Many tennis players struggle with the same variables in competition and a lot of those variables have nothing to do with hitting a ball or the love they have for their sport. Mental toughness is the biggest topic that faces young athletes after a tough loss. Parents tend to review competitions as “My child lacks mental toughness.” However, there are many ways to build your mental skills. If you apply the below three easy skills to your training, you can start to work on closing the mental gaps for better results in competition.

**MAKE SURE YOUR WORST ENEMY DOESN’T LIVE BETWEEN YOUR OWN TWO EARS**  
- LAIRD HAMILTON

**PROPER WARM-UP/COOL DOWN:**
Get that sweat going prior to entering the practice court. This requires DISCIPLINE, a key attribute to all high-level athletes. In addition, cool down after training to prepare the body for the next day and start the recovery process. **This is a key component missed in many young athletes training.**

**ROUTINES:** As athletes we all have them. Jeter with his batting gloves, Rafa with his shorts, Maria turning her back, Djokovic bouncing the ball, etc. **TRAIN LIKE IT’S COMPETITION** rather than going through the motions. In practice, have a plan for every opponent that you face. Use practices as “mini-matches.” Start reviewing how to scout and organize your game plan. This can be against the best player in practice or the lowest level player. **COMPETITION is competition take advantage of every opportunity. WRITE DOWN that plan go play your up/down game or your 7 pointers.**

**REVIEW EVERYTHING!** Many young athletes find this to be the hardest part of training and it should be one of your top priorities. **REVIEW how you trained on/off court, how you performed, and where you need improvement.** This will prepare you for the next training session. Consult with your parent(s), coach(es), Fisco, mental coach, or anyone that will make you better.