

GARDEN STATE CLE LESSON PLAN

A 1.0 credit course

**FREE DOWNLOAD
LESSON PLAN AND EVALUATION**

REPRESENTING A CHILD TENNIS PRODIGY

With

**Robert Ramsey
Garden State CLE Senior Instructor**

And featuring

**Alan Peyrouton
Attorney**

Program description

Every once in a while a client will come into your office and say, “My kid is a tennis prodigy!” And you know what? Every once in a while the kid is a prodigy. This 1 credit CLE will advise you on how to handle a client with an athletically gifted child.

I. Introduction

- **Parents come to your office with child who is a tennis superstar at age 13**
- **1 in 100 people who come in the office with this possibility does it really exist**

II. First step

- **Don't get excited right away because the claims are easy to make but can they back them up with proof**
- **See credentials:**
 - **look at family line (most great players come from families with great players),**
 - **how did the kid get into tennis,**
 - **competitive experience,**
 - **have they played internationally,**
 - **what evidence is there that this kid is exceptional?**
 - **Has the child played at junior academy?**
 - **Scholarships to play?**
 - **Where have they played?**
 - **Where have they trained?**
- **What about kids whose families don't have resources for extensive training but the kid has raw talent? Talent is there but no objective evidence**
 - **Is there a video?**
 - **Wait a few years to compete**
 - **Explain to parents how to get into competition – how to enroll in US Tennis Association, what tournaments to play and see how measures up to other players**
- **History is full of those with talent but how do they compete?**
- **Need the natural ability and the ability to compete and the measuring stick is to put them into competition to see how the child does**
- **Don't get very excited**

III. What to discuss with parents (attorney as a coach and as an attorney)

- **How well will the child stand up to the pressure?**
- **How much interest does the child have in the sport – no interest then not going to put in the effort**

- **Tennis is a difficult lifestyle – need to travel**
- **Child has to have ranking, experience in tournament play**
- **Make sure that child does not get injured**
- **Determine child’s maturity level**
- **There is no coaching in tennis – you are an individual on the court, you cannot ask the coach to take you out – is the child mature enough to be on the court by him/herself playing for an hour or more**
- **Even without a ranking, show the talent**
- **Interview the child – long term and short term aspirations?**
 - **High school play?**
 - **College?**
 - **Career?**
- **Gauge parents’ involvement – parent over-involvement can trump a child’s desire to play – kids get burned out – parent involvement needs to be controlled**
- **Do not forge ahead if child does not want to move forward with the sport – child gets resentful because they miss out on things if parents are too much involved – attorney should advise parents**
- **Attorney should set expectations of clients(parents) – since child is a minor – the parents sign contracts**
 - **Can open doors to college scholarships**
 - **Short manageable goals are important**
- **Is tennis mutually exclusive from other careers??**
 - **No – can get an education and pursue another career**

IV. Marketing child for a school/scholarship

- **Ranking – need to get attention of the coach**
- **Ranking is more of a selling point over a video**
- **Ranking shows ability to compete and temperament on the court**
- **Member of US Tennis Association – USTA.com**
- **Tournament schedules are online – sign up and play tournaments**
- **Get a schedule for the year – need 6 tournaments to get a ranking – singles play**
- **1 tournament a month – see if that is the lifestyle the child wants**
- **Professional track v. scholarship/college track? – going to college delays the money making potential**
- **As a lawyer – provide options and consequences to those options**
- **College years is the prime of a player – this takes away a critical 4 years of a player’s development**

- **Starting at 14 in tennis is “late” – the life of a tennis player is like a swimmer, gymnastics, golfer because they are individual sports**
- **No set time period to determine whether someone is going to peak in their career/skill level**
- **Try a year of college and then after freshman year get a schedule for a few months to do American circuit (satellite, challenger, and grand slam tournaments – 3 levels)**
- **ATP (Assoc. of Tennis Professionals) – works on a point system – depending on how many points you have you are ranked – 1 ATP point = 1600 in the world; more points accumulated the higher ranking**
- **Do not counsel parents on the level of school for the student – look at geographic region, then a few states, then a package to a few schools (including video, newspaper articles)**
- **If sending a video, don’t send playing an inferior player – send in something to demonstrate the skills and demeanor of the child**
- **Parents should meet with coach – coach/player relationship – coach needs healthy attitude**
- **Mutuality of advantage – school and student benefit**
- **Coach must inspire the student**
- **College schedule is very busy**
- **Division one schools usually have better players but not necessarily**
- **Need better players to play with to improve**
- **Counsel family about all types of choices – let them know about all points on a regular basis**
- **NCAA impact on going professional**
 - **college player must maintain amateur status and cannot get prize money – if get money then cannot play college tennis anymore**
 - **random drug testing – any performance enhancing drug, not necessarily steroids**
 - **ATP also does random drug testing**
- **The amount of time you can make money is short**
- **Players that work the hardest are not making that much money – only see big tournaments on TV – need to break into the big tournaments to make money**
- **If don’t go to college and try professionally, must be able to succeed**

- **Either hold off playing in college (delay) – see if coach will wait for you and play on the tour but don't take any money (NCAA disqualifier!) – see how is out there**
- **The player should not consider him/herself as a prodigy – may be too high expectation – be sensitive to what the player wants – don't set up the child for disappointment**
- **Tennis is a game of percentages and consistency – need consistency in your life in order to improve**
- **To make a living in tennis you can go to college and run the risk of injuries in college play without making any money – this is the risk vs. going professionally at the outset**
- **Can compete at the professional level without making money**

V. Job of an agent

- **Agents deal with the sponsors, and evaluate contracts while player focuses on playing**
- **There are agencies (ING) that offer such services**
- **Sometimes the coach may have a referral**
- **Tennis agents can be found on line**
- **Look at how much time that agent is going to spend with you – what experience does the agent have in tennis**
- **Must interview agents and trust instincts – see if that agent is going to best represent player**
- **Attorney can have better ability to interview agents because objective**
- **Agent must know how and when to talk to a player – need good timing – so many considerations**
- **Agent must have strategic plan over a period of years – endorsements, anything by means of compensation**
- **Tournaments to play is a personal decision to the player**
- **Short term agreements are most appropriate because life of tennis player can be very short**

VI. The Intangibles

- **Need heart to be able to play**
- **Everyone has strengths and weaknesses**
- **The intangible is the mind and the heart to play – cannot teach it and cannot be given but can cultivate it**
- **Who is going to want it consistently**
- **Champions hate to lose**

- **Cannot dwell on losses – need to learn to put losses behind you and focus on the next game/tournament**
- **There is a certain combination of things that can get through to a person – each person has a “combination lock” – need to learn how to get through to each person**
- **You need to help your player understand the kind of player he/she is**
- **Look at films – evaluate player and question why played certain ways to unlock the potential**
- **Put player in a match type situation to either make the shot or miss the shot – no time to think – but goes back to practice and abilities developed during practice**

VII. Critical role of attorney

- **Most important function of an attorney – educate and inform client/player and parents what is required, what choices they have, what limitations they have**
- **Many people don’t know options and limitations**
- **The little points provide an informed client to make better decisions**
- **Be careful about who you are accepting money from, where does the money come from, are you being offered a guarantee**
- **Player cannot be a one man band – player needs to focus on playing and let attorney worry about the rest**
- **Attorney must know industry**