

## EDUCATION OF GREEK TENNIS COACHES AND THE METHODOLOGY FOR BASIC STROKES

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### ABSTRACT

*The goal of the present study was to investigate the training process adopted by Greek tennis coaches to develop basic strokes (forehand and backhand) among the trainee. To work on the purpose of the study a questionnaire was used to know about the methodology adopted by Greek tennis coaches. Questions of the questionnaire were such as “what grip do you suggest to players-eastern, western, continental? To response of such questions were based on a 5-scale Likert scale. A total of 90 coaches (male 63.4% and 36.6% female) were the sample of the study. Results showed that there were three groups, the first group (20.2%) used continental grip, the second (59.6 %) used eastern grip and the third (20.2 %) used the western grip, for forehand and backhand. In conclusion, we can say that there is not a common methodology followed for learning basic strokes, there is though influence by the contemporary trends in learning methodologies.*

**Keywords:** Organization, education, Greek tennis coaches, methodology, forehand, backhand.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Research on factors determining coaching behaviors and efficiency has been going on for three decades and investigates the particular coaching characteristics, abilities, knowledge, strategies, techniques and coaching behaviors (Fairweather, 1999), and whether these are related to the coaches' efficiency (Gianousi et al., 2016). An efficient coach can influence the nature and the quality of the experience of their trainees and for this reason they must have excellent scientific techniques (Cushion & Jones, 2001; Mesquita, Sobrinho, & Rosado, 2008; Martens, 1987).

According to Mackenzie (2005) the coaches must in addition to their technical work as leaders also see to the planning of training sessions, the safety of athletes, effective communication by giving the right instructions and explanations, demonstrate wherever this is necessary, observe, analyze and offer feedback (Labar, 1982; Laios, 1994). The role of tennis coaches in improving the performance of their athletes is a highly significant factor and they should understand the importance of the physical condition, technique, psychological preparation, strength and planning as well as match performance (Kioumourtoglou, 1994).

The role of the tennis coach is intertwined with organization, support, control, encouragement, coordination, calculation, planning, communication, choices and training (Crespo et al., 2005).

From a pedagogical point of view, a tennis coach should aim to achieve the best possible personal performance, since training and harmonious education are two complementary concepts (Hehlmann, 1964). From a psychological point of view, tennis coaches must achieve the improvement of skills through the proper planning and structuring of actions (Ulich, 1973). One of the basic characteristics of a Greek tennis coach is the training he/she has received and the methodology he/she uses for teaching basic strokes.

The International Tennis Federation (ITF, 2008) proposes that although the teaching of technique remains an important component, coaches should first focus on player's learning the concept of the game. Furthermore, beginners need to be given only the essential techniques and relevant tactical instruction in order to help them train better through playing the game (Quezada et al., 2000; Papachristou, 1987). It is therefore, the coaches' responsibility to devise game-based lessons where the basic tennis skills are taught and there is both communication and enjoyment.

During the learning of basic strokes, the first element is the grip of the tennis racket (continental, eastern, western). The role of the tennis coach demands multi-dimensional and continuous training. Coaching as a profession combines knowledge of several disciplines such as physiology, biomechanics, psychology, sociology and others and it has been characterized as "evolutionary in status" (Abraham & Collins, 2011).

One of the most basic elements of evolution and success of tennis athletes is the guidance they receive by their coaches (Duffy, Crespo, & Petrovic, 2010; Schmidt, 1983). Greek tennis coaches are influenced by contemporary trends on teaching methodology (play and stay). The Play and Stay program is a worldwide campaign implemented in the last few years by over thirty participating nations with a long tradition in the sport (Lawn Tennis Association, 2005; Thorpe, & Bunker, 1982; Van der Meer, 1982). Thus, the basic goal of the present study was to investigate the methodology adopted by Greek tennis coaches in the instruction of basic strokes (forehand and backhand) and whether they are affected by the education they have received at coaches' schools or use the technique they had when they were athletes.

## **2. METHODS AND MATERIALS**

### **2.1 Participants and their Demographic Information**

The sample of the study consisted of 90 coaches aged 20-55 years. The mean age of the sample was 30 years. From them 63.4% were males and 36.6% females, while 87.4% were graduates of University sport schools and 12.2% were graduates of coaches' schools of the General Secretariat for Sports. Professionally speaking, 8.2% was fully employed and coaching was their main job. The largest part of the coaches, 91.8 %, was part-time employed as second job or as a primary job with no contract and full insurance. Regarding the educational level of the sample, 75.3% held a university degree (sport school or other university school), 11.1% had basic education, 7.9 % had postgraduate education, 4.5% held a Postgraduate degree and 1.1 % were having PhDs.

### **2.2 Tool for the Data Collection**

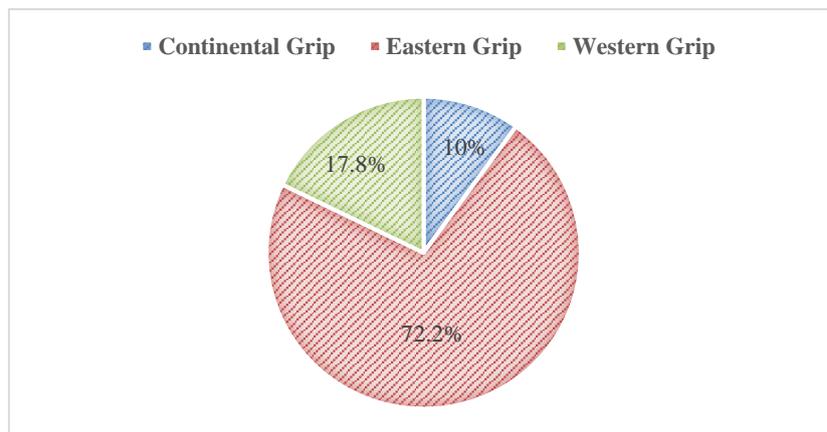
A 5 point Likert Scale questionnaire were used, where Greek tennis coaches replied on the methodology (eastern, continental, western grip) they are using when teaching basic strokes (forehand and backhand). An example of sample question is- 'What kind of grip you use for: 1. forehand (continental grip, eastern grip, western grip), 2. Backhand, 3. Volley, 4. Service, 5. Overhead?'. For replying coaches were given 5 options such as -definitely yes,

yes, so and so, I disagree, I definitely disagree. Alpha of Crobach, 0.594, was used to check the unit's internal consistency.

### 3. RESULTS

The analysis of the obtained results showed that we have three group of coaches who differentiated the methodology they use when teaching basic strokes (forehand and backhand). The first group consists of five people who use eastern grip, while not using at all continental when serving, overhead and volley. The second group consists of ten people and seem to use the western grip on serve and overhead and not use the continental grip or eastern grip on backhand. Finally, the first group consists of 75 people and uses continental grip on overhead, volley, and serve and not use the eastern grip or western grip on strokes overhead, serve, volley. The Figure 1 presents the descriptive analysis of the results.

**Figure 1: Relevant frequency of the grip used by coaches when teaching forehand**



Reading of Figure 1 shows that 10% of coaches use continental grip, 72.2 % of coaches use Eastern grip and 17.8% of coaches use Western grip while they teach forehand stroke to their trainee.

**Figure 2: Relative frequency of the grip used by coaches when teaching backhand**

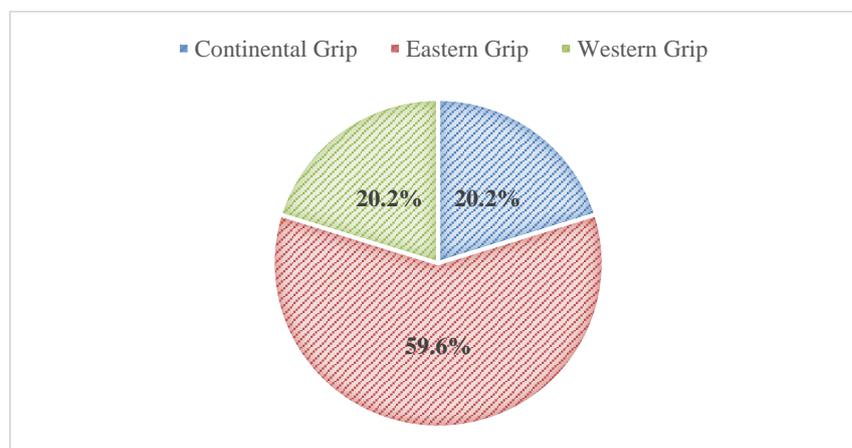


Figure 2 indicates that 20.2% of the coaches use continental grip, 59.6% of the coaches use Eastern grip and 20.2% of the coaches use Western grip while they teach backhand stroke to their trainee.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

In Greece, tennis coaches receive their education either at Coaches' Schools of the General Secretariat for Sports in cooperation with the Greek Federation of Tennis (24.1%), or at the University Departments of Physical Education and Sport Science (75.9%). It is worth to mention that Greece does not have a special tennis school like those found abroad (Spain school characterized for the baseline game and Spain ATP players are specialist on clay court). Considering the results of the research, it is clear that coaches do not have a common methodology in terms of technique teaching and a clear direction in terms of training method. Three classes (groups) of coaches derived from the grouping analysis.

The first class of coaches, including 43 coaches who use the Eastern Grip for the Forehand and Backhand Basic Strokes. This category of coaches is influenced by the Swedish School, which teaches the Eastern Grip (Swedish Way, 1999). Swedish tennis dominated in the 80s (Bjorn Borg) at the time where tennis started developing in Greece. The second group (27 coaches) is influenced by the Spanish school which uses the Western Grip for the Forehand and Backhand Basic Strokes (Arranz, Anrade, & Grespo, 1993). The third group (5 coaches) included in the first class, uses the Continental Grip for the Forehand. These coaches are influenced by the old technique teaching method and frequently use the same grip (Continental) for all the Basic Strokes (Ruth & Le Bar, 1982). The second class of coaches comprises 10 persons using the Western Grip for the Forehand and Backhand Basic Strokes (Arranz, Andrade, & Grespo, 1993). The third class which is the smallest one (5 persons), uses the Eastern Grip for the Forehand and Backhand Basic Strokes.

The results are that Greek coaches, as far as methodology is concerned, are either influenced by one of the internationally prevailing schools or by the education provided by the Greek Government provides. As for the training methodology, it has been proved that there is no clear or, at least, dominating opinion on the methodology of training. On the contrary, there are many, intrinsic differences and errors in the first two groups, whereas the third one does not practice the modern methods. The above evidence the lack of a common educational practice to be implemented and developed in the long term. Finally, no common educational model in Greece exists in terms of basic stroke technique.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

Within the limit and limitation of the study it could be concluded that there are influences regarding the teaching of basic strokes (forehand and backhand), formed by the trends created by ITF (play and stay, red, orange, green ball in first step of learning tennis skills). In general, there is no common methodology for teaching, regardless of the fact that most coaches follow contemporary trends in teaching tennis. In conclusion, a common educational practice must be applied on training issues, this practice having to follow the international educational tendency.

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