

ITF Coaches Education Programme

Coaching High Performance Players Course



DEVELOPING TACTICAL PATTERNS FOR ADVANCED PLAYERS ON COURT

By Miguel Crespo & Machar Reid



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

- Define and understand the concept of tactical pattern
- Explain and effectively apply the fundamentals of developing tactical patterns for advanced players on court
- Introduce the different types of patterns through advanced drills

Tactical Patterns



- **Tactics:**
 - General statements on what to do
- **Patterns:**
 - What actually enable you to implement (how to do) these tactics when playing specific points

Tactical Patterns



- **Tactical patterns for:**
 - Shot selection
 - Positioning
 - Movement
 - **when starting the point** for the server and receiver
- **At advanced level:**
 - Most of the points are short
 - Crucial to initiate the point in a tactically sound and aggressive manner

Tactical Patterns



- Overall tactic to serve and volley during the match
- But when playing:
 - First volley needs to be different depending:
 - Receiver is coming in
 - Receiver's partner is poaching
 - Both players are staying back ...
 - For these different situations:
 - Server chooses between different approach volleys:
 - Deep crosscourt
 - Angle
 - Down-the-line
 - Down-the middle

Training of Tactical Patterns

- Training of the shot selection in game situations
- Performed with sufficient repetition and diligence
- Helps to automatise decision-making when playing

Training Tactical Patterns Methods



- Select, evaluate, and train the tactical patterns
- Discover tactical solutions through specific games

Selecting Tactical Patterns

Most frequent patterns occurring when playing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Looking at the game style of each player and identify what patterns they need to master at this level of competition.• Pay attention to their opponents' tactical patterns to plan the appropriate tactical responses through positioning, movement and shot selection.• As there are many points played with these identified patterns, it is essential to train them systematically.
Most important patterns related to winning a certain match or competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You may decide that training the inside out forehand is this year what is required to win the league championship. Therefore you will evaluate those patterns and provide specific training sessions.
Easiest patterns and those that can be implemented first	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If working with an intermediate level you may choose the patterns that are the easiest to implement. You may consider serve and volley on the first serve and staying back on the 2nd serve.

Evaluating Tactical Patterns

Use or not	Subjective evaluation. For example if you think that a player should have approached the net and he did not, you will note a No (in the second column for use or not) as in your opinion it should have been performed.
Consistent	Identify if the skill is steady. There will be the same number of observations in the “consistent” column as the number of Yes’ in the “use or not” column.
Effective	When the player succeeds in approaching the net, did it achieve its tactical objective i.e. winning the point or keeping the pressure on the opponent. There will be as many observations as there are “Y’s” in the consistent column.

Evaluating Tactical Patterns

PATTERNS	USE OR NOT	CONSISTENT	EFFECTIVE	COMMENTS
Approaching the net when receiving a short ball	Y,N,Y,N,N,Y , N, Y, N, N, Y Coach considers that he could have approached the net an additional 6 more times	Y,N, Y,Y,Y On the 5 times he approached the net, he played the ball in on 4 of those instances	N,N,Y,N, On those 4 volleys, the opponent was forced to defend only once.	- Recognizes 5/11 his chance (Needs to work on this) - Good consistency (4/5), the one he missed being very difficult - Did not achieve the results he wanted (25% successful) as his approaches volleys were not hard enough
Using the best weapon under pressure	Y,Y, Y, Y, Y,	Y, N, N, Y, Y	Y, N, N, N, Y	-Uses the pattern - 60% consistency - 40% effectiveness (needs to work on this)

Evaluating Tactical Patterns in Match Situations



Possibilities	Coaching intervention
Master the goal right away	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Maintain the skill through a specific playing situation- Increase the difficulty of the drill if relevant to reach a higher level of play
Almost have it	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Provide some feedback to increase awareness of what should be done- Put forward some corrections if appropriate on their decision-making or on their technique
Not having it at all	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The goal may be inappropriate, you can decide to let it go- If the tactical pattern needs to be learned, then we can proceed to a systematic 3-steps progression (basket drills, live feed drills and cooperative points)

Evaluating Tactical Patterns in Match Situations



- Talented players:
 - Immediately implement patterns while playing in matches
 - Need to be aware of doing it
- Other players:
 - Not as skilful
 - Resistant to change until they feel confident enough to implement the pattern in a real match situation

Training Tactical Patterns



- Coach:
 - Provide a very systematic progression if required through:
 - Basket feed
 - Live feed
 - Cooperative play

Training Tactical Patterns



- Drill progression:
 - From a high volume of low intensity drills to groove the skills
 - To a low volume of high intensity drills to simulate the game situation

Training Tactical Patterns



- **Basket feed:**
 - High volume of balls
 - Coach controls the intensity
 - Groove a new skill
 - Sufficient repetition
- **Live feed:**
 - More realistic
 - More intense
 - Real shot challenges the skill

Training Tactical Patterns



- Cooperative points:
 - Lowest volume of repetitions
 - Simulates the intensity of match situations.
- Real matches:
 - Coach charts the performance
 - Praise players when using the new tactical patterns
 - Encourage them when not

Training Tactical Patterns through Scoring

- **Drills using constraints:**
 - No bounces allowed
 - No lobs allowed
 - Only crosscourt return
- **Drills using scoring:**
 - Bonus points
 - Game of 10 points
 - Super bonus point



Types of patterns

- One shot selection:
 - i.e. always return a wide serve crosscourt.
- Stroke preceding the shot:
 - Set-up stroke (moon-ball) for the shot (big FH).
- Stroke after the shot:
 - shot (big FH) with the shot after (coming in to volley).
- Combination of shots:
 - X pattern: drop-shot and lob; ...

Developing a Pattern



- Possibility to use the basket to develop the technique
- Using live feed cooperation
- Adapting the pattern to the 5 game situations
- Training the pattern closed and then open
- Real game situation

	MOVING OPPONENT AROUND	USING THE BIG FOREHAND	COMING TO THE NET
1	Serving wide	Serve position and recovery	Serve-volley
2	Return away from the middle	Return: running around backhand	Serve and look to come in
3	Taking control from the middle by hitting corner to corner	Return position and recovery	Return “chip and charge”
4	Grooving the diagonals	Imposing a high forehand tempo	Return “drive and charge”
5	Changing direction	Running around the backhand	Approach shot
6	X pattern	Moonball – drive	Attack followed to the net
7	Drop-shot and lob	Getting into the forehand diagonal	Sneak in after drop-shot or
8	Open court volley	Modifying position	Intercepting moonball
9	Wrong-footing shot	Opening up the court	Fake to come in
	etc.....		

Drills for tactical patterns



- Serve and combinations
- Return options
- Baseline patterns
- Mid court and net game
- Net game against baseline game
- Conclusion



PATTERNS FOR SERVE AND COMBINATIONS

Serve and combinations



- Combine service with return tactical patterns during practice
- Have a serve plan. Coach tells the receiver to follow a tactical pattern:
 - Do not move
 - Make mistakes with the BH return
 - Play inside out FH
 - Play inside out BH
 - Play all shots crosscourt, down the line, slice, topspin

Serve and combinations



- Same as before but the server, serves and comes in:
 - Receiver returns high
 - Receiver returns low
 - Receiver returns always down the line
 - Receiver returns always crosscourt
- Combine: 2nd serve and coming in with the return:
 - If there is a mistake in the approach of the return: loses 2 points

Serve

(direction, spin, depth, power, etc.)



- Mixing up serves depending on type of return and movement of the receiver
- Player serves to the side:
 - If the receiver doesn't move (slice serve in FH side, topspin serve in BH side)
- Player serves to the middle:
 - If the player has a weak BH return or if the is hitting inside out FH from the BH side
- Player serves wide in the BH side:
 - If it is an ad point
- Player serves to the other angle:
 - If the receiver has a good one side return (usually serving to the BH)

Serve

(direction, spin, depth, power, etc.)



- Mixing up direction of serves:
 - 3 to the BH in a row and 1 to the FH
- Mixing up the spin of the serves:
 - 3 to the BH slice in deuce side and topspin in ad in a row and 1 to the FH vice versa
- Topspin serve to:
 - one handed BH or to continental FH
- Direct to the body:
 - If the player opens big angles with the return

Serve and staying at the baseline



- After weak 2nd serve:
 - Receiver chips and charges
 - Player serves and falls inside the court after the serve and runs back
 - Server serves and makes a shadow movement

Serve and volley



- Serve wide and approach:
 - To cover the down the line passing (both sides)
- Serve middle and approach to the centre:
 - Wait
- Serve and approach:
 - To hit a topspin volley
- Player serves and approaches:
 - To smash a lob return

Serve and going for the strong shot (inside out forehand)

- Player serves first serve, coach hits a high and easy return and server hits an inside out FH
- Where to hit the inside out FH?
 - To the server BH
 - Mix it up

Serve and running to the weak side



- After weak 2nd serve
- Player serves 2nd serves and receiver:
 - Chips and charges
 - Hits an inside out forehand

Serve and waiting (staying at the baseline)



- After weak 2nd serve
- Player serves 2nd serves and receiver hits:
 - a drop-shot
 - an angled shot
 - a deep lob



PATTERNS FOR RETURN AND COMBINATIONS

Return options and combinations



- Have a return plan. Coach tells the server to follow a tactical pattern:
 - Serve wide
 - Serve to the middle
 - Serve and come in
 - Serve flat / topspin / slice
 - Play with 2nd serves



Touch it if you can

- Coach serves from the service line. If the player touches the ball: 1 point
- Same as above but player serving from the baseline
- Playing points:
 - 1st serve ace means 2 points lost
 - 2nd serve ace means 1 game lost

Hit over: make your opponent play the ball (defensive, offensive)

- Playing points:
 - 1st serve return mistake means 2 points lost
 - 2nd serve return mistake means 1 game lost
- Player serves 1st serve and stays back, receiver hits a deep return:
 - FH, BH, lob, topspin, slice, etc.
- Player serves and approaches:
 - Receiver wins a point each time server touches the ball (the point must be played until the end)

Go for it: but keep the return in

- Player serves:
 - Receiver has to hit the return to a designated area in server's side (draw 2 alleys inside singles court)
- Server hits 2nd serve:
 - Receiver chips and charges, to the weak side, to the strong side, lob, drop-shot

Go for a winner



- Player serves to a designated area in the middle of the service box:
 - Receiver hits an inside out FH
- Server hits 2nd serve:
 - Receiver hits and inside out forehand to the weak side

Chip and charge



- Server hits 2nd serve:
 - Receiver chips and charges:
 - To the weak side
 - To the strong side
 - Lob
 - Drop-shot



Block return

- Very good return against very powerful serves
- I.e. Roddick or Berdych
- Play the ball back to make the server play the point



PATTERNS FOR BASELINE GAME

Baseline patterns



- Playing crosscourt and attacking down the line when is appropriate:
 - When the ball goes to the middle
 - When the ball is short

Baseline patterns:

Set a series: 4/1, 1/1, 1/2, etc



- Playing points:
 - 1/1 series: changing directions
 - 1/2 series: wrong foot
 - 4/1 series: BH breakdown
- Try to attack crosscourt, change without losing the initiative

Baseline patterns: **Spin combinations**



- Playing points:
 - Hit high and topspin when in problems
 - Player A slice (defensive), player B topspin (offensive)
 - Player A hits flat (offensive), player B slice (defensive)
 - Hit topspin when playing deuce, ad, under pressure or break points

Baseline patterns: Height and depth combinations



- Playing points:
 - Hit high and deep when in problems
 - Hit short, low and angled when trying to make the opponent come to the net

Baseline patterns: **Depth combinations**



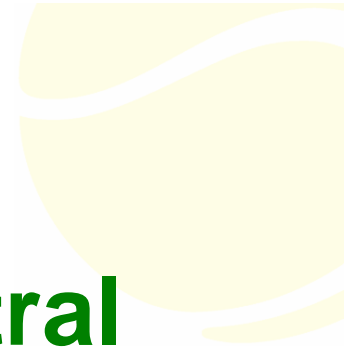
- Playing points:
 - Player A can only hit deep shots (set targets)
 - Player A can only hit short but angled shots (set targets)
 - Player A has to mix up different shots with different depth

Baseline patterns: **Inside out forehand**



- Playing points:
 - Player A can only hit FH
 - Player A can only hit FH return

Baseline patterns: **Offensive, defensive and neutral**



- Playing points:
 - Player A can only hit aggressive shots (FH, BH topspin, etc.)
 - Player A can only hit neutral shots (lobs, shots to the middle, etc.)
 - Player A can only hit defensive shots (drop-shots, indirect passing, lob, etc.)
 - Player A has to mix up different types of shots
- Combine everything: depth, spin, height, etc.



PATTERNS FOR MID COURT AND NET GAME

Mid court and net game patterns

- Do not ask one player to give a shot ball to the other. It is unrealistic!!
- It is better for the coach to put the ball into play by making one player run and hit a defensive shot

Mid court and net game patterns:

Directions

- Approaching down the line:
 - Passing down the line, crosscourt volley, FH and BH.
- Approaching crosscourt:
 - Passing down the line, crosscourt volley, FH and BH.
- Free choice

Mid court and net game patterns:

Attacking from mid court (topspin shots)

- Coach feeds a short ball:
 - Player hits a FH, BH winner
 - Player hits a FH, BH drop-shot

Mid court and net game patterns:

- Approaching the net:
 - Offensive, defensive
 - Topspin (forehand and backhand)
 - Slice (backhand)
- Coach feeds a short ball:
 - Player hits a FH, BH topspin approach shot (offensive). Players play the point
 - Player hits a FH, BH slice approach shot (defensive). Players play the point

Mid court and net game patterns:

Variations: half volley, topspin volley, drop-shot

- Coach feeds a short ball:
 - Player hits a FH, BH half volley, Players play the point
 - Player hits a FH, BH topspin volley. Players play the point
 - Player hits a FH, BH drop-shot. Players play the point

Mid court and net game patterns:

First volley

- Coach feeds a short ball:
 - Player hits a FH, BH deep low volley. Players play the point
 - Player hits a FH, BH angled cross short low volley. Players play the point

Mid court and net game patterns:

Second and last volley

- Coach feeds a short ball:
 - Player hits a FH, BH first volley and then a power high volley. Players play the point
 - Player hits a FH, BH first volley and then an angled volley. Players play the point

Mid court and net game patterns:

Overhead smash and combinations

- Coach feeds a:
 - High lob, player hits an smash on the air. Players play the point
 - Deep lob, player runs back and hits an smash after the bounce. Players play the point
 - Short lob, player runs and hits an smash before the bounce. Players play the point

Net game against baseline game

Passing shots: direct and indirect, drop-shot

- Explain the difference
- Make the opponent volley
- 2 passings: Preparation and winner
 - Coach feeds a deep ball:
 - Player hits a FH, BH direct passing shot. Players play the point
 - Player hits a FH, BH indirect passing shot. Players play the point
 - Player hits a FH, BH drop shot. Players play the point

Net game against baseline:

Lob: offensive, defensive



- Coach feeds a deep ball:
 - Player hits a FH, BH offensive lob. Players play the point
 - Player hits a FH, BH defensive lob. Players play the point

CONCLUSION



- Need to teach tactics in a practical way
- Start with basic tactical patterns (closed situations)
- Follow up with open situations (matchplay conditions)
- Make your players think
- Tennis is a sport for intelligent people!