

Junior doubles development: an on-court progressive approach based on facts and stats

Michelangelo Dell'Edera, Luigi Bertino and Donato Campagnoli

ABSTRACT

Junior doubles is a discipline little developed and often little considered in the training programs of tennis coaches. The Italian Tennis Federation carried out a study aimed at assessing some parameters of doubles at junior level, and comparing them with those of professional tennis.

Key words: junior, doubles, court, scaling

Received: 2 May 2018

Accepted: 5 June 2018

Corresponding author:

Michelangelo Dell'Edera.

Email: m.delledera@libero.it

INTRODUCTION

Some statistical data was gathered through match analysis of doubles matches of 14&under players (boys and girls) during national training camps hosted on a regular basis by the Italian Tennis Federation at the National Tennis Center of Tirrenia, Italy (Centro di Preparazione Olimpica di Tirrenia). The matches analysed were played both on courts with "normal" dimensions (23,77 x 10,97 m) and on a reduced size for doubles singles court (23,77 x 8,23 m).

The analysis of these data highlighted that on the "normal" court, under 14&under players do not develop capabilities in offensive situations and, as a consequence, offensive skills because these conditions do not usually reward players going to the net, practicing the transition game or winning solutions; rather they encourage more defensive and conservative tactical-strategic solutions.

RESULTS

Let's start analysing the different tactical parameters.

In Figure 1 we can see, surprisingly, that the 1st serve percentage in junior doubles on the "normal" court is much higher (59%) than the one measured on the "singles" court (55%) and the one for ATP doubles (54%).

As a matter of fact, this first finding should not be surprising; it leads to the following conclusions: in junior doubles the server's tactical approach is generally conservative on a full court and this low risk level causes a high 1st serve percentage. Reducing the court width stimulates a more offensive attitude

from the server on the first serve which explains why obtained the data is closer to that of professional players.



Figure 1. 1st Serve Percentage and 2nd Serve Percentage of 14&under players on different court sizes vs. ATP players - Istituto Superiore Formazione, R. Lombardi.

In Figure 1 we can see, surprisingly, that the 1st serve percentage in junior doubles on the "normal" court is much higher (59%) than the one measured on the "singles" court (55%) and the one for ATP doubles (54%).

As a matter of fact, this first finding should not be surprising; it leads to the following conclusions: in junior doubles the server's tactical approach is generally conservative on a full court and this low risk level causes a high 1st serve percentage. Reducing the court width stimulates a more offensive attitude from the server on the first serve which explains why obtained the data is closer to that of professional players.

A lower 2nd serve percentage (80%) on the "singles" court probably indicates, in this case too, an increase in attempts to

take a risk, when compared to the “normal” court situation (85%).



Figure 2a and 2b. Winning Serves Percentage and Serve&Volley percentage of 14&under players on both court sizes vs ATP players - Istituto Superiore Formazione R. Lombardi.

Figure 2a shows the percentage of winning serves. The value measured on the “normal” court (6%) is much lower than the one on the “singles” court (12%). However the data of professional players remains very far above the others with 28%, perhaps due to the higher physical development of the players at this level.

The “Serve&Volley” percentage, figure 2b, also increases from the normal court to from 10 to 30%, tending towards the values of pro tennis players (57%).

Figure 2a and 2b show an increased tendency to search for offensive and definitive solutions with the serve considerably when the court width decreases.

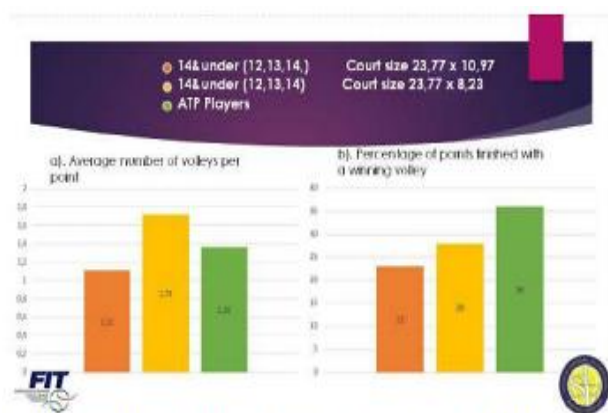


Figure 3a and 3b. Number of volleys/point – Percentage of points ended with a volley - Istituto Superiore Formazione R. Lombardi - FIT.

In Figure 3 we can see that the number of volleys played in each point is radically increased on the “singles” court (1.72) when compared to the normal court (1.11).

From the normal court to the smaller court, the percentage of points ending with a winning volley also increases, from 23% to 28%.

The statistical data of Figure 3 confirms the previous trends: the tactical choices and the game patterns become more offensive, getting closer to those of professionals when doubles is played on a court of reduced width.



Figure 4a and 4b. Percentage of volleys - Percentage of points won with a defensive shot - Istituto Superiore Formazione R. Lombardi - FIT.

The data shown in Figure 4a highlights net play. On the “singles” court the percentage rises to 23%, just like the professionals. In comparison, when doubles is played on the “normal” court, net play is only 6%. In figure 4b we can see that the percentage of points won with a defensive tactical action decreases with a smaller court (from 14% to 11%), and this is a consequence of the greater aggressive attitude of the players on the court, and there not being any passing down the alley options.

CONCLUSIONS

Our teaching proposal consists of changing both the size of the court, thus taking off the alleys, and changing the server's position, bringing her/him to serve inside the court.

These two modifications will stimulate girls and boys to naturally execute attack tactical patterns such as the “Serve&Volley”, the volley, the “poach volley” and all attacking patterns in general.

Tennis coaches will propose doubles drills using the “singles” court, with the server serving from an advanced position (1-2 m inside the baseline).

We allude thus to “dead ball” drills (including drills from the basket), “rally drills” or even drills simulating “match play”, exercises all in which young players might gradually develop all required skills to play high level doubles through specific technical-tactical progressions.

RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ACADEMY CONTENT (CLICK BELOW)



Copyright (c) 2018 Michelangelo Dell'Edera, Luigi Bertino and Donato Campagnoli



This text is under a [Creative Commons BY 4.0 license](#)

You are free to Share - copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format – and Adapt the content - remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially under the following terms:

Attribution: You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.

[CC BY 4.0 license terms summary](#) [CC BY 4.0 license terms](#)