

TOURNAMENT TOUGH

By ROC

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Tournament tough is a term used quite frequently by racquetball players. What does tournament tough really mean? I was recently asked this question at the Lifestyle Family Fitness health club the other day and thought that an explanation might be helpful to some of our readers.

There is no correct answer that is right for everyone. There are basic principals that apply to most people. First on the list is confidence, you obtain confidence in a variety of ways. One of the best ways is by practicing your shots both alone and while playing. Take the time to practice by yourself not only your favorite shots but most importantly your weaker shots. When playing just for fun, practice the low percentage shots. This is how you improve their percentages. In a tournament, consistency breeds confidence and with practice comes consistency.

Second on the list is attitude. This in my opinion is the hardest to get a handle on. It seems that a lot depends on a person's personality. Some players thrive on being pushed to the limit while other players tend to choke when the match is on the line. These are the different ends of the spectrum and most players fall somewhere in the middle.

Most players play great when they're relaxed and playing for fun. The same players playing under pressure will tighten up and miss shots they normally would make. They become frustrated and play even worse. It seems that the tighter you are the worse your game, the more relaxed you are the better you play. Recognizing where you fall in the spectrum of attitude is the first step in overcoming what I call the "Choke Syndrome". There are hundreds of ways to work on playing relaxed. Find out what works for you. I will give a couple of examples on what often works for people.

1. Don't play your opponent play the game. This means don't worry about who your playing and whether or not you think you can win or not, but rather think of your opponent as a

robot programmed to play and adjust its game to take advantage of your weaknesses.

2. Take some quiet time, such as just before going to sleep. Play the game in your mind. See yourself making the shots, running the court and playing the best game of your life. This is not an easy exercise and takes a lot of practice to become good at it.

Third on the list is physical training. You don't play the game of racquetball to get in shape you get in shape to play the game.

When these three attributes; confidence, attitude and physical training are combined with the desire to be a winner, then you will be "Tournament Tough".

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