

EDITORIAL

Welcome to issue 19 of the ITF Coaches Review. This issue is a monographic issue dedicated to the subject of Coaching Methodology with a particular emphasis on the "Games Based Approach" to teaching tennis. We hope you find this monograph of interest and benefit to your coaching. If you have other topics that you think should be covered in a monographic issue please feel free to suggest them.

The ITF Tennis Participation Workshop is to be held in conjunction with the LTA at the University of Bath, in England between the 19th and the 24th of June 2000. The workshop will focus on all aspects related to attracting and keeping more players in tennis. Further information and details regarding applications to attend the workshop and a draft programme will be distributed via your National Associations early next year.

The 1st ITF International Congress on Tennis Science and Technology is due to take place between the 1st and the 4th of August 2000 in London. Application forms to attend the congress can be obtained by contacting Janet Page (Congress Secretariat), International Tennis Federation (London), Tel: 44 181 878 6464, Fax: 44 181 392 4773.

In this issue you will notice the name of Karl Cooke as co-author of a number of articles. We are delighted that Karl, who holds a Masters in Sport Science from Loughborough University in England, will in future be helping Miguel Crespo with the ITF Coaches Education Programme including the preparation of Coaches Review.

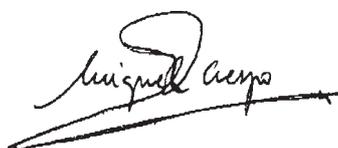
We hope you enjoy the articles in this issue of Coaches Review and we trust they continue to provide you with useful information and points of discussion. We are always happy to receive your comments on any of the articles and we may decide to publish your letter in a future issue so please feel free to contact us via the details given inside.

Once again we would like to thank all those coaches that contributed their articles to this issue of ITF Coaches Review. If you have any material that you deem relevant and worthy of inclusion in a future issue, please forward it for consideration.

We hope you enjoy our 19th issue of Coaches Review.



Dave Miley
Executive Director, Development



Miguel Crespo
Research Officer, Development

CONTENTS

USA Tennis High Performance Coaches Programme Philosophy

Nick Saviano (United States of America) 2

Teaching Methodology for Tennis

Miguel Crespo (ITF) 3-4

Developing a more Player Oriented Approach to Coaching Tennis

Rod Thrope and Paul Dent (United Kingdom) 5-7

The Importance of Implicit Learning in Skill Development

Karl Cooke (ITF) 7-8

Tactical and Technical Learning Process

Ivo van Aken (Belgium) 8-10

The Tactical Approach to Coaching Tennis

Miguel Crespo and Karl Cooke (ITF) 10-11

MINI-TENNIS

How to Create a Mini-Tennis Space

Technical Department of the French Tennis Federation I

ITF School Tennis Initiative

Examples of Tennis Lessons at School II-IV

Game Based Coaching

Anne Pankhurst (United Kingdom) 11-13

Game Based Approach to Teaching Doubles

Philip Veasey (United Kingdom) 13-14

The GAG Method

Marcel K. Meier (Switzerland) 15

Problems in Tennis Teaching: Statements and Possible Solutions

Carlos Carballo and Marcelo Blasco (Argentina) ... 16-17

What Tennis Research tells us about...Coaching Methods

Miguel Crespo and Karl Cooke (ITF) 18-19

Tennis Coaching on the Web

Miguel Crespo and Karl Cooke (ITF) 19

Recommended Books and Videos 20

USA TENNIS HIGH PERFORMANCE COACHES PROGRAMME PHILOSOPHY

Nick Saviano (USA Tennis Director of Coaches Education, U.S.A)

The philosophy of the USA Tennis Coaching Education Programme is that the overriding priority of any coach is to help young players reach their maximum potential as a person through a commitment to excellence in tennis. Every player should be treated equitably and with respect for his or her inherent individual worth. The long-term welfare and happiness of the players should be valued more than the results or rewards of the moment.

APPROACH TO COACHING HIGH PERFORMANCE PLAYERS

There are two typical approaches used by High Performance Coaches to nurture and develop high performance players.

1. "THE GAMES APPROACH"
2. "THE TRADITIONAL APPROACH"

It is important that coaches be aware of both approaches. Understanding your approach to coaching can have a profound impact on the development of our players and the game itself.

1. GAMES APPROACH:

This is a play/goal-oriented approach. In this method of learning, the player learns through playing the game and/or by match simulated situations in training. With the games approach the goal is to teach technique within the context of playing whenever possible. Certain fundamentals and a range of acceptability are established for technique, with consideration given to individual physical attributes, personality, styles and long-term goals.

Within this concept it is crucial for the coach to know what are the key fundamentals of stroke production are and to assure that the player is executing these fundamentals with minimum breakdown and isolation of technique work. The coach should break down and isolate technique only when necessary and for a short as time as possible. Technique is acquired as part of a whole development process and there will be times when the coach adjusts technique without the student being aware of it.

2. TRADITIONAL APPROACH:

This method emphasises breaking down the technique of the individual skills (strokes) and movements in order to accomplish the objectives of playing the game. Within this concept the players are first taught how to hit the ball so that they can play the game. This concept has been popular throughout the United States over the years.

It is the opinion the USA Tennis Coaching Education Programme that the Games Approach is generally a preferred



way of teaching young players. There should be an emphasis on match play and simulated match training in the overall development process of high performance players. We recommend that the isolation of technique work be kept to a minimum and it should be done with the intent of incorporating it into the simulated match training as soon as possible.

The Games Approach should not be misconstrued as de-emphasising technique or off-court movement training. Rather it is the belief that the athlete will learn more effectively and completely when these skills are incorporated into the whole learning process. This should take place in match simulated training and/or match play. Equally as important, however is that we believe it promotes a higher level of fun and enjoyment for the player that is a critical component of their overall development. It is therefore important that coaches be well versed in all aspects of the developmental process (e.g., strategy, tactics, technique, psychology) so as to be capable of integrating all of these skills in the player's game.

TEACHING METHODOLOGY FOR TENNIS

by Miguel Crespo Ph.D (ITF)

1. TENNIS PLAYING AND TENNIS TEACHING

The general opinion of coaches and players is that the game of tennis has changed a lot during the last 20-25 years. In fact, if we compare the game of Borg, Gerulaitis, Vilas, Evert, Austin and others, to the game of Sampras, Agassi, Moya, Williams, some of the top male and female players of our time, we can conclude that the game has changed in almost all aspects.

However, when we have asked coaches about their impressions on whether or not the teaching of tennis has changed during the last 20-25 years, they generally report little or no changes. This seems to indicate that, although coaches think that the game has evolved different to the game of 20 years ago, the way of teaching it has remained the same during this period (Crespo, 1999).

This difference of perceptions is a good starting point to ask ourselves a key question for our job as tennis coaches: So... What and how do we teach?

2. LATEST CONCLUSIONS OF INTERNATIONAL TENNIS FEDERATION RESEARCH ON TENNIS WORLDWIDE

During 1997 and 1998, the ITF conducted a series of studies on tennis participation worldwide in order to have a better understanding of how tennis is played in the world. Which are the markets with a better future in Tennis? What is the general image of tennis? (ITF, 1997).

Results of these studies revealed good and bad news. Good news indicated that the developing countries, such as Morocco, showed a very interesting growth of the game. Bad news addressed the issue that the more mature markets were having problems and that tennis appears not to be a fun game to learn and play for the vast majority of youngsters interviewed (ITF, 1998).

These results can also lead us to ask ourselves why tennis has this image. It can be easily said that inner characteristics of the game of tennis and its differences with other sports and

activities have their influence.

However, this can help us to address the aspect of the responsibility and role of the coach in this situation. Sometimes, we have felt that coaches need to concentrate on the important aspects and consequences of the teaching process. Let's review them briefly.

3. GOALS OF THE TEACHING PROCESS

A common problem is that many tennis teachers teach in the same way that they were taught regardless whom they are teaching. This, of course, should be avoided (Thorpe, 1994).

In order to improve the image of the game and the satisfaction of its players it must be the goal of the coach to always want to teach tennis better. It can be assumed that if the coach teaches better tennis, the players will have a better image and consideration of the game.

What does it mean to teach the game of tennis better? We can say that it is achieving more satisfaction, enjoyment and performance both from the players/ and from the coach.

It is important to conclude that the main goal of the coach as per the teaching process is making tennis an easier and more fun game to play. This implies the coach thinking about what he or she is doing daily.

This also means a process of analysing what coaching and teaching has been all about during this recent period in which there have been major changes in the game but no changes in the teaching methods of it.

4. TEACHING METHODS

We can have a look at the characteristics of the old teaching methods and at the characteristics of the new teaching procedures applied in different sports.

The following charts summarise the characteristics of the old approach and the new approach to teaching tennis. Coaches can use it to progress in their use of more modern and effective teaching methods (see table I, II and III).

Teaching approaches	Overall scope	Type of sport	Contents	Presenting the information	The role of the coach
Old approach	Adapt the player to the sport	Closed skill sport (repetitive actions all with the same characteristics)	Based on teaching technique (models) and focusing on projection skills	Based on using only analytical (part) methods. All players go through the same stages	Based on using command styles
New approach	Adapt the sport to the player	Open skill sport (each stroke and movement is different from the previous one)	Based on teaching situations (tactics) and focusing on both projection and reception skills, and co-ordination	Based on mixing up analytical and global (whole) methods. Learning by watching and imitating. Individualised teaching	Based on using discovery styles
Conclusions	Mini-tennis: use of scaled down equipment	Perception, Decision making, Action and Feedback are crucial	Teaching open skills versus teaching closed skills	Use analytic methods for correction or to make regressions in teaching	More effective questioning, less ineffective telling

TABLE II				
Teaching approaches	The players	The learning process	Class organisation	Dealing with group & players
Old approach	All players learn the same way. The coach teaches everyone in the same way	No attention to the different stages of learning	Based on using line formation	All players in the group doing the same task at the same level of difficulty
New approach	Each player learns differently	The are different stages of learning that should be respected	Based on using buddy teaching, task assignment	Individualisation & inclusion. Adapt the task to the characteristics of each player
Conclusions	Understand kinesthetic, visual and auditory learners	Be aware of cognitive, repetitive and automatic stages of learning	More activity and independence, less control	Possibility of working individually within group lessons

TABLE III					
Teaching approaches	On court practice	Giving feedback	Working on technique	Working on tactics	Working for competition
Old approach	Drills and technical mastery	Coach very negative, always correcting the model (Diagnosis & Correction)	Only one model applied to all players	Only when players master technique, not before	Practice matches with no comments from the coach or from the player
New approach	Games based approach	Based on Analysis & Improvement of a given situation vs. Diagnosis & Correction (effective questioning/ problem solving/ develop strengths/ positive reinforcement)	Style as the interpretation of technique by the player	Ask first: What do you want to do? tactical goal (height, depth, direction, speed, etc.) Ask then: How are you going to do this? Technical goal	Make players think and develop a decision making process by giving options
Conclusions	Learning by playing the game	More positive approach, involve the player in the correction process	Respect the individual and the situation	Teach structures and situations, not models. Set game situations	Make the players apply the different options on court during practices

5. CONCLUSIONS

The traditional method of teaching tennis was for the coach to focus on the technique or production of the strokes. Precise models of the strokes were used by the coach to “show” the player how to play. Once the player had mastered the “model” techniques, the coach then focused on the tactics (i.e. implementing the techniques in a game situation).

In tennis teaching today, tennis is viewed as an open skill sport with each shot being hit differently. The player never plays the same shot twice! Each shot requires the player to go through the following process: Perception - Decision - Action - Feedback.

In today’s tennis, technique (the action) should be seen as a function of the correct biomechanical principles and as a means to implement tactics more efficiently. A player’s stroke technique should always depend on his tactical intention. Simply stated form (technique) should follow function (tactics).

There are many different ways to play the modern strokes and different situations to play from. Therefore, when players come to play the game, they should try to focus on the tactical intentions and the biomechanics, and see technique as a means of performing the tactic more effectively (Crespo & Miley, 1998).

These recommendations on new teaching methods have proven to be very effective at all levels of performance. In our opinion it is important that the coach uses these modern teaching techniques for better performance and satisfaction. Coaches should have in mind that it is never too late to change and to adapt to new methods.

REFERENCES

- Crespo, M. (1999). Teaching methodology for all levels. Symposium APE Tennis. Valencia. Spain. Unpublished document.
- Crespo, M., & Miley, D. (1998). ITF Advanced Coaches Manual. ITF Ltd. London.
- ITF (1997). Tennis towards 2000. ITF Ltd. London.
- ITF (1998). Tennis towards 2000. ITF Ltd. London.
- Thorpe, R. (1994). Methodology: effective coaching. European Tennis Assoc. Coaches Symposium. Helsinki.

DEVELOPING A MORE PLAYER ORIENTED COACHING METHOD

An article adapted from one that originally appeared in the LTA Coaches and Coaching by Rod Thrope and Paul Dent (Issue 15, 1991)

The traditional coaching method of directing the player towards the correct technique and tactics (Tell and Show method) can often hold back the talented player and may not be effective for others. A more successful method of coaching can be utilised through facilitating and challenging the player's discovery of the game and assisting them in their learning rather than directly showing and telling them how the game is played. The key issue in coaching is to appreciate how the learner **learns**, before you start to coach.

THE TRADITIONAL METHOD

The traditional coaching process is for the coach to run a session with a warm up, a hitting phase to identify the fault, a correction phase and a related game. However this coaching process is inherently negative and forces the coach to find errors. This can be highly demoralising for the player and produce a negative mentality in their game. The need to analyse and the ability to correct are vital but somehow the technical analysis/correction process has to become synonymous with the coaching session.

THE ROLE OF TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT IN OVERALL PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

The coaching of technique may be made synonymous with the rest of the game by manipulating the game situation in order to provide the player the opportunity to experience the manner in which the technique may be performed more effectively.

Through the player's own trial and error he or she will experience and assimilate the changes in their technique that are required. For 'Facilitation' coaching to be successful the coach must work with the player and react off them. An important consideration is for the player and coach to be aware of exactly what their long and short term goals are. This should include the exact goal of each session and in this way the sessions will be most effective. This will reduce the likelihood of creating an unorganised coaching session.

The criticism of this method may be that there is less direction placed on the technical side of the players development, but it is important that there is a clear understanding of the role of technical development in the all round game of the player. Technical development or more appropriately **Skill Development** is the ability to perform the tasks that are required in order to meet the challenges of the game and for the player to perform to their optimum ability. This is why it is important that coaches have a sound understanding of the underlying principles of movement or biomechanics so that one can make educated decisions about the consequence of a given movement.

The example of the Borg racket grip or the Seles two handed forehand shows how it is not always important to insist on "perfect" technique when the outcome of the "incorrect" technique is good.



Photo: Abe Masanosuke

The coach should only address what they consider to be a technical inefficiency when they are sure that:

- They are moving the player toward a better action (for that player)
- They can effect a lasting change within the time they have to work (or influence) the player
- The player sees the value and the purpose of the development
- The intervention will not affect other aspects of the player development, e.g. self-confidence

This does not mean that the ability of the coach to see, diagnose and correct a fault is not crucial to the technical development of the player but this should be seen in relation to the development of the player's total game. This sort of technical coaching has dominated coaching in some areas and it requires the tremendous ability to pick out the exact detail that needs attention and so should not be the predominant aspect of a player's coaching.

When dealing with players it is important to recognise that it is more important to get the player to learn the skill and be able to perform it in the right context rather than to simply teach the technique. This should be done by ensuring that:

- They want it
- They are willing to work at it
- The technique is as often as possible developed in the right context

For example you may wish to develop the lob as a skill in your players. So you play a game to elicit the lob, feeding from the service line 'T' you play the point out, but you cannot go outside the service box. It will take only a few minutes and the players start using a lob, a few minutes more and the talented ones slip in some topspin or play a defensive lob off a firmly hit ball. This type of coaching is more likely to develop a player that will understand when and how to use the lob to a greater extent than, "Today we are going to learn the lob, because I think you need it".

If the player does not appear to be reading the situation properly you assist them through questioning them during breaks in play. By questioning the players they will learn more positively due to their greater involvement in the learning process. There will be times when you feel it is necessary to tell the player what exactly is happening but it is important to try to limit the frequency with which you do this.

Your players may not chose to lob you in order to beat you in the given example, but instead play a wide shot to beat your stretch volley. If this happens you have not failed! While your challenge did not achieve your original intention (the lob), you encouraged the player to find a solution to the problem. Finding a solution to the problem situation with which you are faced is what playing tennis is all about and so you are beginning to condition the player to the match situation. You may need to develop a new challenge in order to encourage or challenge some players to use the lob but that will come with some basic imagination in the use of the court.

HOW CAN WE UTILISE OTHER COACHING METHODS TO INCREASE LEARNING?

Another reason why the traditional Show and Tell model of coaching may not work is that when it comes to complex skills such as the serve, words and formal instructions may be too insensitive a way of helping individuals become aware of the small changes necessary to make precise modifications. We have to help them 'feel' the differences. This is supported by evidence in the skill acquisition literature that whilst a coach can give feedback that the player can use to make fairly large movement modifications, fine changes are largely a function of the feedback the performer gets from their own actions.

There are talented players who will watch a champion and almost immediately approximate the action on the court. Many psychologists would support this by saying that 'observational learning' is the most powerful learning medium. In spite of this fact many coaches have failed to optimise this potential channel of learning for their players. It is important that coaches consider some of the less direct ways in which the player, particularly the young player or beginner gains information, and utilise these channels of learning in their coaching.

A possible alternative to traditional methodology is to provide the player with an appropriate role model who has the action you would like to see in your player e.g. a greater knee bend may be required in the serve so Boris Becker would be a good example. This can also relate to other non-technical aspects of the game such as mental toughness (for whom Jim Courier is a good role model) or chasing down every point (you could use Amanda Coetzer). This might include showing the player some footage of the appropriate role model, there is little doubt that committed players have strong models in their heads and to

use this approach will increase the amount young players will look to the top players.

This is a positive thing as long as the top players remain to be good role models for the young players. Young players will not only copy the techniques of the relevant models they will also copy other behaviours. If the older players or even coaches have poor attitudes to practice physical conditioning, etc, this might have a detrimental effect that lasts far longer, than the relatively immediate advantages to technique.



THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY BASED LEARNING

There is considerable evidence to suggest that many top sports performers valued the opportunity to observe, practice and play (particularly when they were younger) more than formal coaching. A study done in Sweden (Carlson and Engstrom, 1987) indicated that Swedish players who made it to the top as adults, had childhoods 'that were typified by play and practice in a supportive atmosphere, rather than intensive coaching. This type of evidence means that the coach needs to make a very careful assessment of the total learning environment.

LESS IS SOMETIMES BETTER THEN MORE

In the player coach learning relationship it is important to realise that the thinking part of the brain has its limitations. Very simplistically (and a little inaccurately), it is reasonable to suggest that we can only 'think' of one thing at a time. It has been suggested that this limited concentration channel can be fully directed to only one aspect of our behaviour at a time (perceptual decision making or movement production). It is often the case that traditional coaching draws this limited attention to inappropriate signals e.g. players might start paying attention to what we are saying rather than paying attention to the feedback from their own body. Therefore sometimes the less said during the exercise the better so as to allow the player to absorb the information from the game situation, which is highly important in the learning process. This does not mean that when the exercise is completed that feedback should not be given, but it is important to not overload the player with too much information during the exercise.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MATCH SIMULATING EXPERIENCES

Another example of how the traditional coaching method of 'Show and Tell' may be lacking in its ability to improve the players understanding of the game can be seen in the most common of all tennis coaching practices, feeding. We tend to feed, to place the ball in the correct place to challenge the movement pattern (the hit) of the player. Many of us develop a feeding technique that, perhaps, sits the ball up for our pupil, using backspin. What we fail to remember is that the image of that feed (i.e. the action the pupil sees us performing) is also a part of the learning environment. If we use the feed too much, the whole image and the rhythm of the rally is inappropriate to the real match situation. It would seem wise for coaches to use feeding procedures that replicate the sort of shots that the pupil may have to play the required shot from. I am sure that most of you will have observed the improvement that occurs

in a player when they rally with a better player, they pick up the rhythm, timing, and even the application to the task.

CONCLUSION

By understanding these recommendations and the ideas behind 'Facilitation Coaching' you are beginning to accept that most of the talented players you work with are capable of solving the problem but they need you to set the situation in which this can occur. If the coach perceives that the bulk of his or her work is done prior to the session, in developing practices, games and challenges for the individual player that suit the learning needs of that player. Then actually during the session they take a less directive role this will help to facilitate the learning of the player. The most important thing to recognise is that any given approach will not be universal, all players are different and so it is important to appreciate this in your coaching.

THE IMPORTANCE OF IMPLICIT LEARNING IN SKILL DEVELOPMENT

by Karl Cooke (ITF)

WHAT IS IMPLICIT LEARNING?

Research shows that a person can 'know' about and take advantage of information about the game situation that are essential to successful performance without being able to describe verbally the characteristics of that information. The player demonstrates this knowledge by performing the skill better after being exposed to the information through practice, but the player is unable to describe it (Magill, 1998). This type of knowledge development with an apparent lack of awareness of its existence is called implicit learning.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR COACHING?

What this research is saying is that players pick up important pieces of information through practice that we are often unaware of, and this information can condition the player's response in the game situation. A good example of the importance of this type of learning can be seen in the 'cues' that novice and expert players look for in preparing to receive the tennis serve (Goulet, Bard & Fleury, 1989). During the "ritual phase" of the server's movements the expert player focuses primarily on the server's head, shoulders and trunk. In the "preparatory phase" the expert focuses on the server's racket and ball and the anticipated ball position in addition to the head, shoulder and trunk. During the "execution phase" experts directed their visual focus only on the server's racket and the ball. In contrast the novice player tends to direct much of their attention to the ball and less on other locations. Therefore the better players directed their attention more appropriately than the novice players and so were better able to return the serve. This type of ability that the expert player has comes from implicit learning.

The application of this for the coaching situation is that we should be highly aware of the effect of our actions in the preparation of our players when working with them. If we continuously do drills in which the feeding technique to players is not the same as the shot they will receive in the match situation they will not learn a considerable amount of important information. This will occur since they collect



incorrect information about the skill during the practice session as a result of feeding that does not provide the same information (body position, racket face, etc) as the match situation. The result will be a player that has the technique but not the knowledge that is learned implicitly which will tell him or her how to interpret his opponent's play.

EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION IN LEARNING

Why don't I just tell the player what to look for when his opponent is going to play a particular shot that will require an appropriate response? Sport scientists have also researched the answer to this question. If the coach explicitly (openly) tells the player to be aware of certain movements by the other

player during practice this will induce a reduction in performance in comparison to the player who is told nothing and simply responds using only the information he or she learns implicitly (Green and Flowers, 1991). The reason given for this reduction in performance was the effort and worry caused by the explicit instruction to remember and apply the information about the specific situation. However this does not mean that verbal instruction is not important, what it means is we need to be careful about how we address our verbal instruction and where possible use methods such as guided discovery to convey the necessary information to the student.

THE USE OF VERBAL CUES IN SKILL DEVELOPMENT

If verbal cues about a skill direct the player to the appropriate area of visual attention and do not identify specific information points to search for they have been shown to be very positive in the coaching situation (Landin, 1994).

An example of this could be the return of serve and the verbal cue might be to direct attention towards the opponents body during the preparatory phase of the serve, rather than specifically saying telling them to watch the trunk, shoulders and head. This means the player can be aware of the opponent's body but does not utilise all of his or her focus in searching for particular pieces of information. This is particularly important considering every opponent will have a different style that needs to be interpreted.

IS ALL THE INSTRUCTION COACHES GIVE TO PLAYERS USEFUL?

Research has shown that on occasion some instructions to a player about a skill during practice may inhibit learning. The authors suggested that giving the players too much information about the skill they were learning caused them to think too much about their performance and so they did not learn to the same extent as those players who received no instruction (Waulf and Weigelt, 1997). If the player is allowed to play without having to consciously think about it they can learn more through implicit learning effects. The authors also suggested that if the players had been given a more discovery

based coaching session they might have learnt to a greater extent since this would involve a minimal amount of instruction from the coach and a greater amount of player discovery and implicit learning of the skill.

CONCLUSION

When coaching we should try to be aware of the different ways in which the player learns and collects vital information about playing tennis. It is the role of the coach to optimise the learning of the player and so if we are aware of the different channels of learning we can organise our coaching in a way that utilises each channel (implicit learning, explicit instruction, post practice feedback...etc) to its optimum. We should develop strategies that give the player all the vital pieces of information that will condition them to respond to the best of their ability in the match situation. Traditionally this may not have been the case but more and more coaches are developing coaching strategies that take into account all the different channels of learning in both group and individual coaching sessions.

REFERENCES

- Goulet, C., Bard, C. & Fleury, M. (1989). Expertise Differences in preparing to return a tennis serve: A Visual information processing approach. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 11, 382-398.
- Green, T.D., and Flowers, J.H. (1991). Implicit versus explicit learning process in a probabilistic, fine motor catching task. *Journal of Motor Behaviour*, 23, 293-300.
- Landin, D. (1994). The role of verbal cues in skill learning. *Quest*, 46, 299-313.
- Magill, R.A. (1998). Knowledge is more than we can talk about: Implicit Learning in Motor Skill Acquisition. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 69, 104-110.
- Waulf, G., and Weigelt, C. (1997). Instructions about physical principles in learning a complex motor skill: to tell or not to tell. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and sport*. Vol. 68, 4, 362-367.

THE TACTICAL AND TECHNICAL LEARNING PROCESS

by Ivo van Aken (Fed Cup Captain, Belgium)

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this article is to present several basic rules of the learning process and their effect on the learning output and its application to the net game.

Juniors very often display a monotonous game on the baseline, which can be a reason for dropping-out. If the coach is able to introduce a more all court game mentality during match play, they will have more fun and, with the proper learning and training process, they will achieve a more complete game.

THE LEARNING PROCESS

The basic rules of a valuable and pleasant learning process are the ones that will create a framework for each learning process. What is the final goal of this process? To develop an environment in which the player will be able to use the skills learned in the match.

In order to do this it is crucial to determine the intermediate goals (which are part of the final goal). These goals should be individual to the player and useful in the match situation.

The coach has to build up the learning process for the intermediate goals by planning:

- the right proportion of drilling and situational training
- the right drills for the desired goal
- progressing from easy to difficult (according to the individual motor capabilities of the player)

Coaches should be aware that drills and tasks should be attainable, measurable and should have a tactical goal.

When dealing with this tactical characteristics of the drills, coaches should progress from technical - tactical to tactical - technical in order to help the player display the correct tactical

knowledge and use of the stroke and its integration in the match, the development of specific fitness and the quality of execution.

In my opinion, the most important didactical principles during the learning process can be listed as follows:

- use of demonstrations
- help players to learn to feel and visualise what to do
- use of trial and error by guided tasks
- use of questions and answers
- use of keywords
- use drills with partners to achieve the goals
- ask players to self-evaluate
- emphasise the independence of the players

A key factor is the ability of the coach to always motivate the players by mixing up extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic (e.g. social recognition), intrinsic (e.g. challenging tasks, attainable tasks, decision making by the player, variety of drills).

Coaches should know that motivation is a combination of extrinsic and intrinsic aspects. Its proportion is very individual to each player. Besides, extrinsic motivation can undermine intrinsic motivation and this one can increase by appreciated extrinsic motivation.

Another important factor in the learning process is the integration of the intermediate goals into the ultimate goals. This can be done both using situational drills and during matches.

Finally, it is very important to evaluate the learning process. In order to do so, it is advisable for the coach to take into account the following aspects:

- observe the ability of the player to describe the new skills (keywords)
- write down keywords in the training book
- judge the level of learning of the new skills
- judge the possibility of use of the new skills in matches
- advise for practice in the training book
- set the contents of the next training session (motivation towards next training)

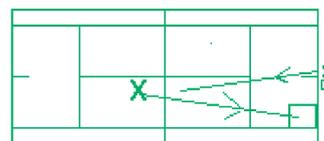
APPLICATION OF THE BASIC RULES TO THE NETGAME

The net game is often poorly developed and used very little by junior players. In fact, the volley is an easy stroke technically speaking since it involves a short stroke-action. Besides it provides simple opportunities to play a winner, thus being a source of good fun.

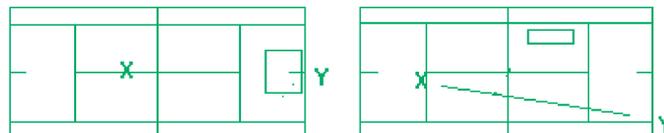
We can conclude that the volley is often very poorly developed technically and its use is not frequently enough. Why?

- The learning process of the volley has not been the correct one. Coaches use too many drills with players of all levels standing at the net. On the contrary, the volley should always be linked to the approach shot. Besides, coaches have taught the defensive volley in the first part of the learning process, thus reinforcing big backswings to get the ball deep which gives the player little or no chance to play a winner.
- There is an insufficient use of the court by the player to be able to approach the net.

THIS IS HOW IT WORKS ON THE COURT:



- To play into the centre
= **No chances to:**
- Approach or Play a winning volley



- Bring the opponent out of the court
= **Opening the court:**
- Easy to play a volley winner

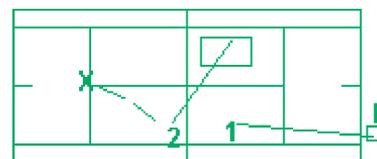
The final goal of the progression can be the following:

To play matches approaching the net and using the volley
If necessary double points for volley winners to motivate players.

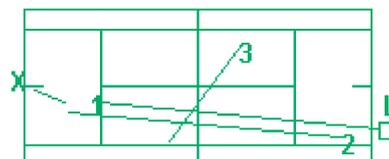
The intermediate goals can be the following:

To hit winners with short cross blocked volleys and hammer on the backhand of the opponent to get an opportunity to approach. We can use the following progression.

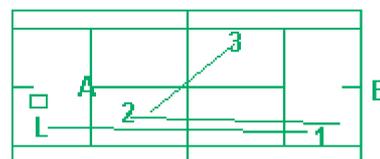
- 1° Ready-position on the baseline; enter the court (in the right direction); split; FHV (short cross to the zone) on a ball coming from the backhand side. Goals: automatic short volley-stroke and automatic use of the open court.



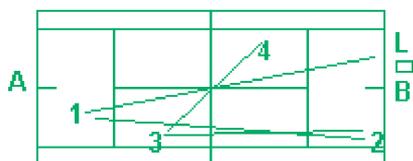
- 2° Ready-position on the baseline; enter the court; FH-approach (on a ball coming from the BH-side) to the BH-side of a right-hander; enter further into the court; split; FV (short cross to the zone) on a ball coming from the backhand-side. Goals: learn to use the court by hammering on the BH, automatic short volley-stroke and automatic use of the open court.



- 3° Player B ready-position on the baseline, player A ready-position on the service line. Coach plays ball on BH of player B; player B BH down the line; player A approaches the net (in the right direction) ; split ; FV short cross to zone. Goals: Same as in task 1, but on a more difficult ball. If necessary with a partner-drill to increase chances of success

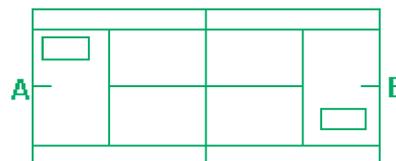


- 4° Player A and B in ready-position on the baseline. Coach plays half-court ball to player A. Player A enters the court; FH-approach to the BH-side of a right-hander; player B BH-passing down the line; player A covering the net (in the right direction); split ; FV short cross to the zone. Goals: Same as the 2nd task, but on a more difficult ball. If necessary with a partner-drill to increase chances of success



- 5° Player A and B rally starting on the baseline (accent on hammering on the BH of the opponent). Use every opportunity to play approach-shot on the BH of the opponent. The backhand passing-shot may only be played to the FV of the opponent. FV winner by playing

short cross. Goals: integration of the new skills into the rally, developing specific fitness. If necessary double points for a winning-volley



- 6° Player A and B play match with the use of task 5. Goals: integration of the new skills into matchplay, developing specific fitness. If necessary double points for a winning-volley

CONCLUSION

If we use the right learning process, everybody can learn to play an attractive approach and net game and improve his / her specific fitness. The same approach would prevent poor returns, integration of the service and passing shots.

THE TACTICAL APPROACH TO COACHING TENNIS

by Miguel Crespo and Karl Cooke (ITF)

Traditionally we have coached technique in isolation and during technical development practice we have not included tactical components of the game. There has also been a tendency to coach tactical aspects of the game without considering the techniques required when performing these tactics. In light of the importance of tactical development and the apparent inability of many technically perfect players to utilise effective tactical approaches during match play it is important to approach the coaching of tactics and technique in a new light.



or technique but the actual application of those skills in the match situation which is determined by their knowledge and experience in the open skill environment (Thomas and Thomas, 1994). This knowledge and experience in the open skill environment is best developed in the game situation where tactics can be applied.

The aim of the Tactical Approach to coaching tennis is to improve the overall game performance of the player combining tactical awareness and skill execution. The tactical approach promotes greater interest to learn tennis, more understanding of tennis game played, and improved ability to play in game situations.

SPECIFIC TO THE DEMANDS OF TENNIS

While the ability to perform a skill effectively is critical to performance, appropriate decisions concerning what to do in the game situation are just as important. If we examine the process that the player goes through in match play the essence of the tactical approach becomes clear.

Perception - Decision - Action - Feedback

First the player must read the situation (perception), decide the appropriate response to the situation (decision) and only then when these two vital components have been performed does the skill or technique need to be applied (action). Therefore in order to be successful in the match situation the player must first perceive the situation correctly and respond in the appropriate manner, the skill is simply a tool (albeit an essential tool) by which the previous two must be implemented. It has been shown that often the difference between the intermediate and advanced player is not the execution of skill

TENNIS PRACTICE SHOULD BE FUN

It is also important that tennis be a fun and enjoyable game to play for players at all levels and that the coaching methods we use maintain intrinsic motivation for the game for as long as possible. It has been argued that the traditional technically based method of coaching tennis makes the tennis session uninteresting and detached from the game young players see on the television, that is so exciting and enjoyable to watch. If however the coach can arrange the coaching session to involve tactical and technical components of the game with as little isolation as possible thereby increasing the game and fun experience of playing tennis this image of tennis as a dull and technically difficult sport will be banished.

UNDERSTANDING MEANS EMPOWERMENT AND INTEREST IN PRACTICE

By coaching in the traditional manner through a technique-based system of improving isolated technical ability the coach is teaching the player how to perform skills before the player knows why he or she might want to use them. As a result we lose the contextual nature of the skill and tennis becomes a series of drills conforming to textbook technique and not the vibrant exciting game that the players wish to experience. It is the experience of the excitement, tension, drama ...etc that gives each of us the motivation to be involved in the game and it is the role of the coach to give players the opportunity to experience this. As a coach who has spent some time with

young beginners I recall the number of times in my own coaching sessions when the kids have asked, "When can we play a game?" If the coach can somehow tap this interest in the game situation and manipulate it to induce a skill execution learning effect then the players will have the motivation to learn and commit to the tasks and so increase their ability to learn.

TENNIS CAN BE TOO COMPLEX FOR BEGINNERS

It is important to realise with the young player or beginner that many of the skills required to play tennis are complex and difficult to perform for the novice. In order for the coach to develop an environment for the beginner to be able to experience the aspects of tennis that make it so enjoyable (many of which are tactical) it may be necessary to adapt the game to the player. So one might: make the court smaller, the racket may need to be smaller/lighter for the young player, the ball may need to be bigger and slower than normal, the net might be made higher to reduce ball speeds used...the list could go on for ever (mini tennis is the ultimate example).

It might even be necessary to take away the racket completely and play a game of throw and catch with the emphasis is on

court tactics. The important concept is that every player can be introduced to tactical decision making as early and as often as possible and that through specific manipulations of the game situation (rather than isolated analyses) skill execution can be introduced and developed effectively.

CONCLUSION

Tactical play is fun! If we can give players especially young players and beginners the opportunity to experience the excitement and joy of playing a game that allows them to use their brains to solve tactical problems on the court they will enjoy their tennis and learn the game more effectively. Through this, they will develop the skills necessary to effectively execute the solutions they have to the problem posed by the game situation.

REFERENCES

Thomas, K.T., and Thomas, J.R. (1994). Developing Expertise in Sport: The relation of knowledge and performance. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 25, 295-312.

GAME BASED COACHING

by Anne Pankhurst (Coach Education Director, LTA, United Kingdom)

In the last few years and particularly since the start of the DCA, the LTA have been making progress! Many more coaches are teaching players the game of tennis, rather than how to form an orderly queue! Most of the players who came for coaching knew that tennis is a game and thought that is what they had come to learn. Far too often though, the first thing they were taught was how to hold the racket, where to put their feet and - if it was a group lesson - how to stand in a queue and hit one ball every two or three minutes. The game they saw on the television - full of movement, excitement and with players all looking different when they hit the ball, did not exactly match what they were learning. At the same time we were told that British players are sound technically, but were struggling on the world scene.

When the Coaching Department began the work of changing coaching methodology with the intention of making tennis coaching more like other sports - playing the game, - there was confusion and often resistance. Coaches were secure in the old ways, basket feeding to lines of players to groove strokes in the 'right' way and after all such methods seemed to have got the coaches to be the players they were. But many of the players found that when they played the game itself, it was difficult - the ball did not come in the right place and many went off to find other easier games.

Many coaches began to accept that players wanted to play and that

technique is only relevant in the context of helping an individual player to play better tennis. Tennis is a game and a game is about tactics, understanding what to do and how to use the playing area. In games based coaching, players are put in rallying situations from the beginning. They are taught to solve problems - of attacking and defending for example. Coaches use different coaching styles to develop the ability of the players to think and then employ different games and practices to develop techniques as necessary. The Australians call this approach 'games sense'. Players learn the basic principles and tactics of games. On the tennis court they learn the basic tactics of the game first. They then understand the need to improve technical skills - in order to progress their ability to play the game itself. The game the players see on the television does resemble what they see and do in their coaching lessons.

We have had then, games based coaching which I think is really games sense coaching. When it is done well it is an essential tool to develop player understanding of the game. It is excellent, but I think as coaches we can now move to another stage, without losing the understanding, interest, excitement, fun and skills that we have developed so far.

I think it is possible to make more links between the game of tennis and the way in which we coach - to develop the idea of **game** based coaching, rather than **games** based coaching.



Tennis is a game of either singles or doubles. Let's start with singles. At any given moment the player must be in one of the following GAME situations:

- Serving,
- Receiving,
- At the back of their own court with the opponent at the back of their court,
- Approaching or at the net,
- At the back of the court with the opponent approaching or at the net.

It really does not matter if the player is a child or adult - the size of the court merely changes - or if the player is a beginner, improver or good player. They must always be in one of these positions. Even the beginner learning to rally has to start the ball off from their hand and then be in a position on the court

Secondly in any of the situations the player is in a particular TACTICAL situation - trying to do something, to play the game.

- Firstly they are trying to get the ball over the net, into the court on the other side - to keep the ball in play,
- They know that it is more difficult to get the ball back if they have to move for it. So if they can get the ball into play, they will then try to make it more difficult for the opponent to reach the ball - they will try to move the player about.
- But if the opponent does the same thing, then it will be essential to keep a good position on the court.
- Then they would like to play their best shots to have a better chance of winning the point - they will play to their strengths
- And finally they will play to their opponent's weaker shot to try and force a mistake.

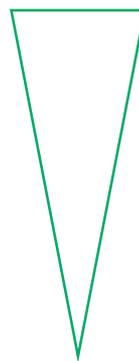
Thus players are doing two things at any one time - they are in a particular **game situation** and they are in a basic **tactical situation**.

So if a coach asks players to play a game, even a structured game, the observant coach will be able to assess: which **game situations** the players are in and at what tactical level the players are.

Obviously both of these could change during the game, but the coach will be able to assess which game situations need developing and which tactical situation needs development. As a result of the assessment therefore, the coach could have a list of coaching possibilities to help the player. This is very different from watching a player and deciding 'the forehand' needs help. Which forehand - the one to return serve, the one at the back of the court or the one in the mid court?

For example, if the player is receiving serve (games situation) and the return does not go over the net into court (tactical situation) it is clear that the lesson could start at this point. Closer analysis should work out what needs to be done. This analysis could show one or more of the following - the problem for the player is tactical - they simply do not understand that the point of this game is to get the ball over the net once more than the opponent. Or it may be technical - earlier preparation is needed, the take back of the racket is incorrect (too high?), the forward swing is incorrect, the length of the swing needs development etc. Which one of these the coach begins with

will depend on a precise analysis of what / how the player is doing. So far then the coaching process is:



Observation of an open game situation

Observation of the specific tactics in each game situation Analysis of the tactical area for development

Close analysis, perhaps through 'isolating' the specific area of work of what needs to be improved.

Coaching of the tactical understanding or technical improvement needed by the player, in a closed situation

To give another example:

The coach observes that in the games situation where both players are at the back of court, the player can keep the ball in play, does move the opponent about, does keep a good court position, but often plays a backhand instead of an attacking forehand. So the technical improvement could be to teach the player how to run around to play more 'off' forehands.

Another example:

When serving (game situation) the player keeps the ball in play (gets the serve into court), but the opponent never has to 'guess' where or what the serve will be. (Tactically the player does not move the opponent about). The tactical development could be to help the player understand the options possible. The technical improvement could be to teach a slice serve or to simply help the player serve to different positions.

But the crunch issue in every one of these examples is that the player knows WHY the tactic or technique is being taught or improved - to help them play a better game. This is game based coaching, specifically in relation to tennis.

The METHOD of coaching is vital. First players should develop games sense - what to try to do in the tennis sense. Coaches need to work on this games sense all the time. Then technical improvement may be needed to advance the tactical understanding and options.

Problem solving, observational learning, effective questioning, buddy teaching, show and tell are all vital methods of coaching that develop games sense and game based coaching.

Traditionally coaches have been good at developing a specific technique in a closed situation. Feeding and demonstration skills are vital. Now we are beginning to change coaching styles to give more attention and credence to individual styles that do not compromise basic essentials.

But coaches are not so good - yet - at putting the improved tactic or technique back into the context of the game - to develop it having improved it in the closed situation. Different practices must be introduced which gradually open up and test the tactic or technique when the player has to make decisions.

To do this well coaches need an understanding of the stages which players go through to learn motor skills. They must also know what type of practice that should be used when. Finally the player must be introduced to decision making skills to use the new tactic or technique at the right time.

So the shape of the rest of the lesson looks like this:



Closed coaching -tactic/technique

Closed practice

More open practice

Decision making practice

Open game

We are often asked for Drills and Practices books. If a coach is coaching the tactic the player needs to improve in the game situation, it can be difficult to 'apply' a practice from a book. A relevant practice for the situation will often be devised at the time - and the player could be asked how they would set up a practice! However, it is also possible that coaches can anticipate likely requirements for a practice in a specific situation. So our next task will be to produce materials to link

different practices to different tactical requirements in the different games situations.

Game based coaching applies to:

- Group coaching, except that the coach is then likely to select the specific games situation in a lesson. The coach also has the more difficult task of giving different levels of work/tactical/technical input to different abilities of player (differentiation)
- Doubles play - but that is for another time!

Finally games based coaching could be re-named player based coaching, because it fits the player at that time. Such an approach gives the coach endless lesson plans. It is no longer relevant in the modern game to coach the forehand in week one, the backhand in week two and so on. Which forehand, which backhand? If that forehand is related to the game situation and to the tactical level of the player - then the forehand that is needed is very clear. Remember it isn't the coach's lesson - it is the player's!

GAME BASED APPROACH TO TEACHING DOUBLES

by Philip Veasey (Education Development Manager, LTA, United Kingdom)

It's not a trendy scientific term dreamed up by a University boffin! In fact, the game based approach to teaching tennis shouldn't even have a name! It should be the routine way every coach approaches a lesson - it is coaching.

David Felgate (Tim Henman), Paul Annacone (Pete Sampras) Javier Duarte (Carlos Moya) and Melanie Molitor (Martina Hingis) are the lucky coaches. They work with some of the best players in the world and are able to teach their pupils from a pure game based approach. Watching their pupils every match in tournament play means that practise sessions will always be focussed on key things to help their matchplay develop. Many sessions will normally be geared around working on parts of the players technique that are letting them down generally in matchplay situations. Or working on particular techniques required to counter a tactical approach or outwit a player in a forthcoming match.

If my pupil had to face Greg Rusedski in a match then return of serve would be high on the practise list. Steffi Graf's coach hired in left handed servers to practise with Graf when her rivalry with Martina Navratilova was at its most intense.



If my pupil was to face Tim Henman then lessons would focus on how to deal with a net rusher - deep second serves, keeping the ball deep in rally play, hitting passing shots and lobs against the net player and so on.

WHATEVER THE SITUATION TECHNIQUE WOULD BE WORKED ON FOR A GOOD REASON.

We mortal coaches aren't so lucky. Pressure of time permits us from watching in matchplay even our most talented pupils and the reality is that our lessons are guided either by verbal reports from our pupils (what went wrong, what went well, etc.), or by the game situations that we set up in lessons.

The same approach applies to beginners. Beginners are desperate to play the game and you the coach should be desperate to get them playing the game too. Because once you get your players rallying its easy to identify appropriate strengths and weaknesses that need working on. If it's a technical aspect of a pupils game that this stopping improvement in the way the game is played then step in and help !

THE GAME BASED APPROACH DOES NOT IGNORE TECHNIQUE. IT SIMPLY PLACES THE TEACHING OF TECHNIQUE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF A GAME.

Definition:

Teaching pupils using a tactical approach and introducing suitable technique in order to enhance performance when appropriate.

My favourite coaching lessons are with groups of adult beginners. Coaches should focus on groups for many reasons:

- It offers newcomers to the game an inexpensive introduction to tennis
- Lessons are fun and offer coaches a change from one to one or small group work

- Some of the group may want to take individual lessons
- Pupils can make friends and find immediate practise partners
- You should be paid a higher hourly rate !

Let's have a look at how I have worked with groups using a game based approach.

General Lesson objectives: learn how to play a game of tennis in a friendly environment that will leave them wanting to learn and play more!

What works well:

- A game-based approach
- Giving the players a structure
They sign up their name and telephone number on the "Hit list" which is photocopied for them in time for the next lesson and they have a number of ready-made practice partners.
- They are encouraged to play at least once between sessions
- They receive details about other activities for them at the club

What doesn't work well:

- A technique based approach where all lessons are geared towards learning technique and a game is only played for five minutes at the end of the session

For me a game based approach means:

- Quickly getting the group to a rallying standard in the mini-tennis area (the four service boxes)
- Setting up game situations (mainly doubles in this case) giving technical help individually or sometimes as a group to enhance the playing of the "game"
- Extending the demands of the game to challenge their developing skills either tactically (e.g. teams can only win points when volleying or teams must defend and attack together...etc) or technically (e.g. start the game with a formal service technique...etc)
- Getting players to think and solve problems

The game based approach produces players who:

- Play a game almost from lesson one
- Understand the game
- Know what their role is within the game
- Know what they have to do to improve their game
- Enjoy the lesson and play the game!

As opposed to lesson one = the forehand, lesson two = the backhand...etc which at best produces good hitters from sympathetic handfeeds but players who come unstuck when placed in a game situation with peers or with a poor feeder.

The key to all coaching at this level is to:

- Make your players independent of the coach or easy feeder (get them rallying with each other!)
- Enable them to make quick decisions about how to receive and how to send the on-coming ball
- Allow them to keep a rally going in a game situation

The two crucial elements to the six-week period of lessons therefore are:

1. Lesson one: learning to rally; mini-tennis rallies; emphasis on early preparation; being in the right place at the right time to send the ball; making decisions to

begin preparation as soon as ball leaves the opponents racket; contact point; limited racket swing. Mini-tennis doubles.

This is the most critical lesson of all. Each player should leave this lesson with an ability to rally in the service boxes, knowing that the angle of the racket face is crucial to success when hitting the ball but that being in the right place at the right time and being prepared to hit is crucial if you are going to keep the rally going! Obviously these points are revisited and practised in subsequent lessons.

2. The way the game of doubles is introduced. It should be in mini-tennis area (or according to the player's abilities). With both players at the baseline working on team work and the role of the non-hitter the main focus, before any formal doubles positions are discussed.

Let's investigate the very first lesson for doubles.

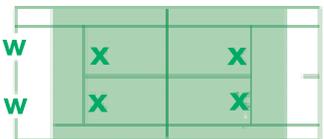
Normally the coach might show a demonstration point or two, explain every player's position and role on the court and pray that 2 or 3 semi-decent rallies might occur over the next half hour!

Here is a different approach:

The group: Can now rally consistently in the mini-tennis area of the court

The coach: sets up a 2 v 2 doubles situation starting the point with a gentle underarm feed by one of the players

(NB: with 6 on a court 2 players wait (W) at the back of the court to play, and bring new players in every 4 points).



The shaded area indicates the playing space that is gradually increased as the players progress from the mini-tennis size to the full court.

Progressions:

1. Players simply play a few points
2. Yours or mine discussion point - get players to take responsibility when the ball is in their half of the court. Have players call 'mine' on every ball for a while, the call being made before the ball crosses the net
3. Down the middle discussion point - who takes the ball down the middle of the court ? (Answer - usually the player on the left using the forehand)
4. Working as a team discussion point - as a player moves wide for a ball where does the partner move ? (Answer - more centrally into the court to ensure good court coverage)

Okay - that's more than enough for the first lesson. Keep consolidating the points made and take some 'time outs' if necessary to keep reminding players of the technique required to keep rallies going. It won't be long before the players are waiting to volley and start the rallies with a 'proper serve'.

So, the next time you begin your run of adult beginner lessons, take a deep breath, cut down on the technique and let them play the game - you will get much better results!

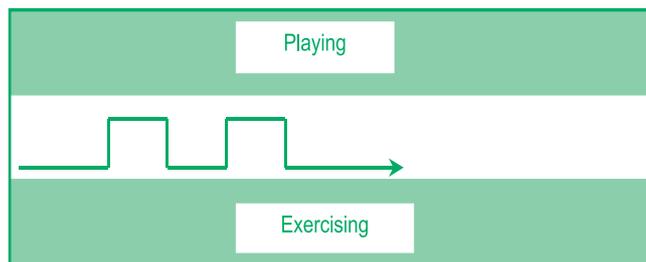
THE GAG METHOD

by Marcel K. Meier (Managing Director "Youth + Sport" Tennis, Switzerland)

Tennis is learnt best by doing, but the systematic acquisition of technical, tactical, physical and mental abilities and skills should not be forgotten. The basic idea of the game should always be present when structuring a lesson. At the beginner's level the game is simplified, but the fundamental concepts must be maintained. It is important that right from the beginning children and adolescents are able to experience the tension of success and failure and that they are fascinated and motivated by the experience of the game. Exercises and games have to be arranged in such a way that the players are again and again exposed to situations for which they have to find adequate solutions.

DEFINITION

The **Game** situation is observed and analysed in its entirety (part G) before an imperfect aspect of it is chosen, **Analysed** and exercised separately (part A) and then reintegrated into the **Game** (part G). The same procedure can be applied for any technical element that has to be improved. If the players can contribute their own ideas they are likely to be more motivated to exercise an element in part A.



GAG IN A LESSON

The initial warm-up period is followed by the first game-part (G) of the lesson, the analysis and exercise, another game based situation and finally a cool down. In their content and form these should be as close as possible to the real game situation. Those elements that are meant to be the main focus of the lesson should occur frequently. The size of the court, the rules and the material should be adapted in order to achieve this. The players should be able to experience the process of perception, decision making, realisation and evaluation. This will enable the coaches to recognise the players' actual strengths and weaknesses. Occasionally the players will already be making rough corrections. The insights that are gained in this way will influence the analytical part (A).

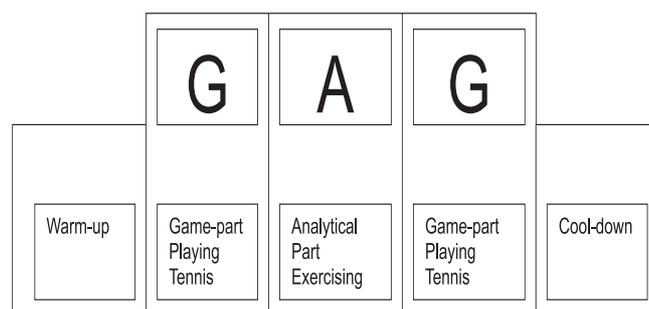
Part (A) contains the practice of separate aspects, such as technical elements or tactical situations in tennis, which are further developed. At this stage there is room for new elements and precision work to be introduced. Depending on the situation this is also the time for suitable drills. Appropriate exercises in part (A) have the quality of being close to the fundamentals of the game and of being as interesting, fascinating and exciting as the game itself. They are based

upon real game situations. The players learn techniques in order to solve certain problems, and always in view of the circumstances. Some of the tasks should be structured in such a way that the players are able to find their own solutions. Having analysed the problem in the first part (G) together with the coach the players may readily accept the task as a challenge.

What has been practised so far is used in the second part (G) in situations similar to the competition. The choices of the court size and of the rules determine the intensity of the game. The coaches check the technical and tactical directions they have given so far during the lesson and correct any mistakes. Thus both the players and the coaches become aware of the achievement progress.

Playing also means exerting one's energies. Every state of tension calls for relaxation. The cool-down period at the end of the lesson helps the players to relax after every hard practice session. Cooling down and stretching are a means of accelerating the regeneration process and increase the general well being of the player after practice and competition.

The GAG method must not lead to lack of purpose and planning. Teachers will always have to prepare their lessons and to have alternative solutions ready in order to guide their lesson in a useful manner. It is also possible to create other types of lessons. The structure of a lesson should always be adapted to the individual teaching situation.



TEACHING HOW TO PLAY TENNIS

The idea of the GAG method enables the players to learn a game from the beginning, i.e. by playing - exercising - playing - exercising - playing etc. In this way, even at the beginner's level, the technical training is closely related to the tactical instruction. The technical skills are always a means of finding a solution for a tactical problem. It is the aim of the very first lesson to convey the idea of the game and thus for the player to acquire a useful and individual attitude on court. By actually playing the game at a very early stage the technical skills are used right from the start under competition-like circumstances. The GAG method eliminates one of the disadvantages of traditional teaching in sport where individual technical skills are practised separately for a long time before they are tested under real circumstances.

PROBLEMS IN TENNIS TEACHING: STATEMENTS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

by Carlos Carballo and Marcelo Blasco (Argentina)

1. FIRST PROBLEM: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAYER BASED ON TECHNICAL PERFORMANCE

a) The Problem

For several years in a number of sports, tennis among them, they have suffered the impact of the industrial process in which concepts of technique, and technology have prevailed. This has been adapted at the teaching level through the false idea that: "If proper technique is good for production, and since it is important to be practical, technique based learning is best for the school, for physical education, for sport, and for tennis".

b) Traditional planning and solution provided to the problem

Analytic methods have tried to solve the problem of motor learning. By using them, tennis is converted in a series of technical movements isolated from the game situation (which is tactically based). Moreover the technique of each stroke is divided in a series of meaningless positions, which causes the player to lose rhythm in the stroke, a basic quality of good technical ability.

With these methods, it may be difficult for the student to learn tennis because we don't teach starting from a real situation (which is defined by some authors as an ecological situation). The knowledge gained from isolated learning does not respond in the game situation, which is ultimately the most important outcome of learning tennis. This is because the environment of the game situation does not resemble that of the learning environment.

Furthermore, these methods tend to forget the game. You can not play, you are not allowed to play until you master the "technical fundamentals of tennis": forehand, backhand, serve, volley, overhead smash, etc.

In these methods the emphasis for player motivation comes from external pressures: "you can" or "if you want to be as successful as 'X' you have to hit like this", the stimulus and the model are alien to the player.

Can we really obtain any results like this? May be results are only possible with talented players, and less talented are not provided for.

c) Planning and possible solutions from an active perspective

"Active" teaching methods are those in which the student has to elaborate something, i.e.: answer questions, search of alternatives, trial and error, decision making, etc., instead of being limited to simply responding to the coach's instructions.

With these methods, the problem presented to the student is the same he faces when playing tennis: "Why did I hit

that ball wrong?" "When is it convenient to use this effect?" "Where should I direct this ball in this situation?"

Children can not solve all these problems alone and require assistance in finding the solutions to the problems but it is important that they are helped to find a solution rather than accepting the "correct" method as dictated by the coach.

The coach **should** teach, i.e., indicate and convey several concepts to a player when he or she can not discover them. Will a girl be able to discover the most convenient position to adopt to hit a forehand with just several directive questions? Yes, she probably will. Then, it is better that the coach asks her several questions, instead of directly telling her: "Stand sideways or facing the net".

It is however, unlikely that a player at a young age will be capable of discovering how to grip the racquet effectively for the forehand. If the coach thinks that the grip is going to limit the learning progression, he should tell the player: "Grip the racquet this way".

However, the active model of coaching is the most effective for learning, it also has its limits which are related to the intellectual level and the motivation of the student.

2. SECOND PROBLEM: THE ROLE OF THE GAME AND COMPETITION IN THE LEARNING PROCESS

a) The problem

Several authors have spoken about the importance of the game as a way to introduce the sport. In this perspective, the game becomes more a means to develop interest rather than real learning content.

Competition has been considered either as something very positive, glorifying it, or very negative, scorning it. Do we have to learn to play or do we learn by playing? Is competition useful and positive or it is preferable to avoid it?

b) Traditional planning and solution provided to the problem

By using several technically based methods, the game is often not introduced until the player has "learned" the basic technique and only then it is time to compete. Early specialisation can be added to this, which in turn aggravates the problem. Sport practice does not necessarily enrich the motor ability of the practitioner, but specialises it and, consequently, it may be hampered and limited due to the stereotypes and automatic movements learned. Early specialisation has annulled the pleasure as a source of motivation, changing it into an "obligation and work" situation that leads to abandonment due to burn out.

From the opposite perspective, it was maintained that everything is a game by using a “multilateral formation” in which a “little bit of everything was offered” but this ended up being a “lot of nothing”.

Competition, from both points of view, argues that it is either something unique or something unnecessary to early player learning.

c) Planning and possible solutions from an active perspective

Piaget states that the game is the exercise of using knowledge learned (through assimilation). When playing you do not learn, but playing is indispensable to internal assimilation and therefore learning.

Thus, in a tennis lesson, the game should be permanent but should not be exclusive. No matter what the technical level of the player is, they have to be able to play with what they have learned. Obviously, not every game, and in the case of beginners not the formal game. Moreover, we should remember Freud who said that playing also satisfies the wish to repeat previous experience, hence the game should always be incorporated into the session.

Games can be varied in terms of their goals. They can be tasks for given abilities or free forms of a scaled down version of the sport. We suggest the use of mini-tennis as a game, not as a sport.

There is no sport without competition, it would be a “false humanism” which would be unrealistic. However, it is clear that competition should be adapted according to ages, playing levels and the motivation of the young tennis players. Rules, scoring, court dimensions can be modified, even - much better - based on suggestions made by the children, because the sport, an invention of adults, has to be adapted for children, and not adapt the children to the sport.

3. THIRD PROBLEM: INDIVIDUAL SPORT/INDIVIDUAL LESSON: THE QUESTION OF THE GROUP LESSONS

a) The Problem

With the recent “boom” of competition at early ages, the exclusive attention of a coach on just one student has given the impression that the learning process would be faster, more efficient and more personalised. Quantity of dedication has been confused with quality of teaching.

There is nothing wrong in an individual lesson, but the sport, as an educational system, should take into account the importance of both the personal and social benefits of sport. The learning process is always personal but its meaning is often social. Vygotski states the importance of co-operation among students in solving problems, which could not be solved alone.

b) Traditional planning and solution to the problem

Often the group class has been used exclusively from a financial point of view: to make the tennis lesson cheaper. The result is predictable: children are “piled up” instead

of “grouped”. Or children are grouped according to age groups: under 12, under 14, under 16, etc., without taking into consideration their playing ability. This is another mistake.

Group classes also were justified as being fun. Yes, we all know how much fun waiting is...Or to avoid waiting, everybody, at the same time, repeating shadow strokes, divided into steps, for 30 minutes (the famous automatism or repetition drills).

c) Planning and possible solutions from an active perspective

When making a group we should respect the interest of its members. There is no general rule for the level of play or age categorisation in the grouping of players. There can be multiple combinations and each student should be taken into account individually. It is possible that A and B are 10 year old students with the same playing level, but A can be included in a group due to her interests and not B.

A tennis programme should have different groups and facilitate the interchange of students among them because each student improves at their own rate. The group favours the formation of values and attitudes such as solidarity, help, mutual correction and tolerance. However, tennis is invariably perceived by children to be an individual sport. There are individual and group improvements, but no team ones.

For instance, it is sad to see the lack of importance given to the game of doubles in several programmes, whereas in some schemes the doubles game has the same importance as the singles game, and team competitions are as important as the individual one.

The group should be reduced in number. However, when the coach works on court with 5, 6 or 7 students he or she does not need to make them wait or use mechanical drills of “everybody doing the same drill and at the same time”. There are several teaching styles (task, buddy teaching, problem solving, etc.) that can guarantee an active, individualised and group lesson at the same time (Mosston, Crespo).

REFERENCES:

- Blázquez, D. (1995). “La Iniciación Deportiva y el Deporte Escolar”. INDE. Barcelona.
- Bruner, J. (1989). “Acción, pensamiento y Lenguaje”. Cap.1: “Concepciones sobre la Infancia: Freud, Piaget y Vygotsky”. Alianza. Madrid.
- Forti, L. (1992). “La Formación del tenista completo”. Paidós. Barcelona.
- Giraldes, M. (1994). “Didáctica de una Cultura de lo corporal”. Buenos Aires.
- Piaget, J. (1969). “Biología y conocimiento”. Siglo XXI. México.

WHAT TENNIS RESEARCH TELLS US ABOUT...COACHING METHODS

Compiled and summarised by Miguel Crespo and Karl Cooke (ITF)

COACHING METHODOLOGY

This study investigated the effectiveness of the Task Method versus the Command Method of teaching the forehand and backhand ground strokes.

- The Command Method is described as being based on the command-response interaction between coach and player, the emphasis is placed on the subject matter and the role of the player in the learning experience is limited.
- The Task Method is described as providing the player with the opportunity to make many more decisions than in the command method, he or she has the authority to decide how many repetitions of a particular task to be performed, and when to stop. After demonstrating the skill to be performed the coach relinquishes his control over the player.

Players were given six weeks coaching for a total of 12 hours. Results revealed that:

1. The Task Method was superior to the command method in the coaching of the backhand,
2. The two methods were not different in the coaching of the forehand,
3. Both methods caused significant improvement in the performance of the two ground strokes,
4. The Task Method players had significantly greater retention for both ground strokes.

*Tom Mariani (1969). A comparison of the effectiveness of the command method and the task method of teaching the forehand and backhand tennis strokes. **The Research Quarterly**, Vol. 41, No. 2: 171-174.*

PRACTICE ORGANISATION

This study examined the effect of practice organisation manipulations implemented in a coaching setting on the performance and learning of low- and high- skilled players. In five sessions of either blocked (focusing on one specific area) or alternating (varying the focus of the drills) practice organisation for the forehand and backhand ground strokes.

The players were tested before and after the practice and the results indicate that the practice organisation influenced player performance.

- Low skilled players assigned to the blocked practice performed better after practice than those who had been assigned to alternating practice.
- In contrast the highly skilled players were not influenced by the practice organisation, this highlights the importance of the type of practice organisation to be used for children and beginners.

Herbert, E.P., Landin, D. & Solmon, M.A. (1996). Practice Schedule Effects on the Performance and Learning of

Low- and High- Skilled Students: An Applied Study. Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport Vol.67 (1): 52-58.

PLAYER TO PLAYER TUTORING IN TENNIS

This article highlights the potential for peer tutoring in early tennis sessions using a fellow player to observe the performance of the criterion skills.

- The criterion skills are determined by the coach and divided into levels. The player must practice the skills with their partner and the partner must observe the completion of the list of required skills before moving on to the next level. The coach then confirms the player's progress either by giving them additional assistance or signing them off to the next level.
- The players are normally allowed to choose their own partners, since they often select partners of similar skill level, thereby enhancing their own playing ability.
- Results have also been successful when higher skilled players worked with players with lower motor capabilities. The higher skilled students are challenged to find ways to assist the less skilled. In turn the less skilled receive individual assistance and guidance, and ultimately find success.

*Donna Chun (1996) Peer Tutoring in Tennis. **Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance** Vol.67(2): 12-15.*

THE BEHAVIOUR OF MORE AND LESS SUCCESSFUL TENNIS COACHES

The behaviour of nine coaches of high school boys' tennis was described and analysed in this study. The coaches were categorised as either more or less successful, this was determined by the definition that a more successful coach was one who had a 70% winning record over the three years prior to the study. A less successful coach was one who only had a 50% winning record over the three years prior to the study. The results showed:

- Less successful coaches instructed more than more successful coaches
- Less successful coaches praised more than the more successful coaches, but the appropriateness of the praise to the situation was not determined
- More successful coaches questioned their players more than less successful coaches
- More successful coaches spent greater time in "silence", "management" and "other" activities than less successful coaches. The authors suggest that this may be due to a greater requirement for tennis players to have practice time without frequent instruction intervals.

*Claxton, D.B. (1988) A Systematic Observation of More and Less Successful High School Tennis Coaches. **Journal of Teaching in Physical Education**, 1988 (7): 302-310.*

THE EFFECT OF PROACTIVE INTERFERENCE ON THE PLAYER'S ABILITY TO LEARN THE BACKHAND STROKE

Proactive interference is when the ability of an individual to perform a desired task is inhibited by the effect of a previously learned skill. In this study the effect of learning the forehand stroke prior and separate to the learning of the backhand stroke was investigated. The results show that:

- There was negative transfer when the players who first learned the forehand were required to learn the backhand
- This negative transfer was suggested to be a consequence of the differences in pivot and grip in the two techniques
- The study recommended that "the traditional instruction model of teaching forehand ground strokes be re-examined. In tennis, teaching forehand and backhand concurrently may initially present a confusing task to the learner, but such a procedure may lead to higher ultimate performance".

Eason, R.L., Smith, T.L. & Plaisance, E. (1989). Effects of Proactive Interference on Learning the Tennis Backhand Stroke. Perceptual and Motor Skills, 68: 923-930.

ENHANCING TENNIS COACHING USING A METAPHOR METHOD

Children and adolescents in a summer tennis instruction programme were taught a "metaphor method" for eliminating distractions and detrimental ideation. They visualised themselves enclosed in a bubble, cocoon, or chrysalis that separated them from non task stimuli.

- Ratings from coaches about the metaphor method demonstrated multiple advantages.
- When compared to the control group (players receiving regular instruction), players taught to use the boundary metaphors improved significantly in terms of performance criteria and the ability to concentrate.
- The coaches involved also rated the players higher in enjoyment of the experience, motivation, and a display of mature and appropriate behaviour.

Efran, J.S., Lesser, G.S. & Spiller, M.J. (1994) Enhancing Tennis Coaching with Youths using a Metaphor Method. The Sport Psychologist, 8: 349-359.

TENNIS COACHING ON THE WEB

by Miguel Crespo and Karl Cooke (ITF)

This article will provide you with some of the sites available on the Internet, which relate to Coaching.

- **Coaches Review Articles on the Web:**
<http://www.itftennis.com>

You can now read a selection of Coaches Review articles on the ITF WebPages in the "Developing Tennis" section as well as considerable information on the work of the ITF Development Department. If you know coaches that do not receive Coaches Review they can read some of our articles here. National Associations also wishing to access complete issues of Coaches Review can obtain them via ITF Worldnet (see the Development Department section of the library).

- **Tennis Coaches Australia New South Wales:**
<http://www.ozemail.com.au/~tcansw/>

"Tennis Coaches Australia is the official organisation authorised to conduct training courses and accredit tennis coaches on behalf of Tennis Australia. On gaining their qualifications members are issued with a joint certificate from Tennis Australia and Tennis Coaches Australia".

Features: Training courses; About TCA; Members' WebPages and Directory; Coaching Accreditation; Links.

- **Tennis One:** <http://www.tennisone.com>

Rather than offering one tip each month, TennisONE provides a whole library of tennis lessons. Anytime you have a problem on the court, check out TennisONE's lesson page to find the solution. We've built our library of lessons using the top local teaching pros as well as nationally recognised industry figures.

Features: Lesson Library; Worldwide tennis news; Racket

Research; Ask the Pros; Tennis one bulletin board; Tennis products.

- **MWN - Tennis:** <http://www.mwnsports.com>

"Some of the highlights of this high impact newsletter include: Drills and Exercises; Playing Strategies; Coaching Principals; Tips Motivation and Sports Psychology; Physical Strength and Conditioning; Public Relations and Promotions; and much, much more!"

- **Tennistrainer Magazine:** <http://www.tennistrainer.com>

Features: Specialised Training; Tennis injuries; Tennis Links; Training diets; Training equipment; Gift shop; Contacts; Classifieds.

- **Tennis at the Australian Institute of Sport:**
<http://www.ausport.au/aisten.html>

Features: A.I.S. Tennis players; The A.I.S. Tennis programme; History of Tennis; Tennis at the Olympic Games; Tennis Diets; Training.

- **Pro Tennis Video:** <http://www.protennisvideo.com>

Features: Train for mental toughness, Overcome choking, Cross train like the Pros; Devise winning game plans; Develop world class footwork; Learn the secrets of Pro Strategy; Out think your opponent to win.

- **Leading Edge Tennis:** <http://www3.sympatico.ca/let/>

Features: Article contributions from tennis professionals; Psychological tip of the month; Technical tip of the month; Tactical tip of the month; Guest writer; Announcements; Pro shop; Best tennis sites (updated monthly).

RECOMMENDED BOOKS AND VIDEOS

THE DAVIS CUP

By Richard Evans

Year: 1998. Pages: 256. Language: English. This book published by the ITF celebrates 100 years of international tennis. In this lavishly illustrated history, the author chronicles not merely the matches that caught the imagination of millions but the extraordinary array of personalities who gave the Cup its lustre and whose names are now engraved on its silver panels.

Contents include: 1. The beginning, 2. The Cup, 3. The first match, 4. Early challenges, 5. The Wilding years, 6. Tilden, 7. Perry, 8. Post-war years, 9. The Hopman era, 10. Dell's Americans, 11. The Seventies, 12. McEnroe to the rescue, 13. Drumbeat in Asuncion, 14. The Nineties, Bibliography and Index.

For more information contact: Ebury Press.
www.randomhouse.co.uk. Price: £14.99.

INITIATION ADULTS

By French Tennis Federation

Year: 1998. Level: Beginners and Intermediate players. Pages: 34. Language: French. This book offers a pedagogical programme for working with adult beginners through a series of 12 one hour sessions. The main goal of the programme is to help players to rally from the very first lesson.

Contents include: 1. Introduction, 2. Equipment, 3. Methodological aspects, 4. Programme for 12 one hour sessions, 5. Formations, games. The general goals are: to involve new people in tennis, to help them to play and compete, to motivate them to be active members of tennis clubs etc.

The specific goals include: to help them discover how to rally with a partner, to help them discover an adapted form of competition, to help them acquire the technical basics on groundstrokes and service, to help them acquire some basic tactical concepts.

For more information contact: Fédération Française de Tennis, 2, Avenue Gordon Bennett, 75016 Paris, France.
Tel: 33 1 47 43 48 00. Fax: 33 1 47 43 04 94.

ADVANCED TECHNIQUES FOR COMPETITIVE TENNIS

By Richard Schonborn

Year: 1999. Level: Advanced. Pages: 280. Language: Spanish. This book sets out to change the way tennis is taught and coached by making technique training more relevant to what happens in a match.

The book provides a detailed analysis of technique and how it is learned then places technique training into the context of the overall tennis training programme.

For more information contact: Ediciones Tutor, C/ Marqués de Urquijo, 34-2º izda. 28008 Madrid. Price approx.: \$25.
Tel. 34 91 559 98 32. Fax: 34 91 541 02 35.
E-mail: tutor@autovia.com.

BOLLETTIERI CLASSIC TENNIS HANDBOOK

By Nick Bollettieri

Year: 1999. Level: Advanced. Pages: 569. Language: English. This book is a collection of the experiences of Nick Bollettieri in his 44-year-old tennis coaching career. It describes his coaching ideas with players of all levels from beginners to world number one. The book covers all areas from physical conditioning, to parenting, to the composition and tension of your racket strings.

For more information contact: Tennis Week, 341 Madison Avenue, Suite 600, New York, NY 10017, United States of America. Price approx. \$30.

VIDEOS

Physical Conditioning for the club player (La préparation physique du joueur de club). Fédération Française de Tennis. Shows exercises for developing the physical qualities needed for club tennis play. Frederic Roche, Paul Quentin, Nicolas Thibault, INSEP. Colour. Approx. 30 min. Strengthening the upper body (Le renforcement du haut du corps). Fédération Française de Tennis. Shows exercises for strengthening the upper body for junior and advanced tennis players. Frederic Roche, Paul Quentin, Eric Grange. Colour. Approx. 30 min. For more information contact: Fédération Française de Tennis, 2, Avenue Gordon Bennett, 75016 Paris, France.
Tel: 33 1 47 43 48 00. Fax: 33 1 47 43 04 94.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING ARTICLES TO COACHES REVIEW

Coaches Review is published 3 times per year by the ITF. If you wish to submit articles for consideration, the general guidelines are as follows:

Length: Short articles not more than 4 pages.

Author (s): Name, nationality, academic degree if any, position in an institution or organisation.

Topics: Latest tennis topics (technique, teaching methodology, tactics, psychology, physical conditioning, medicine, training, drills and games, development, etc.).

SUBMISSION OF ARTICLES:

By mail: To ITF Development Department, Bank Lane Roehampton, London SW15 5XZ (ATT. Miguel Crespo, Research Officer), or to Miguel Crespo, C/ Pérez Bayer, 11, 10-A, 46002 Valencia, España. Please attach a printed copy of the article and a floppy disk.

By e-mail: To Miguel Crespo <dualde@xpress.es>

Text: Use any word processor (Word 7.0 is preferable)

Font: 12 (any type)

Graphs: Use any graph software (Power Point is preferable).

Photos: 2 photos max. per article can be attached.

We hope this information will be useful to you. In case you may need any further details, please contact the ITF Development Department.



International Tennis Federation

ITF Ltd, Bank Lane, Roehampton
London, SW15 5XZ

Tel: 44 181 878 6464 Fax: 44 181 878 7799

E-mail: itf@itftennis.com



Designed and Printed by Wilton Wright & Son Ltd, Units 2/3, Garth Road, Morden, Surrey SM4 4LZ. Tel: 0181-330 6944 Fax: 0181-330 5816

MINI TENNIS

HOW TO CREATE A MINI-TENNIS SPACE

by the Technical Department of the French Tennis Federation

INTRODUCTION

The mini-tennis space is an indispensable complement to the original pedagogical mini-tennis approach and to its equipment. This space can be conceived in different ways. By arranging the existing material or creating one or more areas, the court is converted into a centre of great activity.

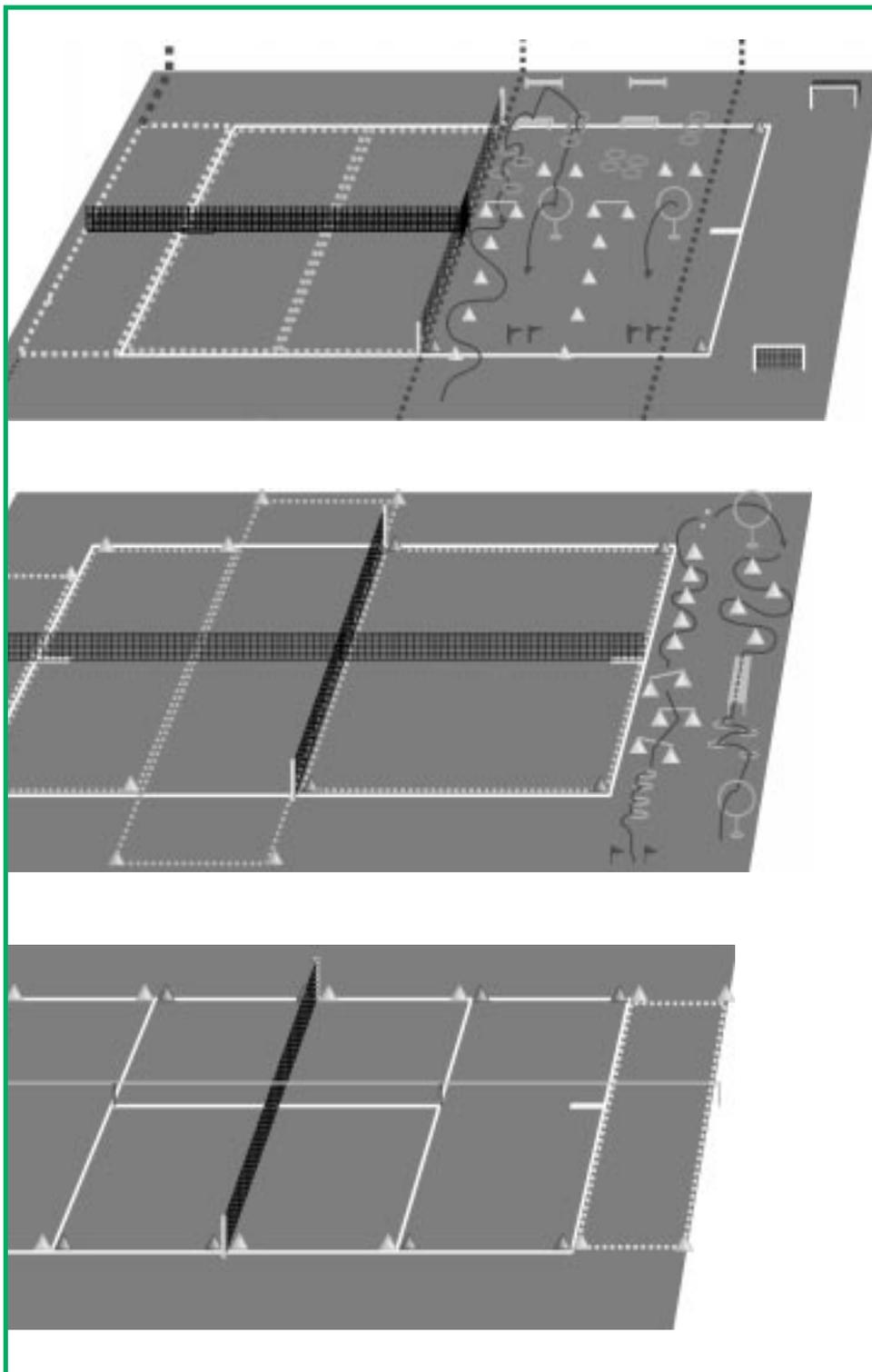
The environment in which children evolve directly influences their motor behaviour. Thus, it is important to dedicate a space to the teaching and practice of mini-tennis in clubs and tennis centres. In order to respond to this demand, the first solution is to adapt a regular tennis court.

With the aid of posts, elastic bands, and nets or by moving lines, the space of play is transformed during the season or all year long as a function of the needs of the students and the teachers.

By doing this, it is possible to use the already existing lines to determine three different zones which will include a different activity in each (see figure 1). It is also possible to create three singles mini-tennis courts on one side of the court and, on the other side, a doubles mini-tennis court and a multi-activity space combining different motor abilities can be included (see figure 2). Another option is simply to draw 5 or 6 singles mini-tennis courts (see figure 3).

NUMEROUS POSSIBLE ARRANGEMENTS

These three options are just few examples of the numerous possible arrangements that can be done. The space is not fixed and its evolution depends on the imagination of the teacher and on the goals to be established. From a financial point of view, the arrangement of a regular court with the mini-tennis equipment is a cheaper option. Unfortunately this solution does not allow the child, apart from during the training sessions, to use the court as a playground.



Four years ago, based on this situation, the French Tennis Federation (FFT) created a mini-tennis space reserved for youngsters. "With Jean Claude Marchon together with the manufacturers, they tried to approach two conflicting constraints. On one side was the desire of the child to evolve freely in a space without rigid limits or obstacles. On the other side, there was the need for the teacher to have a framework to structure the game. The space, the division and all other elements have been defined after an intense process of reflection" explains Alain Guelfi, responsible for the Equipment Service at the FFT. Conceived in a progressive form, this specific space has an adaptable fence in which targets, goals or basket hoops can be fixed. It also has a zone of "team sports" and three zones of 12, 15 or 18 meters delimited by coloured rectangles and by lines more or less marked. The transition from one zone to another depends on the ability of each child to master the space in terms of, for example, the basic concepts of attack and defence.

THE "TEAM SPORTS" ZONE

It permits the practice of numerous activities. The coloured bands can be used as targets, jumping zones, etc. Besides, if posts are used this zone can also be transformed into a supplement mini-tennis court.

THE 12 AND 15 METRES COURTS

In order to allow the child to discover the principles of the game and at the same time to develop their

physical and motor abilities, mini-tennis courts should respond to more demands from the point of view of the dimensions, the colours and even the fences used. They should adapt to the age and the level of the young practitioners. Then, before progressing to the 15-metre court, the child has to be feel comfortable on the 12 metre court.

THE 18 METRE COURT

When the child starts to master and control the ball, she tries to resemble the adult's game. However, she has to improve her learning in an environment adapted to her abilities. The "intermediate" zone is formed by coloured rectangles and has white lines that limit the area of play.

In conclusion: the ideal situation is to have a playing area (in the club or neighbourhood) and a budget big enough to create these structures already mentioned. However, it is also possible to start by building just one court which can have one or several of the elements described above and will allow children to play with their peers, parents, brothers and sisters at all times. As a privileged animation zone for the youngsters, the mini-tennis space will contribute to the improvement of the collective environment within the club. It may develop, as we have already seen, as a space of play for all the family.

THE ITF SCHOOL TENNIS INITIATIVE POCKET AID

Pocket Aid is the teaching aid to help beginning teachers who need to know what to do next. The ten games and ten ball warm up exercises can be found in the ITF School Tennis Initiative Teacher's Manual. This book is given out to all mini tennis teachers. Instead of bringing the book to class, teachers can pull out the Pocket Aid and have a variety of teaching ideas to select from.

The Pocket Aid opposite can be cut out (and photocopied to give to other coaches in your school or club), placed back to back and laminated to produce the Pocket Aid that is hard wearing and can be kept in your pocket for all your coaching sessions.

The Pocket Aid was devised through the hard work of two of the ITF Development Officers; Karl Davies (South Africa) and Dan O'Connell (Pacific Oceania).

ITF POCKET AID

Warm Up

Upper Body	Lower Body
Circles	Kicks
Apples	Hops
Japs	Jumps
Serves	Shuffle

Stretch After Jogging

Relays (to net)

Walks: Bear/Crab/Duck
Racket: Holding/ups/downs

Drills-partner/net

Stop/bounce/hit
Hit Ten
Stop/alternate/hit
Stop/legs/Hit

ITF POCKET AID

Mini Tennis: Ages 5-8

Ball Warm up:

Draughts(3); Ball Relay(4);
Racket Relay(10);
Catch It(11); Ice Hockey(25).

Games:

The Box(5); Catepillar(11);
Close-Far(18); Baseball(23);
Cats&Rats(24).

Mini Tennis: Ages 8-12

Ball Warm up:

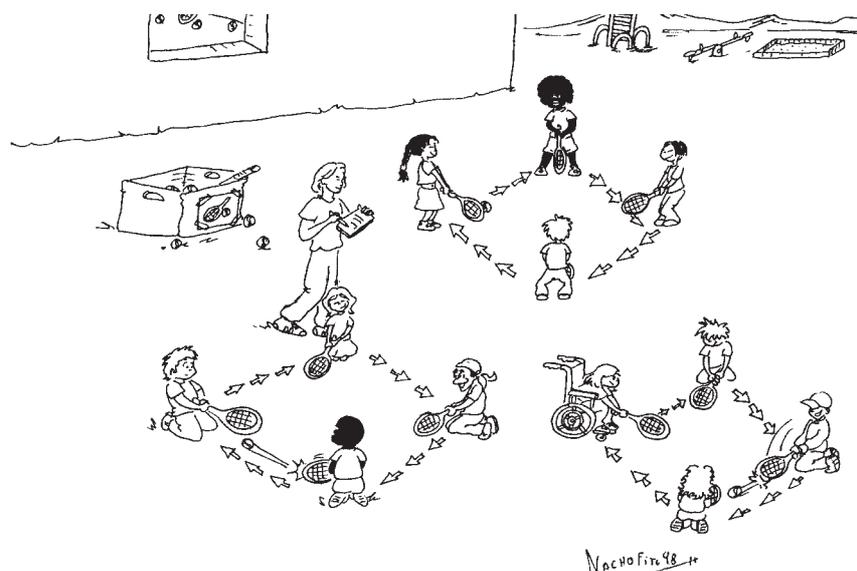
Billards(1); Spider Tag(4);
Bounce Tiggy(7); Handball(11);
Waterpolo(26).

Games:

Speedy Gonzal(11); Hi Lo(19);
Masters(9); Waiter(3); Clean
Court(16)

2 ONE HOUR LESSONS FOR CHILDREN AGED 5-8 YEARS OLD

LESSON 5	Theme: PROPELLING AND RECEIVING THE BALL, CO-OPERATING AND MOBILITY
Objective	To roll the ball over to a team-mate.
Warm up	<u>Freeze:</u> Team leader signals for forehand, backhand, serve. Periodically, in the middle of a stroke, the calls "freeze". Students must stop and hold their exact grip, stroke, position.
Games/Exercises	<u>The box:</u> Teams of 4 students forming a box, ie. each student stands on a corner of the service box. On the signal, they have to roll the ball with the racket, A to B, B to C and C to D. The first team to complete the box wins.
Variations	In pairs, students roll the ball back and forth, using both faces of the racket, along the line, gradually moving back away from each other each time, etc.

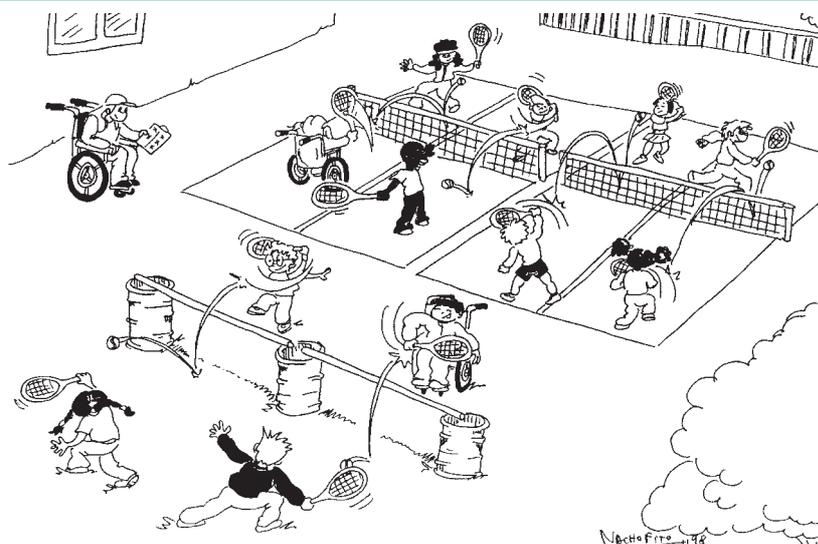


LESSON 6	Theme: HANDLING BALL AND RACKET, CO-OPERATION AND MOBILITY
Objective	To pass the ball from one racket to another without dropping it.
Warm up	<u>Simon says:</u> Team leader calls out signals as follows: "Simon says racket back on the forehand side, Simon says step in, Simon says swing and ready".
Games/Exercises	<u>Caterpillar:</u> Students in teams line up one behind another in a relay formation. There is a basket of balls at one end of the line and an empty basket at another end. First student on each team puts a ball on his racket and passes it to the next student's in line racket without bounce. Each ball is passed along the line of students until all balls are in the basket at the other end of the line.
Variations	Using a racket pass the ball back and forth, in pairs, in teams, etc.



2 ONE HOUR LESSONS FOR CHILDREN AGED 8-10 YEARS OLD

LESSON 5	Theme: PROPELLING, RECEIVING, MOVING AND CO-OPERATING: RALLYING OVER AN OBSTACLE AFTER A BOUNCE
Objective	To reinforce the concept that cooperation is essential for building successful exchanges between students which is facilitated by hitting the ball with an upward arc.
Warm up	<u>Circle Pursuit:</u> All students form a circle and number off from 1-4. Teacher calls a number from 1-4. Student with that number starts to run around the outside, teacher calls another number and student with that number runs around the circle and attempts to catch the runner in front of them. Teacher call different numbers.
Games/Exercises	<u>The never ending rally:</u> Students in pairs rally over the net letting the ball bounce. The pair with the most hits without misses after a given time is the winner.
Variations	Hit balls after bounce, aim for target, catch ball on racket before hitting it back.



LESSON 5	Theme: PROPELLING, RECEIVING, MOVING AND CO-OPERATING: RALLYING OVER AN OBSTACLE AFTER A BOUNCE
Objective	To reinforce the concept that cooperation is essential for building successful exchanges between students which is facilitated by hitting the ball with an upward arc.
Warm up	<u>Scarecrow tiggy:</u> Students spread out within boundaries. When play commences, students who are "it" attempt to tag as many students as possible. When tagged, students should stand still with legs astride and arms outstretched. Students can only be released when another student touches and "frees" them.
Games/Exercises	<u>The never ending rally:</u> Students in pairs rally over the net, before the bounce. The pair with the most number of hits without misses after a given time is the winner.
Variations	Balls before bounce. Juggle volley with or without obstacle, continuous and continuous with a target on each side, etc.

