

Tennis Wales- A Regular Training Week

A Regular Training Week

We know that supporting a young player through 'A Regular Training Week' can be challenging. Each week involves some early mornings, rushes to and from school, lots of travel time and many requests for food, amongst multiple other obstacles!

In light of this, Tennis Wales and Sport Wales have created a number of resources, aiming to address some of the challenges you may face as a parent and provide some solutions to help you to support a young player to thrive throughout 'A Regular Training Week':

Fuelling a Regular Training Week

Preparing for a Regular Training Week

Conversations During a Regular Training Week

Fuelling a Regular Training Week

Challenge 1: Eating Breakfast Early in the Morning Before Training, When not Feeling Hungry

Eating before training is a chance to fuel up for the demands of the session. Consuming foods high in carbohydrates will help you to train longer and at a higher intensity without tiring as quickly. This will help maximise training output and optimise any training adaptations to improve overall performance. It will also help with concentration which is important for skill development. Pay attention to fluids too, especially as we can be slightly dehydrated when we wake up.

'Something is Better Than Nothing'

Eating prior to training will help minimise how hard the session feels. Even encouraging them to have something small can have a big impact. Small, easy to consume snacks can be eaten in the car on the way to training without taking up too much volume in the stomach. Options could be: Fruit

Malt loaf

Scotch pancakes

Cereal bars/breakfast bars

Rice cakes

Toast and jam

It may take some time to work up to eating a 'meal' before an early session. By starting with small snacks, you can start to train your body to 'accept' food in the morning. Build up the quantities slowly over a long period of time.

Drinking Nutritious Fluids is Easier Than Eating

Drinking nutritious fluids like smoothies, milk-based drinks and juice can be better tolerated when appetite is low. These can be sipped in small amounts frequently on the way to training. Sports drinks can also be used though they don't contain as many nutrients as food first options.

Here is an example pre-training breakfast smoothie packed with carbohydrates to fuel training and other nutrients to optimise health: 200ml semi-skimmed milk

20g oats

1 handful blueberries

1 tsp honey

5 strawberries

TIP: blend the oats first into a fine powder before adding the other ingredients.

Boost Intake the Night Before

If eating anything really is a struggle, make sure energy stores are well topped up before going to bed. Have a dairy-based fruit smoothie, yogurt and granola, bowl of cereal with fruit or a couple of pieces of toast with some fruit juice, to boost your carbohydrate intake before bed in preparation for the early session.

Challenge 2: Maintaining Good Quality Nutrition Whilst at School, Without Isolation From Peers

There are many challenges a player faces regarding food intake at school, including food availability (and palatability!) and peer influence. Ideally, the player will have a supportive friendship group who understand that the player's nutrition requirements need to be different to their own. This may need to be communicated by the player if their friendship group is unaware. However, this can still be a big barrier for players to consume enough food in the school day.

Packed Lunches

Having a packed lunch is an insurance policy that your child will have a nutritious lunch. Prepared pasta or couscous salads with some form of protein and vegetables are easy batch cook options that can be prepped at the beginning of the week.

Wraps are also a good option as they're easy and quick to consume. You can double up wraps too if you need to boost carbohydrate intake, or fill with energy dense foods such as full-fat cheese, salmon or avocado to increase overall energy intake in a smaller amount of food.

Small Snacks Frequently

Maintaining intake in small and frequent amounts might be easier than having a larger meal at lunch time. Try to consume something at each breaktime to keep fuel stores topped up.

Have 'emergency' snacks available in backpacks and lockers for easy access if they've forgotten to bring any, or if lunch provision wasn't sufficient. Non-perishable snack options include: Dried fruit

Trail mix with fruit and nuts (check school policy on nuts)

Cereal bars

Malt loaf

Popcorn

Oatcakes/ricecakes

Flapjack bars

Flavour milk or juice cartons

Ensure Good Breakfast Intake and Have a Meal Straight After School

If lunch is still very difficult, make the most of time around the school day to consume enough food. Ensure a big breakfast, especially if after a training session. If they're limited on time, try overnight oats or Weetabix 'cheesecake' to have on the way to school.

Consume another meal straight after school. Again, if time is short, use leftovers from the night before, or make the most of quick options like eggs/beans on toast with a dairy-based smoothie to boost carbohydrate and fruit and vegetable intake.

Challenge 3: Fuelling and Recovering on-the-go pre and Post Evening Training Sessions

Pre-training food should be high in carbohydrates with a moderate amount of protein and low in fat and fibre to minimise gut discomfort. What you should have will depend on how much time you have between eating and training. The less time, the more easily digestible it should

be (e.g. lower in fibre). Post-training food should be high in carbohydrates and protein with fruit and vegetables to promote recovery and replenish essential nutrients.

With time typically very short between school and sessions, most players (and their parents!) spend a lot of time in the car, which usually means it is a common space for fuelling and re-fuelling. Encourage your child to plan their own intake around training, and to bring all the meals and snacks that they need to help improve autonomy. Here are some tips to ensure nutritious and sufficient energy intake.

Batch Cook Meals to Have in the car

Utilise leftovers in Tupperware to consume pre- or post-training. Use thermos pots to keep food hot.

Make quick batch cook meals like pasta or couscous salads; chicken with roasted vegetables and potatoes; or stir-fries.

Soups and stews can be high in carbohydrates and fluids making them useful recovery options, especially after winter sessions. Add a wholegrain cheese sandwich to boost protein content.

Emergency 'Fuelling First aid Kits'

Keep non-perishable snacks and drinks in the car to minimise expensive one-off buys from supermarkets and service stations.

Carbohydrate containing snacks:

Dried fruit

Cereal bars

Jelly pots

Jelly babies

Rice cakes

Mini malt loafs

Juice cartons

Protein containing snacks: UHT flavoured milk cartons

Jerky/biltong

Mixed nuts

Protein bars (e.g Nakd – uses foods only, no added supplements)

On-the-go Options

Sandwiches, wraps, pasta salads, and sushi can all be good options to grab on the go. Make sure you choose low fat, low fibre options pre-training (e.g. no or low mayo, or low-fat cheese options), or high-quality protein sources post-training (e.g. chicken or tuna) and include a milk-based beverage if you're vegetarian.

If service stations are the only options, choose non-fried, fresh alternatives for meals, such as fresh noodles/stir fries, grilled chicken wraps, burritos, pasta salad pots and fresh sandwiches/wraps.

Preparing for a Regular Training Week

Challenge 1: Weekly Schedules Feeling Relentless and Tiring

Support Them to Plan Ahead

- Encourage them to set some time aside every week to plan the week ahead. This often works well during a quieter part of their week e.g. on the weekend.
- There are lots of options out there to help, that include purchasing a weekly planner online (lots available via Amazon and other websites) or downloading an app onto a device via App Store (e.g. Structured).
- When planning, they may need reminding to include all the different areas of their life. It's easy to forget to schedule time for rest and relaxation, socialising and taking part in other interests/hobbies, even if they are only able to identify short periods of free time.
- It can be useful to colour code these different areas to help them to visualise what their week involves and to add in anything they have missed first time around.
- It may also be helpful to add a space for important reminders or deadlines, as well as prompts to set intentions for the week and reflect on the week just gone.

Encourage Them to Prepare in Advance

- We know that tennis can involve some early mornings and a non-stop day once it begins, so promote your child being accountable for getting everything ready the night before (e.g. packing their bag and putting it by the door).
- Help them to create a checklist that includes everything that they will need (e.g. kit, fuelling, hydration etc) for training and competition.
- Remind them to consider when they will need to snack to meet their energy demands and to avoid becoming low on energy throughout the day.
- Again, if this is new, they may need some support initially, and at times they may get things wrong, but despite it being quicker, refrain from doing everything for your child.

Provide Opportunity with Appropriate Support

- Tennis players may require lots of support initially if they are not used to planning and preparing for a regular training week, but over time, they should be encouraged to take more responsibility, relevant to their age and stage.
- Through making decisions and solving problems without solely relying on others, important lifeskills such as independence and organisation can be developed, which will benefit them in both tennis and life and help them to transition across different areas of their lives.

Challenge 2: Finding it Hard to Balance or Prioritise Multiple Areas of Their Lives

Help Them to Utilise Their Support network

- Help them to identify a staff member that they have a good relationship with at school, college, university or work.
- Encourage them to share their weekly plan with that individual to make them aware of their demands and to ask them for help and support if they need it.

Allow Them to Make Their Own Decisions

- Research suggests that allowing young people to make their own decisions around participation across different areas of their life allows individuals to feel a sense of control over their lives and can contribute to increased engagement and motivation.

Challenge 3: Feeling Like They are Missing out on Other Activities

Emphasise Communicating well

- Letting friends and family know key dates of camps or competitions as far in advance as you can may help to avoid some (but unfortunately likely not all) clashes.

Try to Avoid Comparison

- It's easy to feel like everyone else is doing what you'd like to be doing, because you see lots of people's highlights or best bits on social media. Remind them that others might be feeling the same towards them and be envious of the experiences they are having- try not to compare yourself to others.

Conversations During a Regular Training Week

Main Challenges:

1. Individuals experience a variety of emotions after training sessions and have different needs, therefore there is no blueprint for how conversations should go during every car journey
2. Players often wish for some quiet time following a demanding or disappointing training session
3. Lots of players want to know that parents are there if they wish to talk to them and want to feel listened to and understood

Positive Conversations

Tennis is a challenging sport. Talented young players face significant mental challenges in their development, coping with the intense physical demands of the sport, the pressure to perform, and the mental strain of balancing training with other aspects of life. These challenges can be particularly pronounced with teenagers, who are often balancing the competing demands of home, school, social life and sport(s). With busy lives, it's easy to pass like ships in the night. So, making the most of your time together - travelling to and from the court in the car - is important.

The reality is, however, that it's not always easy to talk about tennis. If your child didn't perform as expected, or if training isn't going well, they can climb into the car (or re-enter the house) feeling frustrated, upset, or disappointed. There can be a lot going on in the background that makes conversations difficult. Pressure to succeed, and high expectations, either from parents, coaches, or themselves. The constant comparison with others in their sport or beyond. The hidden pressure of an online audience. Add into the mix that they are often exhausted, irritable and don't have the energy to talk or engage, it is easy to feel like a taxi driver rather than a parent.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0e8zvvY-x8&embeds_referring_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.parentsinsport.co.uk%2F&source_ve_path=MjM4NTE

But the car journey home doesn't have to be endured. The key is to focus on your child's needs and work hard to create a positive, supportive atmosphere in the car. It is natural to want to help solve their problems, to offer constructive feedback or discuss what went wrong, but sometimes they just need space, food, a warm dry seat and a break from talking about their sport. The car ride can be a safe space and a place to bond.

Activity

When you get a chance, reflect on the way you interact with your child in the car after tennis. Even better, ask your child what they need from you after a bad training session, or when they feel they are in a 'hole'. The answer might be simpler than you think. 'Music.' 'Silence.' 'Snacks'. Set yourself 2-3 simple 'rules of the road' you can follow in the car. Here are some examples:

- **LET THEM TALK FIRST – allow them some space and time.**

- . **PARENT NOT COACH - offer positivity and support rather than feedback or advice (unless asked).**
- . **AGREE ON AIR CON – focus on comfort first.**

Summing up

Managing the car journey home after training or competition helps ensure the experience is positive, comfortable, and supportive for both you and your child. Ultimately, the journey home should be a supportive and nurturing experience, helping you both unwind, recover, and feel encouraged for your next challenge together.