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Context to the nugget

Vijay talks about the role of coaching at various stages of a person's life and how as a person evolves, the coach that works with you to help you go to the next level might change. He also talks about how much can get accomplished through sheer will power using the fascinating example of Richard Williams who (with limited background in tennis) through his sheer resolve coached Serena and Venus to become world champions.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Give us an insight into how players select coaches, what differentiate the Great coaches from the Good coaches?

Vijay Amritraj (VA): So now you are looking at the 0.001 people who are looking for coaches the actual coaching starts in that village where you have to find the right person to be able to teach you. That's where it begins and that's where the toughest ones comes from and can you make that little child 5, 6 years old and be able to fuel his/her passion into what they want to become and do you have that drive to be able to get them at that point where they can be able to get someone at the next level so coaching is a very general term. At the very beginning you need the very basic fundamentals you need to be able to get this into your head and get this into the way you play and them get it to the point where you can play under 8 under 10 under 14 and all of that and be able to take you through that system but once you get there you probably need someone to be able to push you over to the next level. And that might or might not be the same person to be taking to you that far. Toni Nadal for example, worked with Nadal all the way from the time he was started playing the game. It's quite unusual that the guy stayed all the way through his uncle but finally when he get up there and when you really sort if in that lead run of players at that point in time I am not quite sure that you can use a coach as a coach you need someone who's been there done that and who knows how to use your strengths at that four, five, thirty, forty, and what you need to do when you get to that position because nobody is on court to tell you, unlike a lot of the 11 man of 5 man team sports we can pull a guy out and put the next man in. nothing taking away from the team sport but you have that option to be able to do that, what is hear you out there and you are wondering where I have done 5-2 in the fifth, how am I going to figure out, how am I going to get back from here. Now you have to figure out what your bakers and the ad beads and the Lendl's all of them have told you at that particular time, now even if you are Federer and Joe and so on and so forth because it is easier to tell from the outside than when you are on the court and then say to yourself oh this is what I was supposed to do against this opponent as oppose to my semi-final opponent and then be able to draw all on your energies and knowledge to be able to use that piece that your coach has

told you three weeks back in Monte Carlo before you got to London. Those are the great moments where I can see when I am doing television I can see how these guys are thinking at that time.

DJ: Give us an insight into where you see the delta? What are the good examples where you have seen good players become good coaches and what are the examples where people without necessarily a background in tennis being successful as a Coach?

VA: I think to a great extent someone who has not played the game but who understands the game will be able to teach someone to play the game I don't think you can teach someone to win, I don't think you can teach someone to be great all of those comes from within to a great extent but when you need to get from a particular level to higher level I think you need someone who has actually played the game and then when you get to the very top of it you need someone to be able to help you at those moments who you respect and admire because he or she has actually done that I find it very hard to believe that if you ranked in the top 200 in the world today that you can actually have someone who has not played the game teach you how to win a quarter final match in a grand slam I don't think so, that could be wrong there is one outstanding example of where I have wrong which I will tell you in a minute but I do believe that you do need someone, in my case for example when I was growing up and I was playing in the early stages between the ages of winning the Indian championships and becoming on the top 10 of the world 18 months later I was coached by Pancho Gonzales who for me was as high as you can get in the tennis world and the way he also taught me because I mould in my game in his or he saw me and said oh well you know, this guy I can help because whether consciously or unconsciously my game was similar to his and then at the tail end of my career I went back to someone to be able to keep me in tour a long enough because I felt he was the perfect person who I thought I would play like and so he helped me for few years, helping me stay on the tour perhaps longer than I should have and he kept me playing at the highest level so those things are important when you are talking about coaching, I don't think he has just jump in there and coach a person to a great championship the example that I bring up which kind of beats all the norms and the true guts now he learnt Tennis from a book, text book and then took the mark at the public court and competent in one of the worst sections of Los Angeles and taught this children how to play and the rest is history, I think that's not the good example to use but that's an exception to the room.

DJ: So, what in that case worked if you had to reflect on that, what about that made it work for them to be so extraordinarily successful?

VA: I think in Richard Williams case, where the fact that they had the single minded devotions to those two children who were meant to be tennis players which is the way they were literally born to be number one, number two is he was almost fighting an uphill battle in the fact that he wanted these two African American to play a white sport and literally show the world that we can do it and the fact that these girls and boys are making so much money and he thought that this is the way to come out of an economic difficulty which they were in and the biggest risk for them as he always said oh was there a big risk at thirty forty five if you asked him that question he would always tell you that , oh there is no pressure on that at all because the biggest pressure for us was to be able to walk out of home to the tennis court make sure you don't get shot on the way, that was the high risk venture for us. So I think you are coming from two different perspectives of the way people thought and Richard was very clear in the way he was able to actually have that belief and work ethic to get these girls to be able to become what they are.

DJ: What is your view on the greatest tennis coach ever, who would be the two or three contenders for that title if there were such a title?

VA: I think that's a hard one to pick because each person, if you are looking at its results, strictly by results then you are going to have with certain people who have had results in that particular area. Guys 1x you know my people who are next number of grand slam people who are next numbers of tour and titles and men or women and so on and so forth or the person with the most number of kids in his academy, I think that's very relative because the greatest tennis coach ever is it someone who actually created the Pete Sampras someone who actually created the Federer and then did nothing, So, it depends on how you look at it and I do believe that there are the coaches at the highest level. You know, whether Toni Nadal is one that comes to mind because he grew up with the rougher but he also has the Bolletticheli of the world you have Bob Brett, so many people who have created great people by just picking them Tiriac Picked Boris Becker when he was 17 or 16 years old and as a matter of fact troughed in one year at 17 years away march that year in 1985 he asked me to play doubles with Becker and I said you want me to play with some 17 year old kid and he said well I want you to play with him because I think he is going to be terrific. So, I did, I ended up playing with him and we got to the final that year or the Rotodome tournament and I kept telling him, Boom Boom because that's the way he struck the ball one boom and the second boom and if they came back he was upset so he was very upset so he hit it harder and of course two months later he won Wimbledon so Teriac saw that there after he coached Goran Ivanisevic and Teriac saw that, but his spotting potential was at very high level Like picking a Raonic and saying oh I think I can make Raonic a winner of a major event but that's speaking amongst the very top of the cherry pie, so it's hard to but you have a whole slew of coaches across the board.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Of the various things Vijay said in this piece, what struck me the most was how much can get accomplished with sheer grit and determination. The fact that Richard Williams, the father of Serena and Venus didn't have any background in tennis, but worked with them to be world champions is inspiring to say the least. Thank you for listening. For more you could follow the Twitter handle Play to Potential.

End of nugget transcription

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About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock human potential of senior executive’s / leadership teams by working with them as an Executive Coach / Sounding Board / Transition Advisor. You can know more about his work [here](#).

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