



Tennis 10s: adapting coaching methodology to the rule change.

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ABSTRACT

This article reflects on the current need to adapt coaching methodology according to the implementation of the Tennis 10s rule change enforced by the ITF in January 2012. It discusses two fundamental aspects of the Tennis10s programme and justifies the importance of this methodological evolution focusing on the benefits for beginner players. Finally, it reflects on a key aspect: appropriately focused competition being a fundamental driver at the beginner level for the teaching – learning process.

Key words: Tennis 10s, Rules, Methodology, Initiation.

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INTRODUCTION

The modern model of teaching – a way of learning based on systemic training (Crespo, 2011), which consists of tactical, technical, physical and psychological development as a single and integrated concept from the very first lesson. This is a systemic training where tactics is the underlying impetus for training, and defines all aspects and content.

In order for this model to develop players optimally, a number of things are required of coaches. Enthusiasm on the part of the coaches is paramount as well as a will to provide players with better quality lessons that provide the appropriate intensity and challenge. Furthermore, considerations about the child's maturity and the demands of the game being placed on them is required.

TENNIS 10S

Tennis 10s, an ITF campaign (Miley, 2010) adopted by many countries all over the world, includes three clearly differentiated stages (Red, Orange and Green). The teaching – learning methods and contents were introduced by the ITF throughout previous years through different courses and seminars organized by national associations and clubs. Whilst these changes have been taking place, many coaches still find changing their coaching methodology a challenge. The present article argues that coaches only need to make some small adjustments to what they have been doing so far.

Red, Orange and Green stages consider the psychomotor development of the child. The targets set for each stage can only be achieved at a certain point of development and not before, so it is important to adapt the player's progression to an important element: INDIVIDUALITY.

This way, it will be possible to develop a player with the characteristics that modern game requires, particularly those that address the tactical aspects, the development of mobility, the technical development with strong and accurate strokes, and independence and confidence in the game among other variables and attributes (Barrell, 2010).

All these changes provide the coach with the guidelines he will need to put the child in a game situation on a permanent basis (Anderson, 2010), which will help him to make decisions and technical adjustments to the tactical decisions made by the child.

More interested readers are directed to the special CSSR issue on Tennis10s, published in August 2010.

ADVANTAGES

After expressing opinion on the programme, it is important to ask ourselves: How does this change help us as coaches?

There are, in the author's opinion, several reasons to justify the adoption of Tennis10s (ITF, 2009):

- To conceptualise the different stages in a clearer and more concise way.
- Clearly defined development goals at each stage are a great incentive for players and parents to know the objectives so as to focus their efforts on something that has previously been defined without having to rely on intuition.
- The coach will evaluate the players' development according to their needs.
- It helps parents to understand the education process and the stage of their children development.

Having clear didactic and methodological targets for each stage of the learning process will avoid exposing the children to education processes in which improvisation and intuition are the main protagonists (Cabral, 2010).

It is important to recognise that bad habits adopted during the first years of a child's tennis development can negatively impact expected progress as a child grows up (Newman, 2010), but, what is worse, this can also lead to a lack of motivation and quitting on the part of most beginners. Our only objective as a coach should be, and the author agrees with Crespo (2010), the education of a child who is happy with activities and classes, and that has an intelligent and complete understanding of the game at the same time.



TENNIS 10S AND COMPETITION ADAPTED FOR CHILDREN

It is vital to create a competition that is tailored for children in order to achieve a good future development and more and better tennis players (Declercq, 2010). The present article aligns itself with the statement: "Competition is not negative in itself, what is negative is its misinterpretation and incorrect application to competition".

Competition is natural for a child (Tennant, 2010), it reassures the player, it helps the player evolve, it improves character, self-esteem and social bonds whilst also teaching them how to interpret and accept rules. Thus, it is necessary to have a structure and an organization to help the child to feel closer to

the game (Procter, 2010). Competition is also another way to acquire new skills and is a systemic part of the education of a child (Elderton, 2010).

This is the time for all those involved in the training process of our tennis players (managers, coaches and parents) to adopt the tool that Tennis10s provides (adapted courts, balls and rules) and adapt the familiar adult game for use by children-taking into account the level of development of each child so that they can compete at the appropriate stage depending on their tennis level.



CONCLUSION

With the Play and Stay participation programme being stronger than ever, it has never been a better time to continue to work towards enlarging the tennis participation base (Cabral, 2010) at all levels. This includes not only players, parents and coaches, but also federations and the tennis industry as a whole (De Boer, 2010). Having said that, one must not focus only on initiation per se; and seek to improve the grass roots level having top performance in mind (McEnroe, 2010). To conclude the present argument in one statement: "More players- Better competition - Better psychomotor development"

Note: *Instances of 'he' refers to both male and female.*

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