

CONCERNING THE SPANISH METHODOLOGY

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Abstract: the aim of this article is to explain concisely the most important points of Spanish Method starting from Bruguera Method and analyzing it in a neurological, psychological and methodological key.

Keywords: Vertical Thinking, Automatic Movement, Emotional Learning, Intuitive Intelligence.

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Introduction

After the 3 days Symposium, organized in Italy in 2010, with Mr Luis Bruguera and Experts entitled 'From parent to coach, the psychophysical growth of a young tennis player', experiences in Equelite Academy and in Pro Ab Academy, I have analyzed **Spanish Method** following 2 different goals:

- 1) The complete technical and tactical learning of tennis and psychophysical growth.
- 2) The training of a young tennis player on the path to become professional.

How many European Academies do it...

The methodology behind the training of a situational sport (tennis is one of these) has the following objective: the maximum psychomotor personal development that (according to experts), for the development of coordinative capacities, is possible for not over 20% starting from the genetic base. The goal is to put the player in the condition to solve many game situations.

This means that the average tennis player would never be able to learn to hit the ball many times in a sufficient way or be able to resolve many discrete difficult situations he might face. From a psychological point of view this method would already frustrate a young child, to whom is presented a didactical proposal with a higher difficulty than his coordinative level.

The teaching approach. From a neurological point of view the suggestion that learning at **random** with continuous variations of course tend to maintain concentration, favouring the learning and increasing their motor ability, but in situations proportional to their actual ability.

If we talk about a tennis player at an average level the failure given from the lack of control in a situation for the elements suggested produces a muscular stiffening limiting learning.

In a complex sport like tennis the pedagogical theories have to always take into account those of psychological behaviour. During the development of athletes the peak of their self-esteem must be maintained when it hits its highest level.

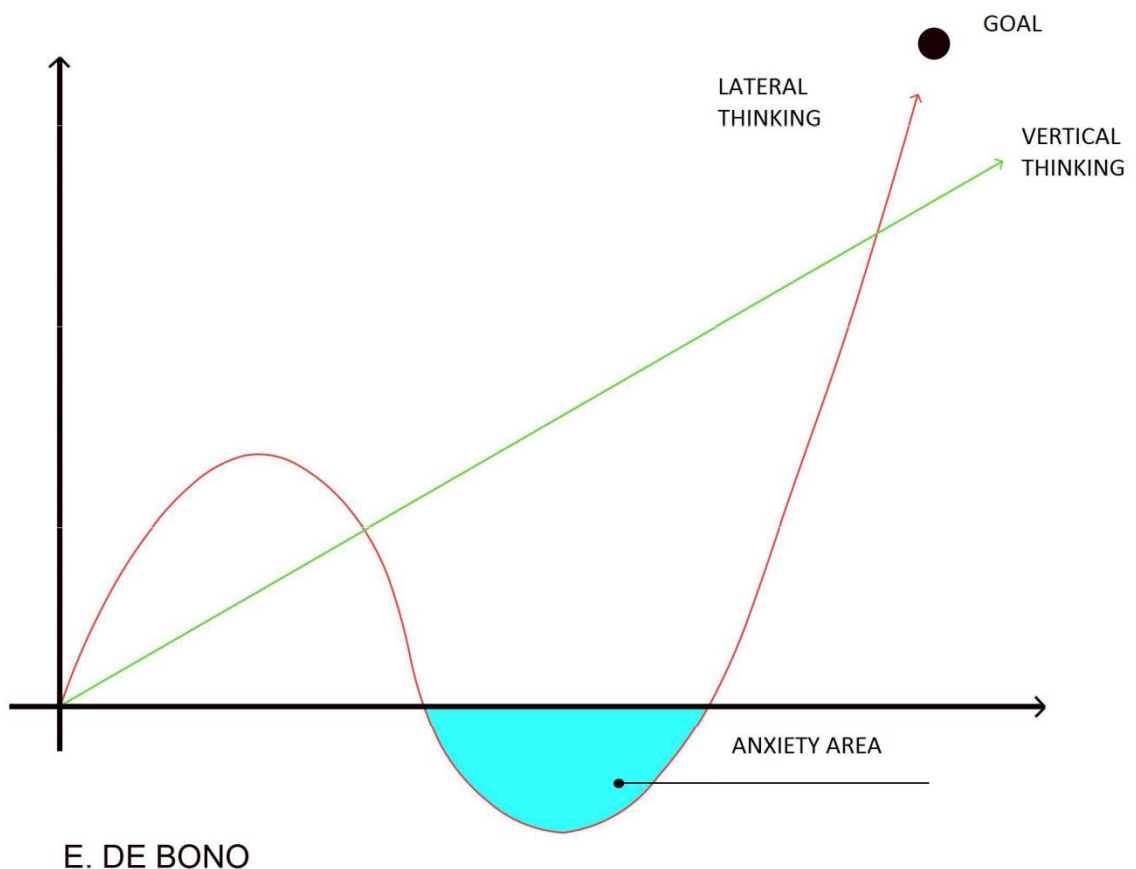
The unlimited court. In many nations the tennis court is divided into manoeuvre and target areas. Quantify the infinite game situations is just an illusion. In reality this approach produces anxiety, insecurity and confusion.

Psychologically besides 'territory' it forces a conscious learning and rational with a lateral mental approach. What does this mean then?

The Key concept. The lateral and vertical thinking.

The lateral (aims to develop creativity) according to its inventor Prof E. De Bono represents the most used teaching method at international level schools. It tested the achievement of objectives in a more precise way than that of the 'vertical thinking', that is the key of Spanish method.

From the graph we can deduce the 'lateral thinking' is more effective but it provokes an 'anxiety area'. In a situation completely open such as a tennis match, this 'anxiety area' can become wider and if the given player doesn't have adequate ability he/she will not be able to reach his/her objective.



This method permits to reach objectives of psychomotor development and the widening of the basic coordination, but it can't be used to train for victory and the training of a professional player from starting point to average level.

Spanish coaches demonstrate with great results how valid this method is and how it can be applied to Junior players (13-14 years) and professionals that have an adequate game technique, who trains on clay courts and follow an appropriate physical training.

The objective of a stereotyped training is to make frequent game actions automatic. These happens into limited areas of the court that allow an aggressive defence (in the case where we face an opponent with a quicker game) and the way the hits played enable maximum security that encourages the opponent to fault. All conditions that are activated psychologically with minimum wasted energy and nervous tension.

The Bruguera method as base of Spanish method.

It is based on 4 points: 1) Control 2) Emotive Learning 3) Intuitive Intelligence 4) Automatic recurring situations.

Control the act, the game, the mind, the court.

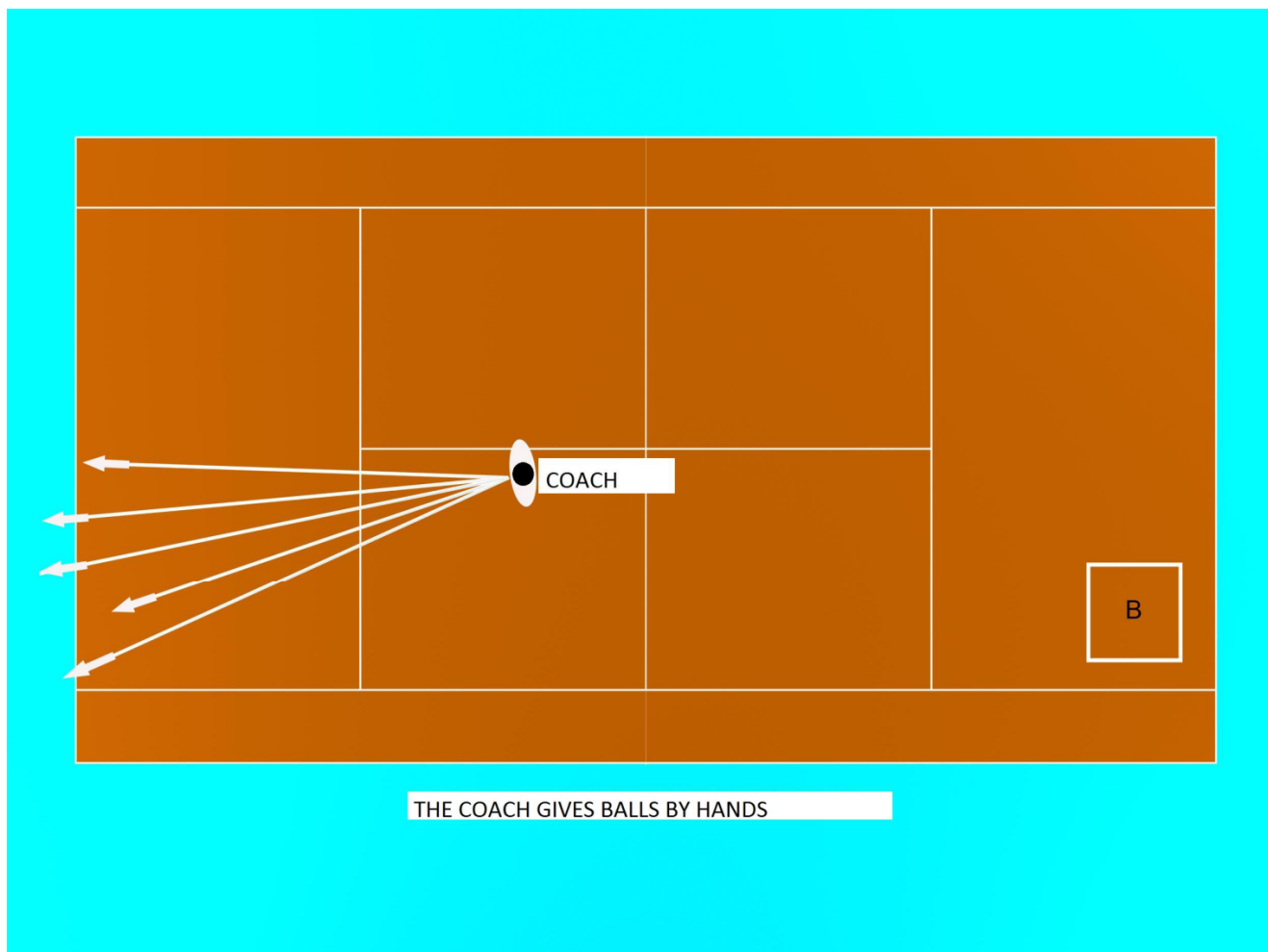
Training occurs in aerobic-anaerobic conditions and foresees numerous immense times in such a way that becomes an automatic and extra pyramidal.

So the minimum number of consecutive balls in play is 60. The automatism is created by leaving from the learning situation to go beyond the anaerobic threshold; however to take the player to his conscious strength limitations increases heart rate.

The court is seen as a manoeuvre area (if we use the terminology of our methodologist but in static conditions) from the back line with the same hit (forehand) putting it into the Target areas, the centre, half meter/1 meter before the back line with a trajectory 1 meter above net level, therefore maximum security.

Didactics.

The first didactic proposal is **the hand method** – The ball is given by the trainer by hand that bounces in front of the player. In this way the reading of the ball is deprived of the opponent, the unpredictability of the speed, direction and rotation of the ball. The racquet works in full acceleration trying to send the ball towards the centre of the court where you risk less to make mistakes and it's difficult for the opponent to find angles.



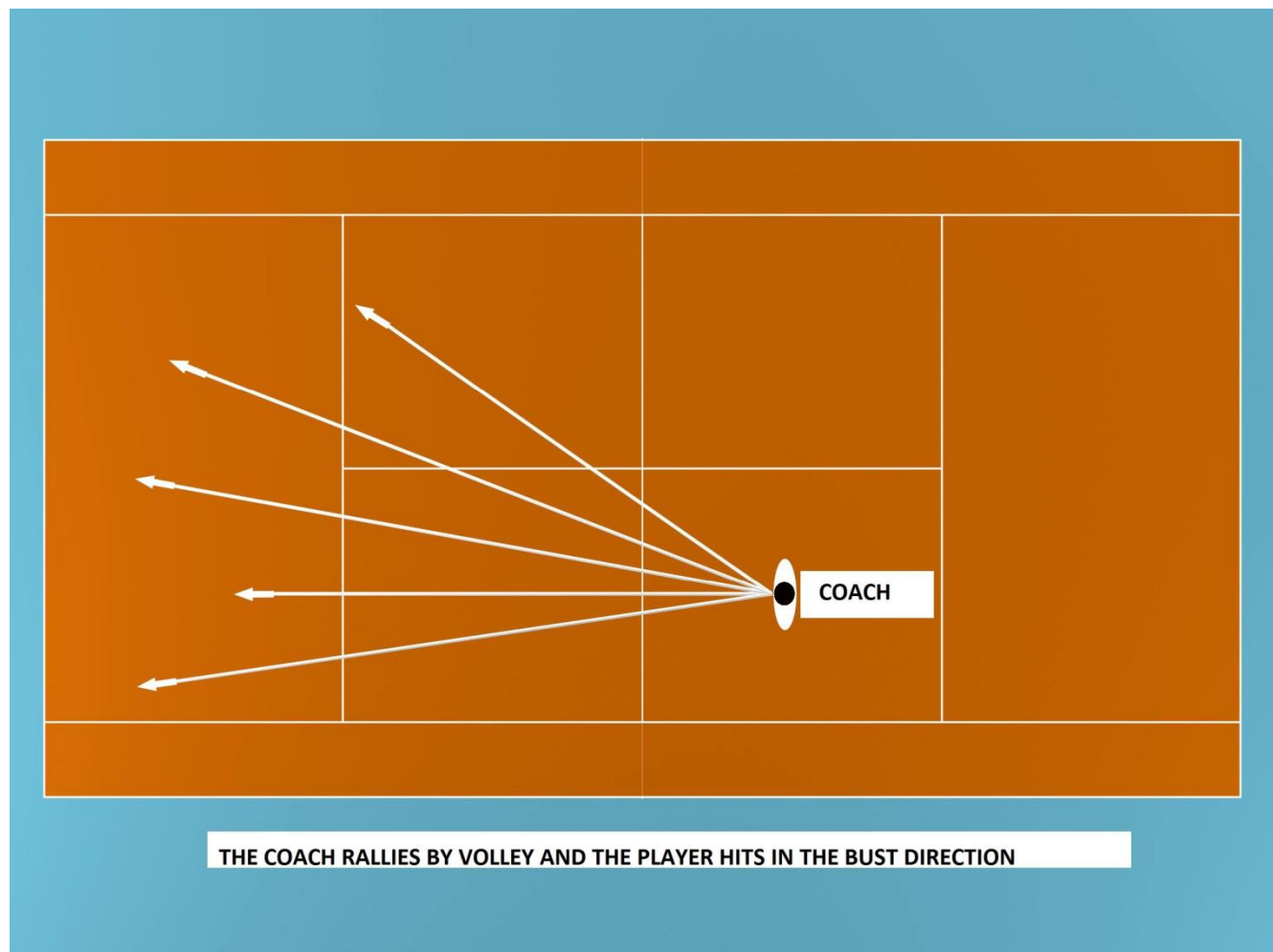
Movements like this become automatic with a conscious superior confidence and an easier way to reproduce these situations of emotive stress. Training with the support of positive communication in which the error is never defined but corrected, and paying a positive attention more on motor actions to do.

The beauty of this approach is supported by Dr Alessandro Zaffari (Neurologist and neurosurgeon) “A fluid execution without pushing too hard, done automatically on the reaction of the continuous flow of visual information, somato-sensory and postural motor systems. At the same time when afferent perceptive somato-sensory and proprioceptive are not coherent or effective (which happen when you hit the ball to the opponent, different every time, often unforeseeable) the movements are inaccurate and the posture is unstable. The hands method moves the afferent towards easier tasks, reduces the field of vision, stimulating the feel of the posture”

With this methodology the aim is **to automate** the movements that tennis players do creating alternate aerobic and anaerobic lucidity of about 50 seconds of intense activity. The condition to recreate is that of ‘apnoea game’ avoiding muscular stiffening.

You train to keep up the lucidity and the relaxed state in extreme conditions.

The second phase of this method consider the same format against the trainer positioned in centre court about one meter from the line. *The player must aim for the trainer's chest (see diagram)* so that he keeps a high ball over the net.



The minimum number of balls to hit should be 60, for the same principals as given previously. Only when regularity, maximum acceleration and good error control are reached the player can aim for the corners, keeping up a maximum security margin.

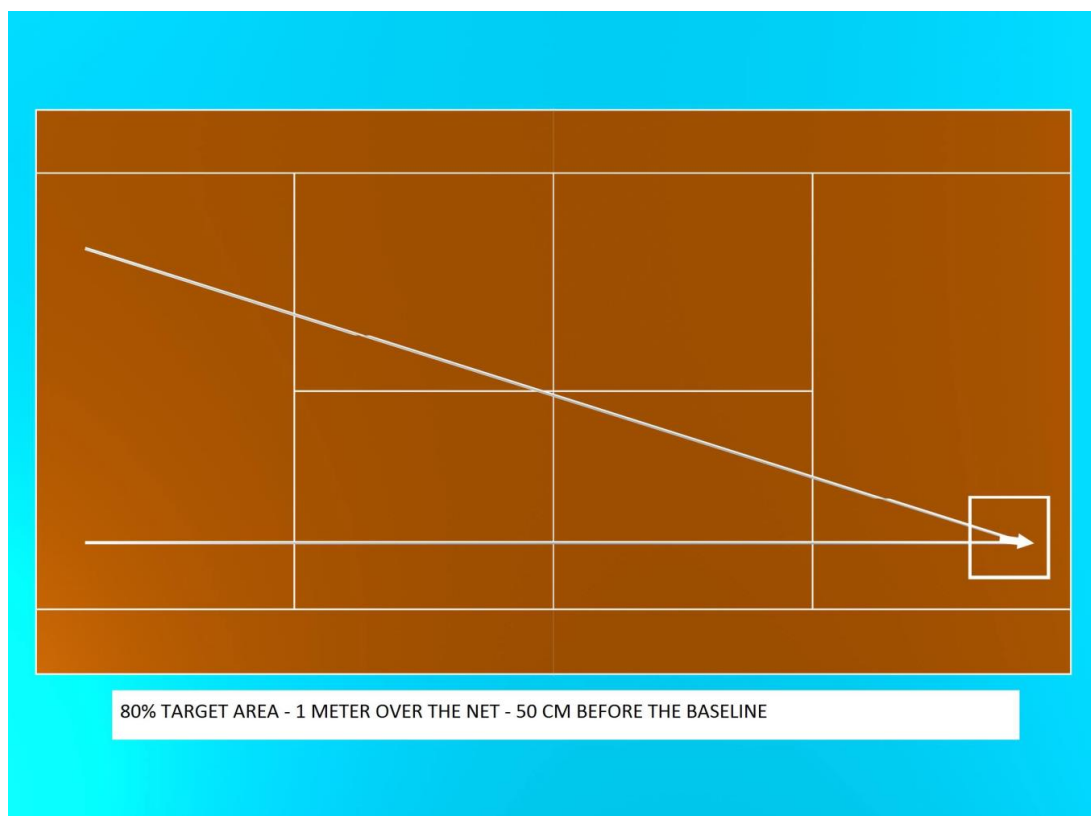
This work should be done bearing in mind emotional learning. Emotional learning consists of feeling. The Canadian psychologist Albert Bandura teaches the awareness principal. The education of the player to feel the best hit in the ideal situation, and to continue with self encouragement so that the player becomes aware of what he is doing. For these reasons the explanation must be kept extremely simple and reproducible as only the **emotional learning** with concentration based on yourself and independent of space and time coordination can enable reproduction of these skills during a game, inner security and an independence on exterior factors. How many times during a game do we hit without looking?

Dr Zilaffi (Neurologist and brain surgeon) confirms that thinking about any body movements before hitting the ball reduces the athlete's performance. Conscious movements are not necessary for control in real time.

Intuitive intelligence. There's a Confucio proverb which states "I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand". Making a decision in a very short time is called intuitive intelligence. The best way of learning is to copy, especially in 'emotional' players. (Mirror Neurons Theory) Automatic reactions in the most frequently reoccurring situations. The tactic must be to have an **aggressive defence** if my opponent has a faster rhythm than me and my objective is to attack the back of the court so as to evade attacks. I will aim to play towards there where I have trained to not go wrong and therefore I have the highest acceleration in the centre court where it is geometrically more difficult for the opponent to make me move.

Then I must put the pressure on the opponents backhand with the ball in topspin so that I am not under so much pressure.

From a psychological point of view the players approach must be 'vertical', this means to think about one element at a time and to not give to the opponent opportunities of tactical variations, therefore to create by action repetitiveness a psychological pressure for not having so many possibilities of tactical choices. Then to play to the opponents backhand, high, in topspin and half a meter away from the baseline. Only 20% of choices must be different. These last decisions will be doubly sure of success, thanks to the fact of 'improvised variations' and of the opponents move out of court during the previous exchange.



The base of the Spanish school is making the opponent play out of court, behind or to the side. This way the ball can be kept high and in topspin because it drastically limits the choices which the opponent can make.

Conclusions.

I have learnt that this is valuable not only for those aspiring young players who were born with talent but also for all young players who have drive and passion to train to become champions. For this reason I believe it should be taken highly into consideration.

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