

<http://blog.WebTennis.net> Post 8/22/2008

How To Lose The First 6-0 and Still Win The Match

Hi, it's Brent with www.WebTennis.net and I got a good question from one of our www.WebTennis.net subscriber the other day asking me about a tournament match that I played this year, June of 2008, over in Mill Valley, at the National Tier II Mill Valley California Tournament.

And, I lost the first set in this match 6-love in probably fifteen minutes. I don't think I won more than 4 or 5 points. I ended up winning the match 6-4 in the third, but it's one thing for me to talk all this theory about the mental game of tennis, it's quite another to actually see it work.

Our basic premise is that if you're losing a match, you have to find a way to try to find a different way to lose.

So I just want to give a quick little recap of what I went through in that match and how it eventually turned around for me and I was able win..

But, just a quick little history. I'm playing the quarter-finals of this Tier II national event. I'm against the #2 seed, a guy named Frank Zebot from Southern California, who is a very, very strong, top, national player. I knew I had my hands full and I was really eager to at least be competitive in the match. Certainly, I wanted to win it.

But, in the warm-up, I felt great. I might have already mentioned, it was an 8:00 AM match. So I did get out there around 7:15 or 7:20. There wasn't anyone to hit balls with, so I tried to at least sort of loosen up, kind of warm up a little bit by stretching and running around a little bit.

In the match-warm up – we started at 8:00 – I felt great. We had a nice ten minute warm-up. I felt real good. And then, lo and behold, once the match starts, I can't hit a ball in the court.

The first couple of games, it's no big deal. You kind of tell yourself, "All right. Things are going to work out. This is an 8:00 AM match. It's probably normal that I shouldn't be able to come right out of the starting blocks and play well". But every game of that first set, six games, I just literally couldn't get a ball in play. It really felt like an out-of-body experience. It was kind of comical at one point.

So I lose the first set, 6-0, literally win 4, 5, 6 points at the most, and I end up starting serving for the second set and the first thing I do is I go and change racquets. I know we've talked a lot about change whatever you're doing. Just find a different way to lose. And so I figured, if I'm going to lose this match, I'm going to lose it with a different racquet.

So I go to my bag, I get a different racquet out, and for whatever reason, it just kind of makes you feel like you're taking some kind of action to change the flow of things. I end up holding serve, and now at least I feel like I'm even. I'm not thinking that I want to change it in such a way that I go from losing 6-0. I just at least want to be even with this guy.

So changing the racquets for me and then holding serve that first game ends up making me feel like I'm at least even. Frank ends up holding serve to make it 1-All and we play a very long game for that third game, but I end up holding serve, and that was kind of the moment where I felt like, "I'm back on track. At least I'm still even here", and could really sigh a nice, deep easy breath on that one.

I break him the next game. I hold and break and end up winning the 2nd set 6-1, and we get into the third set and now I can't even remember that I'd lost the first set 6-0, I'm now on such a roll.

I go up serving at 5-2 in the third, and of course, I get broken at love, and I'm thinking, "All right. Here we go". And he holds.

And now it's me having to change sides and serve at 5-4 for the match. Really, I just sort of felt like I wanted to do that four-part in between point routine that I talk so much about and not think about, "All right. I've lost the first set 6-0. I've somehow flipped the tables and won the second set 6-1. I was up 5-2 in the third. I kind of blew that a little bit. Now I'm serving at 5-4. What else is going to happen here?

Rather than considering those thoughts, I was just really staying true to that in between points routine that I talk so much about.

So, to try to sum it all up here, I just want you to understand that you can lose the first set badly, 6-0, 6-1, whatever. You're not out of the match.

The thing I should have done, and that I always do in other matches, I make sure I get a good 20 to 30 minute warm-up on the court before my match, and it doesn't have to be right before the match.

It could be a couple of hours before the match. At an 8:00 AM match you can't always do that. An 8:00 AM match, you've really got to make sure you've got somebody who either has another 8:00 AM match who wants to get out and hit somewhere around 7:30, or something like that, or find someone else. You've got to beg someone. "Please come out and hit for 15 or 20 minutes before this match starts". And I didn't do that. And I think I really paid the price for that with that first set at 6-0.

So make sure that happens. But the other thing is to make sure, even if you get a good warm-up and you don't play well in that first set, it's not over. You've just got

to try to change something. If that means changing racquet, changing a shirt, whatever it is, do something that is different than what you just did. All you're really trying to do there is just try to stay even.

If you're playing against someone who's much better than you are, then that's a different deal. But if you're against someone who you think you should at least be competitive with, or at least you should beat this player once in awhile, you should be competitive.

So don't panic. Get a great warm-up and really stay true to that four-part in between point routine that I talk so much about.

If you haven't already done so, I want you to pick up a copy of my recent lesson on the mental skills for tennis. I really think that you'll enjoy it and I think you'll get a lot of benefit out of it, from being able to not only reverse losing matches, but to also, when you get in that situation where you've won the first set, you're up 5-2 in the second, or you're up a break in the second, how do you close out that match and close the door?

All right? Hope this helped. Any questions, Brent@webtennis.net . Thanks very much.

If you want some more information on the complete lesson or you want to pick up a copy, just follow the URL that's on the screen and we'll be happy to get you all set up. If you have any questions, be sure to give me an email.

Brent@webtennis.net

Good luck out there. Thanks very much.

Brent

<http://www.WebTennis.net/Tennis-Mental-Skills.htm>

<http://www.WebTennis.net/Tennis-Lessons.htm>