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CHAPTER



FOREHAND AND BACKHAND DRILLS



The ball controls of an effective forehand or backhand are acceleration (for power and offense), accuracy (for control of shots), consistency (for making shots repeatedly), and variety (for the ability to hit various types of shots, including defensive shots). To achieve these qualities, players should focus on the fundamentals. The fundamentals include focusing on movement and balance as a player hits the ball, which are covered in chapters 1 and 2. This chapter helps players make acceleration, accuracy, consistency, and variety an integral part of their game, and it helps players maximize the effectiveness of the forehand and backhand. The qualities of effective forehands and backhands are discussed next.

- **Acceleration.** Acceleration is how the player creates racket head speed and momentum through shots—using the legs and extending the dominant arm before and after contact and through the follow-through. The acceleration adds power and spin to the player's shots. For example, a player hits a ball with topspin and it bounces out of the opponent's strike zone, keeping the opponent off balance; now the player can play the preferred style more easily. Groundstrokes today are designed for power and for hitting an opponent off the court. How well a player strikes the ball can be directly related to how well the player ultimately plays, so hitting shots with good acceleration is an important goal. Accelerating the racket head helps the player create a shot that is both smooth and powerful and a shot that is overpowering.
- **Accuracy.** Shot accuracy relates directly to skill level. The ability to place the ball where it is intended to go gives players confidence and separates them from their peers. Achieving this command of their strokes takes great skill and technique, and it is invaluable to players developing a style of their own. Players need to have a good vision of how they should play (their own game style) to advance to higher levels of play. When players begin thinking more strategically about what shots they will need as part of that style, their accuracy becomes even more important.

Knowing how and when to hit shots that land deep in the court, shots that are angled shorter or deeper, and short shots that fit within a player's game style gives the player a huge advantage. It is also the difference between playing an offensive shot to effectively finish off a point and hitting a defensive shot that merely keeps a rally going. Every tennis player should think with this attention to detail.

- **Consistency.** Consistency and accuracy go hand in hand. A consistent player can accurately place shots where intended and can rely on those shots for the duration of a match. A consistent player can alternately be a *grinder*, which means the player gets a lot of balls in play, as well as a player that performs at a high level day in and day out.

Consistency is the model for every tennis player. As a player develops strengths and shores up weaknesses, consistency develops. Good coaches try developing a player's skill first, and then help them become more consistent with that new skill. A long-term plan of development and consistency results in improvement throughout a player's career.

- **Variety.** It is important that players develop weapons, such as a forehand or backhand, and also add variety to their game. When players possess good offensive and defensive shots, variety can become a weapon. A forehand that can overpower an opponent or slice backhand that can serve as a defensive shot are good examples of how variety can be a valuable tool, even a weapon. Players must learn the shots associated with their preferred style of play. Then, as play improves, they can add a variety of shots to enhance that style.

Variety in shot selection can disguise weaknesses, throw off an opponent's rhythm, and affect both the player's and opponent's confidence. Picture an opponent who doesn't know what is coming next and struggles because of the variety of shots the player possesses. Being able to execute a good lob at an opportune

Drilling With the Backboard

Many of the drills in this chapter offer a solo variation that can be practiced on a backboard. This strategy is helpful for players without a practice partner or coach. It is also good for players who want to get in some extra practice on their own. The backboard is an excellent tool for stroke development because the ball is always coming back at the player, which helps establish a rhythm from the ball just hit against the backboard. The following are tips for successful backboard drilling.

- **Setting the aim.** To start, the player stands 12 feet (3.7 m) from the wall and aims for the middle of the backboard in an area above the net line (if the wall has a net line and target areas painted on it). If no lines or targets exist the player can visualize them. Moving forward and backward in this area gives the player different bounces and different trajectories, so the player should be challenged to work on technique in the different areas.
- **Determining the trajectory.** To begin with, players should use higher, heavier shots that have a high trajectory to give the ball loft. Focus on loading underneath the shot and producing topspin to give the ball proper loft. A flatter ball produces a bounce with less loft, causing the player to have to move more. A ball hit flat against a backboard comes back flat and fast, so players should use flatter balls with greater depth when they practice backcourt grooving drills.
- **Using repetition.** An effective way to practice grooving drills on a backboard is to focus on a certain number of repetitions (e.g., 10, 20, 30, 100) on the forehand or backhand side. This type of repetitive drilling sets the stage for developing consistency (hitting shot after shot), acceleration (hitting with spin and trajectory), accuracy (location of the shot provides a higher bounce to maintain repetitions), and variety of shots (slice, flat shots).

moment and being able to hit a slice that confuses an opponent are powerful tools. Variety in shots is also helpful for recovering back in the court. Players should predominately hit shots that allow for a quick recovery and allow them to play more aggressively.

As players progress, they should work daily on acceleration, consistency, accuracy, and variety. The drills in this chapter help the player zero in on specific ways to improve these skills. A complete player concentrates on improving weaknesses, but also works to perfect strengths, too. Noting the player's strengths and weaknesses in these skills during practice is a good way to develop strong work habits. Ultimately the player should incorporate the objectives of practices into the game plan. (See chapter 10 for more on game plans.)

The following progression of drills works through the identified characteristics for a great groundstroke. The drills start from basic and progress to advanced. They first work on consistency of the core techniques and then expand the playing area with movement, speed, and depth of shot. They progress into drills for learning and fine tuning the different shots and finally drills that mimic match play. To be the best player possible, it is mandatory that the player learn all the proper technique shots and styles in a progressive fashion.

1. Grooving drills to warm up and ingrain the fundamental core techniques
2. Movement drills to work on footwork and balance

3. Acceleration drills to work on hitting through the zone for increased topspin and power
4. Specific shot drills to work on consistency, accuracy, and variety
5. Live ball drills to work on shot recognition and match play skills

GROOVING DRILLS

The goal of grooving drills is to practice the basics of the game and to prepare for more complex and intense practice. These partner drills are effective for both the forehand and backhand and can be practiced in two ways:

1. **Short court.** These drills are for preparation and execution.
2. **Backcourt.** These drills are for overall technique and movement.

Alternatively, the backboard can be used to groove strokes, as directed in the solo variations of the following drills. The straight-ahead short court and backcourt drills are best for backboard drilling because the bounce off the board is straight back as opposed to angled, allowing for easier grooving.

Using the backboard for crosscourt drilling is predominately for more advanced players and for working on speed, movement, and desperation shots. Because of the low trajectory of the flat crosscourt shot, the bounce off the wall is lower and angled outward, requiring hustle to the next shot. The easiest shot for working on crosscourt is a high, heavy shot. The bounce off the wall is higher and allows more time for proper recovery and the ability to groove the shot.

Whether drilling with the backboard or with a partner or coach, it is important to focus on preparation. One way to do so is by playing the call-out game. This technique works with any of the drills in this chapter, but is especially beneficial to practice during the grooving drills.

CALL-OUT GAME

Purpose: Identify and practice early preparation for the correct stroke.

Procedure: The player watches the opponent's racket and shot, and then calls out *forehand* or *backhand* as soon as possible. The player should try to be fast at this and pick up the nuances of the opponent's strokes. The player should notice whether the opponent takes the ball early or late and consider what the opponent's grip suggests about the type of game the opponent has.

Variation: The player calls out the shot and then freezes in position. While frozen, the player should check that his position is the correct preparation for the oncoming ball.

Short Court Grooving Drills

A great deal of tennis players warm up with short court drills. This type of warm-up is designed to help check technique, warm up the body, test different grips, and generally get a feel for the racket. Three short court drills can help in grooving the game. The first drill is done straight ahead, the second drill is done diagonally, and the third is a point situation. All these drills set the player up for later drilling, so the player should master these first, equally using the forehand and backhand.

STRAIGHT-AHEAD SHORT COURT

Purpose: To practice preparation and execution technique.

Procedure: Both players start at the service line. Keeping the ball inside the service box, they rally back and forth lightly, becoming progressively more aggressive depending on the level or intensity of the practice. The players focus on different grips and stances to test variety, a strong first step to the ball (foot closest to the ball first on all shots), and proper stroke execution. The focus here is on technique, not power.

Coaching points: The players should focus on one technique component at a time, starting with grip, then movement and stances, and finally on the technique desired for the different phases of the swing (preparation, forward swing and contact, and follow-through).

Solo variation: Grooving this drill on a backboard is a great tool for warming up. The player stands about 5 feet (1.5 m) away and at first hits the ball softly with a high trajectory to establish a rhythm and to work on technique. When warmed up, the player moves back 2 feet (0.6 m) at a time and begins to flatten out the shot, progressing toward a normal groundstroke. The player continues to move back to a maximum of 10 feet (3 m), which produces a deeper-bouncing ball. The player works on greater acceleration from a deep location by hitting this ball harder. Standing closer than 10 feet (3 m) and hitting the ball harder produces a quicker shot and forces a player to have a quicker preparation and acceleration.

DIAGONAL SHORT COURT

Purpose: To practice preparation and execution technique as well as movement, acceleration, and accuracy of location.

Procedure: The drill is the same as the Straight-Ahead Short Court drill, except players rally crosscourt. They should make sure the ball lands in front of the service line.

Coaching points: In this drill, the player tries to make contact while brushing the outside of the ball. This crosscourt rally focuses on the accuracy and acceleration needed to hit the ball to a specific location within the service box.

Solo variation: To groove crosscourt strokes off a backboard, the player uses a high trajectory to allow time to run to a shot and get into the desired position to hit crosscourt. The player stands about 6 to 10 feet (1.8 to 3 m) in front of the backboard. The player alternates hitting forehands and backhands crosscourt, and the ball returns off the wall either straight or down the line.

CRITICAL CUE:

The player should be sure to line up and load the foot closest to the ball first before contact.

COMPETITIVE SHORT COURT

Purpose: To create a competitive situation, testing movement, strategy, and execution at an accelerated pace.

Procedure: Players compete for points using only the short court area. They should use regular tennis scoring and play a set or points to 11, 15, or 21.

Coaching points: Using and covering both boxes emphasizes an accelerated version of normal backcourt rallies, so this is a perfect time to check and practice strategies. To be successful in this drill, good strategy, movement, touch, and the ability to spin or shape the ball are needed. This is a fun but challenging game. Players should use the opportunity to work on developing a little touch.

Backcourt Grooving Drills

These drills are universal to most warm-ups. In addition to helping groove strokes, they help develop the basis for a player's game style. Performing these drills with an emphasis on not missing a shot, recovering properly, and being in position for each ball, helps the player's focus and intensity.

STRAIGHT-AHEAD BACKCOURT

Purpose: To lengthen strokes and add more power.

Procedure: Players rally from the baseline or move progressively to the backcourt by moving back step by step. They hit down the middle and focus on perfect technique and movement while adding length on the shot. Players should pay attention to the execution and resulting length of the shots, while experimenting with hitting flatter and adding more spin, to get the desired depth.

Coaching points: Players can improve their focus by zeroing in on the ball and trying not to be out of position for any shot. They should focus for a fixed time and recognize when fatigue or loss of focus occurs. Timing how long a player can focus allows for gradually and systematically increasing this ability for longer periods.

Solo variation: The player stands 15 feet (4.6 m) away from the board and hits flat balls to work on forward movement and high, lofty shots to work on backward movement. The amount of forward and backward movement depends on the pace of the shot, so the player should use a variety of speeds to work on different amounts of movement. If a player is unable to sustain a rally using flatter shots, shots with higher loft can be used to start, and then the flatter ball can be slowly incorporated.

CROSSCOURT BACKCOURT

Purpose: To incorporate movement, accuracy, and variety from the backcourt while hitting to a specific spot on the court.

Procedure: Players rally crosscourt. They should set goals for depth and placement, zero in on hitting to a specific area, such as past the service line and before the baseline, and then broaden the hitting area by using the alleys.

Coaching points: This drill can test a variety of shots because each player must adapt to the shot hit by the other and counter with the best shot to stay in the rally.

CRITICAL CUE:

For each shot, the player recovers back to the center and prepares for the next shot. Accelerating through the shot provides more depth and time for recovery.

RELEASE TECHNIQUE DRILL

Purpose: To work on stroke extension. This technique can be implemented with any of the backcourt grooving drills.

Procedure: As two players rally, each player, after making contact with the ball, practices the follow-through by releasing the racket gently into the other hand at the end of the extension.

Coaching points: On the forehand side, the nondominant arm catches the racket. The player should experience a stretch in the back of the shoulders while swinging upward and outward, pausing for a brief second after each hit. The racket should be in the opposite hand in front of the body with the butt cap facing toward the net and the other player (see figure 3.1). This drill exaggerates the follow-through to help highlight the use of the arms at full extension.



Figure 3.1 Proper release position.

HANDCUFF DRILL

Purpose: To check for overrotation. During the preparation and subsequent swing, a common mistake on the backswing is to overrotate and take the racket too far back.

Procedure: A great method to correct overrotation tendencies is for the player to grab the playing arm on the forearm or higher (sort of like wearing handcuffs) with the nondominant hand on the forehand side and keep this position while playing. On the backhand side, the player places the index finger of the nondominant hand on the strings of the racket when preparing for a one-handed shot. This helps to increase sensory awareness of where the racket head is letting go as the racket is swung forward to meet the ball. The same may be done with a two-handed shot, and then the hand slides down on the handle.

MOVEMENT DRILLS

Movement is a huge key to success in tennis, so it is imperative to include movement drills among the list of must-do's when practicing. Efficiency in movement has always been recognized as essential to hitting good shots. The most elite players practice the following types of drills daily.

1. **Loading step drills.** Players practice stepping into the ball using the forehand and backhand.

2. **Specific movement drills.** Players practice proper movement to the ball and proper recovery, whether moving side to side or moving backward and forward. Drills should be practiced using the forehand and backhand.
3. **Combination movement drills.** Players practice maintaining good movement through a combination of shots with the forehand and backhand.

All of these types of drills give heightened awareness to proper movement throughout a point or to a specific shot. Plus, each drill has many variations to make it specific to one shot or one movement, and it can be executed in combination with different shots or different movements. These drills are technical in nature and invaluable to develop and succeed as a tennis player, so players should strive for proficiency in all of them.

It is common to find the drills difficult to master if the movements are quite different from the player's already established movement patterns. Most players are unaware of using inefficient movement because developing a shot in spite of bad movement is possible. They should experiment with these drills to improve the shot by incorporating efficient movement. Players can perform each drill using the forehand or backhand.

SOLO VARIATIONS FOR THE LOADING STEP AND SPECIFIC MOVEMENT DRILLS

Players can also use the backboard to work on the loading step and specific movement drills. (For the combination movement drills, specific instructions for solo variations are provided within each drill.) Initially, the player can practice the loading step drills with slower-paced shots within a smaller area of the short court (within 5 feet, or about 1.6 m), and then speed up the pace of the shots and move back deeper in the court (10 to 15 feet, or about 3 to 5 m). The player should practice the specific movement drills from this deeper position in the court, too. When comfortably warmed up for either type of drill, the player can start counting repetitions (10, 20, 30 . . .) to work toward a specific goal.

Loading Step Drills

Loading step drills are important for practicing getting the foot closest to the ball lined up and loaded to transfer the body weight into the shot. Incorporating this first step is difficult and does throw off players' timing if they have been doing it incorrectly, but players should practice and carefully implement this first move.

For each of the following loading step drills, the drilling player should be on the baseline at the center hash mark, and the partner or coach should be in the middle of the court at the service line or a couple of feet (0.6 m) toward the baseline. The partner or coach feeds balls by throwing them like rally balls, using a similar pace and trajectory for each ball. For more advanced players, a racket feed may work better. The pace of the feeds should allow enough time for the drilling player to recover back to the original position prior to receiving the next ball. The drilling player should incorporate a split step before the partner feeds the next ball.

CRITICAL CUE:

Players should picture the middle instep of the foot closest to the ball landing in the pathway of the oncoming ball.

ALTERNATING OPEN AND CLOSED STANCE

Purpose: To achieve a full transfer of weight and power when hitting shots in open and closed stances.

Procedure: The coach or partner feeds balls with varying degrees of difficulty that require the player to take only one or two steps of sideways or forward movement to reach the ball. To practice a closed-stance groundstroke, the player takes two steps: one step out to line up the foot closest to the ball and then a step forward to the incoming ball to transfer weight from the lined-up position. To practice the first step and open stance, the player takes only one step out with the foot closest to the ball and loads that leg, hitting from an open stance. The first step should be a strong yet comfortable step—the player should remember to visualize having the ball hit the middle instep of the foot stepping out.

Coaching points: The player should put full weight on the leg lining up on the ball. To check weight placement and balance, a player can line up on the incoming ball and then, just prior to contact, lift the other (front) leg. The player should hold the leg up for one count before placing it back down. An inability to keep the leg up indicates imbalance. A player who predominately uses the front leg feels as though the back leg is weak during this exercise, but continued practice leads to improved balance.

CRITICAL CUE:

Players who prematurely step away from the path of the ball just hit should try to stay balanced longer on the leg they just finished hitting on. This requires good use of core strength and trunk rotation.

BACK LOADING STEP

Purpose: To achieve a full transfer of weight and power when stepping backward to return a ball hit deep.

Procedure: The first move is diagonally backward with the foot that the player is trying to line up with the ball. The step is strong, and the emphasis is on loading the leg. The coach or partner must feed high and deep balls to force the backward step. The feeder should throw (or hit, if needed) at different speeds to incorporate all the possible shots in a match and target the player's upper-level strike zone.

Coaching points: Players can check for loading and balance by lifting the front leg to make sure the weight is transferred fully back before moving forward to hit the ball.

Specific Movement Drills

Specific movement drills are designed to teach players exactly what steps to take to a shot. Moving to a ball correctly affects speed around the court and subsequent recovery to get in good position for the next shot. The goal is to be efficient with all movement and to run in a balanced fashion. For the specific movement drills, the drilling player should be positioned on the baseline at the center hash mark, and the partner or coach should be in the middle of the court at the service line. The partner or coach drills with eight balls and feeds the balls by hand or by racket, depending on the level of the player. The pace of the feeds should allow enough time for the drilling player to recover and split step just before receiving the next ball.

CRITICAL CUE:

The player should focus on using two explosive steps forward to get to the ball faster, emphasizing pushing off the back leg.

CRITICAL CUE:

The player can get the body behind the ball by setting up the last step so that the ball lands in line with the middle instep of the outside foot.

FORWARD MOVEMENT

Purpose: To improve footwork to a ball hit inside the baseline and toward the service line.

Procedure: The partner or coach feeds the balls with varying degrees of difficulty so that the drilling player must take more than two steps forward to hit the ball. Tosses can range from just in front of the baseline to all the way inside the service line. The drilling player runs forward quickly and turns sideways a couple steps before striking the ball. The player should focus on turning the body and shuffling forward, being careful to not cross the legs. Then, the player strikes the ball and recovers quickly back to the baseline.

Variation: The partner or coach can push the drilling player back with a deep feed and then throw a ball near the service line. The drilling player hits the first ball off the back leg and then runs forward and makes the adjustment turn just before hitting the shorter ball off the front leg.

SIDE MOVEMENT

Purpose: To incorporate efficient lateral movement needed in a rallying situation and an efficient recovery.

Procedure: The coach or partner feeds balls toward the alley so that the drilling player must move 3 to 5 feet (0.9 to 1.5 m) laterally to hit the ball. The tosses should include balls that are slightly diagonal forward and backward. On the toss, the drilling player immediately pivots with the outside foot, moving first toward the shot. Then, the player takes as many crossover steps as needed before sliding the outside foot out toward the oncoming ball for an open-stance groundstroke. If time allows, the player may step in for a closed-stance stroke.

Coaching points: Players should focus on a big, strong first step because it is more efficient and creates better balance at the end of the shot.

BACKWARD MOVEMENT

Purpose: To improve the backward footwork needed to get behind a deep ball.

Procedure: The coach or partner feeds the balls deep to force the drilling player to move backward beyond the baseline and take multiple steps to get behind the ball. The drilling player takes a big first step backward and then incorporates a crossover step before setting the back leg, keeping the hips facing forward. The player should then pivot the hips in preparation for hitting the ball and recover by thrusting the back leg forward quickly to move back into the court in preparation for the next ball.

Coaching points: To prevent the hips from turning, the player can visualize a piece of tape on the chest that should remain visible until pivoting the hips. The player should focus on stepping in a diagonal direction backward, followed by a crossover step and another drop step to avoid the tendency to get too close to the oncoming ball and have to make extra moves to adjust.

Combination Movement Drills

Combination movement drills simulate real match play situations and maximize the movement for each shot. The drilling player is positioned on the baseline at the center hash mark, and the partner or coach is positioned in the middle of the court at the service line. Eight balls are fed by hand or racket depending on the level of the player, and the pace of the feeds should allow enough time for recovery to the center and a split step just before receiving the next ball.

SIDE-TO-SIDE MOVEMENT

Purpose: To maximize side-to-side movement and to simulate a live ball rally.

Procedure: The coach or partner feeds balls that require the drilling player to move 3 feet (0.9 m) or more to the side. The tosses should vary the amount of movement to the side and should alternate between requiring forehand and backhand shots from the player. The player hits the ball either crosscourt or down the line, depending on the area of focus. The player makes a quick hip turn for recovery toward the center of the court by using a crossover step and taking a split step to prepare for the next ball.

Coaching points: The player should start the hip turn for recovery when making contact with the ball and continue it until the completion of the groundstroke. By rotating the body more fully, the hips and shoulders face the net, saving the player additional steps on the recovery.

Solo variation: The player hits crosscourt so the ball returns down the line. The player starts 8 to 12 feet (2.4 to 3.6 m) from the backboard to work on smaller movement ranges and progresses to 15 feet (4.6 m) or more to cover a larger area of court and use a greater range of combinations.

BACKWARD-TO-FORWARD MOVEMENT

Purpose: To maximize forward and backward movement and to simulate a live ball rally.

Procedure: Starting with a deep feed, the coach or partner alternates tossing short and deep balls that require the player to move 3 feet (0.9 m) or more forward or backward. Throughout the drill, the feeder should vary the amount of movement needed. The player should start hitting crosscourt and then later switch to down the line. On the first toss, the player moves back with a strong first step and shuffles as needed to get behind the ball, loading onto the back leg. After making the shot, the player split steps and runs quickly forward to get the next ball.

Coaching points: The player should avoid turning the hips in the movement leading up to striking the ball. Instead, the player should make a slight hip turn at the end of the stroke to speed up recovery for the next ball.

Solo variation: The player starts 8 to 12 feet (2.4 to 3.6 m) from the backboard to work on smaller movement ranges and progress to 15 feet (4.6 m) or more to cover a larger area of court and use a greater range of combinations. To work on forward and backward movement, the player alternates hitting a high ball with loft (for a deep ball and backward movement) with a harder, flatter ball with a low trajectory (for a short ball and forward movement).

INSIDE-OUT FOREHAND MOVEMENT

Purpose: To practice the inside-out forehand movement pattern. This shot is used widely in today's game.

Procedure: The coach or partner feeds balls toward the player's body, forcing the player to move out of the way and set up behind the ball. The player needs to create space to rip the ball. The player should focus on using a drop step back diagonally and turning the shoulders during the preparation.

Solo variation: The player focuses on moving around each ball to hit the ball inside out against the backboard. Off the wall, the ball returns straight and the player must run over and hit the next forehand crosscourt to set up the run around forehand again.

RANDOM MOVEMENT

Purpose: To practice all movements in a live game simulation, to practice different movement combinations, and to emphasize the proper use of the split step.

Procedure: The coach or partner is positioned on the forehand or backhand side of the court and feeds balls to random locations on the court, allowing the player enough time between shots to recover. The player hits each shot back to the coach, recovers back to the middle of the court on the baseline, split steps, and responds to the next ball. The player should do repetitions hitting everything to the forehand side and then the backhand side of the court.

Solo variation: The player starts 8 to 12 feet (2.4 to 3.6 m) from the backboard to work on smaller movement ranges and progresses to 15 feet (4.6 m) or more to cover a larger area of court.

ACCELERATION DRILLS

One of the successful traits of a good forehand or backhand is acceleration. The speed of the racket head through the contact of a shot produces acceleration. Good acceleration of the racket head adds weight to a shot. From start to finish, the swing should be fluid, without hitches in a player's racket preparation. Players can practice each of the drills in this section using either the forehand or the backhand.

Keep in mind the following tips for performing the acceleration drills:

- The player should load the back leg to set the stage for a continued swing through the shot and then push from the back leg to the front leg in conjunction with the swing.
- The elbow should be close to the body for power and stability. The player should focus on the swing path coming closer to the body as the dominant arm loops down to swing up and forward and extends toward the follow-through.
- The player should imagine the area 2 to 4 inches (about 5 to 10 cm) before the contact point as the acceleration zone and swing aggressively upward through this zone, trying to hit with the top of the strings.
- The player should throw the racket arm toward the target, making sure that the racket head comes through first, followed by the elbow. The elbow coming through first is often seen with a more Western grip, but this approach should generally be avoided.
- If not in use, the nondominant arm should provide balance. The player holds the arm comfortably in front or to the side in preparation and gradually pulls away or to the side upon contact.

- The player needs to follow through, visualizing hitting through the ball, with the goal of extending the arm outward and finishing to maximize the effect on the shot. For most players this means finishing on the opposite side of the body anywhere from waist level to shoulder level. The most common finish is around the opposite shoulder, depending on the stroke, but it is important to experiment with different finishes to find the one that produces the most power. The finishing movement needs to be strong, consistent, and a smooth continuation of the swing path.

Recently, advanced level players have started trying to finish around the chest on the opposite shoulder. Rafael Nadal, however, has tweaked the formula and changed modern tennis with the acceleration he gets by swinging up and staying on the same side. The massive amount of topspin that he puts on the ball makes this swing effective; players should try adding it to their game.

SOLO VARIATIONS FOR ACCELERATION DRILLS

The backboard is a great tool for working on acceleration, but players need to modify the pace of shots. Because hard-hit balls come back hard and fast, sustaining a rally can be difficult. Players should stand 10 feet (about 3 m) from the backboard and use slower-paced shots initially to see the differences in the depth and pace of the shot coming back, then gradually begin to add pace, adapting movement accordingly.

Another way to practice acceleration is to self-feed a bucket of balls. The player drops balls lightly, alternating landings slightly in front, behind, and to the side of the body. Once warmed up, the player lightly throws the balls a little farther away to incorporate movement. The player can initially work on the swing and acceleration down the line, then start to hit crosscourt and angles to see the differences between each shot. This solo variation can also be part of the practice court warm-up before a match to prepare the body for maximum acceleration right away.

BASIC ACCELERATION DRILL

Purpose: To develop racket head acceleration through strokes. Players should do this drill at the beginning of each practice.

Procedure: The player stands 5 feet (1.5 m) from the net near the middle or slightly to the side of the shot being drilled. The coach or partner is on the opposite side and close to the net. About every 2 seconds, the feeder tosses balls diagonally, approximately 2 feet (0.6 m) to the front and side of the stroke being drilled. The player hits up on the ball as fast as possible while extending the racket head and arm toward the shot. The player focuses on hitting up through the attack point of contact with as much force as possible.

Coaching points: The goal for this drill is to hit with force and depth, producing a ball with a lot of topspin and a low trajectory (as low as the player can hit without hitting the ball into the net). The player should experiment with different trajectories to see which one produces the deepest shot. Signs of a good stroke include a ball that lands near the baseline (just outside works for this drill) with shape and moves quickly through the court.

Variation: To check extension, the player uses the technique of releasing the racket described in the Release Technique Drill (see page 59).

CRITICAL CUE:

Pay attention to preparatory technique. The player must load the arm (preparation loop) and body (balanced with weight predominantly on the back leg) to maximize acceleration and extension of the racket head and arm toward the ball.

SWINGING VOLLEY DRILL

Purpose: To develop or improve swing or stroke mechanics with acceleration. A properly hit swinging volley (that lands near the baseline) requires a full swing and proper trunk rotation. This is the same technique needed for groundstrokes. Taking the ball out of the air simulates a ball off a bounce, allowing the player to practice the swing needed to create or counter power. The extension needed to perform this drill successfully, naturally improves swing mechanics.

Procedure: The player stands on the center hash mark of the baseline. The coach or partner feeds ball diagonally with loft into the upper to mid strike zone: toward the shoulder and approximately 2 to 3 feet (0.6 to 0.9 m) to the side of the swing path. The feeds should allow the player time to recover and get in good position for the next swing. The player sets the outside foot and swings fully, hitting the ball out of the air and focusing on the elements of good acceleration throughout the shot. The loft of the feed causes the player to hit under the ball, using topspin to give the ball some shape and keep it in the court. The player should try to get each shot near the baseline and then switch to sharp crosscourt shots off the court. The player should alternate hitting balls flat (drives) and with shape (higher bouncing). The player repeats the drill standing at the center of the baseline.

Variation: The player can test for improved acceleration from time to time by decreasing the time between tosses. A player who is able to recover and swing faster with force and acceleration while maintaining form is developing a powerful and consistent stroke pattern.

MOVING ACCELERATION DRILL

Purpose: To develop or improve racket head speed while hitting a low shot on the move.

Procedure: The player starts on the baseline midway between the center hash mark and the alley. The coach or partner stands in front and a few feet toward the alley of the extended stroke and throws low balls that bounce 0.5 to 1 foot (15 to 30 cm) high. The tosses should come immediately after each ball is hit, and the feeder moves 2 feet (0.6 m) away from the player with each new toss. The player follows the feeder, who is walking backward toward the net while feeding, swinging from low to high as fast as possible through the strike zone, and producing balls with a great deal of topspin and power.

Coaching points: Proper placement and timing of the feeds is mandatory to push the player to accelerate on each ball. The rapid-fire succession of tosses can be slowed down if needed or thrown at different heights if the player desires. The end locations of the shots are not as important as the speed of the racket head through the contact point. The movement toward the net simulates a short ball, and the sustained loading helps improve a player's core strength.

Variation: This drill can also work on backward, diagonal, and side-to-side movements. Backward movement reverses the steps the feeder and player take. For diagonal movement, the balls are tossed in a line diagonally forward toward the alley. To practice side-to-side movement, the partner or coach moves to about 2 feet (0.6 m) directly in front of the player and tosses the ball side to side, requiring anywhere from 2 to 4 feet (0.6 to 1.3 m) of movement in either direction. Ample recovery time is needed on the side-to-side movement so that the contact point remains the same.

CRITICAL CUE:

The player needs to use core muscles to accelerate on each ball and good balance in the legs for the shuffle forward while striking the ball. The player should be low and loaded throughout each repetition.

HARD HITTING: OUT OF THE BALLPARK

Purpose: To increase acceleration and power in the forehand or backhand.

Procedure: The player starts on the middle of the baseline. The coach or partner feeds balls from the middle of the other side of the court. The feeds should land approximately 4 to 5 feet (1.3 to 1.5 m) in front and 2 feet (0.6 m) to the side of the stroke being drilled. The feeds should be easy, bounce to shoulder height, and come at a frequency that allows the player ample time to recover and prepare for the next ball.

The player prepares with a big windup and swings as hard as possible, culminating with a forceful follow-through. Where the ball lands is not important; even hitting the fence is fine! When the player is used to striking the ball with force, the drill continues. Now, while focusing on acceleration and topspin, the player needs to hit hard and aim to get the ball to land before the baseline. The ball should have shape (height and spin) and get off the court quickly.

Coaching points: A ball that lands past the baseline usually indicates a lack of acceleration or improper shot technique. The player can correct the problem by adding more acceleration, experimenting with the grip, emphasizing a more pronounced follow-through and finish, or a combination of these adjustments. For more acceleration, the player needs to focus on using a low-to-high swing path with the racket head leading the elbow. The arm and racket face need to extend as quickly as possible toward the shot. The Eastern, semi-Western, or a hybrid of the two grips may be used. On the follow-through, the elbow should be pointing in the desired direction of where the player wants the ball to go.

Variation: The player can also start at the middle of the service line to work on accelerating from the midcourt. In this version the feed lands 1 to 2 feet (0.3 to 0.6 m) away from the player, and the player hits the ball toward the service line with an emphasis on lining up the foot closest to the ball and loading the leg.

HARD HITTING: KILLER SHOTS

Purpose: To simulate a live game situation and develop or improve the ability to hit a hard-hit ball and transition to the net.

Procedure: Player 1 starts on the center hash mark on the baseline and faces players 2 and 3 who are positioned on the opposite side of the net on the baseline. One of the two other players feeds a ball so that it lands 4 to 5 feet (1.3 to 1.5 m) in front and 2 feet (0.6 m) to the side of the forehand or backhand being practiced. Player 1 hits the ball aggressively (the killer shot), focusing on the elements of acceleration, and approaches the net. The players play out the point. They should score the game to 11, 15, or 21 and then rotate positions.

Coaching points: The execution of the transition shot determines how easily the next shot can be put away at net. If the transition shot lands short, the player should check for a balanced stance, maximum speed, and full arm extension on the swing and that the racket is facing properly out toward the target. If a player's balance and execution are fine and the ball still lands short, the grip (possibly a Western grip) may have too much topspin and isn't allowing for a fast enough pace.

Variation: This drill can be frustrating if the skill level of player 1 is lower than those of players 2 and 3. To accommodate skill level differences or add variety, players should use the drop-off game. In this version, the player who returns the killer shot keeps playing, and one of the other players (2 or 3) drops off the court; the point is completed in a one-on-one situation.

SPECIFIC SHOT DRILLS

Specific shot drills provide the opportunity to zero in and improve on a particular ground-stroke shot. Each shot is important to have for a balanced game with variety. Drilling specific shots can also provide the opportunity to improve the skills discussed in chapters 1 and 2 in a more specific scenario. Each of these drills can be used to drill both the forehand and backhand side.

The drills in this section highlight first the successful execution of a shot and then hitting to a target to help develop focus and accuracy within the shot. For the technique and target portions of the drills, the beginning court position is the same. The player starts on the middle hash mark on the baseline. A coach or partner, who is on the service line on the opposite side, feeds 8 to 10 balls by racket. The coach or partner can start with closer feeds to allow the player to master the proper movement before progressing to wider feeds that require more advanced movement. The tempo of the feeds can also speed up to improve recovery technique and time. The feeds can have varying tempos based on the skill being practiced. For example, players might want slower feeds for grooving and faster feeds for focusing on more challenging movement and learning to hit tougher shots.

The target drills require some equipment. The player or coach places a court squeegee with a hook on the net so that the pole is perpendicular to the ground, as shown in figure 3.2. If a squeegee is not available, a broom handle or similar object may serve as an effective substitute. A cone is placed over the top of the handle to provide a target (see figure 3.3). It is best to use cones with varying heights to work on the different trajectories and angles of the shots. Often the squeegee will have a hook attached, allowing a target to be raised and lowered.

A cone can also be placed deep in the court (see figure 3.4). In this setup, a player's goal is to try to hit the primary cone (the one on the squeegee). A secondary goal is to hit the deep quadrant cone if the player misses the primary cone. The cone on the squeegee can also be used as a target to hit over when trying to use the deeper cone as the primary target. Players should use the setup that works best for the shot they are practicing.



Figure 3.2 A squeegee pole can be attached to the net.



Figure 3.3 Target cone placed on the squeegee handle.



Figure 3.4 Cone and squeegee setup with a cone in the deep crosscourt quadrant.

CROSSCOURT FLAT SHOT

Purpose: To develop a shot played for power and a show of strength.

Technique practice: The coach or partner feeds balls diagonally to the mid strike zone toward the shoulder and approximately 2 to 3 feet (0.6 to 0.9 m) to the side of the swing path. To produce a flat ball and a low trajectory, the player accelerates from low to high but extends the arm outward just before contact. The player makes contact slightly in front of the front foot and hits the outside of the ball, aiming for a trajectory of approximately 1 to 2 feet (0.3 to 0.6 m) over the net. Between shots, the player recovers back to the middle and split steps to prepare for the next shot.

Coaching points: Players should experiment with different contact points to find the best spot for executing the crosscourt shot. Contacting the ball too late makes the ball go more down the line.

Solo variation: See the solo variation of the Diagonal Short Court drill on page 57.

Target practice: Set up the pole 7 to 12 holes to one side of the net strap and anywhere from 1 to 5 holes below the top strap. Move the pole to different positions to work on different angles. The cone can be set up higher or lower to add height variety to the shot. A lower target is the most aggressive form of the shot, and a higher target provides control (comfortable rally shot) for a safer shot. A cone placed deep in the court can add an additional target.

DOWN-THE-LINE SHOT

Purpose: To develop a weapon that can be played for power to the open court, keeping the opponent on the run or taking advantage of the opponent's weak crosscourt shot or poor movement.

Technique practice: The coach or partner feeds balls diagonally to the mid strike zone and approximately 2 to 3 feet (0.6 to 0.9 m) to the side of the swing path. The player accelerates from low to high but closes the shoulders. The player makes contact a little behind the contact point of the crosscourt flat shot and aims for a trajectory of 2 to 3 feet (0.6 to 0.9 m) over the net. Between shots, the player recovers back to the middle and split steps to prepare for the next shot.

Coaching points: This shot has a high risk of error because of the small target area, high net clearance, and the difficulty associated with changing the direction of the ball. To change the direction of the oncoming crosscourt or diagonal shot it is necessary to wait a little longer for the ball to get in the strike zone. The player should experiment with contact point and racket face angle to establish the best combination for executing the shot with power. Also, ball feeds can progress outward to practice this shot from a range of locations, anywhere from midway from the baseline hash mark to the alley.

Solo variation: See the solo variation in the Straight-Ahead Backcourt drill on page 58. Instead of standing centered to the backboard, move to one side.

Target practice: Set up the pole and cone about 2 feet (0.6 m) from the alley toward the net strap and anywhere from 1 to 5 holes below the top strap, moving the pole to work on different trajectories and angles. Then, place a cone on the court 4 to 5 feet (1.3 to 1.5 m) from the baseline and the alley if hitting for placement or 2 to 3 feet (0.6 to 0.9 m) from the baseline and alley if practicing winners.

CRITICAL CUE:

To assist the aim for the deep crosscourt corner, the player should extend the racket arm through the shot and imagine the arm going through the court to the opposite corner.

CRITICAL CUE:

Control of the shot is determined by the ability to keep the ball on the strings longer (to change the direction of the ball) and hit fully through the ball. The player should focus on hitting around the ball and using different degrees of spin and then work toward hitting a flatter ball to produce a more effective shot.

HIGH, HEAVY CROSSCOURT AND DOWN-THE-LINE SHOT

Purpose: To develop a heavy shot that will push or keep an opponent back in the court while creating room to step farther into the court and play more offensively.

Technique practice: The coach or partner feeds balls diagonally with spin and increased velocity to create a higher ball that bounces up high with topspin. The player prepares for the shot in one of three ways: back up and let the ball drop into the midlevel strike zone, move in and take the ball on the rise, or take the ball out of the air. The shot is like the normal groundstroke but with more upward arc on the ball. After the shot, the player split steps to prepare for the next shot.

Coaching points: A high, heavy ball is often played off a high-bouncing ball, leaving ample time to establish a proper load. Players should practice this shot from offensive (inside or near the baseline) and defensive (behind the baseline) positions. Note that hitting from a defensive position may require a slightly later contact point because the player arrives late, which requires more effort to get under the ball.

Variation: The high and heavy shot can also be hit down the line. The player can adjust the footwork, body position, and swing pattern accordingly, while adding the lower loading, increased top spin, and higher arm extension.

Solo variation: Since the bounce is high, the high and heavy shot is easy to drill on the backboard. The player stands 15 feet (4.6 m) away from the backboard to either the forehand or backhand side. The player picks a starting groundstroke (forehand or backhand) and hits one ball down the line with loft so that the ball bounces back high. On the next ball, the player hits a high, heavy crosscourt shot. The player should initially use a limited angle. The player runs over to meet the ball and executes the high, heavy crosscourt shot from the other side. To advance the drill, the player can widen the angle to incorporate more movement.

Target practice: Drilling this shot requires a target placed higher than the net strap. One option is to set up a pole on each net post by connecting a rope between the poles at a height of 3 to 4 feet (0.9 to 1.3 m) above the net. After a player has mastered hitting over the rope at this height, the player can raise the rope height. Another option is to set up an obstacle (bench, chair, bucket of balls, or other object) a few feet in front and to the side of the swing, forcing the player to hit up and over the object. The player should stand far enough back to avoid swinging into the object and enough to the side of the object to avoid a ball ricocheting backward. Finally, the player can place a cone approximately 2 to 3 feet (0.6 to 0.9 m) from the alley and baseline on the appropriate side of the court for either a crosscourt or down-the-line shot and practice the shot.

SHORTER- AND DEEPER-ANGLED SHOTS

Purpose: To develop a range of angled shots designed to pull an opponent off the court.

Technique practice: Two players hit balls diagonally with spin toward each other's doubles alleys. Each player tries to hit seven balls into the alley. The drill can start with players hitting diagonally crosscourt and then moving backward toward the baseline after each point. Players should aggressively brush the outside of the ball, accelerate the racket face in a shorter arc across the body, and aim to clear the net by 1 to 2 feet (0.3 to 0.6 m) for shorter angles and 3 to 5 feet (0.9 to 1.5 m) for balls landing past the service line. Between shots, the player recovers back to the middle and split steps to prepare for the next shot.

Coaching points: Using the rally and defensive points of contact helps provide extra time to load the legs and impart more spin to create a better angle. However, some players prefer the attack point of contact, which relies less on the legs and core and more on the arms and hands to create the angle. Using this contact point is helpful when not enough time exists to get set up behind the ball.

Variation: For an angled shot off of a down-the-line shot, the coach or partner feeds balls down the line flat or with topspin so that they land midway between the service line and baseline and produce a low ball that bounces back toward the baseline. To generate angle, the player takes the ball on the rise and, with a rally point of contact, hits the angle crosscourt.

Solo variation: The angled shot produces a short ball that bounces or deflects short in the court in the opposite direction of the player, so sustaining a rally can be difficult. The player picks a side and stands 6 to 8 feet (1.8 to 2.4 m) from the backboard. The player hits the ball flat or slightly higher down the line. Once the ball bounces off the backboard, the player hits the angle shot. The player runs over and, off the bounce, hits a defensive block shot straight forward or down the line, has it bounce straight in front of the body, and repeats the process. This approach combines practicing the shot and defensive skills.

Target practice: To provide a more sharply angled target, the player places the pole farther right or left from the target for the crosscourt shot. The player starts with the cone on top of the pole. The player performs the technique practice but aims to hit the cone. The coach or partner feeds balls from the center of the service line about midway toward the alley. After practicing this scenario, the player adds a court cone to practice a range of ending locations on or within 1 to 3 feet (0.3 to 0.9 m) of the sideline, varying from inside the service line to midway between the service line and baseline.

CRITICAL CUE:

The player should swing faster with more topspin and angle when hitting shorter angles.

INSIDE-OUT FOREHAND

Purpose: To develop the technique to move around the ball and redirect it with a powerful forehand to the ad-court (backhand side if the opponent is a right hander).

Technique practice: A coach or partner feeds balls diagonally with topspin or slice that bounce just past the service line and to a midway point between the center hash mark and the alley. Closer to the center is an easier shot, while closer to the alley is a more challenging shot. Using an open stance, the player contacts the shot at the attack point of contact for a drive shot and the rally contact point for a high heavy shot, emphasizing an outward push of the arm and wrist snap with upward acceleration. The shot should clear the net by 1 to 2 feet (0.3 to 0.6 m) and land 2 to 3 feet (0.6 to 0.9 m) from the baseline and the alley for a deep shot or near the service line for the angled shot. For the latter version, a player needs to snap the racket head more upward and outward. Between shots, the player recovers back to the middle and split steps to prepare for the next shot.

Solo variation: When combined with other shots, the inside-out forehand can be drilled on the backboard. One possible sequence is to hit down the line so that the ball deflects directly back, followed by an inside-out forehand, then a high and heavy crosscourt shot, followed by another inside-out forehand; then the sequence is repeated. Other options include alternating inside-out forehands with down-the-line shots or following crosscourt shots with down-the-line backhand shots.

Variation: If a player wishes to practice the inside-in forehand on the backboard, one sequence is to hit down the line so that the ball deflects directly back, followed by an inside-in forehand back to the same spot, then a high and heavy crosscourt shot followed by a forehand crosscourt shot; then the sequence is repeated.

Target practice: Set up the pole 7 to 12 holes from the net strap and 1 to 5 holes below the top strap. Then, move the cone to various locations on the sideline, ranging from inside the service line to midway between the service line and baseline as targets for the shot.

SLICE

Purpose: To develop the technique to hit a shot that will stay low over the net and is used to break up the rhythm of an opponent.

Technique practice: A coach or partner feeds balls diagonally with topspin or underspin to a point between the service line and baseline (but closer to the baseline) that is midway between the center hash mark and the alley. The player moves to a closed stance, prepares the racket head slightly behind the shoulders and slightly above the line of the oncoming ball, and contacts the ball in the attack contact point for an aggressive slice and in the rally to defensive contact points for a less aggressive slice. The shot should clear the net by 1 to 2 feet (0.3 to 0.6 m) and land as close as possible to the baseline. Between shots, the player recovers back to the middle and split steps to prepare for the next shot.

Solo variation: The player picks a side to drill and stands to that side. The player stands 3 to 4 feet (0.9 to 1.3 m) from the board to work on slices hit on the rise and 6 to 8 feet (1.8 to 2.4 m) back for deep slices. The player starts with a straight-ahead rally of just slices, moving up and back to practice the range of slice shots. The player can sustain a slice rally against the wall by concentrating on extending the arm toward the wall on the follow-through. Then, the player can add crosscourt

CRITICAL CUE:

In the preparation, the racket arm extends in a high-to-low chop or sweep, but on the follow-through it needs to go out toward the desired target. The wrist should release through the contact point to give the shot more bite.

shots to reset the point and practice the slice from other locations, working on the forehand and backhand slice.

Target practice: The coach or partner feeds a deep ball. Cones can also be placed in the court to highlight the exact location for a deeper slice (2 to 3 feet, or 0.6 to 0.9 m, from the baseline and alley) as well as the exact location for a shorter slice (low and near the service line for the crosscourt and down the line).

LIVE BALL DRILLS

Live ball drills simulate match play while providing the opportunity to continue to work on technique and placement for the various groundstrokes. Live ball drills require players to make adjustments to react to the ball that an opponent hits at them. The following drills range from practicing one stroke at a time to practicing a range of strokes. The drills also vary in terms of court coverage and target area.

ONE SHOT

Purpose: To hone technique and target accuracy while practicing a specific shot in a live ball situation. This drill can be used with the crosscourt, down-the-line, high and heavy, angled, inside-out forehand, inside-in forehand, and slice shots.

Procedure: Two players pick a shot to drill and assume appropriate court positioning at a point midway between the center hash mark and the alley. For crosscourt and deep-angle shots, they are diagonally across from one another on the baseline. For down-the-line shots, they should be straight across from one another on the baseline. For short-angle shots, they should be diagonally across from one another on the service line. The players decide on a target area for the shot that is big enough so they can hit it consistently over a competitive rally. A smaller area can be used for more of a challenge.

Before starting the point, each player completes three controlled hits to the target. For the controlled shots, the partner provides easy feeds for the designated shot and target area. After the controlled hits, the players play aggressively to the target, trying to win the point by forcing the other player into an error—a miss or any shot other than the specific drill shot. Cones can also be set as specific targets so that points are earned for hitting a cone. Games can be played to 10, 20, or 30 points.

FOREHAND OR BACKHAND ONLY

Purpose: To practice full-court coverage using only a forehand or backhand. Players can use this drill to practice the crosscourt, down-the-line, high and heavy, angled, inside-out forehand, inside-in forehand, and slice shots.

Procedure: Player 1 stands in one corner, deuce or ad side, and player 2 covers the whole court. Player 2 must hit either a forehand or backhand on every shot back to player 1. Player 1 can hit any shot to anywhere on the court in reply. Games should be played to 5 points, winning by 1 point if they should tie at 4-all. Players switch sides or roles after each completed game.

Variation: The players pick a specific forehand or backhand to hit every time, such as the inside-out forehand, or force more variety by making the rule that the same shot cannot be hit back-to-back or more often than a designated number of shots, such as a maximum of three.

DONUT HOLE

Purpose: To work on shot recognition and emphasize the time for executing specific shots.

Procedure: Two players stand opposite each other centered behind the baseline. Two cones are placed on each side of the court about 4.5 feet (1.3 m) from each singles sideline and 3 feet (0.9 m) from the baseline to form a box, or donut hole, in the midcourt (see figure 3.5). Any ball that the opponent hits into the hole is considered a *go for it* ball. Players can play games to 7 or 11 points.

Variation: Before they start, the players can agree on what type of shots they will hit (for example, drop shots or runaround forehand shots) when a ball is hit in the donut hole.

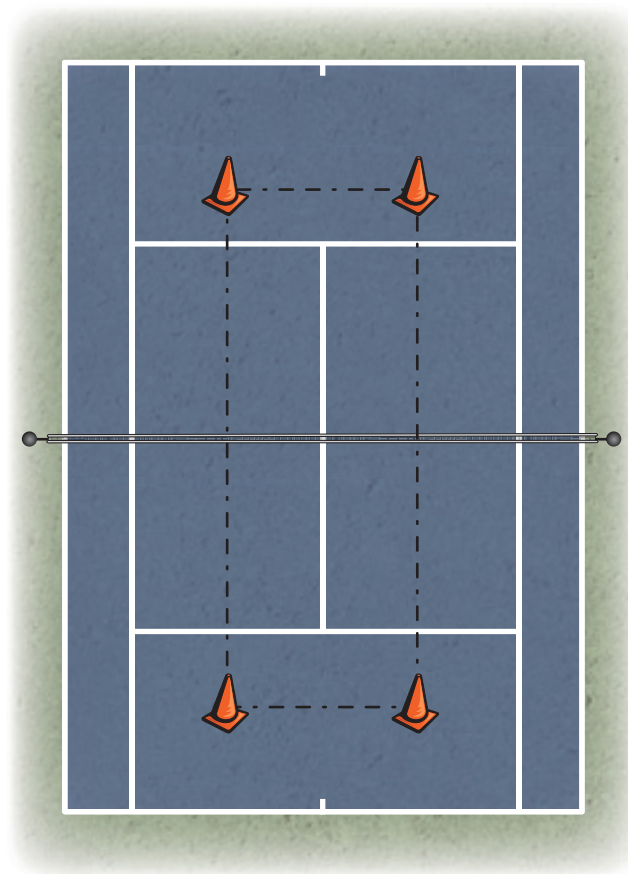


Figure 3.5 Cone setup.

CROSSCOURT VERSUS ANGLED SHOT

Purpose: To practice crosscourt and angled shots in a live ball situation and to gain experience with shot recognition for executing angled shots.

Procedure: On both sides of the court, the coach or player sets up two cones (see figure 3.6). One cone goes about 2 feet (0.6 m) from the alley and midway between the service line and the net to designate a target area for the short-angle shot. The other should be placed 4 feet (1.3 m) from the baseline and alley to form a target area for the crosscourt groundstroke or deep-angle shot. Both players start on their respective center hash mark. They rally with crosscourt shots to the designated area until one player hits a ball that lands outside of the crosscourt target area. When this happens, the point is played out crosscourt trying to hit balls into the short-angle target area. The player who hits the first seven short angles to the target area wins.

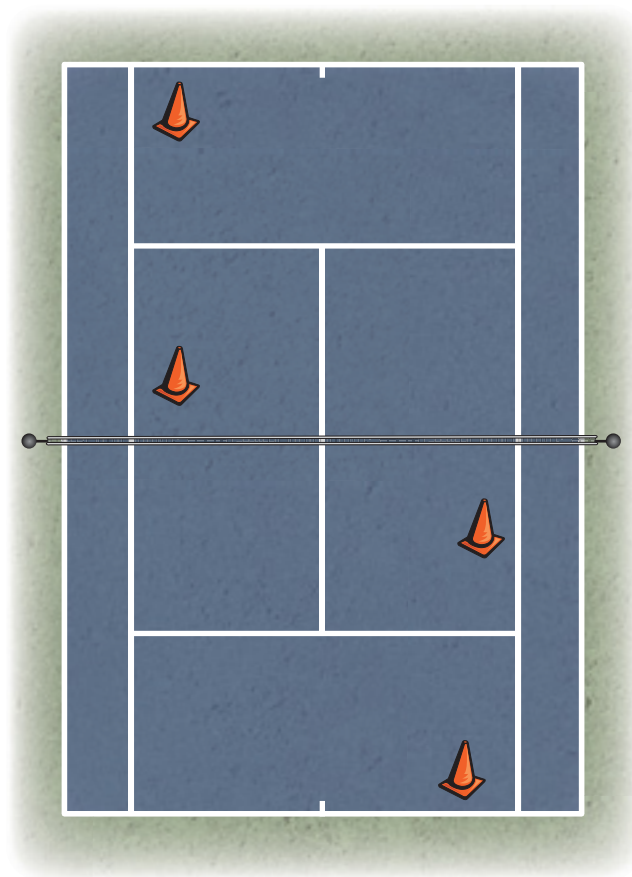


Figure 3.6 Cone setup.

DOWN THE LINE VERSUS HIGH AND HEAVY

Purpose: To practice the down-the-line and high, heavy shots in live ball situations and to gain experience with shot recognition.

Procedure: Two players face each other on opposite sides of the court in the crosscourt position (on the baseline, midway between the center and alley). One player feeds a ball to the other, and players rally with normal groundstrokes. When one player hits a short (or attackable) ball, the other player yells, *Go!* and then hits aggressively down the line. On the *Go!* signal, the player who hit the short ball must run over and hit a high, heavy ball as a recovery tool for the down-the-line shot. After the high and heavy ball, the players use the whole court to finish the point. Points are played to 11, 15, or 21.

Variation: A slice hit on the run can also be practiced after the *Go!* ball is called out.