

2nd Edition

The Truth About Winning!



Learn how to think like a tennis pro and increase your wins – on and off the court.

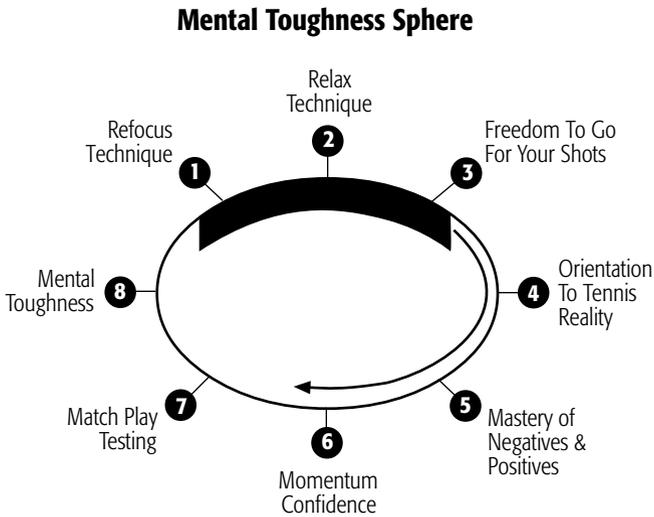
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Tom Veneziano

Developer of the Tennis Warrior System

The Truth About Winning!

Gate 4: Orientation to Tennis Reality



Tom Veneziano

The Truth About Winning – 2nd Edition

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ISBN 0-9716203-9-3

Dedication

To my mother and father Virginia and Philip Veneziano, whose gentle, but firm guidance gave me the values upon which my life was built. I love them both.

To R.B. Thieme Jr., whose unique ability as a principle-oriented teacher has profoundly impacted my life. I am eternally grateful.

And to all of my tennis students. You have taught me well.

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Introduction

Welcome to “The Truth About Winning.” I have been a tennis pro for over 25 years and have taught many players to win. I work extensively with the mind and developed The Tennis Warrior System. The Tennis Warrior System is a system of thinking that makes it easier to understand tennis concepts and to develop mental toughness.

My books and tapes are interrelated. The more you read and listen to them, the better you’ll understand the concepts I present, the better you’ll see the big picture, and the better you’ll play.

They will help you develop or improve your critical thinking skills so you can use the Mental Toughness Sphere—a tool that helps players develop mental toughness. It has eight gates or mental skills. (This book is part of the Mental Toughness Sphere’s “Gate 4: Orientation to Tennis Reality.” See the chart on Page 80.)

You’ll be able to select the correct weapon from an arsenal of information in your mind. And when you do, you’ll become a true Tennis Warrior.

You will not be intimidated by the ups and downs of a match. You’ll become self-sufficient and learn to play in a more instinctive and automatic way.

In short, you will become mentally tough and win more. Here are a few things you’ll learn:

- How to stay positive in the face of negatives.
- What negative thinking really is.
- Two mind-sets that increase your chance of winning.

You'll advance through five levels. Each level builds upon the previous level and reveals the truth about winning. The levels are:

Level 1: Basic

Your perception of negatives and positives

Level 2: Intermediate

A technique for staying positive

Level 3: Advanced

A master principle for evaluating negatives and positives

Level 4: Professional

Negatives and positives applied to winning

Level 5: The Tennis Warrior

Unexplored territory

The Tennis Warrior is a thinker who has learned the art of being mentally tough. The Tennis Warrior accomplishes this by accumulating valuable information that can be used at the proper time.

The Tennis Warrior's mental toughness is not reserved only for playing pros. It is for players of every level. You can learn to think correctly whether you're a beginner or a championship player.

Mental toughness is in the mind. Therefore, Tennis Warriors seek information that builds their minds so they can instinctively make the correct mental decisions in a competitive event.

Anyone can learn to be a Tennis Warrior. However, it may be necessary to let go of some incorrect ideas that are not rooted in proven success principles. These principles are often misunderstood for two reasons.

The first reason is that when success is finally achieved, it always appears complicated. What is achieved may be complicated, but that does not mean the process of reaching that achievement is complicated.

Here's a phrase I have my students use:

**Do the simple right. Then, do the simple better.
Then, simply be the best at doing the simple.**

The pros do the simple so well that we think it is complicated, but we're confusing the outcome with the process.

The second reason success principles are often misunderstood is that everyone desires success, but few want to do what is necessary to succeed. They desperately search for shortcuts and abandon the true pathways to success. The outcome is pseudo-success. This type of success is not founded on proven success principles, and these individuals fall apart when the pressure is on.

Hundreds of books promise shortcuts to success. Here's the title of a tennis book on the market that says it all: "Learn to be an 'A' Player in a Weekend."

Do you think many tennis players would buy that book?

True success principles are often talked about, but rarely applied. If you're interested in shortcuts and aren't interested in the process of success, my book is not for you.

However, if you want to learn the truth about winning, my book is definitely for you. You will learn principles that can be applied in any sport or business or in your life.

I have been involved in sports as a player or coach for most of my life, and believe the athletic arena is simply a microcosm of life. In sports, as in life, you face negative and posi-

tive situations that require skillful mental maneuvering and problem-solving capabilities. You contend with self-doubt, discouragement and despair as well as conviction, encouragement and inspiration. Your confidence, character and self-esteem are challenged.

How your mind handles challenges in the athletic arena is similar to how your mind handles challenges in business and life. If you justify and rationalize your mistakes and failures in sports, you will do the same in life. If you blame everyone and everything for your failures in sports, you will do the same in life. If you have many successes in sports and become carried away with yourself, you will do the same in life.

On the other hand, if you handle failures and successes correctly in the athletic arena, you will do the same in life.

The way you think in sports is the same way you think in life, and the way you think in life is the same way you think in sports.

It is *your* thinking, and you bring your thinking to whatever arena you may be in, whether it's sports, business or life.

One always influences the other.

Even though this is a book about tennis, what you will learn reaches beyond the athletic arena into the core of your thinking. I hope you are prepared. If you aren't, when you're finished reading this book, you will be.

Now, on with the truth about winning.

Level 1: Basic

Your Perception of Negatives and Positives

One of the most important aspects of winning is learning how to lose correctly. If this seems like a paradox, it was intended to be.

To learn how to win, you must learn how to lose correctly.

That's a powerful phrase. Does it make you say, "I thought winning was about thinking positive thoughts, not negative. The only thing positive about that phrase is the word 'correctly' and what you want me to do correctly is lose?"

Be positive, act positive, think positive and win. Doesn't that sound like something from one of those motivational seminars? It sounds great, so why not—no matter what—think positive? Don't let any negatives enter your mind. In fact, let's go to the courts where Miss Patty Positive is playing a match.

Is This Positive Thinking?

Little Patty Positive is in the middle of a point. She is playing well. All of a sudden, she nets an easy shot. Patty is an

excellent proponent of positive thinking and does not recognize the miss. She stays positive and moves on. She doesn't let any negatives enter her mind.

This same miss happens three more times, and all three times, Patty stays positive. She doesn't allow the negative of all the misses to enter her mind. The match ends. Patty Positive loses, but Patty pats herself on the back for staying positive the whole match. Even her friends compliment her on her ability to ignore the misses and stay positive.

Although this sounds like the ideal situation, within it lies a subtle pitfall. The pitfall relates to the misconception and misinformation that most people have about positive thinking.

Most people think (either consciously or subconsciously) that to stay positive, they should not think of any negatives. They think negatives are bad and keep them out of their minds.

This simply is not true.

If this is contrary to what you believe, please keep reading. My goal is to give you the truth about winning and that truth starts here.

When players have trouble winning and come to me for advice, I tell them I want them to lose. They just about go ballistic. This is the opposite of what they expect to hear and probably the opposite of what you expected to hear. I explain that I do not want them to lose on purpose. I want them to practice having the correct mental attitude toward mistakes and losses.

Until you accomplish this, forget everything else. No strokes, strategy or magical pieces of technical information will help you.

You must give yourself the freedom to go for your shots, and if you miss, accept it.

This attitude frees you to keep fighting, to keep challenging yourself and to keep taking risks. You do not want your failures or mistakes to be so important in your mind that they

stop you from performing. Practicing the correct mental attitude during mistakes and losses is a high priority.

The logic behind this is simple. All players have strengths and weaknesses, and you have to practice your weaknesses to improve. Do you know anyone who has trouble handling wins? (I doubt it.) Do you know anyone who has trouble handling losses, mistakes or failures? (I'm sure you do.)

You must practice your weaknesses to improve. If your thinking is right, do not worry about the results. Eventually, you will win. That's the easy part. The difficult part is learning how to think correctly.

Lack of Critical Information

Misconceptions are created by the lack of certain critical information in sports, business and life. This lack of information often leads us to develop incorrect preconceived ideas.

In the case of negatives, that critical information is the ability to distinguish between acknowledging a negative that affects your mental attitude and acknowledging a negative that does not.

Recognizing a negative is not negative thinking. Negative thinking is when you allow the negative to affect your mental attitude. One mental attitude leads to a distorted view (the negatives divorce you from reality), and the other mental attitude recognizes a negative for what it is—a negative.

Recognizing a negative for what it is (a negative) is perfectly healthy and can produce an undistorted view and a correct orientation to reality. It does not have to affect your mental attitude.

Let's go back to Patty Positive. Patty didn't recognize any negatives and, as a result, she didn't realize the shot she missed time and time again was a low-percentage shot. (A low-percentage shot is one you successfully execute only a small per-

centage of the time.) Patty was preoccupied with avoiding a negative and didn't analyze what was happening correctly. She should not have attempted a low-percentage shot.

Her fear of negatives distorted her perception of what happened. This distorted perception easily could have been the reason she lost. It was not the mistakes, the failures or the negatives that were the problem. It was her reaction to them.

If negatives, mistakes or failures drastically affect your overall mental attitude, you have a problem. It is perfectly all right to recognize and analyze negatives when they occur. Negatives give you valuable feedback, allowing you to make corrections so the same mistake doesn't happen again.

It takes longer to reach your goals if you don't assess negatives correctly. This is true for sports, business or any situation that calls for a positive mental attitude. Negatives are not your enemy—unless, of course, you are threatened by them.

Do Negatives Threaten You?

Negatives may threaten you, because you have been brain-washed to believe they are the bad guys and recognizing them means you are a negative person.

This is simply not true. Negatives are not the problem.

Negatives may also threaten you, because you have incorrectly connected negatives and mistakes to who and what you are as a person. You may think mistakes and losses aren't just a part of an athletic event; they are an all-consuming part of how you personally feel about yourself.

Somehow, either consciously or subconsciously, you think you are a bad person if you perform poorly and you are a good person if you perform well. Unknowingly, you made a quantum leap from being a good tennis player to being a good person.

Let me set the record straight. There is no connection between the ability or talent you possess as a tennis player and the quality and character of the person you are—whether you're the best or the worst player in the world.

Do negatives, mistakes or failures discourage you or challenge you? Can you consistently deal with negatives without becoming disillusioned or discouraged? My guess is that you let negatives discourage you. Most people deny failures or rationalize their mistakes to maintain confidence. They have not yet learned how to handle negatives, mistakes and failures and remain confident. This book will teach you how.

The first thing you must do is stop thinking that acknowledging negatives, mistakes or failures is a sign of weakness. Recognizing negatives does not mean you are a negative person. The ability to think in terms of negatives and stay confident is a sign of strength, not weakness.

If this confuses you, hang in there. You'll learn something in the next few paragraphs that will make your game more fun. At the same time, it will make you mentally tougher at anything you do in life.

Negatives Should Not Discourage

One of the principles the Tennis Warrior masters is:

Mentally tough people can think negative thoughts without becoming discouraged.

I love that phrase. The secret that unlocks the whole realm of confidence is: “without becoming discouraged.” In other words, mentally tough people can think of negatives as much as they wish. They just don't become discouraged. (And if they do, they bounce back quickly.)

This implies the negative itself is not the problem. There must be thinking going on in the mentally tough person's mind

that is different from the thinking going on in the mind of the person who is not mentally tough. After all, both have to face negatives.

The obvious difference is that mentally tough people do not let negatives affect their overall mental attitude. They view negatives and failures for what they are: valuable feedback necessary to reach their goals. They know negatives, mistakes and failures will always be there. This is orientation to reality.

You will still make mistakes even if you are No. 1 in the world. Therefore, it only makes sense to change the way you perceive and are affected by negatives, mistakes and failures.

The Choice Is Yours

You can choose to be discouraged by negatives or you can choose to be challenged by negatives. It's up to you.

Do you know what that means? It means—and get ready for some cold-hearted truth—negatives, mistakes and failures are not the problem.

You are.

The way you perceive and deal with negatives is of paramount importance when you're learning the truth about winning.

Negatives are not the enemy. You are.

When I point the finger at you, remember you purchased a book titled, "The Truth About Winning." That is what I am giving you. And, when I say you are the problem, I do not exclude myself. I had to learn to perceive and deal with negatives correctly. We are in this together, so welcome aboard.

Is Competition Bad?

The idea that competition is bad is seeping into our society in sports, in business and in all areas of life. The proponents of this philosophy say, in essence, that competition brings out the worst in us, causing us to become—well, let’s just say—not very congenial. People engage in arguments and fights. They cheat. Sabotage their opponents. Do whatever it takes to win.

This is fuel for the advocates who contend competition makes us behave unseemly. Also, they contend if one person wins, someone loses and that is not nice. This is unequal and therefore, unfair. The person who loses feels bad about himself and that could undermine his self-esteem.

This is a blatant, idiotic, goofball, nonsensical absurdity. America’s greatness was brought about by hard work, individualism and self-reliance combined with cooperation and—yes—competition.

The inevitable result is the development of character and self-esteem. Anti-competition advocates should read this next sentence carefully. You acquire self-esteem and character by changing the way you think inside, not by changing the outside circumstances that affect your thinking.

Competition is not at fault.

Taking Responsibility

Why do I bring this up? Because I love America. It is the greatest country on earth, and to see it undermined by people expecting equal opportunity to ensure equal outcome disturbs me. Just because I have equal opportunity does not mean the results of what I do will be the same for everyone else. Some succeed and some fail. Some are better and some are worse. Some win and some lose.

There is no equality of outcome in sports or life.

Another reason I bring this up is because the way some people view competition (as the villain) is the same way people view negatives. It sounds like this: The negatives, mistakes and failures are the culprits. They make me feel down on myself. It is not my fault.

Interesting, isn't it? Few people take responsibility for their decisions. There is such great emphasis on blaming problems on external causes that new theories and philosophies help us rationalize why negatives, mistakes and failures are not our fault.

With these blame-someone-else philosophies, you can blame your bad decisions, mistakes and failures on the environment, the competition or your partner.

As a result, taking responsibility for your own decisions is becoming obsolete. Yet, like it or not, taking responsibility for your own decisions is the solution, especially when dealing with negatives.

You choose how you perceive negatives and how they affect your mental attitude. Tennis Warriors or mentally tough individuals confront these issues and decide to control negatives. Have you?

The Mental Two-Step

You must make two decisions:

1. To recognize the negative.
2. To let it affect you or not let it affect you.

This is the Mental Two-Step. The first step, recognizing a negative, is not negative thinking. The second step, deciding if you will let it affect you, is the determining factor.

The choice is yours.

Let the negative affect you and you choose a negative mental attitude. Do not let the negative affect you and you choose a positive mental attitude.

You are always two mental steps away from a positive or negative mental attitude.

When you realize that acknowledging negatives is not bad, and that thinking positive does not mean you always have to think positive thoughts, you've made it. You passed Level 1. You are on the way to understanding the truth about winning. So, before we leave Level 1, remember:

Acknowledging negatives is not negative thinking.

Negative thinking is when you let the negative affect your mental attitude. Mentally tough people think in terms of negatives without becoming discouraged. You must learn to do the same.

Review

- The concept of negative thinking is misunderstood.
- You are not a negative thinker because you recognize negatives.
- Recognizing negatives is not the problem. The problem is letting negatives affect your mental attitude.
- Allowing negatives to affect your mental attitude is wrong. It is negative thinking.
- Recognizing negatives that do not affect your mental attitude is right. It is positive thinking.
- Whether or not negatives affect your mental attitude is totally up to you.

Books and Tapes by Tom Veneziano

Order securely online at www.tenniswarrior.com

Books

The Truth About Winning

Learn the thinking the pros use in a step-by-step fashion.

The Relax Technique

This powerful booklet will help you eliminate anxiety in match play and teach you how to access the correct mental pathway to play in the zone.

Audio Cassettes

The ABC's of Tennis

Learn the nine myths of tennis, the four mental battles you will be up against, the true dynamics of the big "C" (consistency), and much more!

Before-Match Pointers

An excellent cassette to play before your matches. It helps you relax, puts you in the correct frame of mind, and teaches you to go for your shots.

Three Techniques to Increase Your Speed in Tennis

Increase your on-court speed 10 to 40 percent—maybe more! With these three mental techniques, you can increase your speed and you do not have to run sprints or tires to do it. (I know you'll like that part.)

Selecting a Doubles Partner

Learn how to find the correct partner. This cassette addresses the physical and mental skills you and your partner should possess. It will save you a lot of grief.

Think Like a Pro

Save! Purchase the four cassettes listed above in a convenient album titled, "Think Like a Pro."

About The Author

Tom Veneziano has been an athlete all of his life. He was a wrestler and gymnast in high school, and ventured into the tennis arena his first year of college. Tom began using his Tennis Warrior System from the moment he started playing. With this extraordinary system of thinking incorporated with his playing technique, he quickly attained the No. 1 and No. 2 positions on the school tennis team and was granted a tennis scholarship.

Tom graduated in 1971 from Parson's College in Fairfield, Iowa, with a B.A. degree in physical education. His love for tennis inspired him to pursue a career as a teaching pro. Tom works at the Piney Point Racquet Club, where he has taught his innovative Tennis Warrior System for 20 years. Thousands of players have learned to play better tennis, to become mentally tougher, and to win more through this unique system.

Tom Veneziano explains the truth about winning in this densely packed book of success principles for tennis players of all levels. It's not about flawless strokes or perfect technique. It's about the correct mental attitude.

“Tom deals with the thinking end of tennis like no one else. It's almost too difficult to explain. You have to experience it. He has an uncanny knack for getting right to the heart of the matter. You come away thinking, ‘That's right. It makes sense!’”

–Colleen Cremer, Houston, Texas

“Tom's books and audio cassettes are the next best thing to taking private lessons from him. I've never met him and I don't live in Houston, but he's taught me how to think and how to increase my wins—on and off the court.”

–Mary A. Sicard, Augusta, Georgia

“Tom's audio cassettes have changed my thinking, aligning it with the correct information needed to improve my game. He's right there with you: inside your head, challenging you to make those changes. It's like having your own personal coach! I highly recommend his tapes for everyone.”

–Linda Zimmerman, Houston, Texas

