

Qualities of Top Teaching Professionals

Finding a good Tennis Pro can be as challenging as finding a good physician or attorney. Your search should include more than asking friends or looking at advertisements. If you are looking for someone for team coaching, private lessons or facility work here are some things that will ensure you have a first-rate professional.

First, always get someone who is currently certified and insured. Make sure your Pro has at least a USPTA Professional rating or USPTR Instructor rating. Preferably, find someone who has had a USPTA Elite Professional rating for at least five years.

Look for someone who is enthusiastic and seems happy. It has been said you can't teach enthusiasm – you have to catch it. You need a Tennis Pro who can transfer their enthusiasm and love of tennis to you. Then, lessons can be fun.

Quality Pros are on time and teach with 100+ very good tennis balls. Being prompt is important and shows respect for other people's time. Substandard coaches teach with "dead" balls. You play matches with new (good) balls and should practice with the same.

Find someone who is a good communicator and promptly returns calls. A good teacher knows and states people's first names. Also, excellent coaches teach in three different ways: visual, kinesthetic and verbal. Remember, most athletic learning is visual.

Top Pros limit class size and groups to six students. The United States Professional Tennis Association recommends a four to one student to Pro ratio. I have never witnessed a quality lesson with more than six students per Pro. Also, smaller groups show the coach cares more about excellent instruction than maximizing revenues.

Get someone who delivers realistic drills and avoids isolation. You need to practice like you play, and the closer you match a practice setting to the competitive environment the more transfer of skills and strategies. Isolation is teaching one person at a time in a group setting. Good lessons have everyone moving and/or participating at the same time.

The best Pros give constructive feedback and have progressive lesson plans. Excellent teachers avoid saying "no" or "don't" and communicate with positive statements which build confidence. Also, they do not do the same drills week after week. Yes, tennis is repetitive, and drills should include fresh games and plans.

Find someone who gives good information and makes lessons fun. Enjoyable practice is essential for children and smiling helps everyone. The best lessons are good workouts and end with reviews and suggestions for practice.

Good coaches watch their teams and students in competition. Although Pros can not watch every match, the best coaches make time to watch their students play. Doing this shows support and allows the Pro to know what their students need for future lessons.

Look for a Tennis Pro who is an advanced player. As with all sports, most of the best coaches are or were excellent players. Find someone who has competed at the collegiate level or is at least a USTA 4.5 level player. Learn about their playing experiences, so you can determine if they can transfer some of that success to you.

Finally, top Tennis Professionals have character. You will not learn this after a brief meeting, yet this essential quality will be revealed over time. True Professionals honor their commitments and do not harm other Pros or the tennis industry. This is so important that it is included in the code of ethics of the professional associations.

When you find someone with most or all of the above qualities you have a Professional. Take the time to find a quality Tennis Professional. When you do you will optimize the tennis experience for everyone associated with the Pro and program.

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