



Stay strong *but supple!*

Allistair McCaw outlines why resistance tube training is perfect for squash

Strength for a squash player is important and no matter what level you may be, your main goals should be to stay injury-free and healthy. Squash is a sport that requires the player to have the

strength to produce the racket speed necessary to create powerful strokes, while at the same time being supple enough to have effective movement around the court. The nature of the game places a lot of stress on your upper body, especially the shoulders, rotator cuff, wrists and back. When it comes to a piece of equipment that addresses those issues, look no further than a resistance tube.

ADVANTAGES:

While there is a definite place for other forms of strength training in your programme, a resistance tube offers the opportunity for you to perform a great variety of functional exercises specific to squash

conditioning and at a fraction of the cost of other exercise equipment.

Another advantage is that you can take it almost anywhere with you, as it doesn't take up much space.

However, the biggest advantage is that it allows the player to strengthen their muscles without causing muscle pain or soreness. It not only keeps the muscle strong, but supple too. Tubes come in a variety of strength levels – from light to very strong – and can be used by players of any level or age.

WHO CAN USE THEM?

On the professional squash and tennis tours you will find many pros working out with their resistance tubes or bands. They've become an essential tool for these players, who have a lot at stake and need to stay healthy.

They are also ideal for junior players, as, personally, I'm not a believer in having kids training with heavy weights.

You will also find physiotherapists using these bands or tubes for rehabilitation exercises, especially when working with patients who have rotator or shoulder issues. In fact, anyone can benefit from this form of training, young and old.

One last thing – make sure you choose the correct resistance strength and always check your tube before using it, as any form



of elastic resistance can tear, fray or break.

To see a demonstration of a resistance tube warm-up programme from 'The McCaw Method', visit Youtube.com/ and search for 'mccawmethod videos'.

Winners handle 'BAD' DAYS

Allistair McCaw explains that it is your 'bad' days that define you as an athlete.

I remember having a chat with former Wimbledon champion Richard Krajicek a few years back about what makes the successful career of an athlete. Obviously staying healthy, working hard, making sacrifices and being disciplined were top of the list.

However, what was most interesting is something many athletes fail to recognise, even after their careers – that you will probably have experienced the 'in the zone' sensation no more than four times and you will have no more than three 'great' performances a year.

Now that might sound very pessimistic, but it's

true, because, as a former professional athlete myself, I experienced it. By 'in the zone' I mean those performances where it felt effortless and you could do absolutely nothing wrong. By 'great' I mean you played as well as you knew you could.

Probably the hardest thing for an athlete to realise is that over a year you will have more days when you aren't going to be playing to your expectations and ability.

Great athletes like Roger Federer and Rory McIlroy will tell you that they've won some of their biggest matches and tournaments playing far less than their best.

In my experience of

working with athletes I've found that it's those with perfectionist-like personalities who are most likely to impede their performances by not accepting that they aren't playing as well as they'd like to. They end up letting matches slip away purely on being frustrated over that.

A successful athlete:

1. Accepts that they aren't going to play their best every time they step onto the court, track or playing field.

2. Understands that success doesn't lie in a one-off upset against a big player or just having a few good results.

3. Understands that in order to win on their 'bad' days, they need to always give their best and believe they can actually win.

4. Doesn't spend their time comparing themselves or current level to their greatest ever performance.

5. Plays 'well enough' to pull out a win on that day.

6. Doesn't ruin their chances of winning or playing better (even when playing poorly) by letting a negative or bad attitude get in the way.

Get rid of the quest for perfection and instead aim for consistency and improvement in your daily performances.

Also, accept that you aren't going to play great every time you step onto the court, but it can be good enough to pull out a win. Your 'bad' days are what define you as an athlete.

Allistair McCaw is a sports performance specialist based in Sarasota, Florida. He has worked with some of the world's best Olympians and athletes and was a former international athlete himself. For more on Allistair, visit his Facebook page at 'McCaw Method'.