA Performance level 4

Where do you coach and your position?

Senior performance coach in Surrey, working at Sutton Tennis Academy and I recently worked self employed at Esher.

As a recent coach obtaining level 4 performance status, can you tell us what things the LTA did to improve their course material?

The course was extremely challenging where they go into a lot of detail about technique, court positioning, sending skills, bring in the bio mechanics and you must demand a lot from your players.

What things specifically?

The science behind everything, kinetic chain, mechanics of shots.

How challenging was it?

Highly challenging theory and practical assessments, which had to be completed to a very standard. I was challenged in recording everything on video.

## Areas of Excellence in UK Tennis Coaching

From our previous report, we identified the quality of the UK coaching qualifications provided through the LTA and RPT, where they excelled in methodologies, platforms to work internationally, and quality principles safeguarding and maintaining the welfare and protection of children. These qualities are still intact but over the past 2-3 years we have seen significant improvements in the quality of coaching.

The LTA saw 5 different people take the role of head of coach development which created uncertainty, but since then have found stability with Merlin Van de Braam. Historically this role was always filled by a UK-based person, so this was a change in direction for the LTA, which has proved hugely successful and positive. This is led the way to more coaches and consultants coming in from outside the UK, bringing fresh innovative ideas to coaching and strength and conditioning. Louis Cayer was brought in as Senior Performance Advisor from outside the UK, who coaches top-level players to grand slam success, in particular doubles. From these changes, what we have found is much higher-level detail in all aspects of coaching from a planning and delivery aspect. The LTA level 4 and 5 performance courses have been completely overhauled and re-written with new ideas and material specifically from Louis Cayer, which tests and challenges our aspiring performance coaches when they work through the courses. We interviewed a recent level 4 performance coach Josh Towers on the course and the demands and detail involved (see interview). Since these changes, the UK has a reputation for having the best level 4 and 5 courses in the world, and we have seen 9 players now into the APT top 80, making the UK the best nation for doubles. On top of that accolade, the LTA guided an 18-year-old Emma Raducanu to win the US Open grand slam which is the highest-level tournament and Joe Sailsbury winning the Australian Open doubles in 2021.

The second area to highlight is the vast improvement is the structure, content and resources connected to coaching young children in schools, parks and clubs. Previously the LTA created a package called Tennis for Kids which involved a very affordable 6-week package offered to kids as an introduction to tennis, however, this has since been overhauled with a new product called Tennis Youth. With this new product, we have seen extensive improvements in the resources provided online for our coaches to deliver better-quality lessons. Coaches have access to videos of warm-ups, drills, ways of teaching techniques, setting up games and generally watching how to run productive high-energy sessions. There are videos for all mini-colour tennis, so ages 4-10, primary school setup, and secondary school lessons with a structured week-by-week to create a full program.

For secondary schools, there are new courses available to PE teachers. These offer great support to the PE department, making lessons more inclusive with lesson plans, modified accessible formats to the game, and employability and well-being resources included. At present every school in the UK will have funding for one person to enrol on this one-day LTA

Youth Schools Secondary Teacher Training Course. From 2021/2022 more than 4470 courses have been completed across the country. Once qualified you to have access to the youth portal which contains all the resources you need to deliver quality tennis lessons in your school, provides information on how to organise competitions in your school, and enter competitions against other schools which can only raise the level of tennis, the profile of the school and create future opportunities for the students in tennis.

Having discussed youth tennis in schools and performance tennis it is also important to explain how the UK has excelled in supporting youths in hard-to-reach areas of the community through their new Athlete Mentor Program, set up in partnership with Youth Sport Trust. The LTA is providing training to ex-professionals to give 20–30-minute lessons in schools to inspire young people to fulfil their potential through sharing stories, and experiences with small groups in schools. The main aim is to focus on the social, personal, creative, and thinking skills they gained from their journey. The goal here is for the students to create their own mini projects to help reach out and support other young people in the community through tennis and physical activity.

# Report on Tennis Coaching in Spain

## History of tennis in Spain

In 1878, tennis arrived in Spain in Huelva with the British mining colony as they set up the Rio tinto English Club for “lawn-tennis”. Various British settlers in Spain set up clubs in their respective cities such as Barcelona, Gibraltar and Madrid. They created their own cups and leagues to play with each other and as the sport grew, they even started to play with other clubs across Europe. These clubs continued to grow as did other modern sports with the development of these cities and the introduction of the metropolitan way of life.

The Sport started to gain more popularity in the 60's when Manolo Santana rose. Andres Gimeno and Manuel Orantes who came shortly after then confirming the rise of Spain onto the international scene. Since this time period there has been three generations of exceptional players that has cemented Spain as one of the main contenders in professional tennis.

The RPT was founded by Luis Madiard and it has achieved the following:

- Certified more than 7000 registered coaches working in academies and schools;
- Provided 50 national conferences;
- Given 1000 training courses;
- Provided 25 international symposiums;
- Delivered over 200 promotional activities and conducted more than 500.

The RPT headquarters remains at the Sanchez Casal Academy in Barcelona and continues to provide high quality coaching with innovative methodology. The RTP also has a strong link with the National Tennis Federation (RFET) in supporting player development, through their 'MARCA circuit' they host more than 60 tournaments a year for junior tennis on a national level.

The RPT has currently trained 75,000 coaches worldwide and has 25,200 certified coaches in 124 countries (69% coming from Europe and Africa, 21% USA, 10% Asia and Oceanica). It continues to offer courses from street tennis, level 1, 2, 3, European, international, master pro level. They also have a partnership with the LTA and RFET whereby they can provide university level courses.

The tennis federation (RFET) continues to support players progress to the elite level and offers the opportunity for strong coaches to obtain qualification through their courses, led by ex-professional Emilio Sanchez at his academy in Barcelona. They currently offer level 1-3 qualifications for coaches.

## Current global position of Spain

In Spain, they continue to go from strength to strength in tennis as they maintain players on both men's and women games who reach the top of the sport. Their most recent successful players have been Paula Badosa, Garbiñe Muguruza and Rafael Nadal. Additionally, Carlos Alcaraz plays for Spain, who historically became the youngest ever number 1 tennis player at the age of 19. For the last 40 years, Spain has had players that have remained consistent in the top 100 players worldwide. This has allowed their stance as a leading tennis nation in the world to be maintained.

Spain remains the leader in providing a pathway and platform to the highest level in the sport. This is due to it providing more tournaments per density than any other European country. The hot climate year-round allows for outdoor games to be available and Spain is a central hub to players travelling the circuit at junior and IFT level who are looking to get their foot in the door on the main tour. Academies continue to grow across Spain, Rafael Nadal has opened academies in Barcelona and Mallorca which have produced top ten players including Norwegian number 2 Casper Ruud. Spain remains a base for many professionals working on the circuit and offers top quality training facilities in their vast academies spread all over Spain and surrounding Barcelona in abundance due to excellent international connections.

If we return to the point of 'rhythm' and 'mentality' together, these two key things which is a core value of coaching in Spain. They implement both aspects into the academies, which means students compete and train with patience, rituals, desire to have focus and mindfulness.

Toni Nadal is a qualified RPT master instructor and the coach of the hugely successful Rafael Nadal. He obsesses around the importance of mentality and control in his teaching methods. We identified his desire to control emotions on the court, help his players develop longer attention spans, deeper concentration to cope through his mentoring and guidance in coaching.

## Key figures for tennis in Spain

### Nature

#### Qualifications needed for teachers and coaches

The aim of Registro Profesional de Tenis is to offer the best and most complete training programme, international certifications and comprehensive services to tennis teaching professionals and their teaching centres.

They have given out over 25,000 degrees in tennis coaching that enjoy the highest level of recognition and are recognised by the RFET. They also are responsible for organising over 60 events for young tennis in Spain.

INTERNATIONAL MASTER PROFESSIONAL  
DIRECTOR OF TENNIS  
INTERNATIONAL PROFESSIONAL  
EUROPEAN PROFESSIONAL/ACADEMY PROFESSIONAL  
NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL  
INSTRUCTOR 1  
INSTRUCTOR 2  
COMMUNITY COACH/ASSISTANT COACH



Their coaching courses are recognised by the RFET hence they benefit from international recognition from the likes of tennis organisations such as the ATP and WTA as well as many other international tennis organisations.

The organisation features courses which include courses from level one to level four, level one being a first step in a tennis coaching career for instructors who want to start working full or part time with mini-tennis and initiation players. Up to level four which teaches the management of tennis schools to tennis professionals.

### Player ranking system

The RFET has a comprehensive ranking system used for national ranking purposes. It consists of three categories, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. The categories help to further classify the top players. The 1<sup>st</sup> category is for players with rankings 1 to 50. The 2<sup>nd</sup> category has two sub categories: A and B. 2A is for rankings 51 to 150 and 2B is from 151 to 300. The 3<sup>rd</sup> category is further broken down into ten sub categories with some slight differences for the male and female rankings. They are numbered from G-10 down to G-1 and break down the ranking ranges from 301 to 500 for the males and from 301 to 400 for females down to G-1, which for the male ranking is for players with 1 RFET point, with their ranking equating to being below 11,000. For the female G-1, it is also for players with 1 RFET point, although their ranking will be higher than 4,001. The last G-groups to be classified by rank alone in the RFET is G-4 for males and females.

Ranking is obtained by the sum of the points that the players has accumulated throughout the year in their 14 best national competitions, including team competitions. Any games won in ATP, WTA, ITF World Tennis Tour Pro, ITS World Tennis Tour Senior, Tennis Europe

and ITF Senior competitions will not be counted towards the RFET ranking as there is a different ranking system.

## Practices and techniques

The Spanish tennis coaching system is known to have a lot of friendliness between all clubs. There seems to be a rising tide that raises all boats type of mentality between clubs. Many of the older players are keen to teach younger generations of tennis players without complaint.

The high amount of inter-academy cooperation is an asset to the development of young Spanish players as they can see different levels of playing. They have a strong focus on drills and intensity, making sure the players are concentrated at all times, it is the only way that they can improve their tennis. The Spanish agree that having a good mentality is almost the most important thing.

- Spain favours a 2:1 student to coach ratio.
- They emphasise consistency and control, teaching their kids to be fighters on the court and to suffer on the court from an early age.
- The Spanish icon Rafael Nadal has also increased the popularity of the sport. Nadal runs a successful Spanish tennis school with his compatriot Juan Carlos Ferrero.

Spain has a large stress on the structure of their tournaments. They have one of the most comprehensive schedules of junior and professional tournaments in the world. This competitive atmosphere is a strong motivation for kids to progress in their training.

## Interview with a Coach

Name: Luis Montoso

Born: Lebrija, Spain

Qualified to national level RPT

Where do you coach and your position?

I am based in Andalucía, Spain, where I teach in high school sports and at a local tennis club.

What do you think of the Spanish teaching system?

Well, I think its good overall and we make good players, I use the local coaching method to teach but also follow more global ways. In Spain we think about everything in balance, with speed, power, accuracy and movement. We must be strong in every situation and keep our mentally calmly.

What is your main coaching philosophy?

I think the player has to move to the ball correctly before anything, we need balance, I have teach the movement part of the game, with the correct feet that works across the baseline.

### Areas of Excellence in Spanish Tennis Coaching

The education system remains the same with the RPT (Registro Profesional de Tenis), providing courses to teach players from beginner through to performance and the RFET (Spanish Federation) provides coaching courses to support development of players from intermediate to professional level.

The Spanish teaching system remains very highly regarded in the tennis world and the proof is its constant flow of top-level players in the top 100 of the men and women's game. We are going to take a closer look into why they achieve these results and where their excellence comes from.

When we think about Spanish tennis coaching the first thing that may come to mind is the intensity and hard work. However, from our findings we have found that the focus of tennis teaching is good rhythm in all aspects, especially footwork and in essence the movement. Coaches recognise that most of the tournaments their players will be entering will be held on clay, which is a red coloured tennis court which demands excellent balance on the lower body. Due to these conditions, emphasis and focus is on excellent movement and balance, which is why we have the famous internationally used 'Spanish drills' in everyday coaching. Drills and exercises setup to expose your body to difficult situations on the tennis court, training students to move with fluidity and balance on the court. It is imperative to make players train on all aspects of the court with specific footwork patterns and ball striking at the same time.

If we focus back to the key word 'rhythm', the Spanish system revolutionised many actions on the tennis court which you still see today, the ATP world number one, Carlos Alcaraz, plays with excellent consistent slow fast rhythm on his forehand swing, so he has quality rhythm hand control. His coach is Juan Carlos Ferrero, who also the world number 1 in 2003 with similar rhythm in his hands. This is not very common on the tour and especially at a lower level in other countries, yet in Spain you see a dedication of this rhythm of the hands



educated at every level. This is something Spain shows excellence and when combined in a Spanish drill scenario such as their X or V pattern can prove very effective to training at any level.

As previously mentioned, footwork is at the core of the Spanish coaching practice in every way. Footwork is considered an art by the Spaniards as players move with grace, fluidity and balance. This takes hard work, technical coaching, video analysis and is completely underestimated in many countries. Spain pride themselves on hard work but with specifics. Everything has context, meaning and structure as you play from tactical and mental focus. When playing on clay, you need to have experience and exposure to training methods that give you that necessary skill set and knowledge. Therefore, Spain remains the front runners on footwork, through dedicated coaching, attention to detail and exposure to challenging conditions. Rival countries production of players can happen, but it has been suggested that movement and footwork can be heavy, slow, chaotic and clumsy.

## Summary

Spain is a country that prides itself on its tennis success, with famous names such as Rafael Nadal and Carlos Alcaraz. With a rigid, well-defined and comprehensive tournament structure and ranking system, the RPT and more broadly the RFET can rely on the future of Spanish tennis. The culture in the teaching and learning of the sport through the Spanish guise is well documented and known throughout the country in schools and training centres alike. Spanish tennis focuses on the artistry of the game found in the footwork and the finesse of it. Due to the nature of the junior and professional circuit in Spain where the majority of games will be played on a clay court, the use of so-called “Spanish drills” has become known in order to practice the nuances of playing on clay courts, focusing on the footwork as it is on these courts it can be most important. Spain’s focus on coach-heavy teaching puts it in the forefront of tennis coaching, with these tactics and practices popularised by Rafael Nadal and some of the successful methods used in his acclaimed school in Mallorca. His style of play has been popularised all over the country and can be seen being taught across Spain.

## Report on Tennis Coaching in France

### History of Tennis in France

The invention of tennis is a long and slow evolution dating back to the 12th–13th-century French handball game *jeu de paume* (“game of the palm”). The popularity of tennis reached the extent that it was banned until 1861 as it distracted the military and monks from work. In 1891, the Stade Francais hosted the first-ever French Championships, which became an international tournament in 1925.

The International Tennis Federation (ITF) is the global governing body of the sport which evolved slowly, and the national governing units comprise the ITF. In France, the French Federation of Lawn Tennis (now the French Federation of Tennis or FFT) was established in 1920. The FFT is recognised by the French Ministry of Sport and ITF. Other national championships were inaugurated in Canada (1890), South Africa (1891), Spain (1910), Denmark (1921), Egypt (1925), Italy (1930), and Sweden (1936).

France has a long history of strong performance in championships. The French Roland-Garros Championships are recognized as the world’s premier clay-court tournaments. Modern tennis is a pastime and sport enjoyed by millions worldwide. Tennis grew in popularity rapidly in the 1960s and ‘70s as participation and spectating were made more attractive by the opening of the major championships to professionals and the invention and spread of television and equipment innovations. The modernisation of tennis rackets also made the game more accessible.

### Current Global Position of France

The FFT organises tennis competitions across France, as well as helps to coordinate tennis clubs and teams for international tournaments.

Key figures for tennis in France in 2022:

- Number one individual sport in France
- Four million practitioners and more than one million licensees
- 1,019,597 licensees (Tuesday, June 28, 2022)
- 7,176 affiliated clubs and authorized structures, 18 leagues, 94 departmental committees
- 100,000 volunteers
- 4,481 municipalities with tennis courts in an FFT-affiliated club (32,560 courts)

- 350,019 competitors (as of 06/03/2022)
- 33,610 courts (active clubs)

France has over 2 million classified tennis players of both sexes in 31 rating categories. Common nationalities include people from Australia, South Africa, Argentina, and potentially many more. While world rankings between 150 and 600 are rare, they are not unheard of. Tournaments vary in both size and level of play, but international draws are common. Tournaments in the south and in smaller clubs tend to be on hard courts because they are easier to maintain, but in general, it may also be possible to play on clay further North and at higher levels.

According to the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP), 12 of the 223 current professional coaches registered with the Association are French. Most of the male French tennis players registered with the ATP have won more than 75% of their games on all surfaces over their careers' Service Games.

Several major tennis tournaments take place in France, including the Paris Masters and the French Open, one of the four Grand-Slam tournaments (International Tennis Federation 2008).

## Qualifications for Trainers and Coaches

To formally become a tennis coach in France, you are required to hold a State Diploma or Professional Qualification Certificate (CQP). The State Diplomas include state certificates of sports educators, first or second degrees (BE1 or BE2), as well as Diploma of Youth, Popular Education and Sports (DEJEPS and DESJEPS) to be instructors or teachers, respectively. The DE JEPS training is organized in centres authorized by the Regional Departments of Youth, Sports and Social Cohesion. The qualification requires a minimum of either 700 hours of experience in a training centre or 500 in a tennis club. The entry requirements for this type of training are: to be or have been classified at least 15/2, on the date of entry into training; and have 90 hours of teaching experience or else to hold the CQP AMT or CQP ET. Entry also depends on passing tests including a written, an oral, a pedagogical sequence, and a technical demonstration.

The Professional Qualification Certificate (CQP) can either be for an Assistant Tennis Instruction (CQP AMT) or Tennis Educator (CQP ET). The CQP AMT provides group training for young people aged 18 and under (up to 360 hours per year). This certificate is no longer issued to date but the holders retain their qualified status. The CQP ET makes it possible to initiate, in collective form, all audiences (within the limit of 360 hours per year). CQP ET training is organized in regional leagues and takes 200 hours (140 training centre hours and

60 in a club). To participate, you must have a game level of 30/2 and hold the PSC1 first aid diploma (Level 1 Civic Prevention and Relief).

The JEPS training is organized in the same way as it is for the DE. To apply for entry into training, you must have a second series level of play and 500 hours of teaching experience. The holder of the BE1 or the DE is exempted from the entry conditions. It is also necessary to satisfy the selection tests which include oral and written tests and a pedagogical sequence.

## Player Ranking System

The French Federation of Tennis ranks players and categorises them into levels to ensure that tournaments involve well-matched individuals. A complex points system is used to determine rank and level. France is in the process of changing the calculation of the ranking system to improve accessibility and fairness, without changing the mechanism underpinning the rankings. Under the new system, the rank of a player is no longer impacted by the results of their opponents. The new ranking better reflects the level of the player at the moment of calculation because it samples a 12-month period throughout the year rather than all players reverting to zero points at the start of each season, as previously happened. To qualify for an increased rank, each player must triumph against an opponent who has already attained this rank. The new calculation of the ranking was planned in 2019 but the COVID pandemic delayed implementation until September 2022.

## Practices and techniques

In France, the technical pedagogy is holistic ensuring that coaches develop their players' technical abilities while maintaining motivation by matching competitors as equally as possible through the 'free match system'.

Patrick Mouratoglou is an internationally famous French coach whose success led him to open the famous Mouratoglou Tennis Academy. His philosophy, and that of his academy, is to focus on growth over results. This philosophy is widely admired and replicated by other coaches to encourage players and motivate them through personal growth as much as competitive success.

French players also compete on clay which increases endurance as the ball bounces higher and more slowly creating more sustained volleys requiring greater aerobic fitness. Playing on clay is common throughout Europe with both Portugal and Spain also using clay as a playing surface for elite coaching. Coaching training in France is an intensive process with some of the highest contact time with course tutors of any tennis country.

In France, tennis is taught with an emphasis on mastery of technique. To develop well-rounded players, a broad skills base is taught with new skills being taught sequentially as each technique is acquired. In particular, French coaches include doubles games in training programmes to widen the skill set of a player to adapt to different conditions including court surfaces and positions. The international reputation for French training being effective and highly structured reflects these practices.

### Interview with a Coach

Name: Francois Laffront

Born: Tolulouse, France

Coaching Level: Level 5 Performance Master Coach.

Where have you coached?

Head performance coach at Sutton Tennis Academy, coach at Roehampton National Tennis Centre (NTC), Florida Tennis Academy, County Coach for Toluouse and Oxfordshire county and Tennis Manager at Club Med.

Achievements:

Developing players to national level

How was your experience training as coach in France and what do you think they do well?

France gave me a great framework to coach to a high level and allowed me to get hands on experience in a local club while I was studying my tennis courses. The courses provide a high level of tuition and detail to coach players to elite level in different playing styles, from serve volley back in late 90's to early 2000's, aggressive baseline tennis and now more tactical defensive tennis from the back. My course provided a lot of theory work on tactics, patient strategy and had to analyse a lot of tennis for my portfolio.

### Area of Excellence in French Tennis Coaching

Traditional styles of tennis coaching, especially in countries where tennis was well-established were ineffective and led to a reduction in the popularity of the sport. Using modern teaching principles, coaches can provide holistic training improving the decision-making, enthusiasm and technical ability of players. This philosophy supports the various methods used in countries producing exceptional tennis professionals and is supported by the ITF. One demotivating factor in tennis training is playing unequal games, which France

works to avoid by ranking players of all ages and abilities. France improved their ranking system in September 2022, one of the goals of this was to create better matches through more even pairings.

As one of the tennis leading nations, France consistently sees several French players ranked in the top global competitions. Focusing on both physical and mental skills and strengths greatly enhance tennis training. In modern coaching paradigms, the focus is on the development of the player, rather than their results. In this training style, the purpose of a coach is to provide a positive and engaging learning environment, enhancing the players' problem-solving, as well as motor skills. Sports science developments also inform training by incorporating new theories and technologies.

Other countries tend to have week-long tournaments whereas French tournaments can be played in a few days, leading to much shorter downtime. These shorter tournaments can be more convenient for players looking to improve their skills. France borders many other countries including Spain, Andorra, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Travel helps to broaden the cultural experience by playing with foreign competitors or joining foreign training academies for new insights.

We have already highlighted some very positive aspects of French tennis and how they are clearly demonstrating they are concerned with looking after every level of tennis with care and attention to the coaching structure, quality and accessibility. It is important to look slightly closer at what really makes them stand out internationally and identify what is special about their 'Pedagogy' i.e. their coaching methods, how they do this practically and their general philosophy.

The FFT provides all training and education to those looking to become a coach and unlike other countries, the process is longer, and more challenging with stricter criteria to enrol. Like most countries there are levels. In France you begin your training on level 1, with a minimum requirement that you are over 18, have proven evidence you've completed higher education and hold a CQPET and PSCI (Safeguarding and First Aid). Once completed you can progress to a Bac+2 (tertiary diploma) or DEJEPS and lastly a Bac+3 (degree). Qualifications can take between 1-2 years to complete for DEJEPS which is done at CREPS, which is their training centre whereby 700 hours must be completed alongside 500 hours in a club and academy.

From our research, we can conclude that the FFT have very high expectations from their coaches once they qualify and are essentially ready to hit the ground running in academies and in regional performance centres set up by the FFT to support performance players to success. Unlike other countries, France has academies set up with excellent facilities and every court surface including grass, clay, hard court, indoor acrylic and carpet. This ensures they are training players to cope with every situation in tennis as each surface brings a

different playing style need. From our research and interviews, we identified coaching excellence in an all-round coaching approach but found extra detail in court tactics. This is the thinking 'chess' aspect of the game, thinking about court strategy, game plan, preparation, knowledge and understanding of your surroundings, such as the court, but also the strengths and weaknesses of your opponent. We interviewed a level 5 coach Francoeur Le Fonnt, a level 5 master coach who has worked in academies for more than 20 years across Europe and worked with elite players on his coaching training in France, please see interview).

## Summary of Tennis in France

For over 100 years France has been established as a strong tennis nation which produces elite tennis players to grand slam champion level in singles and doubles and has built has strong well-structured tennis federation to train players, provide accessibility to all levels but also to promote tennis with innovation, passion and commitment.

At the core of tennis in France is the French Tennis Federation (FFT) which provides 400,000 competitions in France each year. This creates 18,000 full-time jobs, provides pathways from grassroots to elite tennis and provides funding and opportunities for top players to perform internationally (specifically Tennis Europe, junior, ITF, WTA, and ATP tour). The FFT supports these players through its National Technical Department (DTN), where they have set up 18 regional performance teams across France to coach players aged 10 and above and talent ID players under 10. Ex Professional player Nicolas Escude is the National Tennis Director of the DTN. He provides direction, and guidance, and oversees their main mission to "conquer international tennis in youth and adult" and promote tennis at the club level to increase participation levels of young people. So far from our findings we see they are doing a great job, they have 4 million people playing tennis each year, and 1 million registered with the FFT so they can compete in official tournaments, an important note is that of these 1 million registered, 48.5% are under 17.

As mentioned already their success at the Elite level, players like Amelie Mauresmo, a junior and senior multi grand slam champion who came through their coaching system, talent spotted and coached at the national level at the CNE's in Paris, Poitiers and Boulouris (national tennis centres). France has set up a highly detailed coaching system focused on technique and tactics which they refer to as their Technical Pedagogy Department, supporting coaches with teaching material, course material, practical development programs, and up-to-date content for coaches for every level to aid the 'Federal Education Project'.

A large part of France's success was its strategy to support FFT licensees in clubs with free coaching programs and in return, they can provide voluntary coaching to build up tennis

levels at the grassroots levels and increase participation. These courses include LIFT (Tennis Training Institute, which is a digital platform with provided a total of 40,000 hours of training in 2020, a National Apprentice Training Centre (CFA) in partnership with the 18 leagues in France and Aid for the development of clubs and Practice (ADCP) which began in 2017.

Lastly, to update you, we can report that France is showing a commitment to supporting the community in harder-to-reach areas which they do through their De la Cour au Court and Galaxie programs. The emphasis is promoting tennis to everyone and being inclusive, which means helping those aged 3-10 from nursery to primary school, focusing on teaching Pedagogy, and sports ethics and creating competition in a healthy way. France introduced a 'Free Match System' which has proven to be successful to retain club players through higher motivation, working towards targets and getting involved in more coaching sessions



# Report on Tennis Coaching in Portugal

## History of Tennis in Portugal

Although tennis was introduced in Portugal by the British community living in Lisbon and Porto around 1880, it was mainly made known across the nation through the efforts of Guilherme Pinto Basto. Basto is an icon amongst the history of Portuguese sport, for many years being the country's best tennis player. He even coached King Carlos, who heavily promoted the sport at the end of the 19th century. Basto encouraged the first tennis match between Portuguese players after the first clay tennis courts were built in Cascais in 1882. It was then in these Cascais courts that the first International Championships of Portugal took place in 1902, running continuously up until 1973.

The Portuguese Tennis Federation (FPT) [is Portugal's](#) national [tennis](#) organisation that was founded in 1925 and set up so the country could participate in the Davis Cup. The FPT is a member of the regional association [Tennis Europe](#) and the [International Tennis Federation](#) (ITF), and they are also responsible for the [Portugal Davis Cup Team](#) and the Portugal Fed Cup Team. The FPT is responsible for regulating tennis, padel, wheelchair tennis, beach tennis and professional and amateur tennis activities; including the [National Championships](#). Throughout its 75-year history, the FPT has had 14 presidents, although a lot has changed in 8 decades.

Today, the FPT is a complex organisation, with different departments and areas of responsibility. Over a dozen clubs existed when it was founded, and now it has grown to more than 300 affiliates. In turn, the clubs are grouped into 13 Associations - representing the districts of Aveiro, Castelo Branco, Coimbra, Leiria, Lisbon, Porto, Setúbal, Vila Real and Viseu; the provinces of Algarve and Alto Alentejo; and the Autonomous regions of the Azores and Madeira. The associative process began in 1980 - on the 24th of October of that year, the first Regional Association was officially created in Lisbon.

## Current Global Position of Portugal

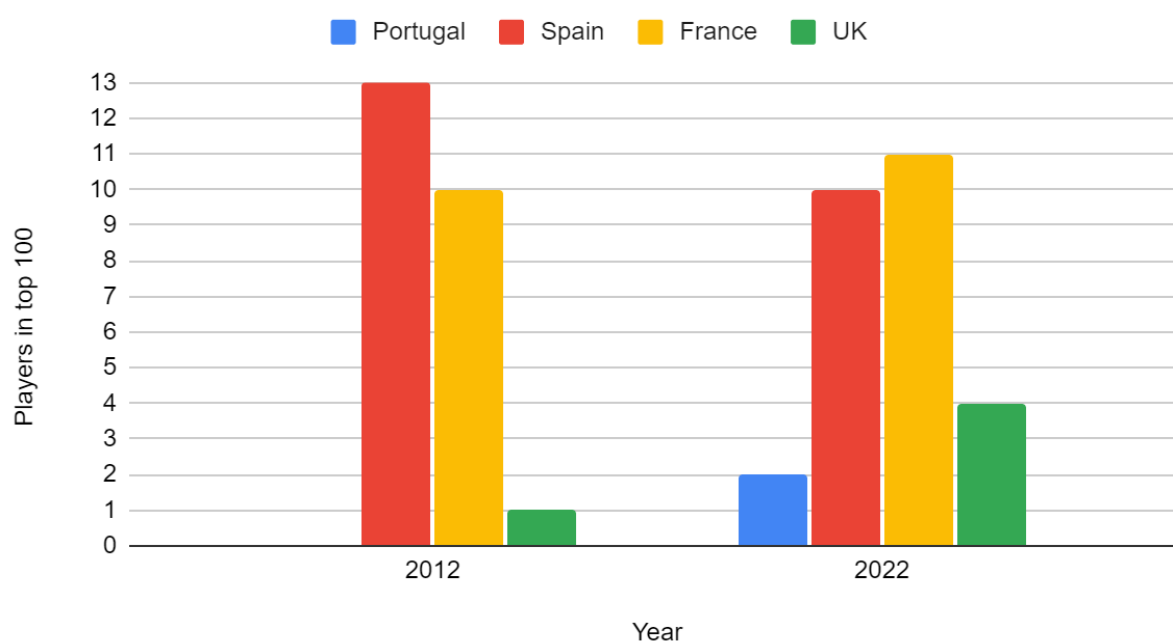
Portugal is an emerging tennis nation which continues to increase opportunities for player development and also work opportunities for coaches through an increasing number of academies which cater for part-time training camps and full-time performance elite pathways. In Portugal, we are seeing popularity increase as a country where it's simply more affordable to play the sport compared to countries with long-established academies such as France and Spain. Tennis in Portugal remains fairly off the grid in the mainstream tennis world, although it holds some importance as a nation, producing elite tennis players in the men's and women's game for decades. This includes previous top 30 players Joao Sousa and Nuno

Borges who is a young player in the International Tennis Federation's top 100. Portugal remains a competitive country as it participates in the Davis Cup, it hosted a Masters Cup event in 2000 in Lisbon and hosts an important yearly event in Estoril which has been going on since the early 1900s.

As of November 2022, 1.4% of male Portuguese tennis players make up the top 1000 rankings, with 2% making up the top 100 players in the world. 10 years prior, at the end of 2012, no Portuguese male tennis player made up the top 100. The table below shows a comparison of data from Portugal and other countries for those currently in the top 100, to players in the top 100 in 2012.

	2012 (Top 100 at 31.12.12) %	2022 (Top 100 at 31.10.22) %
Portugal	0	2
Spain	13	10
France	10	11
UK	1	4

### Comparison between Portugal and Tennis nations



We can see from this graph that countries such as Spain have regressed in terms of top athletes inside the top 100, whereas emerging countries such as Portugal and UK have seen an increase in top athletes.

Key figures for tennis in Portugal:

João Sousa made history May 6th after becoming the first Portuguese tennis player to win the country's most important tennis tournament, the Estoril Open.

Guilhermo Pinto de Basto, an ex-professional and president of the Portuguese Tennis Federation (FPT), has been highly influential in the steady rise of improved tennis coaching from the grassroots to the elite through specialist coaching courses heavily focused on technical and physical aspects of the game which will be explaining in the area of excellence later in this report. The FPT work very closely with a leading academy in Portugal, JCS, based in Lisbon, producing and supporting the best young talent in Portugal and is seen to have the highest level of coaching, from Joao Cunha Silva. Teaching methods at JCS focus heavily on technique and improving physical conditioning, something that is seen as vital to tennis players in the modern game.

Among the men, three names stand out - Nuno Marques, who in September 1995 achieved the best position ever of a Portuguese player in the world singles ranking, reaching 86th place in the ATP Tour table; João Cunha e Silva, winner of a US\$100,000 tournament in Monterrey (Mexico) in October, achieved the best victory ever by a Portuguese tennis player; and also Emanuel Couto, who won the last three editions of the National Championship and who with sure steps reached the lot of the 200 best players in the world.

In 1982, the long-running idea of bringing a great figure of world tennis to Portugal finally became possible. The mythical Bjorn Borg, withdrawn from the professional circuit in the autumn of 1981, was dedicated only to exhibition matches. His performances in Cascais and Póvoa de Varzim, where he performed alongside Vitas Gerulaitis, revived interest in the racket sport. With the pavilions filling up and the television allowing millions to see in action what many considered the best player in the history of tennis, an unexpected boom began in the number of players, which at the end of the decade eighties tennis was the second most practised sport in Portugal.

In 2022 the Davis Cup presents (shown in the figure profiles below) the Portuguese nominations for the World Group I First Round on 16-17 Sep 2022, at the Centro Cultural de Viana do Castelo, Viana do Castelo, Portugal, on hard indoor courts.

## GASTAO ELIAS

 PORTUGAL



Date of birth: 24 November 1990  
Birth place: Caldas da Rainha, Portugal  
Plays: Right Handed (Double Handed Backhand)  
Singles ranking: 210  
Doubles ranking: 1068=

### KEY STATISTICS

First year played	2007
Total nominations	24
Ties played	23
Singles W/L	7/11
Doubles W/L	9/12
Total W/L	16/23

## NUNO BORGES

 PORTUGAL

Date of birth: 19 February 1997  
Birth place: Maia, Portugal  
Plays: Right Handed (Double Handed Backhand)  
Singles ranking: 95  
Doubles ranking: 87

### KEY STATISTICS

First year played	2021
Total nominations	3
Ties played	3
Singles W/L	2/0
Doubles W/L	1/2
Total W/L	3/2

## JOAO SOUSA

 PORTUGAL



Date of birth: 30 March 1989  
Birth place: Guimaraes, Portugal  
Plays: Right Handed (Double Handed Backhand)  
Singles ranking: 70  
Doubles ranking: 134

### KEY STATISTICS

First year played	2008
Total nominations	31
Ties played	31
Singles W/L	29/16
Doubles W/L	11/10
Total W/L	40/26

## FREDERICO FERREIRA SILVA

 PORTUGAL



Date of birth: 18 March 1995  
Birth place: Caldas da Rainha, Portugal  
Plays: Left Handed (Double Handed Backhand)  
Singles ranking: 265  
Doubles ranking: 671

### KEY STATISTICS

First year played	2014
Total nominations	11
Ties played	6
Singles W/L	4/2
Doubles W/L	1/0
Total W/L	5/2

## FRANCISCO CABRAL

 PORTUGAL





























Date of birth: 08 January 1997  
Birth place: Right Handed (Double Handed Backhand)  
Plays: Right Handed (Double Handed Backhand)  
Singles ranking: 1457=  
Doubles ranking: 49

### KEY STATISTICS

First year played	2022
Total nominations	2
Ties played	2
Singles W/L	-
Doubles W/L	1/1
Total W/L	1/1

## Player ranking system

The table below shows Portuguese men ranked in the ATP tournament and women ranked in the WTA tournament. The ATP Tour is a worldwide top-tier tennis tour for men organised by the Association of Tennis Professionals. The equivalent women's organisation is the WTA Tour.

↑ ATP	Name - men	↑ WTA	Name - women
77.	 <u>Sousa, Joao</u>	302.	 <u>Jorge, Francisca</u>
96.	 <u>Borges, Nuno</u>	726.	 <u>Jorge, Matilde</u>
213.	 <u>Elias, Gastao</u>	831.	 <u>Murta, Ines</u>
273.	 <u>Silva, Frederico Ferreira</u>	878.	 <u>Santos, Ana Filipa</u>
290.	 <u>Domingues, Joao</u>	1218.	 <u>Lanca, Sara</u>
413.	 <u>Oliveira, Goncalo</u>		 <u>Abreu, Beatriz</u>
518.	 <u>Sousa, Pedro</u>		 <u>Abreu, Margarida</u>
550.	 <u>Vale, Duarte</u>		 <u>Agra, Matilde</u>
596.	 <u>Faria, Jaime</u>		 <u>Aguiar Machado, Ines</u>
625.	 <u>Araujo, Pedro (2002)</u>		 <u>Almeida, Bibiana</u>
726.	 <u>Rodrigues, Daniel</u>		 <u>Alonso, Barbara</u>
838.	 <u>Cacao, Tiago</u>		 <u>Alvaro, Ivone</u>
878.	 <u>Rocha, Henrique</u>		 <u>Alvaro, Raquel</u>
998.	 <u>Coelho, Fabio</u>		 <u>Alves, Anarita</u>

The Federação Portuguesa de Ténis is responsible for a variety of regulatory and administrative responsibilities while promoting the sport of tennis nationwide. By standardising the quality of tennis coaching, player classification, and the rules of competition the FPT ensures fair and meaningful competition and assessment can occur. The FPT engages stakeholders at national and international levels developing relationships between clubs and players to facilitate competition and talent development. Promoting tennis attracts new talent, sponsorship for clubs and players, and fans to the sport. All of these activities further the agenda of tennis in Portugal.

## Qualifications for trainers and coaches

### FPT and Portuguese Institute of Sports and Youth

In February of 2018, the FPT collaborated with the Portuguese Institute of Sports and Youth to recover the roof of an indoor tennis court and training centre. This intervention allowed for better conditions to support the users of the facility, in particular the high performance athletes in national teams.

### FPT and Ministry of Education

The collaboration between FPT and the Ministry of Education presented a new opportunity for Tennis to play a major part of the schools curriculum, and to widen the participation of

the Sport with young people. The success of the collaboration was due to several factors, including:

- Articulation between Schools, Clubs and Municipalities
- Investment in the training of a large number of physical education teachers
- Creation of incentives for schools to acquire the appropriate sports material
- Promotional and marketing material

### The National Plan of Ethics in Sports

The National Plan of Ethics in Sports is an initiative proposed by the XIX constitutional government, and based at the Portuguese institute of Sport and Youth. It involves a set of structured activities which aim to promote the values which play a fundamental role in Sports such as Tennis. This involves values such as 'sportsmanship, fairplay, respect and well-being' which can often be overlooked in the coaching of young people into sports.

The ITF regulates the training of tennis coaches around the world in an effort to ensure consistency and legitimacy of coaches. The ITF sets out the standards expected and performs an audit visit to assess coach education facilities seeking formal ITF recognition of their programme. Countries are categorised as gold, silver, bronze or white level; gold being the highest.

Each colour certifies a country as being self-sufficient in educating coaches up to a specific level. White, the lowest, establishes a country as being 'self-sufficient up to Play Tennis Level'. Bronze is the next level up, where countries are 'self-sufficient up to Coaching Beginner & Intermediate Players Level'. At Silver, countries are 'self-sufficient up to Coaching Advanced Players Level'. At the top tier of Gold, countries are 'self-sufficient up to Coaching High Performance Players Level'. As of September 2022, Portugal (along with the UK, France and Spain) was recognised as a gold level coach education country (Itftennis.com).

ITF Recognition of Coach Education Systems. Available at:  
<https://www.itftennis.com/media/2237/recognition-of-coach-education-systems.pdf>

ITF Recognition of Coach Education Systems. Available at:  
<https://www.itftennis.com/en/news-and-media/articles/itf-recognition-of-coach-education-systems/>

Tournaments in Portugal are either social or official. In order to compete in the official tournaments as outlined on the FPT tournament calendar, it is necessary for players to be registered with federated tennis clubs.

Coaching in Portugal emphasises classroom learning over learning for a diverse variety of experiences and environments. Research into expert coaches' opinions revealed that coaches

working at the highest level are dissatisfied with this focus in the development of new coaches. The expert coaches developed their skills from a balanced mixture of classroom acquisition of knowledge and the situational gain of expertise which allows them to support tennis players to reach the highest levels of competition performance (Mesquita et al. 2014). Mesquita, I. *et al.* (2014) "Coach learning and coach education: Portuguese expert coaches' perspective," *The Sport Psychologist*, 28(2), pp. 124–136. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.2011-0117>.

## Practices and Techniques

As we have already highlighted, coaching in Portugal heavily focuses on the technical and physical aspects of player development. There is an argument that in the Spanish system this is not the priority, however, when we look at the results and data it does clearly show a rise in the number of players reaching the top 500 from Portugal. Physical presence in Spain is considered the lowest area to improve a player and it does not make players 'special' and thus essentially at the bottom of the pyramid of player development. This is quite subjective when you consider all aspects of coaching that are taught to some degree in each country, but Portugal notably works players harder in academies, with longer training sessions, more emphasis on live ball drills, a higher volume of balls, and more challenging tasks. When we compare this to Spain which focuses heavily on efficient, slow movement with more focus on the quality of that movement, for example, the rhythm of two-step striking and two-step recovery. We interviewed a county/club player who has previously trained full-time in Portugal and also in Spain, Joao Costa, about the striking physicality of coaching methods in Portugal and what benefits that have brought to his tennis.

## Interview with a coach

Name: Nuno Borges

Born: Maia, Portugal

Tennis School – ET Maia (where the Nov CH in Maia is placed)

Area of technical excellence in coaching in Portugal:

Whilst being coached in Portugal what area did they focus their coaching on?

Playing from the baseline using forehands and backhands, building from the back with very physical training, developing conditioning, strength and endurance on a live ball.

I believe in tennis outside Portugal, the physical aspect in tennis is undervalued.

I think Portuguese tennis doesn't have a big culture around it yet, because it's not a main sport, so it's hard to say something unique about them, we are not recognized by something specific in the public media.

### Area of Excellence in Portuguese Tennis Coaching

Further reported excellence from our findings is in the technical element of coaching in Portugal, which does completely make sense given the surface is clay, a surface we have talked about already which is slow, difficult to generate power and requires very sound mechanics of the body when swinging the racket, something we called the kinetic chain. Our findings tell us that JCS academy continues to evolve its quality of teaching methods with technique through innovative technology for example 'Swing Vision' which looks at real-time shot tracking and video analysis. Portugal, like many nations, is influenced by the Spanish teaching system but certainly is creating its own niche in building technique combined with physical scenarios and coaches like Joao Cunha Silva show strong belief in their methods and coaching philosophy. With 14 players currently occupying rankings in the APT tour top 1000, this is an exciting and interesting future for an emerging sleeping giant which is Portugal.

Mental training has been pioneered as one of the most beneficial strategies for long term success in Portugal, and strategies have been widely accepted by the FPT as an educative tool for coaches, players, parents and sport psychologists. The book 'Mental Training in Tennis' gained high traction from psychologists, and strategies have been widely accepted by the FPT as an educative tool for coaches, players and parents. Joao Lagos, a former tennis professional stated after a failed ATP tournament for the Portuguese that 'this book is precisely what is needed to overcome the lack of Portuguese players mental toughness I have witnessed'.

### Summary of Tennis Coaching in Portugal

Similarly to Spain, Portugal has a climate and location allowing play all year round and is seen as a much more affordable option to Spain for coaching and training, therefore appealing to young players looking for opportunities to train and make their living. It has a strong focus on the Junior circuit and is a member of Tennis Europe, which is a tour designed for young players 10-13 years old who are national level in their country and are able to play in countries that are members to compete at the highest level. As has been discussed, coaching in Portugal focuses heavily on the technical and physical aspects of player development. Academy based coaches notably work players harder, with longer training sessions and more challenging tasks. The technical element of coaching in Portugal also demonstrates excellence, for example with the use of innovative technology, which can analyse real-time shot tracking and video analysis. Mental training is also considered an area of excellence in comparison to other countries and a key contributor to long term success in Portugal. Strategies have been widely



accepted by the FPT as an educative tool for coaches, players, parents and sport psychologists.