



SAMPLE

SQUASH

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2

About the card sort

- The cards describe competencies, behaviours and qualities in the game of squash.
- The sort should be completed in a conversation with a coach, parent or mentor.
- The cards should be used to identify competencies to grow into super strengths or areas to work on.
- On the back of the cards are ideas for actions to support development planning.
- Use the cards at the beginning and end of the season, and following key milestones.

Categories of competencies for squash include:

- mental skills
- self
- athlete life
- health
- physical
- technical skills
- tactics

Turn over to see the full list of competencies.

Mental Skills	Self	Athlete Life	Health	Physical	Technical Skills
Performance Focus	Team Person	Managing Time and Energy	Health	Core Strength and Balance	Understanding and Using Length
Motivation and Passion	Team Values and Culture	Financial Skills, Facilities and Equipment	Women's Health	Range of Movement	Control the T and Recovery
Self-Belief and Confidence	Identity, Purpose and Self-Awareness	Future, Change, and Career Planning	Mental Health and Wellbeing	Speed and Agility	Defensive and Attacking Play
Performance Preparation	Communication	Sponsorship and Athlete Brand	Injury Recovery	Muscle Endurance	Short Game
Performance Review	Programme Ownership	Relationships	Robustness	Aerobic Fitness	
Resilience	Drive and Ambition	Circle of Support	Sleep	Speed Endurance	Tactics
Practicing Pressure	Competitiveness		Nutrition		Tactical Awareness
Mastery	Work Ethic				Game Plan
Deep Practice	Leadership				
Composure	Continuous Growth				

2

How to use the cards

ATHLETE

1

SORT FOR STRENGTHS

Sort the cards into roughly three even piles with the following black cards forming the top of each set:

- high/strength
- middle/average
- low/work-on; and
- not applicable.

Sort based on your highest level of competition.

2

EXPLAIN/RECORD

Explain reasons for placement, focusing on strengths and areas to work on. Take a photo or fill in the worksheets to record placement to refer back to on review.

3

PRIORITISE

Once completed, pick up the cards sorted as areas to work on. You may also wish to select some strengths to include in your development plan that could become super strengths. Flip over the header cards and sort again for priorities for the next season or training block using the black cards (high, medium, low). Aim to narrow down to not more than two development priorities per category.

*Once you have identified your priorities, turn over the cards.
The back of the cards have development planning ideas.*

Please Turn Over

2

How to use the cards

COACH/ MENTOR

1

INTRODUCTION

Explain the purpose of the process.

Explain the process (see website for more detail) and discuss confidentiality.

Check for comfort and questions.

2

GUIDE

Guide the process.

Question, clarify and summarise to help the athlete identify the critical priorities.

Listen with an open mind, avoid making judgements.

3

PLAN

Record placement of cards with notes. Select priorities emerging from the second sort and identify development actions (see ideas on the back of cards) in collaboration with the athlete.

TIP: You can complete a separate card sort for comparative discussion.

STRENGTH



COMPETENCIES ASSESSED AS A STRENGTH AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL
OF COMPETITION, IN RELATION TO OTHER COMPETENCIES

HIGH PRIORITY



COMPETENCIES ASSESSED AS A HIGH PRIORITY FOR
THE NEXT COMPETITION AND TRAINING BLOCK

MIDDLE/AVERAGE



COMPETENCIES ASSESSED AS MIDDLE AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL
OF COMPETITION, IN RELATION TO OTHER COMPETENCIES

MEDIUM PRIORITY



COMPETENCIES ASSESSED AS A MEDIUM PRIORITY FOR
THE NEXT COMPETITION AND TRAINING BLOCK

WORK-ON



COMPETENCIES ASSESSED AS AN AREA TO WORK-ON AT THE HIGHEST
LEVEL OF COMPETITION, IN RELATION TO OTHER COMPETENCIES

LOW PRIORITY



COMPETENCIES ASSESSED AS A LOW PRIORITY FOR
THE NEXT COMPETITION AND TRAINING BLOCK

NOT APPLICABLE



THESE ARE EITHER NOT APPLICABLE OR TO BE SORTED AT A LATER DATE



MENTAL SKILLS[©]

— SORT CARDS —



Performance Focus

- I am able to maintain my focus on doing what I need to do, regardless of the level of competition.
- In adversity, under pressure or following unexpected events, I will:
 - Acknowledge my thoughts and feelings in the moment.
 - Use strategies to actively manage my emotions and reactions (e.g., self-talk, imagery, affirmations).
 - Focus on the process, not the outcome.
 - Continue to communicate (through words and actions) positively and effectively.
 - Maintain my confidence.
 - Make rational decisions.

Developing Performance Focus

Experiment with ways to stay calm, manage focus and eliminate distractions

Feeling stressed or anxious affects your focus. Set up situations in training where you could get distracted (e.g., under fatigue, situational pressure).

In these situations, practice different strategies to stay present, e.g., breathing control, imagery or visualisation, cue or focus words, and/or thought dumping/stopping.

Reflect on the consequences

Discuss with someone (a mentor or coach) what the outcomes and impacts of losing your composure are. Discuss high profile examples.

Identify your triggers

Consider what triggers you away from focusing on the present. Build a plan to manage these, testing out how quickly you can refocus.

Key moment planning

Focus is having less in your mind. Use a journal to identify and plan your focus for key moments that may arise. Quiz the consistent performers in squash on their strategies. Evaluate your focus at training as well.

Focus on what you can control

Draw a circle. Inside the circle write down everything about your performance that is within your control. Next, write down everything that is outside of your control outside of the circle. Observe and review how much time you spend thinking and worrying about things outside of your control.

Become actively aware

Keep a journal/daily training diary in which you rate yourself every time you train or play. Simple daily evaluations are critical to improving your focus because you are building a habit of being consciously aware.



Composure

- Cool under pressure.
- Does not become defensive or irritated when times are tough.
- Can be counted on to hold things together during tough times.
- Can handle stress.
- Is not knocked off balance by the unexpected.
- Doesn't show frustration when resisted or blocked.
- Continues to communicate positively and effectively under pressure.
- Maintains confidence.

Developing Composure

Reflect on the consequences

Discuss with someone (a mentor or coach) the outcomes and impacts of losing your composure. Discuss high profile examples.

Experiment with ways to stay calm, manage focus and eliminate distractions

Feeling stressed or anxious affects your focus. Ask other athletes what they do to manage their mood and focus and stay calm in high-pressure situations. Experiment with different strategies, e.g., breathing control, routines, music, mental imagery or visualisation, cue or focus words, perceptual positioning (NLP) and/or thought dumping/thought stopping.

'Key moment' planning

Performance preparation is key to maintaining composure (*see performance preparation card*).

Write down key moments that might arise and plan what you need to focus on at this time. Assess key moments where you have been super composed or times you have lacked composure, and reflect on what you were thinking. Discuss these moments and the outcomes with a training partner or coach.

'What if' planning

Brainstorm some 'what if' scenarios with a mentor or coach and plan what reaction(s) you will have to each scenario so that you have pre-planned your responses.

Focus on what you can control

Draw a circle. Inside the circle write down everything about your performance that is within your control/sphere of influence (e.g., your actions and attitudes). Next, write down everything that is outside of your control, outside of the circle. Observe and review how much time you spend thinking about and worrying about things on the outside. Practice focus activities.

Also, see performance focus card.



SELF Raise My Game[®]

— SORT CARDS —



Team Person

- Approachable, relaxed, warm, friendly, easy to talk to and get to know. An open book.
- Relates well to all kinds of people.
- Can still lead or be a team player when on the bench or a substitute.
- Makes a pleasant first impression.
- Builds trust with team members (i.e., is credible, reliable, makes others feel safe, and cares about what is best for others/the team).
- Enjoys social interactions.
- Deals calmly with issues that arise within the team, positively supporting leaders.
- Puts the team before personal goals or targets, when appropriate.
- Can accept and align to coaches' decisions or directives regardless of personal opinion.
- Supports and celebrates the success of teammates or the team, even when personal goals are not achieved.

Becoming a Team Person

Reflect on how you are seen

Ask your coach how you are viewed within the team and what behaviours are creating that impression. Reflect on how you want to be viewed and identify some actions that would reinforce that view.

Be generous with new people

Make a pleasant first impression. When you meet people, make a point to engage with them (i.e., look them in the eye, speak clearly, make a joke, ask a question). Be welcoming and generous towards new members of the group. Take time to get to know them and check in with them, think about how you can help them fit in. Make a point of asking new members their opinion and including them.

Be positive and give energy

Give energy to those around you through positivity and praise. If you are a senior player, the junior players want to know that you trust and believe in them. Have you gone out of your way to recognise something good someone else in the team has done recently? Do you have opportunities as a team to acknowledge team members?

Include everyone

Are you inclusive of everyone in the group or do you stick with the people you feel most comfortable with? Identify ways you could make people feel included, e.g., humour, team activities, asking everyone's opinion, giving everyone a job/role.

Find common ground

Everyone in the team will have a different background, culture, and upbringing; and everyone brings their own unique set of values and beliefs. Do you view differences as a strength or annoyance? Think about how you could learn more about others to grow your respect and empathy for them. Look for a common ground to connect.

Support leaders

Does your team have processes that allow you to proactively identify and support resolution of issues? When issues arise within the team, ask leaders what you can do to support them.



Team Values and Culture

- Aware of self and impact on others.
- Is a guardian (has kaitiaki) of team values (during both good times and bad times) and encourages others to do the same.
- Is widely trusted. Contributes to team feedback and is seen as a direct, truthful and humble individual.
- Respects and trusts the coaches/leaders, and shows confidence in others.
- Understands role in the team, is selfless, and willing to support the development of others.
- Doesn't misrepresent him/herself for personal gain.
- Can quickly sense what will help or hinder the team.
- Can see the bigger picture (i.e., not just where I am headed, but also where I come from).
- Has considered the whakapapa of the group (i.e., the story of the group, land, or water that we perform on).

Developing Team Values and Culture

Understanding our culture

- Has your team discussed how they are seen from the outside, and how they want to be seen?
- Has your team discussed what moments or events have created those perceptions and how you might go about changing them?
- Is everyone absolutely clear on what behaviours are expected within the 'desired' culture and which are not?
- Have you discussed scenarios and what you would be expected to do?
- Have you discussed consequences of falling short of expectations with the team?

- Does your team integrate team values into review and reflection of team performance? e.g., if courage is a team value, do the team use courage as a way to reflect on performances, or look for moments of courage on the field.

Supporting the leaders

What feedback loops have been set up? How does the coach best receive your feedback? Discuss your ideas and observations with your coach, and work together to build the culture you desire. If you are a junior member of the group speak to someone you trust, who has the influence to take action.

Reflecting on the past

Reflect on the times when you have known a behaviour was outside of what is expected. Reflect on what action you took and what your motivations were. Reflect on any barriers to taking action and how you would approach the situation in hindsight.

Knowing why it's important

Have you drawn a clear line of sight between the impacts/consequences of not respecting team agreements and the success of individuals within the group?

Using humble enquiry

If you see or hear something that doesn't sit right, try asking a humble question to check others' perceptions.



ATHLETE LIFE[®]

— SORT CARDS —



Managing Time and Energy

- Concentrates on the most important priorities.
- Has structure within each day.
- Manages device/screen time.
- Uses a diary and/or calendar.
- Uses down time wisely to recharge my energy.
- Knows that priorities change at different times.
- Life is mostly stable and well balanced.
- Has friends and interests outside of sport that allow some variety, challenge and stimulation.
- Is OK with things outside of control.

Managing my Time and Energy

Noticing when things are out of balance

When things get out of balance, you may start to feel stressed or anxious. Do you know what behaviours others would see that reflect a healthy or unhealthy balance? Reflect on your life balance weekly, and if you notice a series of low scores or downward trend over weeks, talk to someone trusted in your inner circle of support about what changes are needed.

Plan your down time

Look at your schedule, and plan when you have spare time that you could use. Think about how best you can use this time to refresh mentally and physically.

Set aside time to plan

Set aside time on a Sunday night to plan your week and then take 10 mins each morning to plan your priorities for the day.

Examine how you spend your time

Is your life one-dimensional? Do you spend all of your time on squash and only hang out with people related to squash? Having another way to engage the brain, e.g., study, a job or interest, can help you stay fresh, continue to enjoy squash, work towards a career after you retire, and provide perspective.

Device time

Set limits for your device time and avoid screen time in the 30mins before sleep.

Planning in and using breaks effectively

Look at whether you can plan a complete break in your annual programme. Use this time wisely to refresh; e.g., try something new, do something outside your comfort zone, meet new people. TIP: keep your fitness up during your break through cross training.

Managing priorities

Write a list of everything you have to do in priority order. Look down your list and draw a line between the things you 'have to do' and the things that you can delete, defer, or delegate. Now set about 'managing' the things below the line to move them off your short term 'to-do' list.



Future, Change, and Career Planning

- Has a plan for at least the next year (i.e., income source, living arrangements, sporting competition plans, etc.).
- If at school or studying, is actively preparing for the transition into part-time or full-time work.
- Knows what careers are of interest and is developing skills, experience and/or networks in this area.
- Has a transition plan for any upcoming changes.
- Has a strong support network to navigate through changes and support settling into new routines (may take six to 18 months).

Tips for Future, Change and Career Planning

Not sure what career you would like to follow?

- Write down your strengths/talents and what you are passionate about.
- Write down the times in your life you have been in flow (when everything has clicked and you've been in your element). Identify industries or the type of work you are interested in.
- List jobs in which your skills, passions and interests were being used.
- Research; have conversations with people you know in careers you are interested in.
- Consider study options to work towards a career pathway.

Need a job that works in with squash?

Make a list of the job parameters that would be ideal:

- How many hours per week?
- What days/times you would be available to work?
- How much flexibility you would need to attend competitions?

Identify jobs that may fit this profile. If you have no experience in this area, consider what work experience would support your application. Prepare your curriculum vitae and identify a list of people/businesses to approach. Search job advertisements.

Building a network of support

- Make a list of the areas of your life you might need some help/support with (e.g. somewhere to live, finding a part-time job).
- Identify people in your current circle of support and ask them to make introductions to people who may be able to help you in these areas.
- Talk to other athletes who have followed a similar path, and ask them for help identifying people who may be useful connections during your change journey.
- Ask your regional or national sporting organisation for any contacts or relationships they have that may help you through your change journey.



HEALTH

SORT CARDS



Health

- Is consistently able to turn up to training and competitions healthy and ready to go (no ongoing sickness or health challenges).
- Has self-care routines to maintain health.
- Will proactively see the GP with any health concerns.
- Has a positive body image and healthy eating habits.
- Is able to manage health during travel, including adjusting to time zones and new sleep routines.
- Is able to train and compete at altitude and in heat within normal adaption expectations.
- No addictions (i.e., drugs, alcohol, gambling).

Tips for Good Health

General health, body image, addictions or mental health

If you have concerns, talk to someone in your trusted circle to support you to seek help from a GP, counsellor, or clinical psychologist.

Sleep

If you are struggling with sleep, look at your sleep habits:

- Does your bedroom environment promote consistent, uninterrupted sleep?
- Do you have a stable sleep schedule?
- Is your bedroom comfortable and free of disruptions?
- Do you follow a relaxing pre-bed routine?
- Do you have healthy daily routines and habits that contribute to supporting your sleep?
- Do you know how much sleep you need?

Seek professional help if you are struggling with getting the right amount or quality of sleep.

Build your knowledge

Identify someone in your circle of support that will have access to research and specialist knowledge on athlete-specific approaches to subjects such as travel, altitude, and heat.

Also, see women's health, sleep and nutrition cards.



Women's Health

- Understands the importance of menstrual cycles and the role hormones play in recovery, bone, and overall health.
- Is knowledgeable about menstruation and what is normal.
- Knows when to ask for help in relation to pain, bleeding, or other menstruation symptoms. Feels confident to be able to manage symptoms well.
- Can identify the key markers for menstrual health and knows who to contact if she notices any problems.
- Understands that contraception is a choice and is well-informed about the full range of choices available. Knows where to seek help, and has the information and support to make contraception decisions.
- Is aware of common female health issues such as premenstrual syndrome, dysmenorrhea (very painful menstruation), menorrhagia (very frequent or heavy menstruation, amenorrhea (not starting periods until after age 16 or missing more than three periods in a row), endometriosis, and polycystic ovarian syndrome.
- Has positive support from coach/sport to talk about and manage women's health issues.

Tips for Women's Health

See your GP

Ask your GP or sports doctor for information on women's health issues related to sport. Did you know that endometriosis and polycystic ovarian syndrome affect around 10% of all women? Recent research has highlighted the prevalence of girl's and women's health concerns but also that they are under-recognised and under-reported. This means they are diagnosed late and the side effects and outcomes made worse. Don't put up with any negative symptoms which impact what you choose to do or how well you perform. Ask and seek support and help.

Support from your coach/sport

If you have concerns about managing women's health issues in relation to performance or training expectations, identify someone within squash or circle of support that can help you to get understanding and alignment with your health needs.

Managing your whole health is key to menstrual health

Wellbeing is a balance of social, emotional, physical and mental health and together they are key to your performance as an athlete. Your menstrual cycle is sensitive to imbalances in your health. Keeping a 'balance' is critical to your cycle and hormones.

Improve your menstrual health knowledge

Did you know that menstrual cycle hormones can affect metabolism, bone density, hydration, immune response, pain tolerance, body temperature, weight, muscle recovery, injury risk, mental health and many other aspects of health and performance? Get informed, and regain choice and power over your body.

Check out:

- HPSNZ website, WHISPA.
- Sport NZ balanced female health handbook and infographic, sportnz.org.nz/balanced-female-health.
- Australian Institute of Sport, female performance initiative.



PHYSICAL SKILLS[©]

— SORT CARDS —



Core Strength and Balance

- Maintains balance at the point of ball strike.
- Can keep balance to achieve maximal power output through legs.



Developing Core Strength and Balance

Core strength and balance has different component parts, including:

- Balance – the ability to maintain equilibrium when stationary or moving (i.e., not to fall over) through the coordinated actions of our sensory functions (eyes, ears and the proprioceptive organs in our joints).
- Static Balance – the ability to retain the centre of mass above the base of support in a stationary position.
- Dynamic Balance – ability to maintain balance with body movement.
- Speed – the ability to move all or part of the body quickly.

- Strength – the ability of a muscle or muscle group to overcome resistance.
- Co-ordination – the ability to control the movement of the body in co-operation with the body's sensory functions e.g., catching a ball (ball, hand and eye co-ordination).

Getting your timing right requires repetitive practice, video analysis and body awareness.

Ideas for training, core strength and balance:

- Aim to improve the component parts of core strength and balance (listed above) individually or in combination.
- Design high agility training exercises that require excellent timing, lunging,

change of direction, balance and co-ordination.

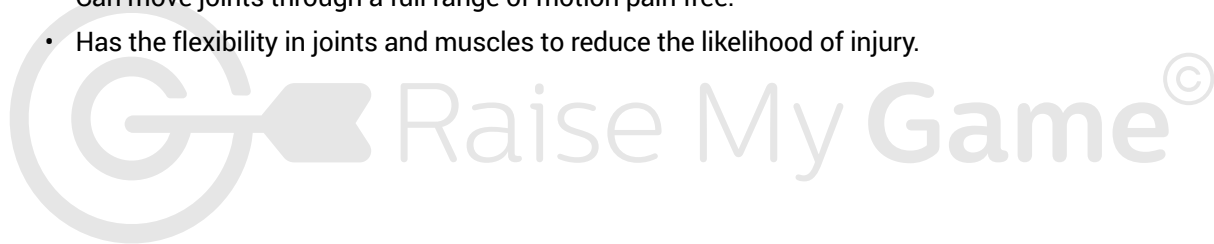
- Add in 10 mins of ladder or cone work before your existing sessions (as a guide, a time of less than 2.8 seconds for males and 3.4 seconds for females for running the length of a 20-rung ladder, one foot in each rung at a time, is considered as excellent for senior athletes).

Also, see speed development and agility card.



Range of Movement

- Can stretch and move to reach the ball in all areas of the court.
- Can move joints through a full range of motion pain free.
- Has the flexibility in joints and muscles to reduce the likelihood of injury.



Developing Range of Movement

Flexibility is the ability of your muscles and other connective tissues to stretch temporarily.

Mobility is the ability of your joints to move freely through a range of motion in a pain-free way.

Developing flexibility

Include stretching in your daily routine. Once you are warmed up, use dynamic stretching prior to your competition, and static stretching after a competition. Target areas of your body that most need it.

Warm-up

Develop a short routine of breathwork and dynamic stretching prior to training, strength sessions and games that works for you.

Warm-down

Develop a routine of static stretching following training, strength sessions and games. Make sure you hold each stretch for 15 to 30 seconds.

Progression

Make sure the muscle overload is progressive.

Strength through length

Stretching is unloaded strength training at end ranges of movement. We can overload and strengthen muscles at end range through the addition of extra load and/or the use of contract/relax stretching, e.g., use a strength exercise such as the Romanian Deadlift to increase hamstring flexibility.

Fitting in stretching

Adding in 10–20 minutes of stretching before or after a training session each day will be more beneficial than one longer session once a week.

Breathing

Proper breathing is an important part of all exercise, especially stretching. The foundation of breath work, diaphragmatic breathing, is intended to help you breathe more effectively and with less energy. It also engages and strengthens your diaphragm and core muscles. If your diaphragm and core aren't strong, stretching and strength training will be more difficult.



TECHNICAL SKILLS[©]

— SORT CARDS —



Understanding and Using Length

- Understands the types of lengths (attacking, defensive), reads play well and anticipates, making good decisions on when to use one over the other.
- Can vary pace to force the opponent to make adjustments (straight and cross-court shots).

Attacking length:

- Identifies opportunities to use attacking length (i.e., loose, or short straight or cross-court shot), and is well positioned to use this shot.
- Uses length to apply pressure by hitting the ball hard and low, with dying length (i.e., two bounces before the back wall) into the back corner. Uses time to set-up for shots well.
- On straight shots, can hit the ball tight to the side walls, and ball stays in the corners.
- On cross-court shots, ball touches the wall and stays low.

Defensive Length:

- Can use defensive length to recover and buy time to achieve better court position and stay in the rally. Ball is hit at optimal height on the front wall, with slow pace.

Developing Length

Technique

Understand the technical skill execution required to achieve length (e.g., grip on racquet, footwork, movement and follow-through). Knowledge could be gathered through:

- Talking to experts (coaches, other athletes).
- Watching videos of the best in the world.
- Videoing yourself or getting someone to watch you and give feedback. Review your shot selection, use of pace, and any other specific development opportunities (e.g. attacking or defensive length).

Identify specific work-on(s)

Complete game analysis with your coach to identifying which 'length' shots need development (e.g. down the wall, cross court, lob).

Training with variation

In training, work with your coach to make sure you have variation in drills and hitting partners.

Using Targets

Set up a target area of the court that you are aiming to hit, set goals and then measure the number of times hit the target.



Control the T and Recovery

Controlling the T and recovery is using T-position effectively to control the rally and cover all shots. A player who controls the T well would:

- Have a wide range of shots.
- Consistently choose the best shot (attacking or defensive).
- Consistently keep the ball out of the middle of the court (i.e., short or long/deep).
- Have the confidence, skill and right timing to hit winners.

Developing Controlling the T and Recovery

Using shot speed

Practice using a change of shot speed to get control of the T by increasing the pace of the game.

Identify specific work-on(s)

Complete game analysis with your coach to identify whether there are certain shots that you need to develop further. Add repetitious practice of these specific shots into your training.

Training with different training partners

Choose your training partner purposefully to either increase the pressure, or to practice applying pressure.

Using video

Video yourself and work with your coach to review your shot selection, use of pace, and any other specific development opportunities.

Agility, balance and anticipation

Do you have the agility, balance and anticipation to control the T.

See core strength and balance, and speed development and agility cards.



TACTICS

©

— SORT CARDS —



Game Plan

A game plan is a strategy to guide decision-making throughout a match. A player who is strong at this competency:

- Completes match analysis of opponents.
- Has identified one or more game plan(s) to define how to approach the match.
- Has a game plan that identifies how to utilise strengths, and expose opposition weaknesses (e.g., by hitting the ball to a particular area of the court).
- Can adapt the game plan as the match progresses.

Developing Game Planning

Analyse opposition

Watch live matches or videos of games played by your opponents, analyse their strengths, weaknesses, game plan, and decisions. Keep a book of notes from your analysis and matches played.

Analyse self

Ensure you understand your own strengths and weaknesses. Knowledge could be gathered through analysis of both your training and matches.

Formulating the plan

Discuss the plan with your coach until you have 100% confidence in it.

Game debrief

Review implementation of the game plan with the coach including your decisions to stick with, or change the game plan. Keep notes on what you learnt to refer back to.

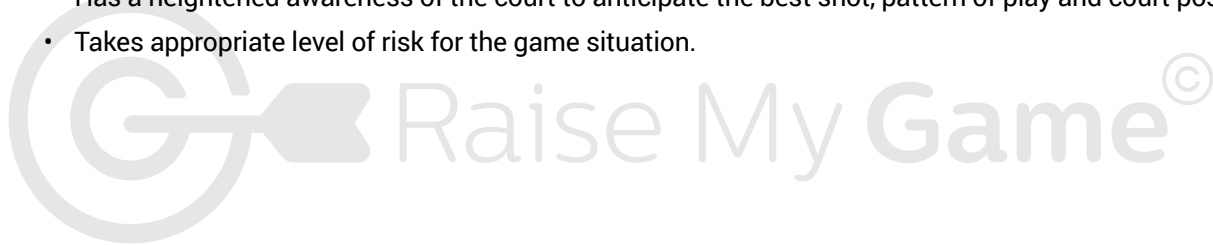
Learn from history

Become a student of the game. Watch videos of games played, analyse the strategy and decisions made. Read books and talk to former players to pick their brains.



Tactical Awareness

- Can read the game situation and make good decisions.
- Has a heightened awareness of the court to anticipate the best shot, pattern of play and court position.
- Takes appropriate level of risk for the game situation.



Developing Tactical Awareness

Game debrief

Review your decision-making, shot anticipation, patterns of play, positioning and ability to read the game situation alongside your coach. Keep notes on what you learnt to refer back to.

Learn from history

Become a student of the game. Watch videos of top players, analyse the strategy and decisions made. Read books and talk to former players to pick their brains.

