

Smith Stearns student-athletes continue learning the importance of challenging themselves appropriately, creating an action plan to guide performance and seeking feedback to learn and grow from every training session and competitive opportunity. In order to build upon this idea, we encourage our athletes to develop imagery skills to prepare confidently for the intense physical and emotional battle that tennis presents. Research continues to show that imagery is one of the most powerful and integral skills to solidify a mindset of performing with purpose. A couple key factors for using imagery effectively include:

- **Vividness** – The more real (life-like) and clear the imagery, the more effective the skill of imagery becomes. How an athlete hopes to look, sound (self-talk) and feel (emotionally) all play into mastering the vividness of effective imagery.
- **Action-based** – While seeing oneself holding trophies and achieving future success can be helpful at times, these images do not take into account the true vigor required to compete effectively. Those who also prepare for the worst-case scenario and know how to respond in these emotional situations will be much better equipped and feel more confident to perform throughout the heat of competition – when performance matters.

Mirinda Carfrae (<http://www.mirindacarfrae.com>) may be one of the mentally toughest athletes in the world. She's an Ironman triathlete, measuring in at only 5-feet 3-inches tall and 115 pounds and is one of the best competitors around. When talking about preparation for races she says, **"I definitely visualize races, especially the parts that are going to be the toughest. I know from experience it's going to hurt and be uncomfortable, but if you're prepared for that mentally, the suffering isn't as bad."**

As our student-athletes continue to prepare themselves with strategies of how to overcome barriers and hurdles to performance, they place no limit on their potential. We will continue developing a mindset of enthusiasm and resilience within the students of Smith Stearns Tennis Academy, so they can utilize these strategies to achieve success on and off the course for many years to come.

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Smith Stearns Mental Conditioning

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