

## Interview with Jon Sorbo - part 2

**Q:How many weeks per year do you travel with Frank?**

**A:** I travel with him outside of Canada about 15 weeks a year. I will join him for Davis Cup, Tennis Masters Series Canada, and the Granby Challenger as well.

**Q:How many weeks per year does Frank travel on his own?**

**A:** Frank travels on his own for about 5 weeks.

**Q:So in total, how many weeks per year does Frank play per year?**

**A:** I would say about 22 weeks per year plus a couple of exhibition tournaments as well. He's played 2 exhibition tournaments this year, the Hopman Cup and the River Oaks tournament in Houston.

**Q:When Frank is training at home, how do you determine what you will work on?**

**A:** From the beginning, I've had a global idea of what the final product would be, and I think every coach in development needs to know what they want their players to play like when development is over. I call it the final product. The coach always has to keep working toward that final product. A coach might need to make minor adjustments based on how the player changes physically and mentally over the years, but working on the final product is extremely important. Another key in determining what we work on is based on competition. By competing at a high level, your opponents explain to you in no uncertain terms everything in your game which you need to work on. To sum it up, we compete on tour, and if Frank's opponents identify any weakness in his game, we come back to Toronto and work to eliminate that weakness.

**Q:How do you balance those long term global objectives and the big picture of where his game will eventually be with short term goals like last weeks issues in his matches and this weeks and so forth?**

**A:** In the juniors it was easy. I got Frank into what I felt was superior physical condition in relation to the players he was playing against. I taught him to focus on tactics, as I find a lot of junior players just don't bother with tactics. We were developing a game that Frank was going to use in the pro's, yet all the other juniors were baseline machines who have been hitting nothing but forehands and backhands since they were 5. So with good tactics and good conditioning and Frank's athletic ability, were able to get satisfactory results. Frank made the top 20 in the world in singles and the top 5 in the world in doubles, but it was never my intention for Frank to become no. 1 in the juniors. If that was the goal, I would have had Frank hitting nothing but forehands and backhands like everyone else. So we were able to get by with decent results that way and I think he is still two years away from having his game set to where there is no more development involved.

**Q:Do practices vary greatly? If so, in what way?**

**A:** Oh yes. On specific days we work on the central nervous system and on other days we will work on endurance, technique or speed-endurance.

**Q:What do you mean by the central nervous system?**

**A:** I have a speed and power program. The concept was originally developed for tennis by Myron Grunberg through his working with track coaches and coaches in other fields and I took what he showed me and I modified it for what I thought was important and what was important for Frank specifically. It is a combination of on and off court workouts. It is very radical from traditional tennis training, but it challenges the central nervous system in a way that even matches don't challenge it. The workouts are so difficult, I have to space them out properly or risk burning the player out. We will have speed endurance days, flat endurance days, technical days and Speed and power days. Sometimes I will put my player through Speed and Power training in the morning, and work on technique in the afternoon, depending on what my experience tells me to do. All this is planned out working from the event that you want to peak in, backwards. So we are working on something maybe 4 weeks ahead of time that's going to hopefully have the right affect when it is time to compete. Through this program, I can make any player that trains with me better than he is now.

**Q:Just back to the CNS are you just talking speed work?**

**A:** Speed and power. In fact that's what we call the program for lack of a better term "Speed and Power".

**Q:How much "say" will Frank have in what you are working on and has it changed?**

**A:** When Frank was a boy, I used to be a dictator, but now that he's more mature, we're more like partners. Yes he absolutely does have a say but there are just some things that just have to be done and we do those things, but otherwise I do look for his input.

**Q:How have you managed that transition from being a coach of a 13 year old which obviously there's a different relationship at that point with the relationship that you have now that he is as a man?**

**A:** When I started coaching Frank, I was fully prepared to coach a tour player, but with junior development, I had no idea of what I was getting into. The changes young athletes go through from 12 to 19 can be drastic, and some of it is unavoidable. For instance, when a young man hits his mid teens he can go through a stage of his life where he just won't listen to anyone in authority.

**Q:Coach/Player relationships for the most part don't last that long. Especially these days, players seem to be looking for instantaneous type of results and as soon as they don't seem to be happy with their coach, they change the coach. The relationship between you and Frank has been going on for about 7 years; How do you account for that like what is it that you've been able to do that other coaches have not been able to do?**

**A:** Frank and I went into this with a long-term agreement and I think that's the only way that this can truly work for the coach. I've read several stories by Nick Bollettieri saying how the Seles' and the Agassi's just basically cast him away whenever they felt like it without pay or credit, so I wasn't prepared for that to happen to me and insisted on an agreement which satisfied both our needs.

**Q:How many hours of on court training per day? Fitness? Days per week? Time off per year? Sport Psychology? Nutrition? Regeneration? Any other cutting edge sport science?**

**A:** We've gone through some interesting stages. I first started working with Frank when he was about 13, and we trained about 3 hours a day on court. When he reached 15 I changed it to 5 hours on court as well as fitness off court. We then reached a stage at 18 where Frank felt he didn't need to hit that many balls and that he would be sharper with less practice, so we cut it back to an hour and a half a day of tennis and an hour and a half a day of fitness. Frank has an incredible capacity for training, and I've noticed that he is much sharper in tournaments when he carries a higher workload, so I've increased his on-court training to 5 hours a day. He trains 6 days per week. Sundays are always off days if that's the way the tournament week breaks up. Sometimes in the off season when we're doing the CNS work, I might give him a couple of days off in the middle of the week so he can recover properly. It just depends, I use my instincts.

**Q:When he has a day off; is it totally off? Is there any stretching, regeneration or massages? Do you do anything?**

**A:** It depends on what the day off is designed for. Some days he'll have a day off from tennis because I feel he's getting stale mentally but he'll still do his fitness work. Other days he'll need complete rest.

**Q:Are you talking other than the Sunday rest?**

**A:** Oh yes, the Sunday is to get away from tennis; go fishing and relax. He'll be a little sluggish maybe on Monday morning but its nothing to be concerned about. If he had a tournament I would never give him the day off before the day he's going to play a match.

**Q:How do you manage Frank's practice around tournaments? Do you have general rules that you use?**

**A:** I usually like to work back from the day of his first match. If it's a normal tournament, the day prior to the first match we'll have a very light day, explosive, quickness and he'll play only one set. Two days before he'll probably play 2 sets, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The third day before the tournament is a complete day off for rest. I will not have my players do CNS training within 5 days of their first match, which insures they will not have fatigue residue on match-day.

**Q:It training, does he also play a certain number of matches?**

**A:** It's very difficult because we don't have anyone locally that can compete with him. I usually have to get 2 guys just for him to work out properly. I was able to play with him at a competitive level before my back surgery, but now I mostly do drills and pattern work from one side of the court and make it difficult and realistic for him. This is where we as Canadians should work together. It would be great if Fred, Daniel, and Simon along with our best juniors were able to all play and train together, as I think it would make everyone better and foster a team spirit among Canadians.

**Q:What do you believe has been the greatest contributor to Frank's success?**

**A:** Commitment! I've been committed to him everyday for 7 years. I can honestly look anyone in the eye and say that I did not slack off one single day. There has also been a great commitment from his family. They have given Frank everything that he has needed for his tennis without questioning. Also while going through those tough teenage years Frank has been a very committed young man.

**Q: Is there any other advice that you can give to a coach on maximizing the relationship with the parents or to make it the best possible relationship?**

**A:** Mutual respect and working together as a team are the most important things to focus on. I've been really lucky, the Dancevic's are a really great family and we get along well. They recognise that I truly want what's best for their son, and they feel that I am worthy of their trust.

**Q: Anything that you think a coach can do or anything that you've done that can make the relationship the best it can be?**

**A:** A coach's commitment to his player will speak volumes to the family. A coach must do his absolute best for his player every minute of every day, regardless of circumstances.