

# Not improving? You are probably too comfortable!

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The main reason players do not improve is because only few are willing to step out of their comfort zone. Just like any muscle, gains only occur when you push above your current ability and that is not pleasant. Regardless of how much time you spend on the court or in the gym, if you are comfortable you are not improving. If it is easy, you are wasting your time. If you really want to take your game to the next level, you need to embrace the struggle:

## **Seek out the Most Uncomfortable Opponents.**

Playing against players whose game you find comfortable is fun but not very helpful. Playing against players that frustrate you, annoy you or exploit your weaknesses is not much fun but much more productive. Those are your true teachers – the only ones that can improve your game. Seek them!

## **Work Through Uncomfortable Fitness Routines**

Getting in shape is painful and most players believe that once they are in shape the workouts will feel easier. However, the truth is that once you stop pushing, you stop improving. So, yes, as you get in better shape the workouts will start feeling easier, but

that is exactly the time to bump up the load. The old: No pain, no gain is not too far off the mark.

### **Embrace Uncomfortable Technical Changes**

Technical changes take time and in many occasions the immediate result is a decrease in performance. Therefore, many players revert to their mediocre shot and are not willing to suffer through the change. They keep working on their shot but only if it feels good and goes in. Most serious technical changes should feel weird, strange, awkward. "If it feels the same, it is the same." Stop wasting your time pretending you are working on changing the shot. Commit to the change and stick to it.

### **Practice Uncomfortable Pattern of Play**

As players develop, so does their game style. A successful game style in the younger age groups will probably not work as well later on, so players need to adapt. However, it is very difficult to change a once successful game style. Under pressure everyone reverts to what they know - to their instincts. As with the technical changes, changing patterns of play takes a lot of work and will usually lead to an initial decrease in performance. Losing is never fun, and losing to players you used to beat is beyond "not fun" but sometimes it is the price to pay for a much better future game.

### **Seek Uncomfortable Conditions**

It is very enjoyable to play indoors with perfect illumination, perfect temperature, a nice medium-speed court with perfect bounces, no wind, no sun, no crowd cheering against you, no noise and no distractions. Unfortunately, in competitive tennis we can only find this "nirvana" in our dreams. The reality is very different. You never play in ideal conditions, so do not seek ideal practice conditions. Go out in the wind, in the heat, on bad courts, in noisy environments. Challenge yourself. It is the only way to truly prepare for competition.

**If you are serious about improving, get uncomfortable. Seek out the things you hate. Very likely they are exactly what you need.**