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Optimizing the role of the tennis parent: an action research study

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Optimizing the Role of the Tennis Parent: An Action Research Study

Sam N. Thrower, Chris G. Harwood, and Christopher M. Spray

Loughborough University

There currently exists an in-depth empirical understanding of parental involvement in junior tennis. Despite this, published intervention studies are conspicuous by their absence in the literature (Harwood & Knight, 2012). This has led to recent calls to encourage applied researchers, practitioners and sports organizations to use this body of literature to provide proactive interventions, which meet parents' stage specific education and support needs. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to longitudinally evaluate the effectiveness of a field based tennis parent education program. Using an organizational action research framework, seven workshops were run for mini tennis parents (with children between the ages of 5 and 10 years) across three British high performance centers. On average, 22 parents attended each educational workshop over a four-month period. Data was collected using participant diaries, social validation feedback forms and post program focus groups (n = 19). The impact and effectiveness of the program was evaluated qualitatively using a thematic analysis. Results indicated that the program was effective in improving parents' awareness, knowledge and skills in relation to their tennis parenting. Parents reported more confidence in their ability to create and maintain a task-involved motivational climate for their children, make key developmental decisions and communicate with their child in competitive situations. Importantly, this confidence appeared to serve as a buffer against the stressors tennis parents faced and improve their overall emotional experiences. Furthermore, findings also offer an insight into the underlying mechanisms of tennis parent learning, and the factors that influence the

effectiveness of face-to-face tennis parent programmes. From an applied perspective, the current study provides information that can be used by practitioners (i.e., coaches and sport psychologists) to educate and support mini tennis parents within British high performance centers.