

A portrait of a middle-aged man with short, graying hair, wearing a dark blue suit jacket over a light blue button-down shirt. He is sitting and looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. His hands are clasped together in his lap. The background is dark and out of focus.

LONG ARNOLD

An Interview

**DIPL. TENNISLEHRER
WETTKAMPFTRAINER B**

TEL. 079 325 41 21
LONG.ARNOLD@BLUEWIN.CH

WWW.LONGARNOLD.CH

COACH

A Conversation About Tennis, Development, and What Truly Matters

Over the last decades, tennis has changed significantly — not only as a sport, but also as a culture. Training methods, equipment, social media, parenting styles, and expectations have all evolved. But one truth has remained constant: tennis is still a sport that reveals character.

This interview offers insight into my coaching background, my philosophy, and what I believe truly helps children and adults develop — not only as tennis players, but as individuals.

After 35 years, I am more convinced than ever: tennis is one of the most powerful tools for personal development. It teaches discipline, emotional control, courage, responsibility, humility, and resilience.

But tennis only has this power when the environment is right.

This is why my coaching is not only about training players — it is about building a culture where growth becomes possible.

And when that culture exists, results follow naturally.

Long Arnold

What creates strong players — and strong people — in a world that is becoming increasingly distracted, anxious, and transactional?

**An Interview with Long Arnold
Tennis Coach, Mentor & Author**

This interview explores tennis not only as a sport, but as a mirror of society — and as a training ground for resilience, responsibility, and identity.



Interview

Long Arnold has been coaching tennis for more than 35 years. In this interview, he reflects on how tennis, coaching, and society have changed — and why the future of the sport will belong to coaches who master not only technique, but human development.

Q: You have coached tennis for more than 35 years. What has kept you in this profession for so long?

Tennis is one of the most complex sports in the world — technically, mentally, emotionally, and socially. You never stop learning. And the longer you coach, the more you realize that the sport is not only about strokes. It is about people.

What kept me in this profession is the opportunity to guide individuals over many years — to see them develop confidence, resilience, responsibility, and maturity through tennis. Coaching is not just about improving forehands. It is about helping people grow.

Q: How did your journey as a coach begin?

Tennis was not only something I wanted to play — it was something I wanted to understand. I began coaching because I loved tennis and was naturally interested in how people learn.

Over time, coaching became more than a profession. It became a responsibility. When children and families trust you, you realize you are influencing far more than technique.

Q: How has tennis changed over the last 35 years?

Tennis has become faster, more physical, and more demanding. Equipment has changed the game dramatically. Modern rackets and strings create more power and spin, and the sport requires earlier timing and stronger movement patterns.

The modern game rewards intensity, but it punishes poor movement patterns. Many injuries today are the result of equipment-driv-

en speed combined with weak athletic foundations. The sport requires a level of physical and psychological maturity that many young players are pushed into too early.

Tennis has become more professional in many ways — but also more transactional. Many environments have become unstable: coaches change frequently, clubs make short-term decisions, and players are surrounded by constant external input.

Players in the past had more time to grow. They played other sports. They built natural coordination. And they developed resilience through unstructured play. Also, coaching was often more stable. You stayed with one coach for years, which created trust and continuity.

Q: Are kids today more pressured — or more protected?

Both. They are pressured mentally and socially, but protected physically and emotionally in ways that sometimes prevent growth. The challenge is to protect children from harm without protecting them from necessary discomfort. Tennis requires struggle. But struggle must happen inside a safe relationship. Failure is the doorway to mastery and resilience.

Q: What do you think today's juniors struggle with the most?

Self-regulation. Handling emotions, handling mistakes, and staying stable under pressure.

Many juniors have talent, but their inner world is chaotic. Tennis exposes chaos. And without guidance, chaos becomes frustration, burnout, or quitting. What we can control is the environment and the consistency of the process.

Q: What do you believe is the most misunderstood part of tennis development?

Most people underestimate the timeline. Tennis development is a long-term journey. A complete tennis player is not created in one season. It takes years — often 10 to 14 years — to build strong technique, footwork, match intelligence, mental stability, and confidence.

Tennis is complex. Real development is not linear. Progress comes in phases: growth, plateau, breakthrough, setback.

Many programs focus on quick results, quick tournament wins, or short-term performance. That often produces early success, but long-term instability.

A coach must always think ahead: What kind of player will this child become in 5 years? In 10 years? What habits are forming now? What personality is developing?

Q: You often use the term “attunement.” What does that mean in coaching?

Attunement means understanding the individual player in front of you.

It means recognizing their talent, but also their emotional capacity. Some children can be challenged strongly and enjoy pressure. Others need more security and gradual steps.

Attunement means choosing the right speed, the right level of challenge, and the right tone — so that development happens without fear.

A coach who lacks attunement often trains everyone the same way. That creates either burnout or stagnation.

Q: Why do you believe emotional safety is so important in tennis training?

Because learning requires openness. If a player is afraid of making mistakes, being

judged, or being shamed, their nervous system becomes defensive. In that state, learning slows down. Players start protecting their ego instead of exploring new skills. When a player feels safe, they are willing to try, fail, repeat, and improve. They can focus. They can absorb information. They can take risks.

Emotional safety is not a “soft concept.” It is one of the strongest performance factors in tennis.

Q: How do you balance emotional safety with high standards?

Safety does not mean comfort. A great coach must be warm and demanding at the same time. Players should feel respected — but also challenged.

High standards are essential. The difference is how those standards are communicated. I correct directly, but never with humiliation. I set boundaries, but without punishment. I challenge players, but I do not break their confidence. The goal is to create an environment where hard work feels meaningful, not threatening.

Q: What qualities do you look for when you assess a child’s potential?

Talent is not only about hitting the ball well. When I assess a young player, I look at:

- coordination and motor skills
- ball feeling and timing
- movement intelligence
- frustration tolerance
- willingness to learn
- curiosity and motivation
- emotional stability
- competitiveness
- personality and character

A child with talent but no emotional resilience will struggle long-term. A child with average talent but strong character can develop very far.

Q: What does a truly sustainable development pathway look like?

It includes technical foundations, athletic development, mental training, emotional maturity, and personal responsibility.

It also includes seasons. Tennis is not a sprint. Players need phases: growth phases, competition phases, recovery phases.

A sustainable pathway is one that respects the human being.

Q: You emphasize long-term thinking. What does that mean practically in weekly training?

It means that every training session is part of a bigger picture. We don't train for today's match. We train for the player this child will become in five years. We build habits, movement patterns, mindset, and self-leadership. Weekly training must be consistent, structured, and emotionally intelligent.

Q: What causes young players to quit tennis?

Pressure without meaning. Training without joy. Environments without trust. Children quit when tennis becomes a place where they feel judged instead of supported. Or when they feel like they are living someone else's dream.

If tennis is built on relationship and autonomy, quitting becomes far less likely.

Q: How has the tennis business changed?

Tennis has become more commercial. Many programs operate like a service industry: short-term contracts, seasonal coaches, constant changes, and a focus on convenience.

Parents often want flexible schedules, cheap prices, and quick results. Clubs often want easy solutions and minimal conflict.

But tennis development cannot be built like a fast product. It requires consistency, structure, and trust. The business side of tennis

has moved faster than the reality of human development. That creates a gap — and that gap is where many juniors get lost.

Q: What do you think parents should look for when choosing a coach?

A good coach must be more than technically competent. Parents should look for:

- consistency and long-term thinking
- emotional stability and maturity
- clear & reliable communication
- structured training plans
- the ability to set boundaries respectfully
- a culture of trust and respect
- the ability to handle both success and failure
- real care for the person behind the player

A coach is not only teaching tennis. A coach is shaping the emotional environment in which the child grows.

“Technique can be copied Relationships cannot”

Q: You recently became officially recognized by J+S (Jugend+Sport). Why was that important?

Because it is an official recognition of quality and education.

Jugend+Sport is the Swiss government's structured pathway for youth sports development. Becoming a J+S certified coach strengthens the professionalism of my school and opens opportunities for young players who want to become coaches.

It fits my vision: not only building players, but building future leaders.

Q: What qualities do you look for in young coaches?

Humility, reliability, emotional maturity,

curiosity, and discipline.

Many young coaches focus on looking competent. The best coaches focus on learning.

Q: Why do many coaches fail even if they have strong playing skills?

Because playing tennis and teaching tennis are completely different skills.

Many strong players lack patience, communication skills, and emotional awareness. They cannot adapt to different learning styles.

They don't understand psychology. A coach must understand people. Without that, talent as a player means nothing.

Q: You wrote a book called "Match of Life." What inspired you to write it?

After decades of coaching, I realized that the most important knowledge in tennis is not technical.

The most important knowledge is relational: how coaches influence players, how trust is built, how emotional dynamics shape performance, and why many players fail not because of lack of talent, but because of unhealthy environments.

"Match of Life" is a collection of the most important lessons I've learned about coaching relationships. It is written for players, parents, and coaches who want to understand what truly creates long-term success.

Q: What is your personal coaching mission today?

My mission is to ignite a lifelong love for tennis, develop strong and resilient personalities, and create an environment where every player feels physically and emotionally safe.

Success means that players stay in tennis long-term and become stronger human

beings through the sport. Titles are nice. But character lasts.

Q: What do you believe the future of tennis coaching will look like?

The future will reward coaches who combine two things:

technical competence and human competence.

Technology will become more important: video analysis, data tracking, biomechanics. But technology will never replace the human side. In fact, the more digital the world becomes, the more athletes will need emotionally intelligent environments.

The future belongs to coaches who can build trust, create stability, develop identity, and guide players through pressure — while still teaching world-class technique.

Coaching will become less about feeding instructions and more about building people.

Q: What would you like parents to understand most?

That tennis development is not a short-term project.

Children grow when they are guided with patience, clarity, structure, and respect. A great coach is not the one who promises quick success. A great coach is the one who creates an environment where a child can stay in tennis for years — and become stronger through the sport.

**“Convenience is temporary.
Trust is long-term.”**

And long-term trust is what builds strong players. Choose the environment, not the shortcut. Tennis is a long journey. Trust matters more than convenience.

Interview Highlights

Key Quotes

"Technique can be copied. Relationships cannot."

"Emotional safety is not a soft concept — it is a performance factor."

"Safety does not mean comfort. Players must feel respected and challenged."

"Most people underestimate the timeline. Tennis development takes years."

"Convenience is temporary. Trust is long-term."

"A coach is not only teaching tennis — a coach is shaping the emotional environment in which the child grows."

Core Principles

- ***Tennis is a long-term journey.***

Sustainable development requires patience, structure, and consistency.

- ***Attunement matters.***

Every player learns differently and needs the right balance of challenge and emotional security.

- ***Character shapes performance.***

Confidence, resilience, and self-regulation are match-winning skills.

- ***Consistency builds excellence.***

Stable coaching and a predictable training environment create trust and progress.

- ***Modern players need more than technique.***

Social pressure, comparison, and distraction require stronger inner stability.

- ***Great coaching is culture-building.***

The best results emerge from environments where growth matters more than ego.

"Exceptional personalities need a long time to mature."

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TENNIS IS MY SPORT

In my blog, I share my decades of experience working with players of all ages and skill levels. Here you will find articles on topics such as technique, mental strength, personal development, and the deeper values that tennis teaches us.

Tennis Experience

www.longarnold.ch/blog

