



The Global Website for Tennis Professionals and Enthusiasts!

FREE E-BOOK

PRACTICE MATCH VARIATIONS

In this e-book you will find 20 practice match variations to use in your lessons. The variations can be used in both singles and doubles and are a great way to add variety and excitement to your sessions.

Be sure to check the Global Sports Coaching website for 100's more tennis and fitness drills and ideas to help your coaching and training sessions.

We hope you enjoy these drills and feel free to send this FREE E-BOOK to your friends or include them in your e-zines and newsletters.

Global Sports Coaching Team

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PRACTICE MATCH VARIATIONS

In addition to practicing the drills found in the Global Sports Coaching Tennis and Fitness Manuals it is very important to play points and game situations during training. Constant and repetitive drilling in lessons can lead to boredom, the match simulations in this free ebook can help create a healthy competitive environment amongst your players and squads.

By using practice match variations players can still experience the fun and excitement of competing, while working at a particular aspect the coach designates. In this way the coach maintains control of the lesson but a “general” hitting session can be avoided.

Mix and match the variations listed in this section. For instance match one player who needs to work at their net play, awarding double points for winning volleys; against another player who needs to work at their consistency, penalising them double points for a net error. In this way different players can work at their individual strengths and weaknesses.

You will find these variations will add flavour to your coaching sessions and avoid the monotony that can occur if students are playing a lot of matches. All the variations may be played in sets or tie breaker format depending on time constraints. This format of simulating match play will maintain a high competitive spirit amongst players and also create opportunities for different players to succeed.

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Drill Theme: Practice Match Variation Drill: 1 serve only	1
Objective: Improve specific aspects of match play including 2 nd serve effectiveness and aggressive return of serve	
Instruction: Play a set or tiebreaker where the server has only 1 fault. Look to work at:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the 2nd serve • Starting the point positively but reducing risk • Attacking attitude on return of serve 	
Details: This variation can be a great help for players who are developing their 2 nd serve – introducing a kick serve that will stop their opponent from attacking. Remember...”your game is only as good as your second serve.” John Newcombe	
Drill Theme: Practice Match Variation Drill: 2 points for net winner	2
Objective: Improve specific aspect of match play including transition between the baseline and net. Players will have to play good volleys, but also approach the net at the appropriate time.	
Instruction: Play a set or tie breaker awarding 2 points to any player who can successfully approach the net and hit a winner volley or overhead. Look to work:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tactical use of the approach shot – coming in behind the right shot • Effective volleying including closing in for a put away 	
Scoring and Details: Play this variation to encourage players who camp out at the baseline to move forwards. Although all out attack on the net has disappeared from the game, being able to follow a good approach shot into the net is still a key weapon.	

Drill Theme: Practice Match Variation Drill: 2 points lost for net error	3
Objective: Improve specific aspects of match play including consistency by penalising net errors (the worst errors in tennis!)	
Instruction: Play a set or tiebreaker where the players hitting errors into the net are penalised 2 points. Look to work at:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing clearance over the net • Simultaneously increasing depth and topspin • Playing attacking shots with reduced risk 	
Details: Reinforce the importance of net clearance in this match variation. It may be particularly effective to train your inconsistent attacking players to stop making those frustrating errors.	
Drill Theme: Practice Match Variation Drill: 2 points for winning shot	4
Objective: Improve specific aspect of match play by rewarding the players who attacks and finishes the point with a winner.	
Instruction: Play a set or tie breaker awarding 2 points to any player who can hit a baseline winner. Look to work at:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening the court up with angles and then hitting to the open court, or wrong footing • Set up your strengths • Avoid playing the low percentage shot from out of position 	
Scoring and Details: This variation is all about shot selection – avoid the big “TV / Hollywood” shot that look good when they come off – but will always be low percentage. This drill may help the “pusher / hacker” come out of their shell a little and hit through the ball.	

Drill Theme: Practice Match Variation Drill: 2 points for a passing shot or lob	5
Objective: Improve specific aspects of match play including passing under pressure and pulling your opponent into the net.	
Instruction: Play a set or tiebreaker where the player hitting a passing shot or lob winner is awarded double points. Look to work at:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staying calm under the pressure of net attack and choosing a lob or passing shot • The skill of “dragging” a player to the net – especially if they are an unconfident net player 	
Details: Consider matching this variation with #2 “2 points for a net winner” – with two players of different playing styles challenging one another.	
Drill Theme: Practice Match Variation Drill: 2 points for a drop shot or angled shot winner	6
Objective: Improve specific aspect of match play by rewarding the players who show creativity in their shot making including skill and touch.	
Instruction: Play a set or tie breaker awarding 2 points to any player who can hit a drop shot or angled winner. Look to work at:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shot selection – these shots are only to be played from the right position • Increasing spin (including backspin, sidespin and topspin) to control these shots • Assessing your opponent and the conditions (ie. don’t drop shot a quick player on a high bouncing hard court) 	
Scoring and Details: The drop shot and angled shot become real weapons on the clay court when it is rare to hit winners “through” the court. These shots are major weapons that can be extremely effective in the hands of the creative player.	

Drill Theme: Practice Match Variation

Drill: Server gets 2 points for finishing the point inside 5 shots

7

Objective:

Improve specific aspects of match play including forcing the play from the serve and setting up your strengths for the winning shot.

Instruction:

Play a set or tiebreaker where the server is awarded 2 points for winning the point inside 5 shots
Look to work at:-

- Winning patterns rather than the big shot (ie. serve wide – open court volley)
- Maximising strengths

Details:

This variation is best suited to a fast court preparation and encouraging big, strong players with weapons to impose themselves quickly in a point. Think of Becker or Sampras when conducting this match play.

Drill Theme: Practice Match Variation

Drill: 2 points lost for error in first 5 shots (except from a big 1st serve)

8

Objective:

Improve specific aspect of match play by accentuating the importance of not making errors early in the point and therefore handing your opponent easy “pressure relieving” points.

Instruction:

Play a set or tie breaker penalising any player who makes an error in the first 5 shots 2 points (excluding a forced error from the 1st serve.)

Look to work at:-

- Playing aggressive but safe (ie. deep cross court) shots early in the point
- Look to build the point, opening up the court and exposing the opponents weakness’

Scoring and Details:

Making unforced errors early in the point is the worst way to hand the momentum to your opponent. It takes the pressure off mentally and physically giving the challenging player every opportunity to take control of the match.

Drill Theme: Practice Match Variation

Drill: Ace wins the game

9

Objective:

Improve specific aspects of match play by increasing the value of the big serve

Instruction:

Play a set or tiebreaker where the server is awarded the game after serving an ace.

This will simultaneously:-

- Increase the value for taking a risk on the serve
- Increase the intensity of the return of serve player

Details:

The serve and return remain the two most important shots in tennis despite all the advancements made in recent years. This variation heightens the importance of the serve – return battle. Use it to train the timid server; or lazy return of server.

Drill Theme: Practice Match Variation

Drill: Forehand only

10

Objective:

Improve specific aspect of match play by emphasising the importance of setting up and using your strengths.

Instruction:

Play a set or tie breaker where only forehands are allowed to be played (ie. backhand is treated as an error). Start the point with an underhand feed.

Look to work at:-

- Footwork and court positioning to maximise the chance of hitting a forehand
- Placing the strokes maximise the chance of receiving a forehand on the return
- Hit the forehand with the aim of forcing a winner or weak return

Scoring and Details:

Studying the modern game shows that pro's hit approximately $\frac{2}{3}$ of all strokes on the forehand side. Except in some very rare circumstances most of the winners will come from the forehand also. Use this variation to indoctrinate your players with the message that the forehand is a weapon.

Drill Theme: Practice Match Variation

11

Drill: 3 in a row wins the game

Objective:

Improve specific aspects of match play by making the players deal with the very important concept of momentum and

Instruction:

Play a set where a game can only be won by a player winning 3 points in a row.

Work at:

- Creating or preventing a swing in momentum during a match
- Understanding and identifying turning points or key moments in a match

Details:

Not only does winning a series of three points in a row offer a high probability of winning the game, it establishes momentum or a trend in the match. By capitalising on a lapse from your opponent in this situation you can quickly accumulate games and convert them into sets. Equally you must identify if the game is getting away from you and increase your output.

Drill Theme: Practice Match Variation

12

Drill: 0 – 30

Objective:

Improve specific aspect of match play by emphasising the importance of setting up and using your strengths.

Instruction:

Play a set where the server always starts the game at 0 - 30. The coach should emphasise endeavour for the serving player (“fight back”) and concentration for the receiving player (“secure the break”)

This variation teaches:-

- Converting break point opportunities; and
- Comeback efforts from the server.

Scoring and Details:

Think of Pete Sampras serving his way out of trouble “all the time.” Think also of the best return players like Hewitt and Agassi who step up the pressure and don’t miss their returns from 0 – 30. This game is also a great mental exercise – exposing players who will cruise at 0 – 30 or 30 – 0.

Drill Theme: Practice Match Variation Drill: 1 point “knock out” tournament	13
Objective: Improve specific aspects of match play by making the players deal with the pressure of match points and performing in front of a crowd.	
Instruction: Using a squad of 8+ players form a centre court and gather the players around. Match the players in a random fashion and challenge them to a 1 point match. Spin the racquet to decide the serving player (a crucial decision). Winners move on in a knock out format until a final is played. Increase the stakes by offering a small prize for the winning player.	
Details: 1 point tournament is a great format to finish a competitive squad training. It will reveal the players who enjoy pressure going for their shots on the big points and holding their nerve.	
Drill Theme: Practice Match Variation Drill: Davis Cup Team Comp (2 singles, 1 doubles rubber)	14
Objective: Team is mainly an individual sport. Juniors especially love to be part of a team and this practice match variation can build “team spirit” in your squads.	
Instruction: Using a squad of 8+ players, divide the players into teams of 2 or 4. Each team challenges each other to a tie comprising 2 singles and 1 doubles rubber – with the players from each team deciding their configuration. The winning team wins 2 of the 3 rubbers and a round robin, or winners play off format can be applied.	
Scoring and Details: Matches can be tie breakers, sets or modified scoring (each game starts at 30-30) depending on time available.	

Drill Theme: Practice Match Variation Drill: Doubles – Serve and Volley Only	15
Objective: Improve specific aspects of doubles match play by making the players serve volley. Not only will this match play improve their doubles it will develop their serve and volley and can be applied to singles.	
Instruction: The best doubles teams have always been dominant at the net! The key skill is to get both players at the net so that full control is taken over the point. The instruction is simple – the server must follow their serve into the net.	
Details: 4 players. This drill can be progressed by making the return player chip and charge meaning all 4 players will play the point out from the net. Matches can be tie breakers, sets or modified scoring (each game starts at 30-30) depending on time available.	
Drill Theme: Practice Match Variation Drill: Doubles – Tandem Formation	16
Objective: Doubles at its best is a game of teamwork at tactics. Tandem Formation is one way for doubles teams to confuse their opponents and gain the upper hand.	
Instruction: Tandem formation involves both members of the serving team starting on the same side of the court as the serve is delivered. Before the point is played out the team members decide if the net players will cross and cover the open court or whether the server will cover the open court. Practice should involve the expert timing of the net players move, too early or too late and the advantage will be with the receiving team. The introduction of tactics will help the players move to the next level.	
Scoring and Details: 4 players. This formation is best practiced in conjunction with the serve volley. Matches can be tie breakers, sets or modified scoring (each game starts at 30-30) depending on time available.	

Drill Theme: Practice Match Variation	17
Drill: Doubles – Eye Formation	

Objective:

Doubles at its best is a game of teamwork and tactics. Eye Formation is one way for doubles teams to confuse their opponents and gain the upper hand.

Instruction:

Eye formation involves the net player crouching down in the centre of the court as the server delivers. Before the point is played out the team members decide if the net player will move to the forehand or backhand court.

As in the last Practice Match variation the coach must train the players to move at the exact right time, early enough to make position, but late enough that the return player cannot adjust their stroke.

Details:

4 players. This formation is best practiced in conjunction with the serve volley. Matches can be tie breakers, sets or modified scoring (each game starts at 30-30) depending on time available.

Drill Theme: Practice Match Variation	18
Drill: Doubles – Scissors Formation	

Objective:

Doubles at its best is a game of teamwork and tactics. Scissors Formation is one way for doubles teams to confuse their opponents and gain the upper hand.

Instruction:

Players from the serving team start in traditional doubles formation. Before the point is played out the team members decide if the net player will move to “poach” the cross court return or stay put. In this way they will confuse the return player who will be unsure whether they play cross court or down the line.

To re-emphasise the coaches main goal is to get the timing of the move perfect.

Scoring and Details:

4 players. This formation is best practiced in conjunction with the serve volley. Matches can be tie breakers, sets or modified scoring (each game starts at 30-30) depending on time available.

Drill Theme: Practice Match Variation	19
Drill: Cross Court Points	

Objective:

Doubles is a game of designated shots. In a majority of points the cross court shot is the best option as it avoids the player set up at the net. This drill practices that cross court scenario.

Instruction:

Coach marks out a half court area with all play to be directed cross court. Doubles alley is allowed to let players experiment with the angles they can use while playing doubles. Coach should encourage the players to take the net behind intelligent approach shots while effectively combining attack and neutralising tactics.

Details:

4 players. This formation is best practiced in conjunction with the serve volley. Matches can be tie breakers, sets or modified scoring (each game starts at 30-30) depending on time available.

Drill Theme: Practice Match Variation	20
Drill: Combo's	

Objective:

Modified scoring scenario's are a very effective way of manipulating your students game style. Award them double points for a forehand winner and they will attack with that shot, penalise double points for a net error and they will hit with greater clearance – combine different variations to get your players playing the type of game you want them to.

Instruction:

Award two points for aces, forehand winners, volley winners or drop shots. Penalise two points for double faults or errors into the net. Consider your own combinations which will suit your player's specific needs. If they have the right competitive attitude they will adjust their play to maximise the modified scoring scenario, and then hopefully adopt in during open match play.

Scoring and Details:

Matches can be tie breakers, sets or modified scoring (each game starts at 30-30) depending on time available.

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What separates Global Sports Coaching from many other Tennis Websites?

Our mission is to provide practical and informative resources to tennis professionals that will have a real impact on their tennis careers. We don't just write "empty" articles full of information that can't be used in lessons. Our resourceful articles strive to answer questions that coaches face in their coaching career.

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Global Sports Coaching Team

About Global Sports Coaching

Global Sports Coaching (GSC) was born from the need to provide coaches with one of their greatest assets – an unlimited number of drills and sport specific exercises for their chosen sport.

GSC strives to assist coaches of all levels in every sport to advance in their careers. Coaching can be a very rewarding career and continuing an education and striving to reach one's full potential as a coach should be a main goal for everyone.

GSC's goal is to assist coaches achieve this goal by providing them with the necessary coaching tools.

GSC's team of coaches, exercise physiologists, sports psychologists, consultants and former touring professionals have compiled drills from all over the world with many years of experience. These drills have been compiled for all levels and also include a range and variety of sports.

GSC's team of professionals also provide consulting services to coaches and fitness trainers.

Please check out our website where you will be able to communicate with fellow coaches from all around the world through our member's only discussion forum. You will also find a selection of informative articles, drills and advice specific to tennis.

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