



The environmental component

In the development of any player, whether a recreational club member or a competitive junior, outside factors and issues unrelated to the game of tennis undoubtedly play a significant role in how that player performs on court. These outside factors, which include the player's social, personal and home life, are what make up the sixth and final general performance component of a player's development: the environmental component.

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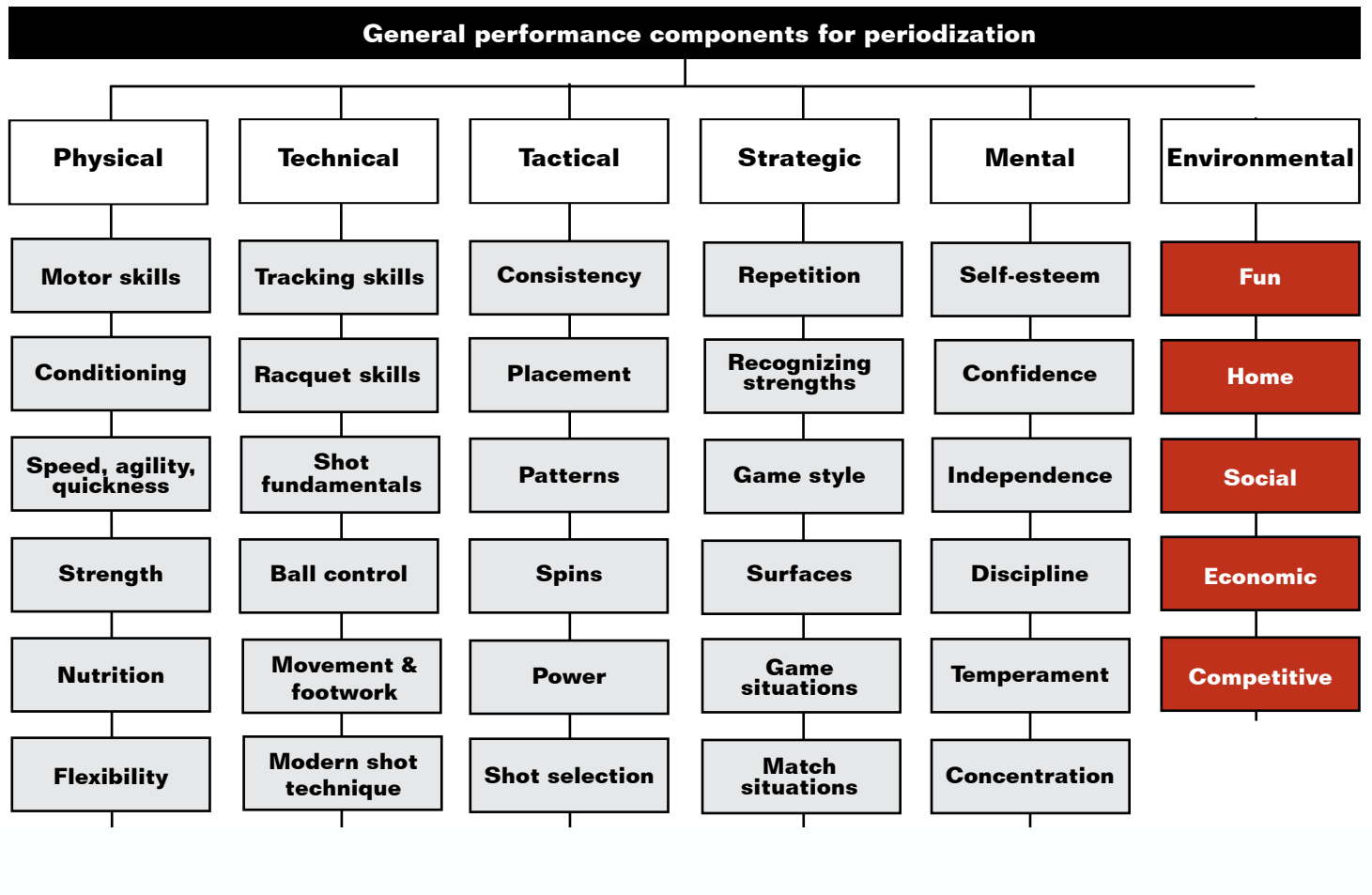
A positive environment is key to the development of a successful player. The status of a player's environment can often become a distraction to the player on court because it affects the player's mentality and concentration. If relationships within the home or in a player's personal life are suffering, it may have some kind of mental effect on the player because those problems may remain in the back of the player's mind, and may ultimately affect his or her performance on the tennis court. Therefore, it is important for a coach to do his or her best to minimize outside distractions.

Of course, there is only so much a coach can do. Sometimes the outside distractions may involve financial difficulties, a sick relative, problems at work or school or even relationships between the player and a girlfriend, boyfriend or spouse. These kinds of issues could weigh heavily on a player's mind, causing a lack of enjoyment of the game, or in many cases neglect to practice and play. However, according to USPTA Master Professional David T. Porter, Ed.D., tennis should remain a positive influence on a player's life no matter what else may be going on off the court.

"The environment that you're in, and the things that happen outside of tennis, whether it's a family issue, friends, or maybe you just failed a test in school, any of those things have a big impact on the way that you feel," Porter said. "That's why coaches need to be able to help eliminate distractions so that the tennis court can be a place of refuge from all of the challenges that are facing players in the rest of their lives and from all of the things they don't have control over."

In addition to personal issues, a player's environment can also refer to the tennis relationship between the player and coach, or the player, coach and parents, if the player is a junior. When it comes to the development of a child, the player's environment has a significant influence on whether or not he or she continues to play tennis.

"There's kind of a triumvirate between the player, coach and parents," said Master Professional Jim Parker. "It's really a team that has to be moving in the same direction. I think in some cases it's the role of the coach to educate



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