



USING THE MTQ48 WITH SUB-ELITE JUNIOR TABLE TENNIS PLAYER

Application of Mental Toughness in Sports World

Background

The Player: Born 1998, the player was ranked in the top 12 in England for their age (11 years) in 2010.

The Coach: The coach is a Level 4 and international table tennis coach and an executive coach/supervisor.

The Problem: It was clear to the father that the player (now nearly 14), despite still having a top 12 ranking in England for their age, was suffering and confused about their involvement in table tennis; had considerable anxiety around competition and wasn't enjoying competitive play.

Objectives:

- Enjoy playing in competition again and to look forward to it
- Improve results and underpin performances with a 'basic guaranteed minimum standard'
- Win more matches from behind
- Win a higher percentage of close games
- Beat more players ranked above
- Improve mental skills to reduce anxiety, increase confidence, stabilise mood and performance (especially the use of the in-between point time)
- Improve preparation (the critical last 48 hours before performing)

The process

This was delivered between March and October 2013, with around 11 hours per month of contact time split between:

- On-the-table technical and tactical development together
- Face to face meetings/sessions
- Telephone sessions focussed on mental skills, competition preparation, self-planning and reflective practice
- Text conversations before, during and after competition events

The MTQ48 was taken at the start of the training in March and again in July.

The Outcomes

By May 2013, the player was beginning to be able to articulate again why they liked table tennis, why they wanted to play in competitions, and was showing signs of regenerated commitment and enjoyment. In May and June they played well (process, performance and results) in four consecutive competitive events, culminating in reaching the last eight of the England National Under 14's – a great result and more importantly in the coach's view, a very enjoyable event for them.

At the beginning of July, a retest was taken on the MTQ48.

The results revealed the following:

- Scores now averaged five – a considerable improvement in Mental Toughness
- Commitment increased from two to four

Conclusion

The MTQ48 was a useful framework and guide as part of a sport-specific programme over several months for a sub-elite junior player. Several key mental and performance objectives were met.