**10 years Tennis Play and Stay: A review on communicating and teaching tennis from (pre)school to advanced ages in Germany**

Philipp Born, Hans-Peter Born, Rüdiger Bornemann, Alexander Jakubec and Tobias Vogt

German University of Sport Cologne, Germany

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| ABSTRACT  Germany has a long tradition of a well-developed coaches’ education and always used methodological approaches to teach and learn tennis. The implementation of the Tennis Play and Stay campaign by the ITF in 2007 provided additional boosts to existing programs and brought new ideas and a superordinate system to German tennis. Despite some minor difficulties the P&S campaign was and is successful in Germany.. |  | **Key words:** Tennis Play and Stay; Germany; campaigns; programs and initiatives  **Received**: 10 Feb 2017 **Acepted**: 08 Apr 2017 **Corresponding author:** Philipp Born, German University of Sport Cologne, Germany  Email: [p.born@dshs-koeln.de](mailto:p.born@dshs-koeln.de) |

INTRODUCTION

Germany has always used methodological approaches to teach and learn tennis. Moreover, there is a long tradition of a well-developed coaches’ education. The implementation of the Tennis Play and Stay campaign by the ITF in 2007 provided additional boosts to existing programs.

HISTORY

Since 1970, the German Tennis Federation (DTB) initialized several school tennis programs as well as advancing the cooperation between schools and clubs. Additionally, Schönborn et al. (1970) introduced the first methodological approaches to teach tennis, recommending that children should start playing tennis with small wooden boards, the so called ‘Holzbrett-Tennis’. Based on these ideas, the commission for school tennis published a series of textbooks (‘Lehrpläne des DTB’ u.a. Brinker, W. & Dreibholz, K., 1975), primarily including technique-oriented instructions. Bornemann (1977) published the first game-oriented theory; however, at that time only a few coaches, mainly from universities, applied this game-oriented approach.

Subsequently, since the 1980s, there have been several initiatives and programs regarding children`s tennis, adapted tennis equipment (‘ST-Ball’) and ways to teach and learn tennis more effectively (‘Kleinfeldtennis’). The regional association of Württemberg was the first to start an initiative to recruit talented children into playing tennis in the late 1980s. Following that initiative, the first regional tournaments on smaller courts using adapted materials and additional motor skill games were organized and are still running to date (‘Kleinfeld-Championat’).

Initiatives like the ‘DTB-Talentcup’, a team competition for the best players aged 11 years and under as well as the ‘Street Tennis’ initiative have been established years before the implementation of the Play and Stay campaign in 2007 and are still around. However, all these programs and initiatives were mostly regional with no changes in the rules of tennis regarding children`s competition.

IMPLEMENTATION OF PLAY & STAY

In addition to all already existing programs, the Tennis Play and Stay campaign brought new ideas as well as a superordinate and holistic system of training methods, court and racket sizes, different ball types and tournaments to Germany. After the launch of the campaign in 2007 the DTB and it’s regional associations implemented Play and Stay into their coaches’ education and coaches development programs on all levels as well as into the so called ‘Online Campus’, the official online coaching platform of the DTB. With this, the gameoriented approach receveived a boost for introducing Tennis. Today, Tennis Play and Stay is the basic concept and talent development program of most of the German tennis clubs to

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recruit new members. Most of the beginners start with either Tennis10s, Cardio Tennis, Tennis Xpress or other Tennis Play and Stay related programs. In particular the stage 1 green ball has a strong acceptance in the area of adult and adolescent beginners.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS**

CAMPAIGNS AND INITIATIVES

The TennisPlay and Stay initiatives ‘Tennis10s’ and ‘Cardio Tennis’ have been a part of German tennis since 2007. In 2014 the ‘Tennis Xpress’ manual was translated into German and has been part of the coaches’ education ever since. Beside these programs the DTB, particularly the ‘Play and Stay taskforce’, and its regional associations have started several initiatives and programs based on the Play & Stay campaign.

Play & Stay congress 2010

The first German Tennis Play and Stay congress was held in Leipzig in 2010 to serve the wider distribution of the campaign in Germany. The title was ‘Spielend in die Zukunft’, which has the double meaning ‘effortlessly into the future’ as well as ‘playing into the future’. The congress aimed to address all tennis coaches, interested representatives from the regional tennis associations and clubs as well as teachers who introduce tennis in schools.

Competition

Traditionally, German tennis is based on and driven by the tennis clubs and the club team matches organized by the regional associations. In these, the club teams play against each other in a league system. The teams consist of six (or sometimes four) players, playing six (or four) singles as well as three (or two) doubles. Before the Tennis Play and Stay campaign these club team matches have been played in all age groups, from children to seniors. The Play and Stay campaign brought team competitions also for the red, orange and green court. These matches are played either in boys/girls only teams or in mixed teams. In addition to the singles and doubles matches different motor skill games are part of the competition (mandatory in some regions).

Besides the club team matches the number of competitions in Germany increased significantly after the implementation of the Tennis Play and Stay campaign in 2007. Not only are there more normal single tournaments for under 10 years old children, there are also regional tournament series for red, orange and green court players which conclude in a regional Masters tournament held at the end of each summer season. For two years there has also been a national Masters during the winter season which was, however, cancelled due to many regional associations concerns of not wanting a national championship at that age. One of the Play and Stay mottos ‘competition runs the sport’ was also a decisive element to establish the idea of Tennis Play and Stay in Germany.

International tennis number = ‘Leistungsklassen’

Based on the idea of the International Tennis Number (ITN), a rating system for players of all performance classes, the DTB developed a rating system called ‘Leistungsklassen’ (LK) which can be translated as performance classes. Further to the already existing german ranking, which was only significant to the advanced and high performance players in Germany, the LK gave a number to every player in Germany who is either competing in club team matches or tournaments or both. Starting with LK 1 (all the players with a national German ranking) up to LK 23 all players were rated. By winning against equal or better rated players, one may improve their LK. The system helped further increasing the number of competitions as well as competing players in all ages and of all levels, particularly in mass sport tennis (‘Breitensport’).

‘Tennis badge’ (‘Tennis Sportabzeichen’)

Existing since 1988, the DTB relaunched the ‘tennis badge’ in 2016 as part of the Play and Stay campaign in Germany. Based on the Tennis Play & Stay concept, the ‘tennis badge’ is a tennis-specific test in which players of all ages and levels may participate to see how well they perform in different tasks of the tennis game.

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The test is designed to be taken in all four stages of the Tennis Play and Stay concept (red, orange, green, yellow) and a successful completion is rewarded with bronze, silver or gold certificates and/or medals. The test contains four tennis-specific tasks which cover technical, tactical as well as coordinative and physical parts of the tennis game. The different tasks are rewarded with points which are eventually added to determine the achieved level and certificate.

‘Germany plays tennis’ (‘Deutschland spielt Tennis’)

Since 2007, German Tennis clubs begin every summer season with an annual nationwide event called ‘Germany plays Tennis’. On this day several events are held in tennis clubs to kick off the summer season, promoting tennis in Germany to attract more and new people to play tennis.

Talentinos

‘Talentinos’ is a training and marketing concept based on the Tennis Play and Stay campaign. The concept includes a so called ‘ball school’ for children between 4 and 6 years of age. This ‘ball school’ is divided into 3 stages, based on the idea of ‘basic training’ (‘Grundlagentraining’) as a basic element in talent development of german tennis addressing a wider motor skill acquisition before an early specialization in tennis. After the ‘ball school’ the ‘Talentinos’ concept continues with 3 stages of Play and Stay red, orange and green.

CHALLENGES

The DTB is divided into 18 regional associations that are in charge of the tennis development within their region. This is the main reason why there are still some different approaches within Germany regarding Play and Stay. One example is the width of the orange court. Most of the regional associations play their orange-court competitions on an 18m x 8.23m court (the width of the normal court). But there are also regions that play on an 18m x 6.40m court. This can sometimes confuse players when playing tournaments in different regions.

Although the idea of Play and Stay and its programs and initiatives are promoted all over Germany and are part of every coaches’ education program, there are still coaches who are not using the adapted material and who are not following the recommendations. The main reason for that may be additional costs and effort that come with practicing Play and Stay.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Play and Stay campaign in 2007 brought new ideas and a superordinate system to german tennis. Having a long and successful history of tennis participation programs, the DTB included their existing programs into the Play and Stay campaign, starting innovative and new programs to attract more people to play tennis. Despite some minor difficulties the Play and Stay campaign was and is successful in Germany.

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