

Psychology in the [News: Motivation](#) in Sports

Sefania Desinor

Montclair State University

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Abstract

I read a newspaper article about a very successful tennis player, Roger Federer, and how he managed to beat his great opponent even though Roger was having a rough day. I did some research to explain why and how Federer still managed to win even though he was not performing at his best. I concluded that he was motivated during his childhood to only get better in the tennis, which made him the great player he is today.

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Psychology in the News: Motivation in Sports

While browsing through the different news articles in the New York Times, I have seemed to come across many titles describing different victories many sports teams have achieved. Instead of focusing on what the team has accomplished as a whole, I wanted to know factors of motivation in individual athletes. I came across a news article in the NY Times that read, *Federer Reaches ATP (Association of Tennis Professionals) semifinals in London*. The article described Roger Federer's achievements and went into detail about how he made it to where he stands.

The article starts off to explain how great of a player Federer is. On an indoor court, [Roger Federer](#) can win even when he's not playing his best (NY Times). This was proven at the ATP finals, when Roger faced and won against David Ferrer. It was obvious Roger was not playing at his best performance, but he still managed to win. A man with that much talent must have had a stimulating childhood when it came to tennis. Roger himself is even aware that he is an uncommonly, talented tennis player and speaks about it, "I've been very successful over the years. Probably won most titles indoors, maybe more than all the other guys combined," said Federer, who called it a natural surface for him (NY Times).

After reading about Rogers victory during one of his off games, I figured that there must have been some form of motivation that made this athlete so superior at this sport. I then looked up a biography circulating Federer's life growing up. This biography spoke about the many sports he took part in while growing up. Federer took an interest in sports at an early age, playing tennis and soccer at the age of 8. The young athlete excelled at athletics, and by age 11, he was among the Top 3 junior tennis players in Switzerland. At the age of 12, he decided to quit other sports and focus all his efforts on tennis, which he felt he excelled at more naturally (Biography).

Roger participated in other sports, but knew that he was an even better athlete when it came to tennis. He quit the other sports and devoted his time and energy on that one sport. This supports the psychodynamic perspective when it comes to motivation. Psychodynamic theorists, believe that people are motivated to do things due to the need for self-esteem. Federer knew that he had a better chance at receiving praise in tennis, so he focused more on that sport.

Another motive that could have gotten Federer to improve in tennis would be his idolization of other tennis players. To perfect his technique, he often imitated his idols, [Boris Becker](#) and Stefan Edberg (Biography). At that point, Roger intended to be as great as some of these people through imitation. Roger wished that he could be just as great as these athletes, so tried his best to match their abilities. A wish is a representation of a desired state that is associated with emotion or arousal (Psychology 332), which also supports the psychodynamic perspective on motivation. Federer wished to be just as great as his idols, so his wishes motivated him to practice until he became just as great.

Success in a specific sport depends a lot on how the athlete see's themselves in their hobby. A positive self-esteem in a sport is what makes athletes perform well. Continuous practice makes the athlete more comfortable with how they play a sport, and will build there self-esteem in the activity. Federer took up daily practices to work on his self esteem so he can gain confidence in tennis. This is why great athletes may seem a little cocky or too full of themselves because they spent a lot of time working on their confidence playing a sport.

In part of having a positive self esteem when it comes to sports, Motivation to succeed, which is one of the most important driving forces in sport performance, is also one of the magical keys of the success in sport (Soye 42). Soye's article goes to explain how athletes are motivated to avoid defeat in a sport. Every talented athlete knows that practice makes perfect,

and this can go back to Roger Federer researching ways to help polish his techniques in tennis. Intrinsic motivation is the experience of the person to display his or her skills (Soye 41). Early on, Roger Federer knew that he had a higher chance succeeding in tennis, being that he was always best at it. He continued participating in tennis, because it was his dominate area when it came to athletics. Federer was intrinsically motivated to display his skills on the court and face others. If Federer wanted to get further in the sport, he knew he had to step his game up which came with great, long practices.

In order to become talented in a sport, you must be motivated in some way to get better. It always takes practice for someone to improve in any sport that is played. Roger Federer was motivated to be the best in tennis, because of the comparison he made between tennis and the other sports that he participated in. Knowing he had a better chance at prevailing in tennis, he took the sport more seriously than others. He set goals for himself and was motivated to achieve them through imitation of other successful people. Anyone can become great at a sport if they dedicate time and practice. Every athlete has their bad days where they do not perform their best, but if they are skilled enough, that may not even effect the amount of wins they take up. Just like Federer, with enough motivation early on, athletes can still gain victory even if they slip up a little bit.

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