

## The Attentional Focus Impact on the Decision Making in Three-Game Situations in Tennis

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**Abstract :** Game performance, besides the accuracy and the quality skills execution, depends heavily on where the athletes will focus their attention while performing a skill. The purpose of the present study was to examine and compare the effect of internal and external focus of attention instructions on the decision making in tennis at players 8-9 years old ( $M=8.4$ ,  $SD=0.49$ ). The participants ( $N=40$ ) were divided into two groups and followed an intervention training program that lasted 4 weeks; first group ( $N=20$ ) under internal focus of attention instructions and the second group ( $N=20$ ) under external focus of attention instructions. Three measurements took place (pre-test, post-test, and retention test) in which the participants were video recorded while playing matches in real scoring conditions. GPAI (Game Performance Assessment Instrument) was used to evaluate decision making in three game situations; service, return of the service, baseline game. ANOVA repeated measures (2 groups x 3 measurements) revealed a significant interaction between groups and measurements. Specifically, the data analysis showed superiority of the group that was instructed to focus externally. The high scores of the external attention group were maintained at the same level at the third measurement as well, which indicates that the impact was concerning not only performance but also learning. Thus, cues that lead to an external focus of attention enhance the decision-making skill and therefore the game performance of the young tennis players.

**Keywords :** decision making, evaluation, focus of attention, game performance, tennis

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