

Tactical Teaching of Tennis

(From Griffin, L., Mitchell, S., & Oslin, J. (1997). *Teaching Sport Concepts and Skills: A Tactical Games Approach*. Champaign: Human Kinetics)

Level I Singles

1. Court awareness & creating up and back space: Using narrow (half lengthwise) courts, have a feeder near net, a hitter and retriever behind the feeder. Feeder feeds the ball to hitter in their "strike zone", hitter tries to hit the ball on the bounce: a) deep to baseline; b) short-in front of service line. Rotate - fielder-feeder-hitter-feeder.

Cues: racquet back, move to strike zone (ball at top of bounce), pivot side to target, step, swing through opposite shoulder elbow up; back to base; ready!

Game: Half court singles, ground stroke serve, alternating

Version 1: One And One (Keep Up). *What do you need to do to keep the rally going? Hit to partner's strike zone*

Version 2: One on One (half court singles). *What do you need to do to win the point? Hit to the spaces; Where are they? Front and back.*

Version 3: Backhand One and One (Keep Up)

Cues: swing through hitting shoulder, hit to partner's backhand

Version 4: One on one (half court singles)

2. Court awareness and creating side to side space. Using full court, have a feeder near net, a hitter and retriever behind the feeder. Feeder feeds the ball to hitter in their "strike zone", in corner, hitter tries to hit the ball on the bounce: a) down the line; b) cross court.

Cues: racquet back, move to strike zone (ball at top of bounce), strike ball in front of body (down the line), in front of body and early (cross court), back to base; ready (ready-jump)! Forehand and backhand practice.

Game: Half court singles, ground stroke serve, alternating

Version 1: One And One (Keep Up). 6 hits, new players on (rotating onto court). *What do you need to do to keep the rally going? Hit to partner's strike zone*

Version 2: One on One (full court singles). *What do you need to do to win the point? Hit to the spaces; Where are they? Front, back and sides.*

3. Winning points - approach shot. Game: Using narrow (half lengthwise) courts, have students play 4 point games. *What do you do for a short shot? Move up. Is it easier to keep moving up to net or go back after the shot? Keep moving up to net.*

Practice: have a feeder near net, a hitter and retriever behind the feeder. Other practice group goes in opposite direction. Feeder feeds the ball to hitter short, hitter tries to hit the ball on the bounce in last third of court (behind service line); Rotate - fielder-feeder-hitter-feeder.

Cues: move quickly to strike zone (ball at top of bounce), quick feet, ready-jump, pivot side to target, step, short swing, move up to net, ready!

Game: Half court singles, ground stroke serve, alternating

Version 1: One And One (Keep Up). *What do you need to do to keep the rally going? Hit to partner's strike zone*

Version 2: One on One (half court singles). *What do you need to do to win the point? Hit to the spaces; Where are they? Front and back.*

Version 3: Backhand One and One (Keep Up)

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Cues: swing through hitting shoulder

Version 4: One on one (half court singles)

4. Winning points/attack - volley. - see 3

- Use a similar process to the previous three activities. Start with a mini game, stop the action, break it down with questions (*When you are up at the net should you let the ball bounce? How far from the net should you be?*)

Practice: have a feeder near net, a hitter and retriever behind the feeder in same set up as 3, above. If there are enough tennis balls, give the feeder 4-6; if not, have the retriever send the ball back quickly each time (feeder needs 2 minimum).

Game 1: Half court singles, four points, can only score off volley

Game 2: Half court singles, regular scoring, try to win by attacking.

Variation: practice deep ground strokes to have player come up to net when they have forced their opponent deep.

5. Winning points/defense - lob. Follow a similar sequence to 3 and 4. The feeder for the practice part can be the net player.

NOTE: All the above practices and games are played with a bounce/serve or groundstroke feed to start the game/practice. Serve can be added later. For level II and III tennis practice and games using the tactical system, see Griffin, L., Mitchell, S., & Oslin, J. (1997). *Teaching Sport Concepts and Skills: A Tactical Games Approach*. Champaign: Human Kinetics.

Other sports included in this text: Badminton, basketball, golf, soccer, softball, and volleyball. Also includes 170 lesson plans, assessment, and implementation guidelines.