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DRILLING FOR THE GAME-BASED APPROACH - "MIND MAP" CHART

SITUATION



TRAINING

SITUATION TRAINING

- TACTICAL VS TECHNICAL PLANNING/DRILLING
- SITUATION TRAINING FRAMEWORK
- SELECTING SITUATIONS
- CREATING SITUATION TRAINING DRILLS

S.M.A.R.T.

GOAL SETTING

(ENSURING QUALITY REPETITION)

- SPECIFIC
- MEASURABLE
- AGREED
- REALISTIC
- TIMED

DRILL STRUCTURE

- INTRODUCE THE TACTIC
 - Situation
 - Response
- HIGHLIGHT A SKILL
 - Visually
 - Verbally
 - Kinesthetically
- SET-UP A DRILL
 - Objective
 - Court Management
 - Feeding
- MANAGE THE DRILL
 - Fun
 - Safety
 - Correct drill/skill

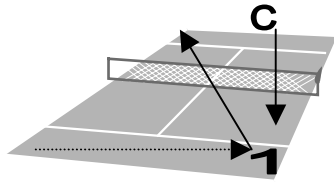
DECISION-MAKING DRILLING

- DECISION-MAKING RESEARCH
 - "Unseen" skills
- "OPEN" AND "CLOSED" DRILLING
- DECISION-MAKING FACTORS
 - Ball-based decisions
 - Opponent-based decisions
 - Player-based decisions
- MODIFYING THE BASIC DRILL STRUCTURE

FEEDING

(CREATING MAXIMUM REPETITION AND REALISTIC SITUATIONS THROUGH FEEDING)

- FEEDING "LADDER"
- RE-CREATING REALISTIC SITUATIONS



"EVOLVING" THE DRILL

See how the information in each section impacts and changes this typical drill

Where we left off after the last section...

Point Situation & Shot Situation defined:

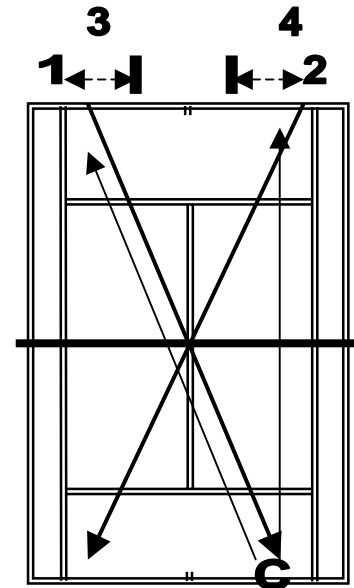
"Building": Player and opponent in a baseline to baseline neutral exchange

S.M.A.R.T. Goals:

Specific Shot received and sent. Measuring the ball sent and it's 'neutral' effect. Building agreement with students. Adding realistic feeding position, player position (a little back from the baseline for a rally), amount of repetitions (a sequence of 4 rather than 1), and recovery. Having 4 attempts before rotating.

Drill Structure:

Introducing the Baseline crosscourt Rally Tactic, emphasizing the low to high swing path for height control, Setting up the Drill and Managing the Drill.



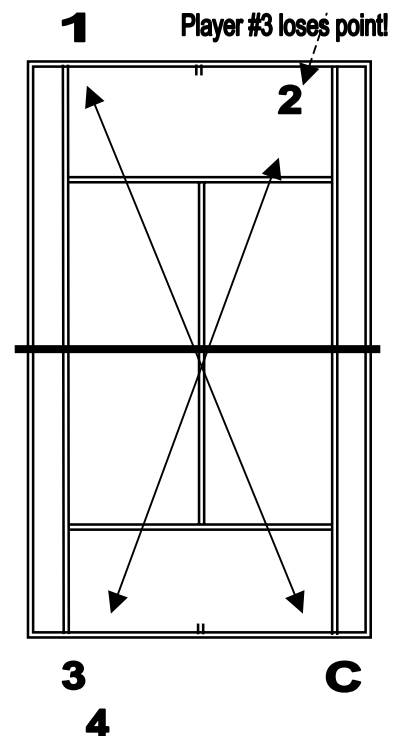
Adding FEEDING

We have already set-up feeding for this drill however, other feeding options will allow for more possible variations.

Space & Time: If the coach continues to **Basket Feed**, it is critical to re-create the same ball the player would typically receive at their level of play. The coach should also feed at intervals that re-create the rhythm and timing of a rally.

Feeding Ladder: Basket feeding isn't the only option for this drill. It could be progressed to more **Live Ball** (players rally with each other) or **Point Play** situations:

- **Simulated Point Play:** Play points crosscourt to crosscourt only (half court, two games at once) starting with the Context. Coach can play in or not. Players lose point if opponent can move into the court and make a good shot back (since they failed to keep the opponent neutral).
- **Point Play:** Start by feeding the crosscourt and play out the point full court. Players play one point starting with the forehand crosscourt exchange, one to the backhand exchange and then rotate out.



DECISION-MAKING IN DRILLS

One of the most critical and practical aspects of Situation Training involves training decision-making. It is not possible to fully train a player tactically without decision-making since the definition of tactics *is* decision-making. The Situation Training presented so far in this manual is not fully tactical, it is actually technical training set in a tactical context. This is far more effective than pure technical training but including decision-making makes the training fully tactical.

It is common to observe coaches at tournaments commenting on their players not playing smart and making bad decisions. When asked, "How do you train their decision-making?" most coaches respond with a blank stare. Contrary to popular belief, and what the TV commentators claim, it is not a skill that players, "Are just born with". Decision-making is a very trainable skill if one knows how.

There are a few questions that coaches need answers to before they launch into training decision-making. "*Why is decision-making important?*" will be answered in the first section, "**Decision-making Research**". "*How much decision-making is required?*" will be covered in section 2, "**Open and Closed Drills**". "*Which decisions should I train?*" is answered in section 3, "**Decision-making factors**". Finally, "*What structure do I use?*" will be covered in section 4, "**Modifying the basic Drill Structure**".

1. DECISION-MAKING RESEARCH

Understanding the research and information behind decision-making helps coaches see the importance of decision-making and integrate decision-making into their drilling. The first step is to understand the types of practice available and the advantages and disadvantages of each.

- **Blocked Practice:** Repeating only one skill (e.g. power putaway volley when receiving a high ball at net). It usually involves high repetition of skills in a predictable and pre-set situation. The coach determines where, when, and how to hit the ball.
- **Variable Practice:** Practicing variations of a skill (e.g. power putaway volley when receiving the high ball, angled precision volley when receiving a low volley).
- **Random Practice:** Combining several skills in simulated game-like situations.

The most common method used to train skills is 'Blocked' repetition. An example of a Blocked repetition Live ball drill in tennis would be two players at the baseline, one who must hit down-the-lines, and one who must hit crosscourts. Another example would be a coach basket feeding to a player who hits only forehand volleys crosscourt. In Blocked repetition drills, little emphasis is placed on *when* to select skills.

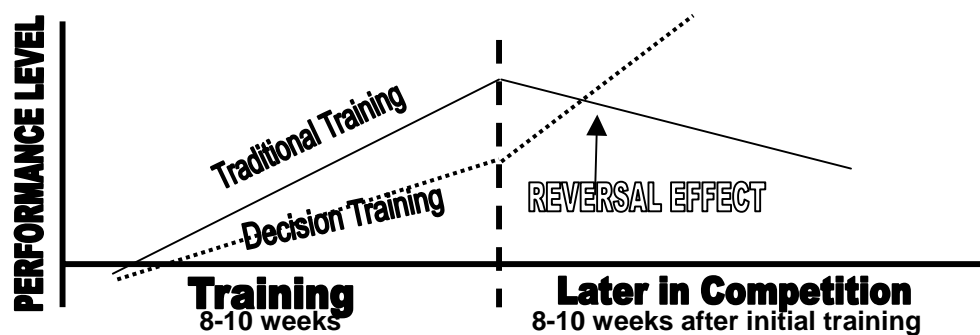
Interesting findings in current motor skill research reveals why the use of Blocked practice is so prevalent. Studies by leading motor skill researchers demonstrated that subjects trained using the traditional method of Blocked practice with lots of immediate technical feedback by the coach and 'part to whole', 'simple to complex' drills, achieved high levels of immediate success (Christina & Bjork, 1991; Schmidt & Bjork, 1992; Lee, Swinnen & Serrien, 1994).

What coach would not be encouraged by immediate success of a skill? The initial studies however, were conducted over short periods of time (8-12 weeks). Longer-term studies (months) found that these same subject's skills broke down under competitive pressure (Hall, Domingues, Cavazos, 1994). They were unable to sustain the skill levels achieved in training during match play.

A second group was trained using a Situation Training system that prioritized tactical decision-making. The coach used questions, stressed tactics, and provided lots of variability in skills (didn't practice drills with 100% pre-set decisions). This group preformed poorly for the first 8-12 weeks. After that period, they passed the first group in skill performance in competition. This is called, "the reversal effect."

This type of training *initially looks inferior* but yields better results long term. Coaches need to train cognitive skills so that players can select and execute appropriate skills under competitive pressure.

Figure 20: "The reversal effect"



When drills are tactical situation based and use random/variable practice, players learn decision-making by getting repetition on making specific decisions. The player has the constant challenge of mental effort and selecting options. Drills in which the coach sets where, how, and when to hit, rob the player of learning to make those decisions. Just like a stroke, if the only time they practice decision-making is in a match, it will develop very slowly. In addition, the 'reality gap' between practice and match play will hinder integrating skills into match play.

A) "UNSEEN" SKILLS:

Decision-making drilling is a new process coaches can use to give their players an edge. As the modern game of tennis gets faster, these "unseen" skills must be developed accordingly. Below are some "cognitive" skills that are, for the most part, left underdeveloped by standard drilling techniques:

- **Attention:** Selectively focusing attention on the correct details needed to select and perform the tactic while ignoring details not relevant to the task at hand. The ability to constantly re-focus for the duration of a match.
- **Anticipation:** Reading the correct cues early to make time for a higher quality response.
- **Problem Solving:** Assessing the situation and devising the best solution.



DRILL: Finishing volley
POINT SITUATION: "Finish" (also "Stay-in") at Net with volley
SHOT SITUATION: "Putaway" volley when receiving various height of balls

TACTIC

Player comes to the net after putting the opponent in trouble. They receive a medium paced ball (received at various heights) and finish the point with a volley.

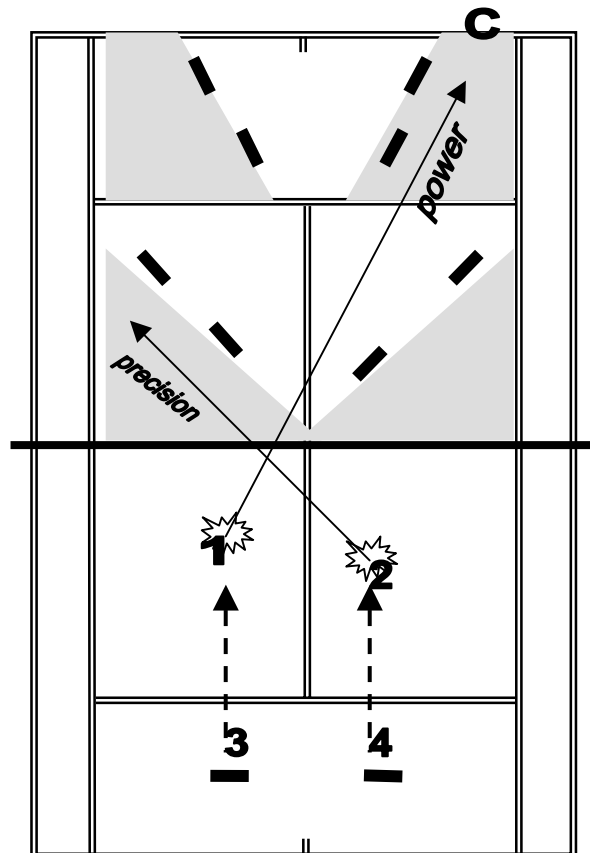
DESCRIPTION (Basket feeding)

Players start at $\frac{3}{4}$ court and shadow swing a down-the-line approach shot. They move to the net where coach feeds randomly either a high volley (one received above waist level), or a low volley (received below the level of the net). Hit high volleys to 'power' target areas, low volleys to 'precision' areas. Rotate to end of opposite line after each turn. Players on backhand side practice backhands, forehand side practices forehands.

Note: One shot per turn helps keep the psychological 'pressure' of finishing the point.

Scoring:

One point for every shot landing in target area. Power volleys must hit the wall before the second bounce (score as individuals or team).



KEY POINTS:

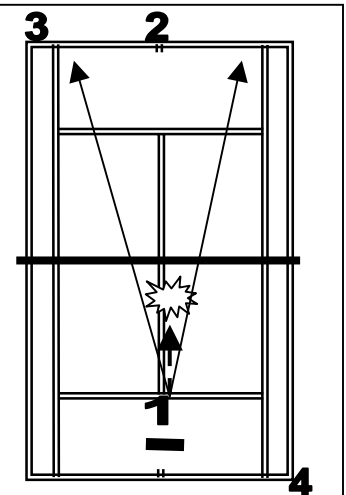
- 'Stay calm' attitude
- Decision-making on high & low options
- High ball = more of a 'punching action'
- Low ball = more of a 'catching' action
- Keep moving until a good impact point is created (don't stop to volley)
- Recover even on a winner

VARIATION: (Point-play)

1 player is the 'volley dominator'. The other players are challengers. Dominator starts at $\frac{3}{4}$ court (marker), hits a ball to either corner (make the opponent stretch) and goes to net. Defending player tries to pass (no lobs allowed). Finishing player goes for a winning volley. Play out the point.

Scoring:

Dominator must win on the volley, or get replaced by the challenger.





What coaches are saying about “Situation Training: Drilling for the Game-based approach”:

“Wayne has produced an extremely informative and practical coaching resource that shows you how to create practice environments that closely resemble match play and drills that focus on the needs of players. This is a coaching ‘self-study’ workbook that challenges all of us to move forward in our coaching”.

Butch Staples

PTR Master Professional. PTR Clinician & National Tester. USTA RCW Trainer. USPTA Professional I. Former Chairman Tennis Canada Coaches & Instructors Development Committee. Former Van Der Meer TennisUniversity Course Conductor

“My legacy to Canadian coaches after leaving to become a Performance Leader for the LTA in the UK, was the mentoring of Wayne Elderton. Wayne is the best at learning, implementing, and integrating all the concepts of cutting edge methodologies and writing about them in practical and systematic ways. I recommend his manuals for any coach who is serious about professionally developing and improving their coaching”.

Louis Cayer

LTA Performance and Doubles Team Leader. Louis works with the British Davis and Fed Cup Squads and was former Head National Coach and Master Course Facilitator for Coaching Certification in Canada.

“Wayne's coaching manual is arguably one of the finest written in a long time. You will have a wonderful paradigm shift and will experience an exponential growth as a coach. Elderton's GBA and situational methodology is presented in logical progressions and, most importantly, can be successfully implemented right away. Wayne is a credit to our teaching industry.”

Ajay Pant

Midtown National Tennis Director. PTR Master Professional. USPTA Professional 1. USTA RCW Master Trainer. Cardio Tennis and Wilson Speakers Team

“If you had only one manual to choose from to use as a tennis coach this would be it. Coaches of all levels will benefit by this organized approach to integrating Game-based drills into their training programs. Once again, Wayne Elderton proves he is ahead of the tennis coaching curve!”

Scott A. Biron

PTR teaching professional and a USA Tennis Development Coach. Considered an expert on school tennis programs. Member of the USTA Youth Community Committee, a USA Tennis New England Board Member and the PTR NE President.

“Wayne is truly on the cutting edge with his teaching concepts. This recent publication provides great depth and important tools for developing players from a tactical foundation and with much greater proficiency.”

Jason Jamison

Manager of Development Coaching, USTA Southwest Section
USTA National RCW Trainer

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