

## Attention Parents! - Tennis is the Best First Sport

by Joe Dinoffer, USPTA, USPTR, ITA, USTWA

This story is about another example of the scientific community confirming what many of us lifelong tennis lovers have believed for years --- that tennis is not only the best sport to play for a lifetime, but that it is also the best first sport for children to learn as well. It's an important and logical consideration. After all, it makes a great deal of sense for parents to encourage their children to select a first sport to learn which will develop the greatest number of skills required by the greatest number of other sports and activities. The chart on this page presents a very convincing argument.

Sport	Tennis	Soccer	Baseball	Football	Basketball	Golf
Skill						
Throwing	✗		✗	✗	✗	
Catching	✗		✗	✗	✗	
Striking	✗		✗			✗
Running & Striking	✗	✗	✗			
Movement rhythm	✗				✗	✗
3-step movement patterns	✗	✗		✗	✗	
Aerobic	✗	✗			✗	
Anaerobic	✗		✗	✗		
Team-Building	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	
Bonus Question:						
Can this sport be played for a lifetime?	✗					✗

**Here are the tennis-specific notes and definitions to help you better understand the chart.**

**Throwing** - We all know that the service and overhead motion in tennis is identical to baseball and football. It shouldn't be surprising to note that when baseball players or quarterbacks take up tennis, they serve like Pete Sampras.

**Catching** - It has long been understood that the soft-hand skills required for volleying, as well as dropshots, lobs, and other touch shots in tennis are terrific catching skill-builders for other sports.

**Striking** - Anyone who has played tennis knows how much easier tennis makes learning all other racquet sports. In fact, studies have proven significant carry-overs from one racquet sport to others, as well as to other striking activities like baseball and hockey.

**Running & Striking** - This very specific skill is one of the most challenging features of tennis, and one of the most valuable skill-builders a developing athlete can master. In this area, most other sports don't compare at all.

**Movement Rhythm** - Sports educators are now broadly beginning to emphasize the importance of rhythm in sports, although dance teachers have long expounded it's benefits. Because tennis is a continuous rhythm activity, it offers many timing and rhythm benefits not available from many other sports. It may be interesting to compare soccer and tennis in this regard. In tennis, players are constantly involved with the ball; however in soccer, a center halfback, for example, will only be in contact with the soccer ball about two minutes in a full court 90-minute soccer game.

**3-Step Movement Patterns** - At a recent multiple sports conference, a featured speaker spoke about the 3-step movement principal for sports like kicking in soccer and football. In tennis as well, leading coaches are pointing out that almost all baseline movement can be covered in three steps.

**Aerobic** - Although tennis is accepted as more anaerobic than aerobic, the aerobic benefits of playing tennis are very high as compared to other sports such as baseball or golf.

**Anaerobic** - There was a recent comparison of calories burned by different activities over a 3-hour period. Competitive and moderate tennis scored near the top of the list. Why? The on-going high level of anaerobic activity in tennis compares quite favorably to all other sports. This makes tennis a wonderful first sport to build both stamina and strength in children.

**Team-Building** - Most junior tennis classes are organized in a group learning environment, encouraging a team atmosphere within an individual sport. And, what is perhaps the most exciting tennis event of the year? Davis Cup play - a total team experience.

**The final point of interest on our comparison chart is to consider which of the sports listed can be played for a lifetime. After all, it makes sense to invest the most time and resources in an activity which pays the highest dividends. And tennis does just that.**

Visit [www.uncourtoffcourt.com](http://www.uncourtoffcourt.com) to sign up for a free monthly tennis newsletter and free access to other related articles and tennis tips.