

Coaching Special Olympics Tennis Groups: Training Session Two OUTLINE

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Overview

Previous Session: Administrative issues, safety, lesson structure, demonstration skills, technical skills (basic feeding, strokes, footwork), introduction to progressions

This Session: Less on specific technical skills, more on **group coaching tools**

Goals:

1. Better understanding of challenges of SO group tennis clinics
2. Better understanding of what group coaching success looks like
3. Better understanding of coaching tools to use to “get to success”

Activity-based Learning:

How will we learn? Together, all of us chipping in, by “activity examples”, and by asking ourselves, “how can we make each activity more successful?”.

Let’s Get Started!

HEY COACHES! What are the challenges of SO group tennis clinics?

What makes SO tennis clinics particularly challenging? Diversity of athletes: fitness, strength, coordination, attention span, focus, behavior, interaction/communication skills, and... **group coaching in general is challenging because the “picture” is big (all the athletes, coaches, and teachers, multiple courts) and small (the athletes immediately in front of us) and we need to be aware of and adaptive to all of it**

Example Activity #1: More productive Stations/Feeding Lines (leveling vs. adaptive feeding)

Stations/groups with diverse athlete levels – customize feeding to challenge each player appropriately.

Progressive tools: feed near player, far away, high, low, fast slow, catch target, other target, ball type, etc. (COACHES, give it a TRY! AND work on feeding skills...)

HEY COACHES! What does group coaching success look like? (in the moment, and over time)

- Fun, passion, **actively engaged** (as individuals), **everyone engaged** (as a group, inclusion)
- Adoption: spectrum from casual recreation to lifelong enjoyment ... “tennis is *my sport*”
- Advancement spectrum: skills, mastery, proficiency
- Group and individual growth, cohesion, sense of identity and team
- Physical fitness, wellness, and mental health benefits
- Safe, physically, mentally; Healthy level of exercise/exertion, hydrated

Example Activity 2: More productive Cooperative Activities (e.g. progression which leads to rally skills with coach normalization/correction to maximize success.)

HEY COACHES! What coaching tools and activities can we use to “get to success”? (many paths to success, but probably some consistent “themes” and “tools”)

- **Leadership** skills: Confidence, knowledgeable, fun, creative, anticipating, interested, skillful, awareness/insightful, motivational (addressing individuals and group)

- Activities which **balance challenge and success**
- **Progressions** which take group diversity & range of skills into account
- **Inclusive activities** which foster teamwork and fellowship (sense of group, everyone is valued)
- **Tennis-specific skill training** activities which develop and reinforce essential tennis-specific techniques, patterns, and biomechanics
- **Cross-training** activities which develop athleticism and athletic diversity, agility, balance and balanced fitness
- Activities which impart **knowledge of the sport/game** of tennis, including historical and current information, and activities which encourage further independent discovery
- Activities which incorporate **games** and FUN

Example Activity 3: Inclusive group relay race, team on court 1 vs. team on court 2. On each court, players line up on left doubles sideline in single file in order (roughly) by ability to hit a feed over the net from increasing distance. One at a time (and with team rooting/cheering), each player will enter the court (left to right), hit a feed from a distance with optimal challenge and repeat as needed until successfully hitting ball over the net, and then move to the right sideline. First team to get all players across from left to right wins! Next relay might be right to left or both directions or two balls over the net for success, etc – many variations possible!

Note about inclusion and dividing/levelling groups: Many coaches are surprised at how well we can coach children with diverse skills *together*, by incorporating progressive challenge techniques in activities – for example, drills can incorporate skill-level-appropriate court positioning and more/less challenging feeding within the same grouping. This said, depending on agenda and the specific skills of the athletes, there will be activities (for example, point play) which are not only better served, but are also safer, in level-based groups.