
TAKING TO TENNIS

NEGOTIATION

Teaching Note

This simple little negotiation exercise can be used to demonstrate both distributive and integrative approaches to negotiation. Unlike most of the other simulations I use, it is not based on legal practice. I developed it for use in the first-class session as a teaser for simulated negotiations that will follow in the weeks ahead. Though I have generally started my Negotiation course with *Win As Much As You Can*, or a variant that is a prisoner's dilemma game, I always try to carve some time toward the end of an initial class meeting in the semester for this simulation.

Before handing this out in class, I have not assigned readings on distributive or integrative negotiation. The students have only been assigned introductory materials on negotiation. For this reason, *Taking to Tennis* is a surprise for students and it never fails to generate a wide range of results. The ZOPA is just plain enormous. And it also inspires a nice discussion about the wide range and what led to it. Some students come up with integrative options, others don't. Some negotiations yield almost no payment, others quite a high one. What is nice about using it with NO preparatory reading and barely any time to read the roles is that no student needs to be embarrassed by their outcome. This subtly reinforces the sheer importance insight, preparation, research, and thinking all play in negotiation.

The factual setup is that an internationally famous and top-ranked Swiss tennis player would like to practice with a relatively unknown, but still very talented left-handed pro tennis player to prepare for an upcoming tournament. There is a much, much lower-ranked tennis player whose left-handed hit and overall game would make a perfect practice partner for our top-ranked pro. The famous tennis player is VERY wealthy and has a large estate with tennis courts, accommodations, and anything else one would need to entice a pro tennis player to drop everything and become a paid practice partner. The younger, lower-ranked tennis player is on the cusp of giving up the professional tennis circuit and going to law school. He would like nothing more than to practice with one of the world's greatest tennis players. Either he'll still end up in law school or maybe, just maybe, his work with this famous tennis player will provide a much-needed boost to his performance and rankings. He would do this for essentially nothing, perhaps taking only what is necessary for him to cover his expenses to get to Switzerland. Our plucky lefty has an old college buddy, currently a law student, acting as his agent.

From the perspective of the famous tennis player, money doesn't matter. He has plenty of it. And if this practice with a lefty to improve his weakness gambit works out, it's worth an enormous amount to increase his chances of winning the next big international tournament. He does want to be sure the other player will be willing to practice long and hard. Complicating the situation, the agent for the famous Swiss tennis player represents them in a variety of contexts. He has a small, subtly mixed motive. There's a suggestion that if his client saves a little bit of money in the negotiation, the tennis pro might be willing to donate more to the agent's favorite charity.

I generally give the students about 5 minutes to read their roles, and maybe 10-15 minutes to negotiate their deals. Then we post the results and have a highly spirited debriefing. Among the takeaways is: DO prepare for next week's negotiations!



I originally wrote this using the names of real tennis players. After all, it's based on a true story. The great Roger Federer once arranged to practice with a lesser-ranked left-handed player to focus on improving a noted weakness of his game that appeared in matches against left-handed opponents— notably the left-handed swinging Rafael Nadal. For posterity, we've moved away from the names of historical players and used their rankings instead. Students can supply their knowledge of actual players, or the professor is welcome to use the Word version of this case and insert names of players who fit the descriptions.