



Serve Rally and Score... The ITF tennis Play and Stay Campaign and Tennis10s.

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ABSTRACT

The ITF launched a global campaign in 2007 aimed at increasing tennis participation worldwide. Tennis...Play and Stay centres around the slogan of "Serve Rally and Score" and seeks to promote tennis as easy, fun and healthy. Fundamental to the campaign is the use of slower red, orange and green balls by coaches working with starter players, which help to ensure that the first experience of tennis is a positive and dynamic one, involving playing the game (serving, rallying and scoring). The Play and Stay campaign led to the launch of Tennis10s in 2009.

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WHY WAS TENNIS...PLAY AND STAY INTRODUCED?

In 2002 the ITF Intro to Tennis Taskforce was established with the aim of looking at how tennis could be better introduced to starter players. The taskforce included experts in tennis participation from some of the world's top tennis federations and coaching bodies.

The Taskforce recognised that, whilst tennis is growing in many nations, some of the more established nations are facing challenges related to participation resulting primarily from lifestyle changes that have occurred. The key finding was that our sport seems to be good at attracting people but is not as good at retaining them. The taskforce saw the need to adapt the sport to the needs of the customer, the starter player, and to agree a common position related to starter tennis.

The key messages of the Tennis...Play and Stay campaign are:

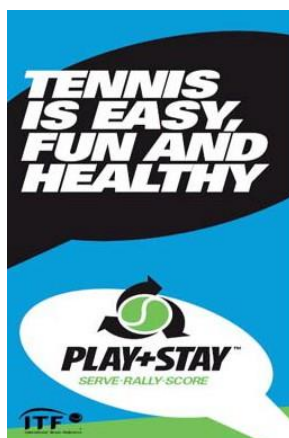
- Tennis is easy ...when coaches working with starter players use slower red, orange or green balls
- Tennis is fun...when starter players serve, rally and score from the first lesson
- Tennis competition can be fun...and formats and scoring systems exist to suit all lifestyles
- Tennis is healthy...research conducted in 2006 by the ITF and published in the British Journal of Sports medicine supports this
- Tennis is a sport for all and all players should have a rating which helps them to find players of a similar level to play with

The ball is key!

Using the right ball with starter players is crucial to player retention. There is no doubt that the slower balls give players more time and control and make it easier for them to rally. Yet when the campaign started it was estimated that less than an estimated 10% of coaches worldwide were using slower balls with starter players. That is why the promotion of the slower balls to coaches is a key element of Tennis...Play and Stay and Tennis 10s.

Slower Balls, Smaller courts, Better Juniors!

The slower balls are not just important for developing starter players; high level juniors benefit as the balls help them to more



easily develop efficient technique and allow them to implement more advanced tactics than could not be performed using a normal ball on a full court.

Adults....Play tennis fast!

Some of the major nations, including France, have had a lot of success with the slower balls in introducing tennis to adults and they are a major focus of Play and Stay. Just like children, if adults cannot serve, rally and score on a full court with a regular ball – their coach should use a ball where they can.

Coaching players with disabilities

Slower balls can be most helpful when coaching players with disabilities and can dramatically increase their enjoyment and success in tennis, see Mark Bullock’s article later that tackles tennis for 10 and under players with disabilities.

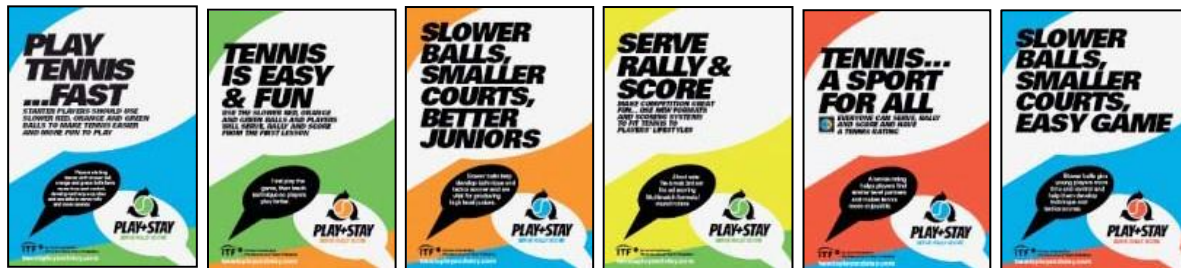
What about Technique?

Some coaches ask where technique fits in when the emphasis is placed on getting starter players to serve, rally and score

from the first lesson. The answer is that technique is still very important and once coaches have used the slower balls to give players the taste of playing tennis, they should then look to give the players relevant technical (and tactical) instruction that can then help them to serve, rally and score more effectively. This is in effect the simple definition of the Game Based Approach, which is sometimes misunderstood by tennis coaches.

The Game based approach

The game based approach is fundamental to the Play and Stay campaign. This is the foundation of all coaching at all levels. Whether the coach is working with starter players or with advanced players all instruction should relate to helping the players to better play the game. All instruction given should be relevant to helping the player to implement tactics. In simple play and Stay language the game based approach can be defined as “Serve rally and score....and then give relevant instruction (Technical, tactical, physical or mental) to help the player to serve rally and score more effectively!”



STAGE	AGE	BALL	COURT	RACKET *(Dependent on the size of the player)	SCORING OPTIONS
tennis 10s	5-8 years	 (Foam or Felt) 75% slower than a yellow ball	 11-12m (36-39ft) x 5-6m (16-19ft) Net Height: 80-83.8cm (31.5-33in)	Up to 23" (43-58cm)*	1 x tiebreak to 7 or 10 Best of 3 tiebreaks to 7 1 x short set to 4 Timed Matches
tennis 10s	8-10 years	 50% slower than a yellow ball	 18m (60ft) x 6.5-8.23m (21-27ft) Net Height: 80-91cm (31.5-36in)	23-25" (58-63cm)*	Best of 3 tiebreaks to 7 1 x short set to 4
tennis 10s	9-10 years	 25% slower than a yellow ball	 Full Size Court	25-26" (63-66cm)*	1 x short set to 4 Best of 3 short sets to 4 (3rd set as match tiebreak)
tennis	11 years and over	 Yellow Ball	 Full Size Court	26-29" (66-73.7cm)*	Any scoring system within the Rules of Tennis

What is Tennis10s?

Tennis10s is tennis for 10 and under players played with one of the slower red, orange or green balls. Tennis10s was introduced to give formal guidance on the use of the different red, orange and green balls and courts with competition for 10 and under players (see Table).

At the ITF AGM in 2010, the ITF will ask member nations to vote on a rule that will mean that only slower red, orange, or green balls may be used in official competition at 10 and under, and that yellow ball may not be used. The ITF will seek to introduce this rule from 2012, giving nations time to adapt to the rule where necessary. At present although many players use the slower balls in training, competition is usually played with the regular yellow ball which makes little sense. Once the competitions are using the slower balls, the coaches will all of course have to use the balls in training.

Is it more difficult for coaches to organise the lesson using different balls and courts sizes?

Some coaches are concerned that the logistics of using different balls and court sizes will make their lessons more complicated to organise. However learner centred coaching means doing the right thing for the student....not doing what is easiest for the coach! It does require more organisation but the smaller courts can be set up very quickly by using throw down lines, more players can be organised to play on each full tennis court and the slower balls last longer than normal balls. So there are many advantages in using slower balls and smaller courts, including the most important ones of a more positive and dynamic first experience for the starter players and increased retention by making the game easier and more fun.

SUMMARY

The overall reaction to the campaign and to the launch of Tennis10s has been overwhelmingly positive. The major nations have been very supportive of the proposed rule change for 10 and under competition and the ITF will work with all federations to help ensure the rule can be implemented with success.

Tennis 10s also has the committed support of the ATP and WTA tours with some of the top players including Federer, Nadal, Stosur and Jankovic all recording video messages in support of Tennis10s.

To back up the campaign the ITF has produced a range of promotional material and coaching tools in a number of different languages all branded with the Tennis...Play and Stay and Tennis10s logo. To view these materials and for other important information related to Tennis...Play and Stay readers

should go to www.tennisplayandstay.com or www.tennis10s.com.

The ITF believe that the launch of Tennis...Play and Stay and Tennis10s has had big impact on tennis worldwide and we hope that coaches will recognise and support the changes that these 2 projects have brought to how the game is coached for starter players and for 10 and under players

Remember... Tennis coaching is not a sport. Tennis is the sport! Our job as coaches is not simply to teach technique. Our main role is to organise people to play tennis so that they experience the best part of tennis...serving, rallying and scoring!. Let's use the slower balls to ensure that as many people as possible have the chance to Serve, Rally and Score and to enjoy and stay playing our great sport!

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RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ACADEMY CONTENT (CLICK BELOW)



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