



SEPTEMBER 2026 | ARTICLE 1

Best Styles x Sports

Secrets of success – what Jannik Sinner and Best Styles have in common



There is a moment in almost every great tennis match when the true nature of the contest becomes clear. It is not just, as the crowd often assumes, a battle of exceptional talent against exceptional talent. It is also a battle of systems.

Jannik Sinner understands this better than almost anyone on the ATP Tour. The Italian world number one, four-time Grand Slam champion, winner of the 2024 and 2025 Australian opens, the 2024 US Open, and Wimbledon champion in 2025 and 2026 has, by the assessment of

coaches and analysts across the sport, become one of the clearest modern examples of systematic excellence in elite sport. From the small village of Sexten in South Tyrol to the pinnacle of the world rankings, his rise has been driven not by isolated flashes of genius, but by a relentless commitment to discipline, method, and a clear, consistent vision.

In both elite sport and systematic investing, durable success emerges from the consistent application of a robust process under conditions of uncertainty.

At Allianz Global Investors, our Best Styles approach to systematic equity investing is built on precisely this logic. What follows draws

on five dimensions of Sinner's career to show how a disciplined, evidence-based framework creates durable advantage, whether you are competing on Centre Court or managing a global equity portfolio.

1 Philosophy: knowing your game

Every elite player develops a game philosophy, an answer to the question of what, given their physical and technical profile, their most reliable path to winning looks like. Sinner's philosophy is built around aggressive baseline play: taking the ball early, minimising the time his opponent has to recover, and imposing a relentless pace that compounds across a long match. It

is, as his results demonstrate, among the most effective.

Crucially, this philosophy was a deliberate choice. At thirteen, Sinner left home to train under the renowned coach Riccardo Piatti, a decision that required him to commit fully to a vision of the player he wanted to become, long before results validated that vision. The strictness of Piatti's method instilled the discipline to apply a system consistently, even when short-term results were ambiguous. That temperament has never left him.

The philosophy must also survive contact with reality. Sinner's aggressive hardcourt game needed significant adaptation for grass, a surface on which he didn't have as much experience as on others. Rather than abandoning his baseline approach, his team worked systematically to adapt it: more net approaches, better serve placement, improved footwork on slippery turf. The fundamentals did not change; the implementation was refined. The 2025 Wimbledon title was the result.

Best Styles' investment philosophy carries the same logic. Identify investment styles (Value, Trend, Quality) that are grounded in genuine economic mechanisms and help to deliver excess return potential in the long run. Combine them in what we believe to be the right balance. Apply the philosophy with discipline, adjusting implementation for market conditions without abandoning the framework that gives the approach its long-term validity. The discipline, moreover,

is not to abandon that philosophy when factor correlations break down and results disappoint in the short term, when correlations temporarily converge and style premia compress. Instead, the edge comes from continuous refinement, disciplined implementation, and the willingness to improve the process over time.

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To me, talent doesn't exist, it has to be earned. Your ability may be a little better, but if you work, you will rise higher. The one who works is the talented one.

Jannik Sinner

2 Research: the statistics that actually matter

Modern tennis analytics has moved far beyond the scoreline. The metrics that now define elite preparation (first-serve percentage, unforced error rate, break-point conversion, return points won on second serve) illuminate dimensions of the game that match results alone systematically obscure. A player can win a match despite generating worse underlying statistics; similarly, a player can lose a match while their process is in excellent shape.

Sinner's team increasingly integrated analytical preparation into an already rigorous developmental process. When coaches Simone Vagnozzi and Darren Cahill identified specific weaknesses in his game in 2022, such as serve mechanics, court positioning or backhand variation, they worked with him on adjustments that made Sinner's game more varied and more resilient. This is research in its truest form: not the confirmation of existing beliefs, but the deliberate search for what the data reveals that intuition might have missed.

The discipline extends to knowing which metrics to trust across different conditions. A first-serve percentage that looks impressive on indoor hard courts needs to be evaluated against its equivalent on grass, in wind, under fatigue. The signal that holds up across samples is the signal worth trusting. The result: Sinner won ATP 500 titles in Beijing and Vienna, a Masters 1000 in Paris, and the ATP Finals trophy.



Best Styles research is built on the same principle. The factors we employ are selected because they have demonstrated robust explanatory power across geographies, sectors, and market cycles spanning decades. The research process, guided by human expertise and applying sophisticated techniques, subjects each metric to precisely this test: does it work outside the sample, or only within it? Signals that pass are retained; those that lack reliability or value-add are discarded, however impressive their recent performance.

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I risultati non arrivano direttamente. Ho lavorato duro negli ultimi anni per trovare un modo per essere efficace nei momenti importanti.

[The results don't come directly. I've worked hard over the last few years to find a way to be effective in the important moments.]

Jannik Sinner — Tennis Magazine, December 2024

3 Selection: building the right shot arsenal for this opponent

Modern professional tennis demands remarkable tactical preparation. Sinner and his coaches study opponents in granular detail before each match: preferred patterns of play, return positioning, behaviour under pressure. But the selection of which shots to play is not simply about identifying the opponent's weaknesses in the abstract. It is about matching your strengths to their vulnerabilities in a specific context.

Jannik Sinner's rivalry with Daniil Medvedev in the early 2020s illustrates this perfectly. Medvedev posed a uniquely difficult problem for Sinner. His extraordinarily deep return position absorbed pace, extended rallies, and forced opponents into over-hitting. Sinner lost their first six encounters largely because his natural aggressive baseline game played into Medvedev's preferred rhythm.

Through detailed match analysis, Sinner's team identified several adjustments that could alter the geometry of the rallies: taking the ball even earlier, redirecting backhands down the line to prevent Medvedev from controlling cross-court exchanges, and attacking second serves more aggressively before rallies could settle into Medvedev's defensive structure.

The adjustments were incremental rather than dramatic. Sinner



refined shot selection within his existing framework, adapting the implementation to the specific opponent while preserving the broader philosophy that made him successful. The effect became visible quickly: after six consecutive defeats, Sinner won the next meetings and fundamentally changed the dynamic of the rivalry.

The Best Styles approach works in a similar way. Just as Sinner does not abandon his signature playing style, we do not change our core “game”: we consistently invest in the same three factors—Value, Trend, and Quality—because we believe they are reliable sources of long-term returns. What changes is how we position ourselves around them. Depending on the environment, we adjust the portfolio to avoid taking unnecessary risks that are not rewarded. For example, ahead of the last U.S. presidential election, we positioned the portfolio to be

broadly neutral to different political outcomes. This way, our “opponent” — the broad market — couldn’t easily work against us, and we can stay focused on playing our own strengths rather than reacting to every new development.

4 The team behind the player: why no champion competes alone

Tennis is often described as the loneliest elite sport. One player walks onto the court alone, absorbs the pressure alone, and ultimately owns the result alone. But the apparent individualism of the sport conceals how deeply collaborative elite performance has become.

Consider what surrounds him. Head coaches Simone Vagnozzi and Darren Cahill bring complementary expertise: Vagnozzi, who has known Sinner since he was fourteen, provides the technical and emotional continuity of a long-term partnership; Cahill, who has guided Andre Agassi, Lleyton Hewitt, and Simona Halep to world number one, brings tactical depth and Grand Slam experience that few coaches on the circuit can match. Their partnership was recognised with the joint ATP Coach of the Year award in 2023, an unusual distinction that reflects the unusual quality of their collaboration.

Their value lies in productive tension. Cahill has spoken publicly about challenging Sinner to become less predictable in key moments, while Vagnozzi has focused on preserving the aggressive baseline identity that

elevated Sinner in the first place. The objective is structured debate in service of better decisions.

That collaborative structure became particularly important during Sinner’s difficult phases in 2022 and early 2023, when physical setbacks and tactical inconsistencies raised questions about whether his game would translate reliably across surfaces and long tournaments. The team decomposed the problem systematically: improving serve variation, refining transitional play at the net, and managing physical workload more carefully across the season. The progress that followed was incremental, but cumulative.

Best Styles is managed by a team built on the same principle. Portfolio managers and researchers with different national backgrounds and academic training, ranging from economics and business administration to mathematics and physics, work

closely together on the strategy, combining more than 300 years of investment experience. While each portfolio has a responsible lead portfolio manager, decisions are supported and challenged by the full team. Each member brings a distinct way of thinking about markets and risk.

5 Consistency: the mental framework for staying with the system

There is, in tennis, a concept coaches call ‘playing within yourself’: the capacity to execute your game plan under competitive pressure, without abandoning your system in favour of the spectacular or the reactive. When a player is a break down in the third set, the temptation is to reach for something extraordinary. Players who succumb almost invariably lose. Players who stay with their process give themselves the best chance of recovery.



No single moment in Sinner's career illustrates this more vividly than the 2024 Australian Open final. Down two sets to none against Daniil Medvedev, who had just spent 85 minutes dominating every dimension of the match, a lesser player might have reached for an entirely different tactical approach. Sinner did not. He made one adjustment: hitting the backhand down the line more often, as the context-specific analysis had identified. And he continued to trust his system.

Best Styles is designed with precisely this discipline in mind. Factor investing goes through different environments, and harvesting long-term risk premia naturally means that individual factors may underperform over shorter periods. Our approach is built to manage this variation in a consistent and structured way. Rather than constantly changing direction, we apply a stable, well-tested framework while continuously refining how it is implemented. That means regularly assessing the portfolio construction, ensuring risk exposures remain well balanced,

and confirming that the signals continue to behave as expected.

In this way, we stay focused on executing our process with consistency and clarity, even as market conditions evolve. Just as a player who trusts their game gives themselves the best chance of turning a match around, a disciplined and systematic approach allows investors to participate in long-term opportunities without being driven by short-term noise.

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It all stems from work that was done much further back, from efforts I made much earlier. Everything I've managed to do in 2024 is the result of what I did last year.

Jannik Sinner — Tennis Magazine, December 2024

Best Styles x Sports

What's next: a series at the intersection of sport and systematic investing

This article is the first in the Best Styles x Sports series, a programme of thought leadership that draws on the world of elite athletics to illuminate the principles of systematic equity investing applied by our Best Styles strategies. The parallels explored here through the lens of tennis — the primacy of process over outcomes, the role of evidence-based research, the importance of objective data-driven selection, the competitive advantage of a great team, and the discipline of consistency under pressure — recur, in different forms, across every sporting discipline that has been transformed by rigour and data.



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September 2026

LDS-260120