

ITF Coaches Education Programme Level 2 Coaching Course



Doubles for tournament players - Introduction

By the end of this session you should be able to:

- Understand the benefits of doubles for juniors and professional tennis players
- Know the tactical goals for doubles tournament players
- Understand the main characteristics of the strategy and tactics for doubles
- Devise effective and appropriate knowledge of the mental performance in doubles tournament play

Benefits of doubles for juniors



- Develops:
 - An all-round game
 - The use of lob
 - The use greater angles
 - Return of serve
 - Quick reactions, and improves reflexes
- Pressure shared with partner
- Encourages:
 - teamwork (co-operation)
 - communication
- Confidence to play at the net (offensive game)
- More fun and enjoyment
- Success in doubles can lead to more confidence in singles

Tactical goals for doubles



Under 11

- Communicate with each other
- Play as a team with high positive energy and intensity
- Stay centred on the present and focus on one point at a time

Tactical goals for doubles

11-13

- Chose a partner with a complementary game
- Understand percentage play in doubles
- Know responsibilities/positioning of each role
- Have a variable and flexible gamestyle to allow changes in tactics during the match
- Devise a game plan

Tactical goals for doubles

14-16

- Normally stay with a winning game, if the tactic is successful keep attacking the opponents' weaknesses

Benefits of doubles for professional players



- In team events (Davis Cup), doubles is often what determines the winning team
- Provides extra practice time and prize money
- High doubles ranking can help save money as players in the main draw of the doubles receive hospitality at the tournament even if the player fails to qualify for singles

How to set the doubles team

- If there is one strong player he/she should usually play in the ad side as this side usually deals with more game points
- If there is a left hander he/she should usually play in the ad side, unless both players have better backhands than forehands
- If there is a good right court or left court player, they should play on that side

How top world players play doubles...

- First service in play: 65-80%;
- Point decided after first shot (service):
 - Men 30%
 - Women 18%
- Aces:
 - Men 5-10%
 - Women 1-3%
- Double faults
Men and Women 2-4%
- - Missed returns
 - Men 20-25%,
 - Women 10-15%
- Winning returns
 - Men and Women 5-10%;
- Missed first volleys when serving
 - Men and Women 15-20%;
- % of all points decided after the first 2 shots:
 - Men 50%
 - Women 40%
- More than 50% of all points are decided at the net

Poaching

“real spice of a double game”



Poaching of the serving team:

- verbal communication
- signal
- reaction
- fake and stay

Poaching of the receiving team:

- receiver's partner
- fake and stay
- “When a player decide to poach he has to go all the way”

Four main doubles features

- Attack
- Team-work
- Anticipation & court coverage
- Combination of touch and power shots

Attack



- To win in doubles a team should attack
- Attacking position: at the net
- A team which controls the net usually has control over the outcome of the point



Team-work

- Respect, understanding and constant communication
- No individual brilliance; Yes co-ordinated team effort
- Having responsibility for making your partner safe, comfortable and well positioned
- Moving together

Anticipation – court coverage



- Court position of the hitting opponent
- Selecting the correct placement
- Cover your half court fully including lobs
- Keep constantly moving and covering court even when not hitting the ball
- Make the opponent aware of your presence, especially at the net

Combination of touch and power shots

- Power shots have become vital in modern tennis (aggressiveness or desperation)
- Touch shots are often vital to set up the team for the final put-away shot (percentage element and manoeuvring strength)
- Objective: reduce power of opponent's shot and make them hit up & opening their half of court

Stroke production in doubles



- Serving
- Receiving
- Net play
- Lobs
- Second shots



Serving

- Objectives:
 - - force a defensive return (70% first serves in play-inform your partner)
 - To get as fast and as close to the net as possible
 - 3/4 speed and full control, split-steps (?)
- Placement:
 - T areas (cuts down the angle of return), wide (2 points ahead, against two handed bh, at the body (limit the swing))



Receiving

- Among most difficult and important stroke:
...get the return in play (let the opponent play 1st volley)!
 - a low, hard shot cross-court or down the middle
 - a soft angled shot chipped cross-court = (65-70%)
 - a low, hard shot down the line 4) a lob over the net player = (30-35%)



Net play

- 1st volley: most frequent, difficult and important: ...play it cross-court and deep!
- Players should not overplay it but play it safe and “crisp”!
- Put-away 1st volley on high balls, if close to the net or down the line if you have to play a “shoe lace” volley...



Net play

- A deep, crisp volley cross-court;
- An angles touch volley cross court;
- A high volley hit hard down the line
- An extremely difficult low volley go down the line or try sharp cross-court
- An attempt for a lob volley


Lobs



- Great importance in doubles
- It is the most used touch shot (from defensive to offensive situation...move to the net)
- It should be used when the team is out of position or in trouble during a point
- Can be used as a defensive return of service

Second shots



- Server: 1st volley or half volley
- Receiver: - 80% of a server's first volleys are aimed back at the receiver
 - If Chips the return he has to charge to the net
 - If hits hard  go down the middle hard or opt for a lob/short cross-court at the right time

Remember the simple things...



- 7 out of 10 shots should go cross-court or down the middle,
- The remaining 3 shots are lobs and down the line
- The player at the net should watch only the opponents in front of him as their moves will indicate type and direction of their next shots

Remember the simple things...



- Avoid playing drop shots or first volleys down the line if they are not power put-away or desperation volleys
- The ability to anticipate makes a difference between a mediocre and a good doubles player
- There will not be any team work without forgive and forget attitude

How to choose a doubles partner

- Important decision
 - Each player should know themselves very well
 - Contrasting but complementary personalities that are team strengths not weaknesses (Emotional harmony)
 - Take time to get to know each other
 - When under pressure each player has to bring support, balance and direction to the team
 - Experiment with a variety of partners

Communication questions for doubles partners



- Do I need a lot of encouragement?
- Do I like to talk a lot?
- When do you become most uptight?
- How do you respond to criticism?
- What should I say when you make a mistake?
- What helps to build your confidence?
- What types of behaviour irritate you?

Verbal communication

Situation	Ineffective	Effective
Partner makes a mistake on a big point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Say nothing - Walk immediately to the next point ignoring partner - 'You are playing awful in important points' - 'Why can't you make the return? That was a big point!' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'OK, no problem' - 'Let's go, next point' - 'Well, get it next time, no worry!'
Before a big point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'You have to make this return' - 'Everything depends on you!' - 'Don't double fault' or 'Get the return in, please!' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'OK, let's go for it!', 'You can do it?' - 'I know we're very good at these points'
Partner is playing badly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Come on, bend your knees a little bit more!' - (Cynical) 'You are playing great today, my God!' - 'I don't know why I play with you' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Come on, you can do it!' - 'Don't worry, it will come!' - 'Hang in there'
Partner is nervous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Come on, you are driving me mad, please relax!' - 'Please, don't choke now!' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Come on, take your time!' - Use humour to help then relax
Partner is angry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'I can't stand your behaviour!' - 'I don't care what you do!' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'OK, lets forget it, it's over' - 'Let's focus on the next point' - Use humour
Partner is not motivated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'I'm running like hell, and what about you?' - 'Do I have to win this myself?' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Come on, let's fire up!' - 'Here we go!, let's activate ourselves!'

Non-verbal communication

Efficient communication	Inefficient communication
Turning toward each other as soon as the point ends	Turning away from the partner
Walking shoulder to shoulder at the same pace (shoulder touching)	Refusing to walk together
Using hand signals to improve non-verbal communication	Saying nothing and avoiding communication
Body contact (high-fives and back-patting)	Refusing body contact
Smiling, being constructive	Being emotionless, cynical and very critical
Frequent eye contact/ Nodding approval	No eye contact/ or eyes raised to the sky

Team cohesion in doubles

- Be honest, but supportive and understanding
- Help build partner's confidence
- Compliment good shots
- Do not apologise for errors
- Avoid talking too much
- Know partner's preferences
- Be aware of possible negative non-verbal communication

Mental tips for doubles performance



- Use changeovers to communicate with your partner
- Use the full 90 seconds to sit down
- Always discuss the strategy for the next games

Mental tips for doubles performance



- Be aware of physical, emotional and tactical adjustments that should be done
- Stand up together and walk shoulder by shoulder to the court positions
- Remember: you are a team!