

Why “Keeping Your Eye on the Ball” Is More Than a Slogan in Tennis

by Lenny Schloss

Founder and CEO

Billie Jean King’s Eye Coach

In developing a player’s tennis swing, the eyes are often overlooked. Perhaps that’s because we use our eyes all day long as we accomplish daily tasks. We use them with precision every day to scan (to find), track (to follow) or focus (to take action). We take them for granted.

But a tennis stroke requires something more. To consistently hit quality shots these three functions must operate in a precise and coordinated sequence. Most current methods of training treat each function independently. There are problems with this approach. Primarily it seldom works and leads to a syndrome we call “head shifting.” This is when your eye shifts prematurely from the point of contact (POC) creating inconsistency and the majority of missed shots.

Point of Contact (POC) Training

POC Training unifies these three eye functions so they perform as a team – for each ball and each stroke. When this happens, the full potential in the “kinetic chain” is unleashed. And we are moved closer to become the athletes we were born to be.

My work over many years with players and coaches across the country prove that the eye reflex can be changed. We can replace it with a more-helpful reaction. As we do this, the results quickly become evident and you begin to self-reinforce your new behavior.

A Coaches Normal Focus

When playing, coaches normally concentrate on the larger actions that consume the conscious mind – like stroke technique, unit turn, or footwork. Most coaches are very good at this and it certainly matters. What is often forgotten is the smaller motion of the eyes that is too fast for the human eye to spot. (This is especially when the coach is positioned far from their student.) POC Training *removes all conscious thinking* and allows a natural flow between the eye (mind) and the body to instinctively occur.

Unleash Your Natural Reflexes

POC Training allows your eyes to work better for you. Look at it this way. Your eyes are crucial to survival using protective reflexes that are hardwired into the neural circuit. The eyelid closes when an object is about to hit it. The head pulls away from the force of a blow. Instantly, instinctively and without forethought, this reflex will only change if it is replaced. That’s what POC Training does. It allows the *optimal eye position* to become instinctive and self-correcting when mishitting occurs due to head shifting.

Unfortunately most practice repeats the same mistakes over and over. This is a dead end street. You replace an established behavior by repeating a new specific action. You must do this over and over for the replacement to take effect. Consistency is the secret. That means that if the newly-acquired behavior is not maintained, the old reflexive reaction will return. And in tennis, your mishits will return.

My Best Advice

Add POC Training to your system as a separate emphasis. Starting with the eyes impacts everything. It builds a more solid foundation for all training that will follow. This is how the kinetic change works. It’s how your game or your student’s play can become more fun and rewarding...almost immediately. We have detailed drills and Billie Jean’s Eye Coach to help. So take advantage of them and watch the results roll in.



Lenny Schloss, CEO and Founder of Billie Jean King's Eye Coach. Trained thousands of players and coaches on Point of Contact concepts and why it's the fastest way to better tennis. Former All American Tennis Player, Top 10 US Pro, and award-winning club owner and manager. www.theeyecoach.com