



**RETHINKING COACH EDUCATION: ONE OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN
PADEL TODAY**

**REPLANTEAR LA FORMACIÓN DE ENTRENADORES: UNO DE LOS
GRANDES RETOS DEL PÁDEL ACTUAL**

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Can you imagine a scenario in football where coaches lacked specific training and had merely been players in the past? Or where strength and conditioning coaches were not graduates in Sports Sciences, or psychologists held no degree in Psychology? Yet, however alarming it may sound, this is in some cases the reality in padel today.

While millions of people worldwide follow the Premier Padel circuit, and brands, media, and players are raising the professional standard of the sport, one of the pillars that should support this growth—coach education—remains without a solid, coherent, and updated structure.

It therefore seems inevitable to ask the following questions: are we training the coaches that padel needs? Is the current system adequate, or has the time come to rethink it?

The Spanish model: solid at the base, but stuck in the past

Spain, a global benchmark in padel, has a training system defined by law. According to the Official State Gazette (BOE), padel instruction, like other sports disciplines, is structured into three levels (Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3). On paper, this hierarchy should guarantee the quality and academic progression of future coaches.

However, the training content is outdated and rarely addresses the competencies that define coaching effectiveness in a comprehensive manner (Côté & Gilbert, 2009). In many cases, there is a disconnect from scientific evidence and current professional reality. While the game, methodologies, and technology evolve, official content remains focused on reproductive models, with barely any room for research or applied psychology.

Furthermore, the current regulatory framework remains in a transitional period, implying that only federations—both regional and national—can deliver official training. This situation creates an evident bottleneck and hinders the expansion of a diverse and modern educational offer.

In this context, it would be desirable for the Spanish Padel Federation (*Federación Española de Pádel*), beyond having an administrative training department, to become a benchmark in pedagogical and scientific terms. Undoubtedly, creating a teaching and research area would allow for the generation of proprietary knowledge, the updating of content, and closer collaboration with universities and specialised centres. Such a project would

reinforce the federation's prestige and consolidate Spain as a world leader in the educational sphere of padel.

Regarding the courses themselves, we cannot ignore a practical fact: many coaches point out that attending training requires them to take time off from their academies, with the consequent financial impact. This is a legitimate concern, but perhaps the paradigm needs to shift. When coaches perceive true value in training, they will stop viewing it as a cost and start seeing it as an investment.

It is evident that well-designed training programmes significantly improve the effectiveness of the coaching process (Li et al., 2025). To achieve this, education must inspire, connect with real practice, and offer useful, transformative tools applicable from day one.

The international contrast: immediacy as the norm

If we look beyond our borders, the landscape is worrying, to say the least. In many emerging countries, a course of barely three days is sufficient to obtain the title of "Coach". There is no homogeneous regulation, nor a framework to ensure minimum quality standards in training. The consequence is clear: a proliferation of express courses with a commercial focus and no quality control, where the priority is to certify rather than to educate.

Although this model responds to the need to meet growing demand, it may have serious medium-term consequences: poorly prepared coaches, incoherent messaging, avoidable injuries and, above all, a loss of professional credibility in the eyes of other sports and the educational system itself.

What about the educators? The importance of who teaches how to teach

An aspect rarely discussed, yet crucial, is the preparation of the educators themselves who deliver padel courses. In many cases, instructors are excellent players or coaches with practical experience, but they lack the pedagogical or scientific training to transmit knowledge effectively.

Teaching in padel requires more than knowing how to execute a shot or run a training session: it demands knowing how each student learns, how to adapt teaching methods, how to assess competencies, or how to foster reflection on one's own practice (Nelson et al., 2012). In this sense, we could draw a parallel with higher education or vocational training: it is not enough

to be a good doctor to be a professor of medicine, nor a good mechanic to be a teacher in automotive engineering.

We need teacher educators with a dual profile: mastery of the game and pedagogical and scientific competence. In this way, coach education will become a meaningful learning experience.

Leading by example: a key way forward

Those of us who love this sport wish to see it grow in a sustainable and professional manner. In this vein, leading by example should be the norm.

If we demand quality from educators and training programmes, we must also demand it from those occupying positions of high responsibility. For instance, professional coaches—those we see week after week on our screens—should hold recognised and updated qualifications. Furthermore, it would be desirable for them to be the first to show that training is not a bureaucratic requirement, but a commitment to excellence. Needless to say, the credibility of the system begins with those who represent it.

Another example: in the case of Spain, coaches accompanying their players in various regional and national competitions—including, of course, the coaches of the different regional and national teams—should hold, at a minimum, Level 2 certification. Why? Quite simply, Level 1 is oriented towards beginners and low-level players. And I do not think these competition players can be labeled into that initial category.

In conclusion, if we demand professionalisation, we must also guarantee that those in reference positions act as role models for the rest. This will pave the way.

A global challenge: improving padel instruction

Padel is living through a decisive moment. The professionalisation of players, clubs, and competitions also demands professionalisation in the realm of education. This is not about increasing bureaucracy or imposing closed models, but about designing coherent, updated, and internationally transferable pathways.

In this sense, models integrating all these issues would be more than welcome:

- Multidimensional competencies: technical, tactical, physical conditioning, psychological, didactic, etc.

- Continuous assessment and reflective practice.
- Continuous Professional Development (CPD) courses or updates based on scientific evidence.
- Recognised European or international certification, allowing for mobility and equivalence between countries.

In recent years, game-based methodologies and environmental adaptation have gained prominence, promoting more autonomous and meaningful learning in players (Richardson et al., 2024). This, in turn, requires that the educators themselves continue to learn and develop professionally (Walton et al., in press). Obviously, in the 21st century, digitalisation also offers a unique opportunity to expand access to training and make it more flexible and continuous (Pérez-Camarero et al., 2022).

In line with this, some time ago I received a proposal to collaborate on the educational structure of the International Padel Federation. Although that opportunity did not ultimately materialise, it led me to reflect deeply on the training model our sport truly needs: one that combines scientific rigour, pedagogical coherence, and a true international vision.

Because, beyond titles or certifications, the authentic challenge is not teaching how to teach shots (e.g., the *bandeja*), but teaching how to coach people, and providing padel with a training system that has a solid, coherent, and updated structure.

Looking ahead

We are probably not yet on the ideal path, but we are at a historic moment to build it.

Change will come when we move towards a model where the qualifications required for each function are aligned with the level of responsibility, and where training is not experienced merely as a formality, but as a vocation. When coaches want to train not only due to regulatory requirements but also out of conviction and a desire to grow, we will have taken a decisive step as a professional community.

Padel has demonstrated that it knows how to grow, adapt, and innovate. Now it is time to do the same at its most important base: the coaches.

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