



The strategic component

If there is one characteristic or quality that every player must have when developing the strategic component of tennis, regardless of the player's skill level, it is the ability to adapt. Putting a particular strategy into effect during a match requires a certain amount of adaptation to various circumstances and conditions that may develop as the match progresses.

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Depending on certain elements of the game, such as the court surface, game score, match score, a player's strengths or an opponent's game style, to name a few, a player will have to adapt his strategy in some way, shape or form. These adaptations will likely take place in one of seven strategic subcomponents, which are: repetition, recognizing strengths, game style, surfaces, game situations, match situations and tournament situations. Each subcomponent represents a different element that must be considered when formulating a strategy.

By definition, strategy is the implementation of a combination of tactics (consistency, spin, placement, patterns, power and shot selection) that make up an overall game plan to combat an opponent. In other words, a strategy is "the big picture."

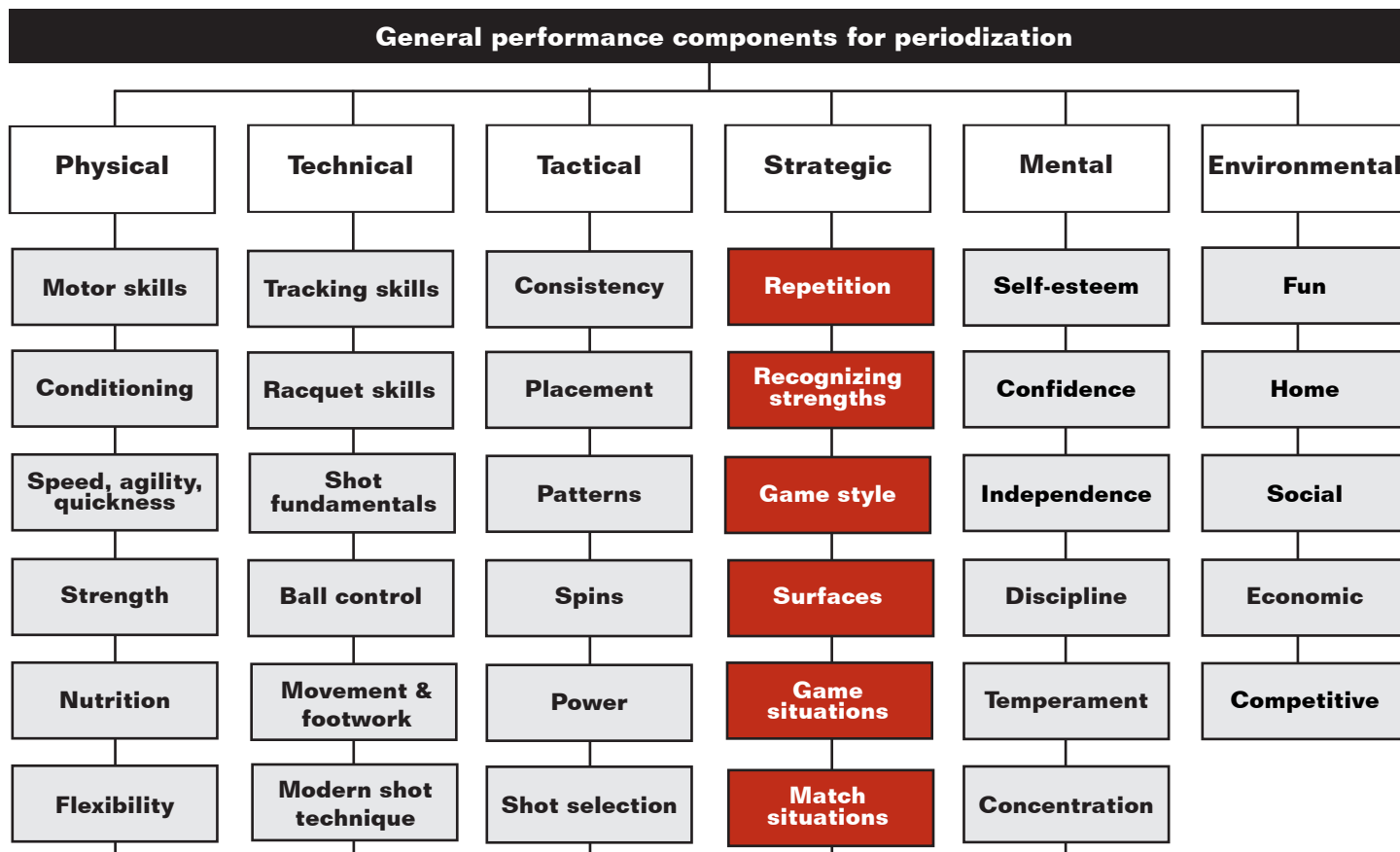
For example, a player's strategy may be to look for opportunities to come to the net and put the ball away; it could be to penetrate one specific side of the court; it could be to move the opponent around a lot at the baseline to tire him out. A beginner's strategy might be simply to keep the ball in play, while a more advanced player might implement the strategy of moving an opponent out wide with angled shots before hitting a short dropshot.

While a player might be successful at implementing one strategy, he also has to be able to change his strategy if it becomes ineffective and the opponent begins to counter. A well-prepared player should know how to make appropriate changes to his own strategy based on an opponent's changing strategy. The idea is to start out with a strategy that you're most comfortable with and that you do well. If it is a winning strategy, then continue using it, but if it's not effective, a player needs to know when to change it. Let's discuss the first strategic subcomponent, repetition.

Repetition

During the course of a match, it is important for a player to be able to recognize and identify which tactics (a shot and/or combination of shots) are proving successful. Once he finds something that consistently works to his advantage and puts his opponent in trouble, he should then repeat the tactic over and over until the match ends or the opponent makes an adjustment and finds a way to counter.

An example of strategic repetition might be hitting a high, hard, topspin shot to a player's backhand during a rally to



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