

"Oscar is a great coach. He helped me regain my strokes and my feel for the ball."

— BJÖRN BORG, FIVE-TIME WIMBLEDON CHAMPION, SIX-TIME FRENCH OPEN CHAMPION

play better tennis in 2 hours

Simplify
the game
and **PLAY** like
THE PROS

**OSCAR
WEGNER**

with **Steven Ferry**

- Rediscover the athleticism your lessons destroyed
- Focus on stroking the ball
- Let your stance and foot position take care of themselves
- Whether you're learning or relearning the game, play like the pros!



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praise for the Wegner Method

"Oscar is a great coach. He makes the most advanced techniques of the game very simple and clear, and he has helped me regain my strokes and my feel for the game."

—**Bjorn Borg**, five-time Wimbledon champion
and six-time French Open champion

"Wegner strips instruction of all those accepted phrases and directions that only clutter your mind and confuse. I think you will find it worthwhile to dump the past and join Oscar in your tennis future. In listening to him, I've unlearned a few things myself that I long considered gospel."

—**Bud Collins**, *Boston Globe*/NBC-TV
tennis commentator

"Through his tips on ESPN International, Oscar has helped many of today's young pros and has been key in revolutionizing and simplifying tennis instruction around the world."

—**Martin Mulligan**, 1962 Wimbledon finalist and
1967 #3 ranked player in the world

"Oscar has dedicated his life to tennis, demonstrating the same passion for teaching the game as he had for competing. He's been at the forefront of research, molding the future of tennis [coaching]."

—**Guillermo Salatino**, FoxSports Latin America, founder and
vice president of the International Tennis Writers' Association

"When my children were very young and just starting to play tennis, Oscar gave them drills that were fun, so that they wanted to play more and were motivated to play better. They looked forward to working with him and enjoyed the consistent improvements that result from his teachings."

—**Vincent Spadea Sr.**, father of Vince, top pro; Luanne,
three-time Orange Bowl Champion; and Diana,
winner of a U.S. National Junior Championship

praise for the Wegner Method

“Oscar enhanced not only my tennis but also my life beyond description. I became one of the top juniors in the south of Brazil and went to college in the U.S. on a full tennis scholarship, where I achieved great results. A large number of other young players from my area—all of them somehow touched by the magic wand of Oscar Wegner’s knowledge—followed the same path, playing college tennis in the U.S. on scholarships.”

—**Fernando Canziani Pereira**,
marketing director and college professor

“Oscar has broken the mold used in understanding the modern tennis stroke. In working with him and watching super-slow-motion sequences of the top pros, I have seen the genius of Oscar’s analysis of their dynamics and technique. He has translated this into an effective teaching methodology that is easy and fun to learn.”

—**Andy Rosenberg**, director for NBC Sports
Wimbledon and the French Open

“With the application of Oscar’s method, we definitely revolutionized tennis in the state of Santa Catarina, now a tennis powerhouse in Brazil. The results: the current top female player in the country, Nanda Alves, and nothing less than the sparkle that ignited Gustavo ‘Guga’ Kuerten, whose game was developed by Oscar and me until Kuerten turned 14.”

—**Carlos Alves**, top Brazilian coach

“Oscar’s techniques are incredible. Back in 1982 he was coaching with me in Germany and the students called him ‘the American who taught tennis in two hours.’ Over and over, he had total beginners rallying 40, 60 balls back and forth in just two hours of instruction. He also helped the Weiden Tennis Club enjoy an undefeated junior tennis team that year and send our main team to the Bundesliga.”

—**Jurgen Fassbender**, former #1 player in Germany
and top-ten player in the world

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I WOULD LIKE to thank these former top players for personally showing me the best of their game: Pancho Gonzalez, the serve; Pancho Segura, the two-handed forehand; Roy Emerson, the volleys; and Manuel Santana, the topspin forehand.

I would also like to thank Nina Bers, 1987 U.S. Junior Intercollegiate tennis champion, for her patient modeling for the photographs; Steven Ferry, for helping me write and photograph this book; and most of all, L. Ron Hubbard, who inspired my life with his works and insights into teaching and the nature of the human spirit.

introduction

IN THE 1960s, less than 10 million people played tennis in the United States. Then in 1968, professionals and amateurs were allowed to compete together for the first time in open tournaments, sparking an explosion of interest and TV exposure for the game. As a result, by the late 1970s, close to 40 million Americans were playing tennis.

However by the beginning of 2000, industry figures showed the number of players only ranged between 16 and 23 million, while official figures from the United States Tennis Association showed three times this number had left the game over the last twenty years.

Why did this happen?

As unpalatable as it may seem, the answer is from incorrect instruction—tennis had been taught one way, while the top pros played a completely different way.

That is until I ended my international playing days and began coaching at the Beverly Hills Tennis Club in California as an assistant to Pancho Segura, considered one of the greatest coaches ever. I soon realized that the most important details of the top pros' games were not only neglected but also actually violated by both conventional coaching and most entry-level teaching.

My own forehand stroke had been affected by poor coaching. Formerly a powerful, stinging weapon I had found on my own as a child, it was rendered inaccurate and ineffective during my tour-playing days after I was counseled to play "the proper way." Something was amiss.

Once I was free of the competitive pressures of the tennis tour, I discovered the answer to the riddle—tennis had been made too complicated. Simple. I then isolated the common denominators of the best strokes, and by establishing what was important to learn and what was not, I found that tennis was a game of hand-eye coordination only—not hand-eye-feet, as had been widely taught.

When focusing a player on hand movement only, I noticed the body coordinated itself naturally, resulting in the same fluid motions as the pros.

Just by following very simple but specific instructions on how to stroke the ball, and still focusing on the hand, players experienced an incredibly rapid rate of improvement. In the same way, you should expect to be a changed player after a couple of hours practicing this fundamental truth.

Beginners, when not overriding the motions they had acquired in learning to walk and run, found tennis to be an easy sport to learn. Beyond this, you, like all players, just need to determine the best way to handle the ball, maximizing your feel, power, and control—all of which the drills in this book make possible. This book will integrate the best techniques available with your own unique physique and develop your tennis based on your natural motor skills.

| The Results

Encouraged by Pancho Segura, I first tested these fundamentals on a large following of Hollywood clientele, including Charlton Heston, Dinah Shore, and Dean Martin Jr. (whose tennis looked so good after his training that he was cast playing in the Wimbledon singles final against Guillermo Vilas in the movie "Players").

The Spanish Tennis Federation hired me in 1973 to coach the top juniors at the National Tennis School. I applied these same fundamentals, despite opposition from leading Spanish coaches, with astounding results. Within three months of my arrival, Spanish players using my techniques eliminated all the international competitors in the Monte Carlo Junior Tournament, resulting in four Spanish semifinalists. The coaches accepted the evidence and adopted my methods. From then on, Spain didn't have just a few winners—it had a crowd of them, an influx of new talent that continues to this day!

Returning to Florida in 1974, I opened my own tennis club, teaching those who were intrigued by my unorthodox but highly successful techniques.

In the 1980s, I was invited to Brazil, where I spent half that decade coaching in a small club and teaching local pros my coaching methods. Two juniors whom I coached went on to win the Junior Davis Cup in Miami for Brazil in 1993. Some years later, one of them, Gustavo “Guga” Kuerten, went on to win three French Open championships, and became World Champion in 2000 by beating Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi.

In 1990, I returned to the United States, where I wrote the forerunner to this book, *You Can Play Tennis in Two Hours*, and appeared weekly for four years on a nationally syndicated tennis show, *The New Tennis Magazine Show* (later called *Tennis Television*), on the Prime Network. An ambitious tennis father, Richard Williams, saw these shows and trained his young girls on my system for four years before sending them directly into the professional tennis circuit. A few years later, Venus and Serena Williams dominated the sport.

In 1994, I became a tennis commentator for ESPN Latin America, changing the entire continent's coaching ideas and methods. Starting in 1997, and for the next two years, ESPN International broadcast my tennis tips in English and Spanish to over 150 countries, initiating a coaching revolution around the world. Another tennis parent, this one in Thailand, had a youngster with the talent to become a pro, but very little tennis was being played in the country and even less coaching materials were available. When he saw the ESPN broadcasts, he ordered my videos to coach his son. Within a few years, Paradorn Srichaphan became one of the top players in the world.

The Russian Tennis Federation, which has worked with my first book since 1990, implemented my techniques in their junior programs, and the results are showing up in the professional ranks—a dozen Russian women are now ranked in the top one hundred of the world.

The Wegner Method

My system works for beginners as well as advanced club players and pros. It teaches the basics in a more natural way, hooking you on tennis forever. Because my system is easier to learn, you really can be playing better tennis in two hours.

What are the specific benefits you and other players may expect from the Wegner Method?

- Ease of movement on the tennis court
- Feeling you are well coordinated
- Excellent control of your shots
- No fear of missing the shot
- Ease of adjustment to difficult shots
- Ability to play without feeling rushed
- Certainty in your timing of the ball
- Constant improvement
- Gradual development of power
- Minimal amount of thinking
- Togetherness with the ball
- Ability to stay focused
- Knowing that you know a lot about the game
- Confidence in your skill

If you have ever been taught tennis before, look at the following table and note which teaching method best describes the way you play. When you have completed the book, review the list and see if anything has changed for you.

Before and After Assessment

TRADITIONAL COACHING

You have to prepare as fast as you can

Take your racquet back as soon as the ball leaves your opponent's racquet

Start your stroke early

WEGNER METHOD

Top professionals restrain themselves from reacting too quickly

The best pro players keep the racquet to their front until the ball is close

You have to wait for the ball

Before and After Assessment (cont.)

TRADITIONAL COACHING

Move forward on your serve

Put your left foot across to hit your forehand (closed stance)

Keep your distance from the ball—usually an arm's length

Keep your arm straight on your forehand

Step forward into the ball

Stay down through the stroke

Don't let your body lean back

On your forehand, keep your racquet head above your wrist all of the time

You can hit the ball harder with a flat stroke than with topspin

Bend your knees only

Move to the ball with side steps, then turn and hit

Make a ¼-turn grip rotation between forehand and backhand

Finish your forehand pointing to your target

Topspin is more stressful on your arm

You have to hit deep all the time

WEGNER METHOD

Pro players hit up on the serve, then fall forward

Open-stance forehands are more powerful and natural

Closer distances are better for power and control

Bending the arm on the forehand is much more natural

Top pros emphasize lifting, not stepping in

It is more natural to pull up

The body does whatever is needed to make the shot

All top pros drop the racquet head below the ball and below the hand and wrist at some point during their swing

You can hit the ball harder flat, but right out of the tennis court

Pro players bend whatever and wherever is natural

Pro players pivot and run to the ball

No grip change is necessary for the two-handed backhand; for the one-handed backhand, pros bring the racquet parallel to the body to change grip, rather than focusing on rotating it

The arm comes across the body with the butt of the racquet usually pointing to the target at the end of the forehand stroke

Flat shots are harder on your arm

The deeper you try to drive the ball during rallies, the more mistakes you'll make

Tennis is a wonderful adventure. After reading this book you'll love this sport more than ever, and your game will never be the same! In fact, I believe that as these techniques are adopted, tennis will regain and even surpass its earlier popularity.

How to Use This Book

This book has information for players of all levels. Some sections are very basic, written for beginners, while others are written for advanced players. These advanced sections are called “Play Like the Pros” (a full list is provided in the index). Beginners should skip these tips until they have completed the entire book. *Then* they may go back and read the advanced tips which will, undoubtedly, make more sense.

The book is set up so that you first study a section and then go onto a court and practice the specific drill for that section until you have mastered it. Only then should you move on to the next section.

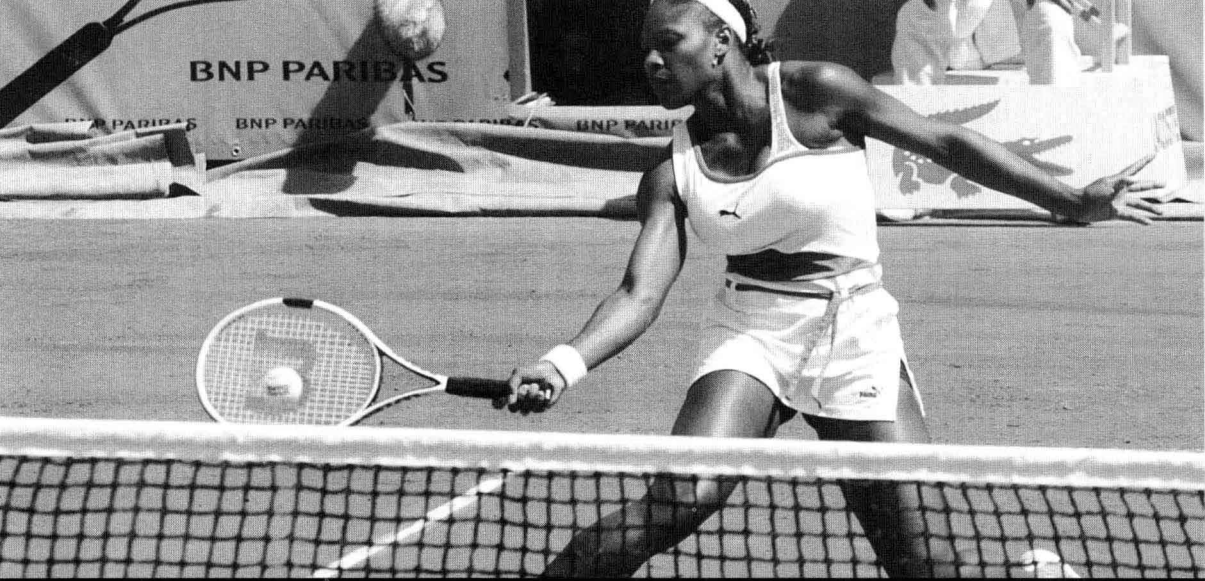
The first chapter, Misconceptions, is targeted to people who have been exposed to the myths of conventional tennis teaching. *If you are a complete beginner, you should skip this section at first.* But if someone is trying to teach you concepts such as “get sideways,” “take your racquet back early,” “step into the ball,” “hit through five balls in a row,” or “follow through toward the target,” you may need to review the Misconceptions chapter—and perhaps show it to your coach as well.

If you are an intermediate player, I recommend you read the whole book in order to isolate and adopt any new concepts to your game, practicing indicated drills as necessary.

Lastly, when you bump into a word that you do not understand fully, please do not guess what it means from the context—a bad habit being taught in many schools these days. Look it up in a dictionary and find the exact definition of the word being used.*

If you have any questions or difficulties concerning your own game, you can either log onto www.tennisteacher.com for more information or e-mail me at oscar@tennisteacher.com.

* Based on the technology of study developed by Mr. L. Ron Hubbard in the 1960s. For more information, visit www.appliedscholastics.org/learn_barr.php.



misconceptions

1

Serena Williams. [Art Seitz]

WHY IS TENNIS considered a difficult sport to learn and to improve upon? Mostly because of widely taught misconceptions that cripple a player's natural ability and make coordination as difficult as walking with several crutches at the same time.

Even many tennis professionals believe these misconceptions. But the test is, do they actually follow them when they play?

Observe and decide for yourself.

I have seen top players go into rapid decline in the later years of their career when adjusting to the conventional way. During their greatest years, of course, they were untouchable. Nobody could tell them to use any other technique but their own obviously successful style.

But soon after they felt some cracks in their armor they sought advice. “Flatten your strokes. You are getting older, you need more power,” is one common culprit.

For most modern players, topspin strokes and ball rotation are great rungs on the ladder to success. At the top of their game, they can hit as hard as they want, sometimes flattening their strokes. But when their confidence wanes, the successful course of action is to rely on the safety of the topspin shots, without compromising the power or the margin for error.

Following are classic misconceptions that could impair your game. The top pros shown in this book are vivid examples of players who did not fall for these faulty ideas.

Myths versus Facts

MYTH: Learn every move—tennis is a game of positions, specific steps, and preparations that you must learn in detail.

FACT: Go to the ball in a natural, instinctive way, focusing only on what you do with the racquet and the ball.

In the mind of a tennis pro, a ground stroke is a channeled effort rather than thought. His eyes are focused on the ball. His “feel” is focused on what he does with the racquet, as its movement and angle determine his whole shot. He wants to feel the ball rather than think of the mechanics.

The player reaches in the proximity of the ball, finding it as if wanting to catch it. He thinks of nothing else but where he wants to send the ball, channeling all his effort into achieving this goal. His only mental image of position is the arm at the end of the swing, something he has related to his shot placement over the years.

His mental effort may be nothing more than to bring the arm and racquet to this “finish.” At this point, this particular effort is over. He

might keep the arm in this position for a short time, feeling the end of his swing and looking to see where the ball is going. However, his legs don't stay still. He may already be recovering from the shot or covering the court. But he has certainly related the end of his swing to where he wants his shot to land.

Most conventional teaching techniques have you relate the impact of the ball to the placement of your shot. This technique is excellent for your volleys. But on ground strokes, top pros focus on the finish of the swing, which is the main reason why they don't "choke," stopping their swing midway. The only part of the swing they know for sure is the finish. The rest of the stroke adjusts instinctively while finding the ball.

MYTH: Prepare as fast as you can.

FACT: Restrain yourself from reacting too quickly.

Although sometimes you have little time to swing at the ball, you must manage the time you have. With the ball at a medium or slow pace, a pro looks as if he isn't even trying.

So little is the effort required at this slower pace that many amateurs play great placement and control games seemingly without exerting themselves. They take their time to run and to stroke. They look terrifically coordinated. They don't look like pros, of course, because the speed of the ball is much slower, but they play like pros, managing time and effort efficiently.

Look at pros warming up or practicing, and you'll see how easily they move and how much time they have.

At high ball speeds, pros may look rushed, but there really isn't much upper body effort on their strokes prior to the hit. A pro finds the ball first, then explodes.

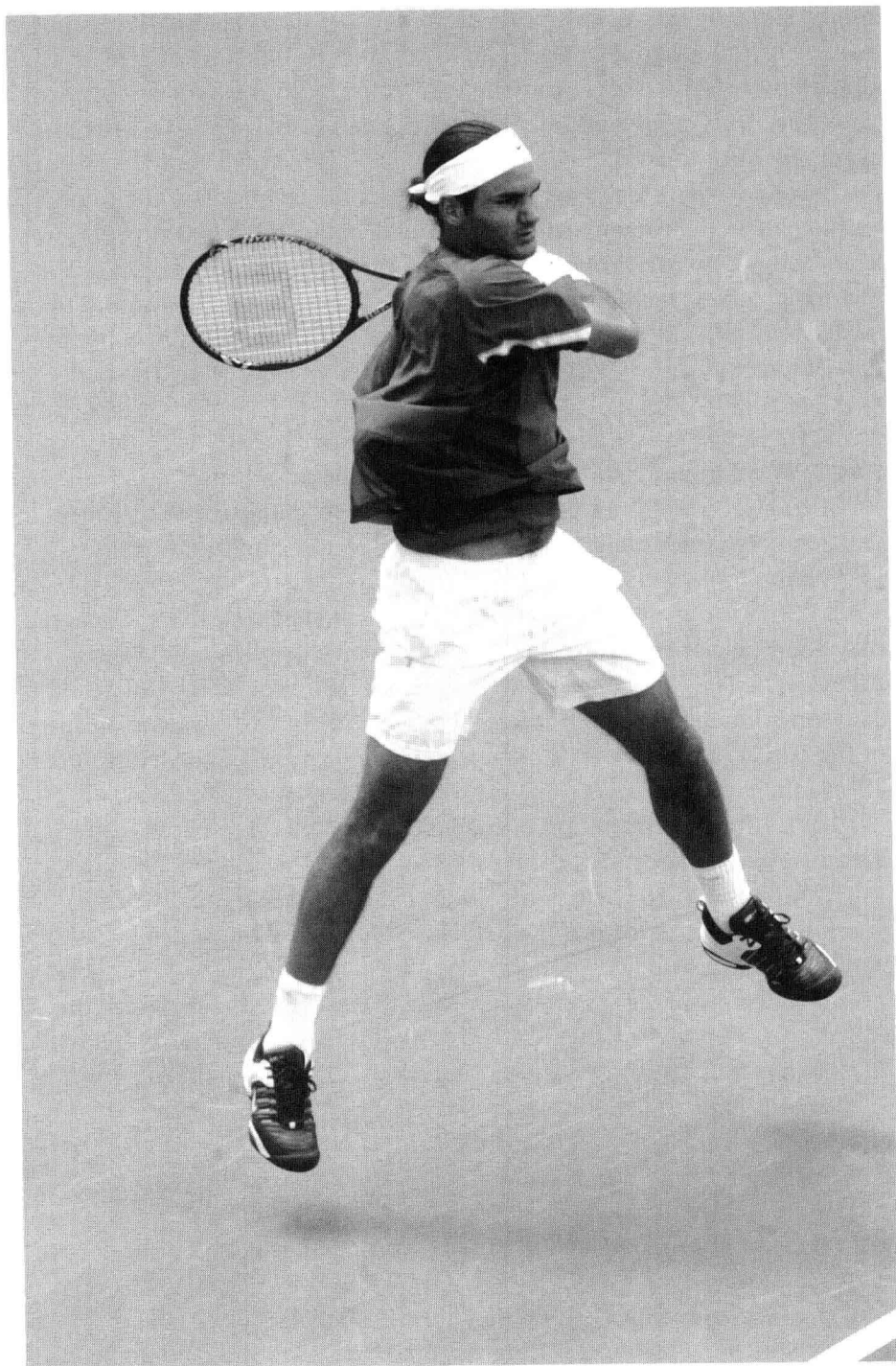
Of course, your legs have to move fast to enable you to intercept the ball. A good opponent will make you run, slide, bend, and jump. But while the legs move fast, the arms are waiting for the right moment to swing.

What is amazing about top pros is the separation between the body effort to reach the ball and the arm effort to strike it. They run for the ball first, trying to find it as if catching it, then they swing at it.

MYTH: Take your racquet back as soon as the ball leaves your opponent's racquet.

FACT: Keep your racquet to the front until the ball is close.

Conventional tennis teaching emphasizes taking the racquet back as



*Roger Federer hitting
forehand. [Art Seitz]*