

# NY1 News

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## Raising An Athlete Can Cost Pretty Penny, But There Are Payoffs

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As the U.S. Open swings into action, young tennis stars all over the city will watch and wonder if they have it within them to become a pro.

"Tennis is a phenomenal sport. I can't say enough about tennis. I think everyone should play," says Roman Prokes of RPNY Tennis.

If you are the parent of one of these super-star athletes, you may be wondering if you can afford to raise a child with aspirations of making it to the top.

John Lieberman is a personal financial specialist who works with professional athletes, and he says it can cost a lot.

"Figure skating, you're looking costs of \$30-50,000 a year. Baseball is less but you have the travel time and expenses and sometimes they fly all over the country in the league," says Lieberman. "The same thing with soccer. With tennis the costs between the coaching, the court time and equipment costs will run anywhere from \$10-20,000."

Roman Prokes of RPNY Tennis has been stringing rackets for the likes of Andre Agassi, and Maria Sharapova since 1991.

He says equipment is important no matter what level you are playing at, and it doesn't cost as much as you might think to have your racket fine-tuned just for you.

"It varies anywhere from \$50 for one racket, up to about \$185 per racket if you really want the full, full service," says Prokes.

To be a competitive athlete you do have to buy the equipment, but Lieberman says sponsorship is out there and it can help.

"The higher up they move up within the rankings as 12-year-olds, 14-year-olds, 16-year-olds, the athletic companies will get involved and start trying to give equipment for them to play, because in the hopes that when they do turn professional they will continue to play with them," says Lieberman.

Lieberman points out that even if your child doesn't go pro, there are many other benefits of being an athlete, like college scholarships, and learning how to be a team player.

"There are approximately 300,000 tennis players at the high school level," says Lieberman. "If you are the number one player for your team and you have won regional tournaments, you have a USTA junior ranking, the likelihood of you receiving a scholarship at some school is very, very good."

With or without scholarships, players and their families need to be prepared to give a lot more than just money.

"There's a tremendous time requirement by the parents to go with their kids to tournaments and travel, and to be bale to balance school, work life and the kid's profession," says Lieberman.

So if your child has the talent, and is ready to dedicate his or her blood sweat and tears, you now know what it may cost you to raise the next Roger Federer, or Serena Williams.

– Lindley Pless