

# Conditioning for Tennis

*By Ashley Hobson*

1. **Strength** - the force that a muscle or muscle group can exert against a resistance in one maximal effort. For example, a one-repetition maximal bench press. High maximal strength is not absolutely necessary for the tennis player, but the higher your maximum strength, the less taxing submaximal work will be to your body. This factor is important for tennis players.
2. **Muscular Endurance** – the ability of a muscle or muscle group to perform repeated contractions against a light (submaximal) load for an extended period of time. Muscular endurance is more important for the tennis player when compared to maximal strength, but as mentioned above, increased strength will have a positive affect on muscular endurance.
3. **Power** – whereas maximum strength is the maximal force produced power is defined as the speed at which a force is exerted over a certain distance. Power is more important for tennis than strength. Power is what generates speed to the ball. The faster you can overcome the resistance of your arm and racket during the serve, the more power you will be able to generate. Increase in strength and speed will have a positive affect on power.
4. **Agility** – the ability to change the direction of the body or body parts rapidly under control. This is very important for the tennis player. Increases in strength and power will have a positive affect on the agility of a player. Changing direction quickly requires great amounts of strength and power, and muscular endurance can help to change direction again and again without excessive fatigue.
5. **Speed** – the rapidity of movement. This is important when making dashes to the net to pickup a ball. Pure speed is not as important for tennis as speed-agility.
6. **Flexibility** – the range of motion around a joint. Flexibility will allow more fluidity of movements as well as reduce the risk of injuries caused by over-stretching or muscle pulls. Flexibility training can also aid in recovery from hard training sessions and should e incorporated in a workout in the warm-up phase, but particularly in the cool-down phase. More dynamic warm-up and flexibility should be reserved for the warm-up.

7. **Aerobic Capacity** – the amount of work a person can perform, normally determined by the rate at which oxygen is utilized during exercise. The better your aerobic power, the less likely you will become fatigued. However, for tennis, combining a high level of anaerobic power to a good aerobic base is vital.
8. **Body Composition** – refers to the relative proportions by weight of body fat and lean mass. In most sports having a body composition of 10-15% fat for men and 18-21% fat for women is good. In some sports bodyfat compositions may be lower. Weight training will cause an increase in bodyweight, as muscle is more dense than fat. Therefore, the scale should not be used as a good indicator of fat loss.

## **Conditioning – 4 Phases**

1. **Preparation** – Building a base fitness level. Tennis is a game of 3-500 short sprints. In the preparation phase one first needs to build up a aerobic base by developing cardiac fitness
2. **Pre-Competiton** - In this stage one needs to develop Speed/ Agility/ Strength/ Power
3. **Competitive phase** – During this phase maintenance of physical fitness is key. Light conditioning is essential to maintain fitness. Endurance run once a week maintains endurance.
4. **Active Rest** – Post competitive regeneration phase, players need to keep fit by x-training, swimming, biking or playing other sports.