

MORE THAN JUST THE DRILLS: THINK BEFORE YOU FEED THE BALL!

Miguel Crespo
International Tennis Federation

INTRODUCTION

- Tennis is a game of emergencies.
- Tennis is dynamic, complex, interacting, chaotic...system.

Learning the game / skill acquisition in tennis

- Search for a stable and functional state of co-ordination during an activity that has a goal
- Defined by several variables or **constraints.** (Davids et al., 2008):

Constraints can be:

- **Individual**
- **Environmental**
- **Task**

Improvement →
Overcome the
constraints of the
task.

**Adapt to
changing
constraints →
problem →
self-organisation**

Variability

- Each player produces a unique solution to the problem
- Allows for a flexible adaptation to the constraints of a dynamic environment such as tennis play.

Practice

- Selection of the adequate behaviours / solutions to the task constraints

Retention

- More likely to happen if skills have been acquired across a range of different constraints.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

France

- The strength of a Grand Slam nation
- Importance of coach education

Russia

- Learning the basic fundamentals
- Importance of technique

Argentina

- The drive of the individual
- Facing adversity efficiently

Spain

- Joint effort Federation / Academies / Clubs
- Importance of mentality

Technique

- Common optimal co-ordination patterns do not exist
- Each time a skill is performed it should adapt to subtle differences

Learning

- Encourage change and adaptation
- Develop optimal individual technique...not idealised technique
- Goal → discover a relevant movement solution

Teaching

- Facilitating independent learning
- Search, discovery and use of constraints in game play
- Emphasise implicit vs explicit instruction

Feedback focus

- External (i.e. ball) better than internal (i.e. body parts)
- Effects of actions better than antecedents of actions

Drills

- They are not special
- Top coaches have favourite drills and repeat / vary them
- Manipulate game conditions to facilitate the process for the player to achieve the goal

WHAT YOU DO
VS.
HOW YOU DO IT

KEY COMPONENTS AND CONTENTS OF QUALITY DRILLS

- Quality
- Commitment player
/ coach

Intensity: In and out drill (Alvarez / Sánchez)

Acceleration: Hand feed drill (Porta)

Movement: Inside out FH drill (Alvariano)

Footwork: Groundstrokes reaction drill (Bruguera)

100% effort: 2 vs 1 killer drill (Ferrero)

Angles: FH & BH baseline angle drill (Alvariano)

Confidence: 2nd serve drill (Pizza)

Good habits: Serve with basket in front drill (Ferrero)

Anticipation: Service line return drill (Giffenig)

Weakness: High BH return progression drill (López)

Agility: Mid court 2 v 1 half volley drill (Margets)

Reaction: Surprise volley drill (Andrade)

Motivation: Drive volley drill (Roig)

CONCLUSION

- Adapt practice / drills to players intrinsic dynamics by changing:
 - Rules
 - Space / zones
 - Equipment

CONCLUSION

- Help players explore key areas of task dynamics
- The more experienced the player, the more the coach should minimise prescriptive, verbal communication / feedback during drills