

## **Jeff-Abracadabra- The Magic of Communication with Jeff Salzenstein ParentingAces Tennis**

**Lisa [0:00:10]:** Welcome to season 8, episode 3 of the ParentingAces Podcast, I'm so glad you chose to join us again this week. There's a lot going on in tennis right now with the Australian Open underway, and the Australian Open Juniors getting underway, I hope you're finding sometime to watch some of these incredible matches, and cheer on your favorite players, and I hope your juniors are watching some matches and learning from the players that are making their living out there, playing this sport because the kids have a lot to learn by watching tennis.

**[0:00:47]:** And coaches, I hope you're giving your students some guidance and what to look for when they're watching these matches on T.V. and parents, if this is your wheel house and you know what to look for out there, I hope you're also offering up some guidance to your child and enjoying watching these matches, and sharing the sport with your family.

**[0:01:09]:** So this week's conversation is with a friend of mine, Jeff Salzenstein who I think is making the rounds on the podcast circuit these days, I'm seeing his name pop-up on a lot of the podcast that I listen to, and I always find him so interesting and insightful, and this conversation is no different. I was not real sure what we were going to talk about, we kind of went back and forth trying to decide what the topic should be, and really came to the conclusion that we should have a conversation on communication, and not just communication in the generic sense but, really digging deeper into what it means to be a good communicator both as a parent and as a coach. What we can do as the adults to help the young people that we're working with become better at communicating, and also how we can be good role-models for those that were around.

**[0:02:12]:** So I hope you enjoy my conversation with Jeff, he, like I said is always so knowledgeable, so insightful, and comes from a lifetime in the sports so, I really trust what he has to say. So that said, sit back, relax, and enjoy this episode of the ParentingAces Podcast.

**[0:02:32]:** Jeff Salzenstein, thanks so much for joining us on the ParentingAces Podcast.

**Jeff [0:02:37]:** I am so happy to be here, it has been way too long, I am glad we're finally connected again Lisa, thank you so much.

## **Jeff-Abracadabra- The Magic of Communication with Jeff Salzenstein ParentingAces Tennis**

**Lisa [0:02:43]:** Yeah, thank you. It has been a long time, as we were chatting before we started recording here. 2013 was our last podcast together so, yeah it's been way too long.

**Jeff [0:02:55]:** Yeah, well let's try to make it that's it's not every five years, let's close that gap a little bit.

**Lisa [0:03:01]:** Absolutely. That sounds like a great plan. So for my listeners that are not familiar with you, and I don't know how they've missed you, if they have. Why don't you just give us just a brief rundown on your background in tennis?

**Jeff [0:03:16]:** Sure, you know I can give you the long version, or the short version. We'll start with the shortest version I can give, and then if you have clarifying questions, we'll continue but I've been playing tennis since I was four years old. I mean I still have videos of my father dragging me around... well, not dragging me around but, I dragging a racket on the court with him, tossing balls to me, rolling balls to me. He was a teaching pro, he was USBTA pro in the Midwest in Peoria in Saint Luis. My mom was a **[unclear 0:03:45]**, I was an only child, so what do you do when your parents tennis, you go the court, and that's how it started.

**[0:03:53]:** By the age of nine, I had moved to Colorado with my mother a few years prior to that. By the age of nine, I was No. 1 in the state, in Colorado. I remember my mother re-married when I was nine, and my stepdad said, "You're going to be the No. 1 player in the state this year as a nine year old, the first year of 10 and unders." And I thought, "This guy's crazy. I mean he's my stepdad now, he's also crazy." But he was right. And then at age 12, I was a national champion, don't ask me how it happened coming from Colorado, competing against Florida, and California, and the southern section but, somehow I was the national champion at age 12.

**[0:04:33]:** Had a low during my teenage years where I drop to 69 in the country. So No. 1 in the country at 12 to 69 at the first year 16, that's quite a drop for someone and it was pretty traumatic but, I was able to turn that around and ended up being top 5 in the county in the 18's, my final year, I think I was rank second but there were two guys that didn't ranked that year so, I always say, "I was top 5."

**[0:04:58]:** And then I went to Stanford, played four years there for the legendary **[unclear 0:05:02]**. Five singles my freshmen year, developed a massive serve out of nowhere my sophomore in college and

## **Jeff-Abracadabra- The Magic of Communication with Jeff Salzenstein ParentingAces Tennis**

ended up playing No. 1 my last two years, and won a couple of national title, that's an amazing experience there. And then tried my hand at the pro tour, and played on and off for 11 years not knowing that I was ever going to be good enough to play pro tennis when I was in college, especially my freshman year when I was playing five singles and had no serve.

**[0:05:27]:** And my career was probably marked by injury, two surgeries before the age of 25. It was one of perseverance, persistent, and a deep love of the game, truly playing for the love of the game in the minor leagues being ranked 150 to 200 most my career. Spent about five minutes inside the top 100, which is great for marketing that I actually got to the top hundred for a two seconds but... did that, and then at age 33 I hung up the racket and started coaching. I mean what do you do when you're a Stanford grad with an Economics degree, and you've never had a job in your life because you've always played tennis, and you don't want a 9-5, and you don't want to for the man, what do you do, well you coach.

**[0:06:18]:** And started coaching in Colorado, and then a few years into that I started studying online marketing, and how you could actually create content and monetize content, this is way back in 2009-10 and I launched my first online product in 2011, and I've been doing online tennis instruction in addition to some coaching and consulting for the last seven years, and now I'm doing more mindset coaching, working with parents and kids but, also with athletes outside of tennis and with executives.

**[0:06:52]:** So, really expanding my reach outside of tennis but, as you and I spoke earlier, I have a deep love for tennis, for education, for coaching, and that short story became a long story. So I apologize but it felt like I would give a bit of a timeframe on what we're dealing with here.

**Lisa [0:07:11]:** No, it was perfect... that was perfect because, it leads us right into our conversation today which is really focused around communication, and communication is kind of one of those underlying themes that has permeated everything I've done with ParentingAces from the very beginning, and talking about communication between coaches and players, between coaches and parents, between parents and players, and so that's what we're going to delve into a little bit more deeply today, I think. And really, one of the first questions I have for you... one of the first topics I'd like you to tackle is, how tennis parents should be communicating with their children?

**Jeff [0:08:03]:** Well you've opened up "Pandora's Box" with communication, we could talk for hours about it, I'm sure we will have questions going back and forth. But a little bit of context before I answer

## **Jeff-Abracadabra- The Magic of Communication with Jeff Salzenstein ParentingAces Tennis**

that question in communication, is I've been obsessed probably for the last 20 years— when I had all the injuries, I started delving into everything related to peak performance, mindset, physicality, athletic performance, nutrition, even spirituality techniques, footwork strategy, everything between the lines. And so that became my passion, maybe even more so than winning tennis matches, I had a tendency to get distracted because I was so passionate about that.

**[0:08:49]:** And I remember listening to— I don't know if it was as CD at the time, or might have even been a cassette, because we're going back to like 2003 maybe, even before that possibly, maybe 2000. But there was a tape that I got a hold of from a gentleman outside the tennis world that was teaching about the power of language, and the power of communication. And I became obsessed with words, and how we communicate, and the way I look at it is there are— in my view, three types of communication as it relates to the source let's say.

**[0:09:31]:** How you talk to yourself. So the internal dialogue to me is communication, the words you use, the things that you say on and off the court to yourself. Then there's the communication that you get from people that are influencing you. It could be parents or coaches, and as parents and coaches we have a tremendous responsibility... probably way more responsibility than we realize on choosing the right words and communicating in a positive healthy way to our children on and off the tennis court. And that part, we have a long way to go in that area to open up an awareness and a dialogue, and actually to create education around that. I mean there are tools and skills to develop in that area.

**[0:10:18]:** And then the third line of communication, or way of communication— I look at society. Like what the big bad world, or the good world depending on how you want to look at it. How we're being programmed if you will, from T.V., from the internet, from government. Just different sources better outside of our small network of our coaches, and our parents.

**[0:10:45]:** And so there's a lot of programming and brainwashing going on, literally by the time you're 35 years old, and that's why kids are so malleable, we can really impact them by how we communicate and speak to them. By the time you're 35 years old, 98% of what we're doing is a program. We're waking up every day on autopilot doing the same habits every single day, thinking the same thought, driving the same way to work, brushing our teeth the same way, like everything we're running a program, and in order to change that program you have to become aware of what you're doing in the first place, and a lot of people are sleepwalking through this.

## **Jeff-Abracadabra- The Magic of Communication with Jeff Salzenstein ParentingAces Tennis**

**[0:11:26]:** And so one of my responsibilities I feel as a coach, and that is the hat that I always wear before I'm... an entrepreneur or into the marketing side of things, is I think like a coach and how can we impact other people in a positive way, and the one of the easiest way to do it is to become more aware of your language and how you communicate.