

THE PERFORMANCE- DISRUPTING WEIGHT OF EXPECTATIONS

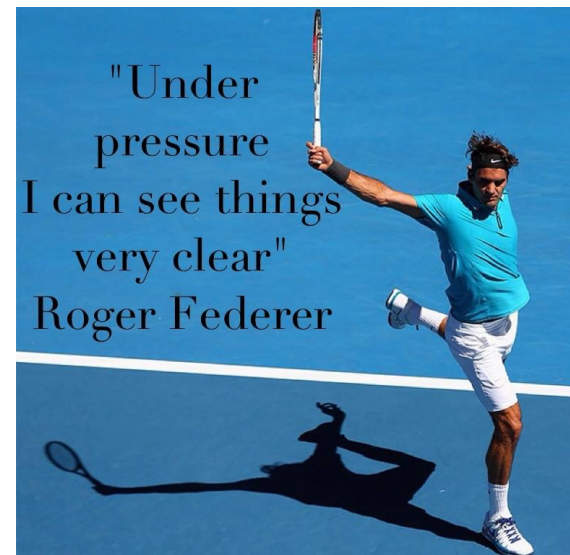
Player often asking me, "How come I regularly tend to fall apart in all of my bigger games? You know, I do just fine in practice but then I go into those more important competitions, the ones where I really want to do well, where there's more at stake, and my performances are just plain awful. I'm nervous, have no confidence in myself and am like a shell of my normal self. Why?"

If you do better in practice than competition or in less important games than the big ones, then chances are really good that you are making a very common mental mistake. You are bringing your goals or expectations into the performance with you. What I mean by expectations are the things that you are pressuring yourself to achieve like, "I want to prove to my coach that I deserve to start," "I want points from this tournament," "this is an easy tournament, I should beat everyone here," "I need to beat so & so," "I have to qualify today because my parents are watching."

These expectations or goals end up making your performance more important in your mind. They create an internal sense of urgency that gets you feeling like, "I have

to, I've got to, I need to, or, Oh my God, What if I don't?" This urgency makes you nervous, distracts your focus from where it needs to be and tightens your muscles. The end result is that you perform way below your potential.

Your goals/expectations are important to your player development. They organize your training efforts, give you a direction to go in and give you a reason to sacrifice and struggle daily.



However, your goals/expectations are a training tool to be used *in practice only*. If you take your expectations onto



the court with you when it counts, they will weigh you down and crush your performance! In fact, you can even think about your expectations as weights that you put on just before you go on for each match. If you had a critical try-out in front of you and you really wanted to impress the coaches and selection panel to make the team, would you walk into that tryout with 35 -40 extra pounds strapped to your arms and legs? Of course not! That extra weight would slow your reactions down, slow your foot speed, disrupt your mechanics and totally exhaust you. Well, this is EXACTLY what your expectations will do to you if you take them into an important performance. They'll weigh you down.

Remember, save the goals/expectations for everyday training, for giving you a good reason to sacrifice and push yourself. However, when it's time to really compete and doing well means a lot to you, then you need to leave your goals/expectations at home!