

COACHES CORNER

Probe: Should on-court coaching be permitted on the ATP Tour?

BY CHRIS ODDO

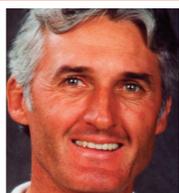


Harold Solomon

Former French Open finalist ranked as high as No. 5 in the world; has coached Jim Courier, Jennifer Capriati and Monica Seles; founder of the Harold Solomon Tennis Institute.



I don't like the idea of on-court coaching in men's or women's tennis. I think that one of the unique aspects of our sport is that the players need to be able to think for themselves and figure out what's working and not working. I think that is part of a player's game that needs to be developed, and the players that learn how to think have an advantage just like a player would that developed superior footwork. I really don't think that from a television aspect the coaching lends very much to a telecast.



Jose Higueras

Two-time French Open finalist and former No. 6 in the world; currently the Director of Coaching for the USTA.



I have mixed emotions. On-court coaching would change the outcome of matches, and it would make it more interesting. The coaches would become more relevant, and I think it would make the game more interesting. But on the other side I am kind of a traditionalist, and I think it would take away the individuality and the self-reliance that the players need. If I had to choose, I would lean towards having on-court coaching, not like in Davis Cup where the captain sits there all the time, but maybe a couple of times, once a set or a couple of times a set.



Chip Brooks

Director of Tennis at the Nick Bollettieri Tennis Academy; has worked with Boris Becker, Jimmy Arias, Jelena Jankovic and countless others.



I have been involved with on-court coaching this year with Jelena Jankovic in WTA Tour events, and I feel it is an asset to the players. I also feel it is positive for the fans, as they can hear tips given to touring professionals during competition. The level of coaching on both the WTA and ATP tour is excellent, and the fans love to hear the information given to the players.



Bob Brett

Former coach of Boris Becker, Goran Ivanisevic, and currently Marin Cilic. Founder of the Bob Brett Tennis Academy in San Remo, Italy.



The coach should try to create complete independence with his player and the challenge is to ensure that the player is able to execute at the most difficult occasion. The more you try to be the savior, the more it takes away their independence. The actual match – what takes place on the court during that match – is something for coach and player to learn from. That's when you go back with your player and continue to develop the necessary skills. Harry Hopman once said over coaching will be the danger in tennis. That's where we're at today.



Nick Bollettieri

Founder of the Nick Bollettieri Tennis Academy; has coached 10 No. 1 Ranked players.



If we took a worldwide poll, I'm sure the statistics would be evenly split between those for and against on-court coaching. The majority of fans and coaches say that you take away from the player thinking how to deal with the ups and downs that take place during match play. The flip side states that a player can reach higher levels of excellence with input during a match. I feel that younger players need coaching during practice and tournament play, but once they reach the 16 and under division, on-court coaching should stop.