

Ladies Team Drill – (Goal: Working on Attacking the Net)

This is a drill format I recently used with a group of six advanced level ladies. The focus of this series of drills is to help your players become more comfortable in attacking the net and getting them off the baseline. One of the key issues when coaching club level ladies teams is that they often just want to play from the baseline and never move from that position.

The top players know how important it is to be able to mix up their game plan by attacking the net behind a short ball. These drills can be performed with 4 – 6 players and once again are designed to minimise “Dead Time” which I discussed in the previous article.

Goals for this session:

- ✓ Net positioning
- ✓ Work on the split-step and when to do it
- ✓ Anticipating shots
- ✓ Reflexes at the net
- ✓ Teamwork and shifting at the net
- ✓ Volley technique
- ✓ Footwork (split-step, shifting, moving forward, lateral movement)
- ✓ Accuracy on volleys
- ✓ Fitness (anaerobic training)
- ✓ Teach players the stages of moving in to the net

Below, you will find a format for a drill session involving six players.

- Number of players: Four - Six ladies
- Playing Level: Intermediate - Advanced
- Goal: Attacking the net and net play
- Total Drill time: 60 minutes

Key Point:

As you see I like to focus more on live ball drills. However, I often start with some feeding drills for several reasons. Feeding drills at the start of a lesson:

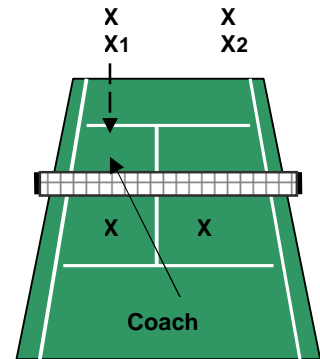
- (1) Allow players to get moving and work on footwork
- (2) Allows players to warm-up their shots and get their timing by hitting a nicely fed ball
- (3) Allows for you, the coach, to quickly include players smoothly into the drill who may show up late without too much disruption to the existing group.

Group Lesson Plan

2 V's 1 Drills

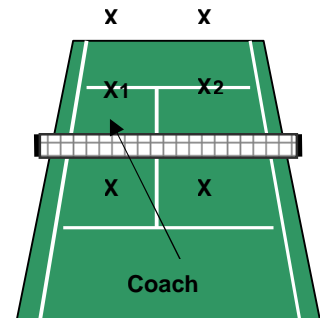
Drill 1: Start with an approach shot

The first drill in this series involves two players being positioned at the net. The remaining players will be positioned at the opposite end in two lines behind the baseline as shown in the diagram. The drill consists of two players against one player. The two players at the net can only hit their volleys to the half that the single player is on including the doubles alley. The player by themselves can hit into the entire court. The coach feeds a short ball and the single player (X1) hits an approach shot and comes in to the net. Player X1 must stay on that half of the court. As soon as that point is over the coach will feed a second ball and the point is played out. Then a third ball is fed in. After three points the team will shift to their right and the same sequence of three points will be played out against the player (X2) in the advantage court.



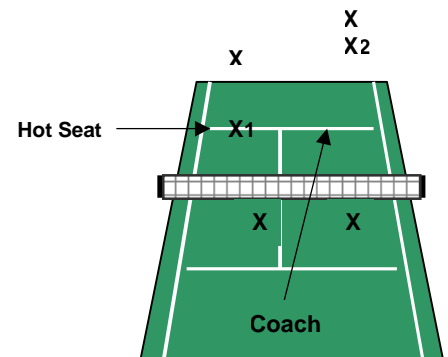
Drill 2: Start on the service line

The second drill involves the player starting on the service line on their half court. The coach will once again feed in a ball allowing the player to work on their first volley before closing in to the net. The point is played out. After the point has finished the coach will immediately feed in another ball. A total of three points are played out. Immediately feed to the second player (X2) who moves in to start at the service line.



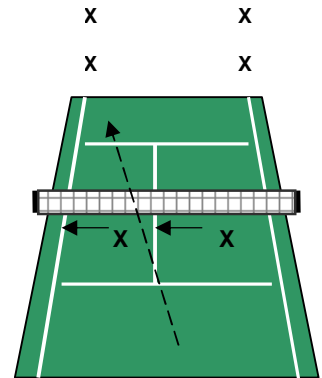
Drill 3: "Hot Seat Drill"

This is a drill where one player will be in the "Hot Seat". The "hot seat" (A1) is where the player is positioned at the net in the non-playing position and must react to any ball hit at them. The normal series of three points are played out with players at the net now having the option to put a volley away anywhere on the court. This forces the net player (A1) to be ready to react to any ball that may come their way. After completing their three points that player will then remain at the net and be in the "Hot Seat". They will be involved in another three points before moving back to the end of the line.



Drill 4: Shifting Drill (2 Vs 2)

Two players start on the coach's side of the court positioned at the net. The remaining four players will be at the opposite end of the court. Two players are on the baseline and the remaining two waiting players will stand behind them near the fence. The goal for the challenging team is to win 5 points off the champion net team. The scoring system is as follows: 3 points for an outright winner up the middle, two points for an outright winner down the side of the net players in the doubles alley and 1 point for everything else. When the challenging team loses a point they move back and the waiting team moves in quickly to try and score five points in a row. Teach the players at the the net to shift left and right with the ball. The scoring system forces the net players to cover the middle of the court where most of the balls are hit at the club level. When a challenging team scores five points they then become champions. For example: a winning shot up the middle = 3 points. If they hit the next shot down the sideline for a winner they get another two points for a total of five. Or they may have to work for every point and win five single points.

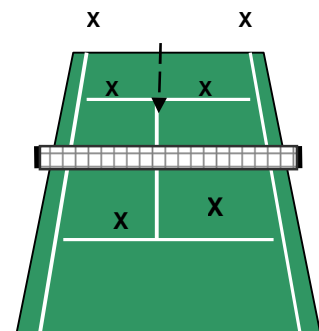


Drill 5: Reflex Volleys (2 Vs 2)

Finish off this drilling session with a two against two reflex volley drill.

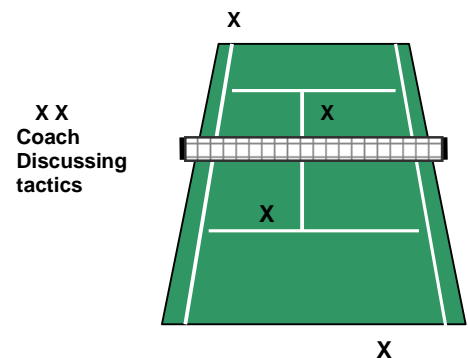
Two players will start at the net and the other two teams will start on the opposite baseline. The coach will feed a ball in to team B who will charge the net and play the point out. As soon as the point has finished the coach will feed in another ball. Continue feeding and playing points until a team has won 5 points. If the challenging team wins five points first then they jog around the net and become the new champion team. If they lose they return to the end of the line.

This is a fast moving drill and as a coach it is important to feed in appropriate balls based on the skill level of the players. The better they are the harder and more difficult the feeds.



Drill 6: Match Play

Allow your players to play a game of doubles with the winning team staying in and the losing team going out (if you have more than four players). The key with this doubles is to load the scoring by awarding bonus points for a put-away volley or overhead. Chat to the waiting team in talking about tactics, court positioning and other key issues that they need to work on. If you have an empty court have these two waiting players play a game of singles.





Key Coaching Points:

- Teach players to shift when at the net and cover the middle
- Encourage players to communicate with their partner shouting “yours” or “mine”
- Teach players not to stand and watch their shot after they hit it. Teach them to watch and recover back to the best court position for that situation.
- Teach players when to perform the split-step
- Work with players on their approach shots
- Instruct players at the net when to put away their volleys and when to play percentage shots
- Teach players how to defend against an attacking team and where they should position themselves
- Work on various team formations during doubles match play (tandem, scissors, “1” formation etc.)

**** Check out our Tennis Drills eBooks for more great doubles drills that you can use for your group lessons.

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