

# Tennis: Losers move their heads more often than winners

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negative emotions, i.e. when winning or losing a sports competition. Credit: German Sport University

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A new study by the Section Neurology, Psychosomatic Medicine and Psychiatry of the Institute of Movement Therapy and Movement-oriented Prevention and Rehabilitation at the German Sport University Cologne, has now found that, contrary to previous assumptions, losers express themselves nonverbally more strongly than winners. "Losers make more spontaneous nonverbal [head](#) movements after losing points in [tennis](#) than after winning points. They carry out nonverbal head-shaking movements upwards as well as side-to-side," explains scientist Dr. Ingo Helmich.

Seventeen professional male tennis players (average age: 28.1 years) were analyzed on five official match days of the first 2018 season of the German Tennis Bundesliga. The players' entire spontaneous nonverbal head [movement](#) behavior between point-scoring was video-taped during the competition and analyzed by two trained and certified evaluators using the NEUROpsychological GESTure (NEUROGES) Systems, a standardized analysis system for nonverbal behavior, in relation to gained or lost points.

"For the first time, these results present a clear picture of nonverbal head movements of winners and losers in sport," says Dr. Helmich. The analysis of nonverbal movement behavior relating to emotions is relevant to better understand and possibly improve an athlete's performance during a competition.

**More information:** V Drewes et al, Spontaneous head movements characterize losing athletes during competition, *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching* (2020). [DOI: 10.1177/1747954120934598](https://doi.org/10.1177/1747954120934598)

Provided by German Sport University

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