

**Session 1 (1 hour):**

**Coaching methodology for tactical decision making at 10 & Under Green level**

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**1. Introduction**

- a. The fallacy of tactics-technique-physical-mental
- b. Players are always making decisions!
- c. The coach's task is to assist them in making them faster and better
- d. This is a process that it takes years

**2. Tactical questions:**

- a. How do I win points?
- b. How do I lose points?
- c. What adjustments can I make to win more points?
- d. What adjustments can I make to lose fewer points?
- e. How can I adjust to put this equation to my favour?
- f. You know all the answers but you are still losing, so you need a plan B. What is your plan B?
- g. How good am I to impose my game to the one of the opponent?
- h. How good am I to adjust my game to the game of the opponent?

**3. Tactical concepts:**

- a. Observing:
  - i. Reading the ball:
    1. Direction
    2. Height
    3. Depth
    4. Effect
    5. Power
  - ii. Reading the position:
    1. My position
    2. My opponent's
- b. Reflecting – so what does this mean to me?
  - i. Patterns that are often seen
  - ii. Patterns that are never seen
  - iii. Patterns that I can implement
  - iv. Patterns that I cannot implement

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- c. Deciding – so what am I going to do?
  - i. Stay neutral
  - ii. Defend
  - iii. Attack - dictate
  - iv. Counter-attack
- d. Evaluating:
  - i. Learning from wins
  - ii. Learning from loses
- e. Developing:
  - i. Technique through tactics
  - ii. Condition through tactics
  - iii. Mentality through tactics

**4. Baseline game**

- a. Rally
- b. Using the space:
  - i. Playing to the open court
  - ii. Playing behind the opponent
  - iii. Playing to the opponent!
- c. Using the speed
- d. Using the memory – memorizing tactical patterns
- e. Following the path of the ball
- f. Positioning behind the ball
- g. Positioning on court
- h. Covering the court
- i. Developing rhythm
- j. Using variety
- k. Automation of tactical responses
- l. Anticipating – reading the ball
- m. Balance between game speed and errors
- n. Adapting to different:
  - i. Surfaces
  - ii. Opponents:
    - 1. Lefty

2. Better BH than FH

<b>General goal</b>	To develop the basic tactical concepts of the game including consistency, height, direction and depth.
<b>Consistency</b>	Tennis' foremost tactical goal: it should be learned as soon as possible. Once players are able to contact the ball, coaches should begin to introduce consistency drills (including rallying between the coach and player) where players aim to pass the ball over the net 5, 10, 15, 20 times without missing.
<b>Height</b>	Beginners use height to keep opponents in the back court or to pass them when they are at the net. Players need to therefore learn to hit balls to and at varying heights. Player-coach rallies whereby players alternate hitting balls to the feet, body and over the head of the coach, or variations thereof, are simple but effective in this regard.
<b>Direction</b>	Basket or rally drills can assist beginner players to learn to: Direct the ball where they want to (i.e. to the open court). Return the ball to the same spot and direct the ball to the opposite side. Change directions (i.e. one shot to the forehand side and the next shot to the backhand side). Play to one side only (i.e. four balls in a row to the backhand side). Play "wrong-foot" (i.e. one ball to the forehand and two balls in a row to the backhand).
<b>Depth</b>	The capacity to understand and use depth should complete the first stage of beginner players' tactical development. Basket or rally drills, where coaches ask players to respond to and hit balls so that they land in the different zones of the court, are great for getting beginner players familiar with the concept of depth.

<b>General goal</b>	To improve the players' use of power, spin, tempo and variety to achieve specific tactical goals.
<b>Power</b>	As players develop, they are able to hit more powerful shots (technical goal), yet may fail to use this power in appropriate ways (tactical goal). The tactical uses of power are: To reduce the time available for opponents to respond. To attack. To set up points or win them outright. To change the rhythm of point play. Through basket drills and rallies with the coach, players can improve their ability to recognise opportunities to use power appropriately. Above all, the coach should encourage players to: Hit the ball hard when they are in excellent positions to do so.
<b>Spin</b>	In rallying with the coach or other players, individuals can hone the appropriateness with which they use spin. In general, they can look to apply different spins according to the height of the oncoming ball: High balls (topspin). Easy low balls (topspin). Difficult low balls (slice). Medium-high balls (flat).
<b>Tempo</b>	Players can change tempo with the following goals in mind: Upset the opponent's rhythm. Variety and surprise. Reduce the time available for opponents to respond. Rallies between players or with the coach, where players vary their stroke rhythm are the best ways for players to practice the tactical use of tempo.
<b>Variety</b>	Having learned to use power, spin and tempo, players can also begin to combine them to achieve other tactical goals or to experiment with other styles of play. For example, a simple and appropriate drill to foster this capacity is to ask players to rally with the coach but not hit any two consecutive shots in the same way.

**Session 2 (1 hour):**

**Developing decision making on the serve and return for U12 and U14 players.**

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**1. Tactical training tips for serve and return:**

- a. Practice them together
- b. Organise competitions
- c. Use complex training principles
- d. Beginning of the session
- e. End of the session

**2. Tactical principles:**

- a. Have a plan:
  - i. What do you want to do?
  - ii. What can you do?
- b. Be consistent
- c. Recover the position
- d. Force the opponent to make mistakes
- e. Use the whole service box - court

**3. Decision making in the serve:**

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STRATEGY OF PLAY	TACTICAL INTENTION: What am I trying to do?	TACTICAL PATTERN What are my options?	BASIC TECHNIQUES How can I do it? (only key teaching points are included)	
<b>Neutral</b>	Put the ball in	Use a flat serve with enough high trajectory to safely clear the net.	Position / Preparation	Establish a solid but comfortable ready position that is sideways to the net with the front foot pointing diagonally forward. Assume the same position for all serves.
		Hit the serve with reasonable speed.	Grip	Continental or Eastern Forehand.
		Play to the centre of the service box avoiding the lines.	Toss	Slightly forward and to the racquet side of the body.
		Beginner-intermediate could use a topspin or slice serve.	Lower body movement	Bend the knees and drive the body upward and forward.
			Swing	Make it smooth and continuous; and longer rather than too short.
	Impact	Over the racquet shoulder.		
	Be consistent and vary the serve	Use a flat serve varying the direction to the different service box corners.	Grip	Continental or Eastern backhand (topspin).
			Toss	Slightly more to the non-racquet side and closer to the baseline than in the flat serve. Toss would otherwise land on the player's head.
		Use a flat serve varying the depth (deep; close to the service line, short; close to the net).	Lower body movement	Bend the knees and drive the body upward and forward.
			Swing	Move the racquet from low to high and from non-racquet side to racquet side. The trajectory of the racquet through impact should be from approximately "7 o'clock to 1 o'clock" up the back of the ball.
Use a <b>topspin</b> wide serve in the left service box.		Impact	The racquet brushes up the back of the ball, which is positioned to the non-racquet side of the body and closer to the baseline than in the flat serve.	
<b>Attack</b>	Dominate the point	Use a flat serve directed to the weak side of the opponent or to the open area in the service box	Go for it! Try to hit powerfully by driving the body up and forward, and rotating the trunk and upper arm aggressively.	
	Pull the receiver wide off the court (deuce court)	Use a slice wide serve in the right service box.	Grip	Continental.
			Toss	Even further to the racquet side of the body than in the flat serve.
		Move in to play inside the court.	Lower body movement	Bend the knees and drive the body upward and forward.
			Swing	Move the racquet around the outside of the ball.
Impact	The racquet brushes around or across the ball.			
Serve and attack the net to rush my opponent	Use a serve (i.e. slice) that squeezes or stretches, allowing you to get closer to the net. Volley to the open court or behind the opponent.	Split step and transition forward with balance. Emphasis on optimal positioning for the volley.		
Serve and attack using my best groundstroke	Use a serve that squeezes or stretches, allowing you to subsequently attack with shot speed and/or placement.	Be on your toes; move quickly to your next shot, having already decided what to do with it.		
<b>Defend</b>	Serve to defend from the opponent's good returns	Serve at the body or to the weakest shot, and ready yourself for the second shot.	Endeavour to maintain a high first serve percentage. Be alert; always expect a second shot.	

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	Serve to counter the effectiveness of a net rusher	Use deep, body serves but also vary serve locations and speeds in an effort to keep the opponent back.	Endeavour to maintain a high first serve percentage. Don't be afraid to serve and volley.
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4. Decision making in the return of serve:

STRATEGY OF PLAY	TACTICAL INTENTION: What am I trying to do?	TACTICAL PATTERN What are my options?	BASIC TECHNIQUES How can I do it? (only key teaching points are included)	
<b>Neutral</b>	<p>Play the ball back in and recover court position.</p> <p>This may happen when <b>receiving a slice serve</b>, where the low sliding bounce pulls the receiver wide, leaving the rest of the court open.</p> <p>When <b>receiving against a serve and volleyer</b> the receiver can keep the server from playing an easy volley.</p>	Standard return or neutralising low return (all spin variations)	<b>Position/ preparation *</b>	Establish a well balanced ready position so that you can quickly respond to any type of serve. Observe the ball toss and the racquet swing of the server to help you anticipate the type of serve.
			<b>Grip *</b>	Depending on whether you intend to hit or block, use the appropriate forehand or backhand grip.
			<b>Movement</b>	Try to move forward if possible. Move diagonally to bisect the angle of the serve. This also helps to transfer your bodyweight forward.
			<b>Swing</b>	As required (i.e. when returning high speed serves), reduce the length of the backswing by simplifying segment co-ordination (i.e. use just hip and shoulder rotation).
			<b>Direction</b>	Aim to hit cross-court to enhance your chances of recovering a central court position as well as your shot's margin of error. Against a serve and volleyer , first, make the server volley. Second, make the server stretch or volley up.
<b>Attack</b>	<p>Dominate the point from the first shot: attack the serve.</p> <p>When <b>receiving a kick serve</b> high to the backhand the player can attack the serve, neutralising the effect of its bounce, and placing pressure on the opponent.</p> <p>When <b>receiving a second serve or when the server stays at the baseline (baseline player)</b>, the receiver can attack the serve by placing pressure on the opponent.</p>	<p>Attacking / offensive return</p> <p>Run-around forehand or aggressive backhand (flat or topspin)</p>	<b>Movement</b>	Move in and attack! By using, where possible, your best shot. Move early to get into position to play the ball before it bounces above shoulder height. Don't hesitate in following your good returns to the net. 'Chipping and charging' can also be effective.
			<b>Swing</b>	With more time available, you can increase the involvement of different body parts.
			<b>Attitude</b>	Don't hesitate... GO FOR IT!
			<b>Direction</b>	Make the server move ... 'turn up' under pressure.
<b>Defence</b>	Play the ball back if possible.	Defensive return (all spin variations)	<b>Swing</b>	Keep backswing compact; co-ordinate hip and shoulder rotation. Pick up the ball early and play aggressively if possible.
			<b>Attitude</b>	No fear.
			<b>Direction</b>	Aim for the middle of the court as it improves your margin for error.

**Session 3 (1 ½ hours):**

**Tactical decision making for good level club doubles players**

**1. Basic tactical principles for doubles**

<b>Partner</b>	Find the best possible doubles partner (ideally, with a complementary game). Communicate effectively with each other. Play as a team with positive energy and high intensity.
<b>Overall strategy:</b>	Always devise a game plan. Try to 'win the net' and then the point in as few shots as possible.
<b>Possible tactics</b>	Have a variable and flexible game plan to accommodate changes to tactics throughout the course of the match (i.e. capacity to serve and volley or to stay back). Play to the weakest opponent, isolating the best player. Staying with a winning game (i.e. if a tactic is successful, stick with it). Couple playing percentages with planned attacks. Avoid getting caught in mid-court.
<b>Positioning</b>	Understand the responsibilities/positioning of each of the four doubles roles.
<b>Serve:</b>	Get the first serve in (first serve percentages of ≈75-80% should be achieved).
<b>Return:</b>	Generally return service crosscourt, or over the head of the server's partner. Play down the middle to create doubt in the minds of your opponents.
<b>Net game:</b>	Periodically use poaching at the net to keep the other team guessing. Combine touch and power shots to create opportunities and to disrupt your opponents' rhythm.
<b>Psychology:</b>	Concentrate on the present and focus on one point at a time, but above all, play with enthusiasm and have fun together!

**2. Tactics and technique in doubles play**

Stroke	Specific aspects developed by doubles play	Technical doubles training
Serve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistency: to avoid easy returns against the server partner.</li> <li>Direction: wide, body or T serves.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistency and placement of the serve towards specific targets</li> <li>Practice serving down the centre (safest option) and serving wide (to exploit a weakness and/or to open up the court).</li> </ul>
Return	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistency: to avoid easy volleys for the receiving team.</li> <li>Direction: down-the-line, to the middle, short-cross court, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grooving the crosscourt return.</li> <li>Experimenting with different return variations: down-the-line, chip and charge, lob, etc.</li> </ul>
Groundstrokes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direction: down-the-line, to the middle, short-cross court, etc.</li> <li>Height: keeping it low and playing it up (lobs).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grooving crosscourt, angled groundstrokes and groundstrokes driven to the net players' bodies.</li> <li>Practice topspin and sliced lobs.</li> </ul>
Mid court game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attack: to set up or win the point (i.e. aggressive approach).</li> <li>Neutralise: to maintain court position (i.e. half volley).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practice topspin and sliced approach shots to location.</li> <li>Practice half volleys and low volleys.</li> </ul>
Net game strokes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attack: to win the point (i.e. topspin forehand volley, overhead smash).</li> <li>Neutralise: to maintain court position (i.e. waist height volleys).</li> <li>Defend: to stay in the point (i.e. reflex or stretch volleys).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practice all types of volleys in both closed and open training drills.</li> </ul>

### 3. Example of a session

Aspect	Teaching strategy
Main goal	To understand the options available and their appropriateness when returning serve in doubles. To be able to return serve.
Secondary goal	To be able to win the point by playing tactically and technically sound returns in doubles.
Coach role	Set up game situations and drills related to the goal. Help players to learn by presenting problems, asking questions, and if necessary, guiding the players towards the solution.
Basic structure of the session	<p>Set up a realistic game situation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Do you remember that doubles match in which you were having trouble with your return of serve?"</li> </ul> <p>Facilitate player learning through effective questioning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "What options do you have available when having trouble in returning serve in doubles?" (Coach may wait for the player's answer).</li> <li>• "When would it be best or most suitable to play each one of those options in the return?", "Why?"</li> </ul> <p>Set up a game situation in which the players try to find a solution for the problem above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Players play points in regular doubles formation with their objective being to find different ways to play the return of serve.</li> <li>• The coach observes how each player tries to find different tactical (crosscourt short, down the line, deep, to the middle, to the body, etc.) or technical solutions (positioning, balance, grip, swing, etc.) to the tactical problem (receiving options in doubles).</li> <li>• Coach evaluates the tactical or technical prowess of each player and decides upon which tactical (anticipation, decision making) or technical points (grip, racquet trajectory and/or speed, movement, balance, etc.) require more concentrated work.</li> </ul> <p>Set up a closed drill in which the players try to improve the identified skill in a closed (controlled, with less decision making) situation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In a basket situation, the players hit forehand or backhand returns, deep down the line or short cross court and / or as a lob.</li> <li>• Other options include incorporating a rally with the coach drill or drill where players rally among themselves.</li> </ul> <p>Set up a game situation drill in which the players try to integrate or improve the identified skill in a open (less controlled, with more decision making) situation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Players play points. They earn 1 point for passing the return over the net having made the correct decision and/or executed appropriately. A further point is earned for winning the point.</li> </ul>
Player role	Experiments, asks questions and tries to achieve the task.
Teaching styles	Discovery and problem solving.
Organisation	Using stations, rallying with peers.

Other possible themes for doubles lessons with beginner and intermediate tennis players include: Attacking with the serve, playing as a team, playing at the net, attacking when at the net, and defending when at the net.