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MyCoach

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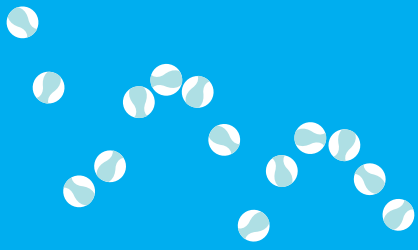
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SCRATCHING THE SURFACE

Different surfaces require a different set of skills and tactics. **Daniela Toleski** speaks to some coaches for advice on the best ways to play on each surface.



Roger Federer's all-court game style works well on hard courts.

ALL-SURFACE TRANSLATION

Different surfaces are something that every player needs to contend with, but if you're looking for one particular surface to build versatility, clay is the automatic choice.

National Academy Sydney Coach Ben Pyne explains that developing students' games on clay provides a platform for other developmental opportunities.

"From a National Academy Sydney view point we believe that all of these skills can be developed on a clay court first and then used on all surfaces," Pyne says. "We spend a minimum of three days a week on clay at Homebush, our athletes get the repetition of working on clay

where points are longer and they develop their offensive and defensive skills."

Once the skills have been developed on clay they can be translated to any surface.

HARD COURTS

Roger Federer has an aggressive all court game style and is a great model for playing on hard courts.

"Being able to maintain a position nearer to the baseline is a must," Pyne says. "Also being able to apply pressure by moving forward to take time away from the opponent through sneak attack plays and ideally finishing at or near the net with solid volleys and put away ground strokes."

Hard courts in Australia tend to be medium to fast pace and to take advantage of the extra court speed players should develop counter punching skills by turning defence into attack.

"Players tend to use less touch and drop shots when near the net and should look to neutralise their opponents with volleys down the line or attack with volleys cross court to expose movement," Pyne says.

Federer also shows how an accurate, well disguised serve with a high first serve percentage rate is invaluable on a hard court.

"Returners should be looking to take the ball as earlier as possible, like [Andre] Agassi or [Lleyton] Hewitt, as this will give their opponent less angle to work with."

Taking control of a point early is important, whether that's with a serve or a return of serve and by keeping control of the rally, a player is able to finish off the point with something aggressive and positive.

An athlete needs to stand up on the baseline more and take the ball on the rise, rather than standing two metres behind the baseline.

"You need to provide the environment where they can do that. I coach on porous or en-tout-cas courts primarily so occasionally we'll go to other centres, specifically when we've got nationals coming up for the kids, we'll move to a hard court centre for a bit of time and have some work there." Tennis Australia High Performance coach and Talent Development coach Greg Duns says.

"In men's tennis these weapons are commonly represented by the serve and the

forehand,” National Academy Melbourne coach Rea adds.

“The women’s game differs slightly in that the general pattern of play is observed to be increasingly linear ball flight lower, flatter over the net and the two-handed backhand has become the single most dominant shot across the spectrum of top 100 players.”

CLAY COURTS

When you think of clay courts, it’s hard to go past Rafael Nadal and his utter brilliance on the surface. It goes without saying that Nadal has changed the way clay court tennis is played.

Clay courts are a slower, higher bouncing surface which allows players to set a rally position further behind the baseline giving them more time to take a bigger swing causing a heavier spinning ball with extreme speed.

“This ‘heavy’ ball can be extremely useful for challenging the opponent’s strike zone, by pushing an opponent back with a high heavy ball or creating space with a short angle,” Pyne says.

“Drop shots become more useful on clay as players often find themselves further behind the baseline covering heavily hit ground strokes and they may not be ready for the drop shot.”

Being able to keep the ball in under pressure and having strong defensive skills are paramount on clay courts, along with movement and sliding.

“Players should look to develop a high kicking serve to the backhand and then dominate off the forehand side,” Pyne says.



which is a little slower to en tout cas.

“There’s a lot of strategy and tactics. You need to use the court well, move the ball around and hit the ball with some height and some depth and also some angles as well,” Duns says.

“And it’s not as easy to just win the point, you’ve got to work harder and be a bit smarter to play on clay than you do on hard court.”

GRASS COURTS

The fastest court surface with inconsistent bounces usually encourages players to move forward by either serving and volleying or using chip charge plays on grass.

“Being able to block and chip returns is advantageous due to the dominance of the serve on grass. A compact swing will allow

and play those events,” Duns says.

“You need to be able to flatten the ball out a little bit and a backhand slice is a good asset on the grass and also the ability to be able to volley reasonable well. But probably the most important thing is a good serve where you can take control of a point by setting up with a good serve.”

BEING COMFORTABLE

There are a number of players who are better on a faster surface than on a slower surface and many factors can have an impact on this.

“What surface an athlete has grown up on can effect where an athlete feels most comfortable playing from,” Pyne says.

“Players growing up on fast surfaces tend to have a less extreme grip giving them the ability to hit a flatter ball with more penetration. It also makes it easier to come forward and look to finish at the net because there is less of a grip change.”

Rea says that even though Nadal grew up on clay, the intensity, passion, refusal to accept second place and sheer determination to be the very best set him apart from nearly all of his competitors on any surface.

“In the minds of several good judges, he may well be one of the two or three greatest competitors to ever play this game, it is this quality that shines above all others when analysing the reasons behind his success on these two very different surfaces (clay and grass),” Rea says.

But Pyne believes the fundamentals of the game remain the same on any surface.

“Sound grips that allow players to defend and attack, good explosive movement and great defence. This has become more evident over the last decade due to most courts in the world becoming medium speed and medium bouncing courts no matter what the surface.”

Developing students’ games on clay provides a platform for other developmental opportunities.

In terms of establishing a level of comfort on this surface (and developing the appropriate movement) nothing replaces volume of training on this surface from a young age.

“As opposed to hard courts, a player is not rewarded so quickly for pure power on the clay and so the tactical understanding of how best to construct the point to enable success becomes increasingly important,” Rea says.

“The ability to utilise different spin, shape of shot and defensive doggedness becomes a priority. The associated gains in terms of the number of tennis balls being struck and the understanding of the game are just a couple of the reasons why exposure to clay courts during developmental years is so beneficial.”

Players need to learn to be a little more patient and more disciplined with their shot selection as they move on to natural clay

for good contact and helps get the ball back quickly and low to the advancing volleyer,” Pyne says.

“The ability to slice off the backhand side will help with defensive plays as well as giving variation with drop shots and short angles.”

The assistance of a genuinely world-class serve cannot be understated on grass, and it is a surface that will reward aggressive, confrontational tennis.

The dominance of the Williams sisters at Wimbledon recently (eight of the last 10 titles) shows that the supreme combination of power and athleticism have a real impact on grass, with practice and exposure to grass the key to being comfortable on the surface.

“There are a lot of good country tournaments and it’s a good idea for coaches to take kids away or encourage them to go

Return With Interest

Netpost view



Side view



Preparation Phase

Shoulders begin to turn, helping Federer align the racquet strings to the path of the oncoming ball. The non-dominant hand supports the racquet with the elbows away from the body, assisting the commencement of a separation angle.

Arms are slightly flexed and the beginning of a short and compact swing is evident, rather than a large circular motion with the hands positioned below the shoulders.

Flexion of the knees gives a sound base of support that is two to three times shoulder-width apart. Federer “fans” his fingers (top image) to find his eastern forehand grip.

Swing Phase — Backswing

Compared to his forehand drive, Federer’s return of serve preparation is more compact. The racquet hand is lower, so even though the racquet head has been “picked up”, his circular motion is modified.

The shoulders have rotated further than the hips to create a separation angle, ideally about 20°. The muscle stretch associated with the shoulders rotating further than the hips stores elastic energy, adding to the racquet head speed during the forwardswing.

Federer has a wide base of support that makes it easier to stay in balance.

Swing Phase — Backswing (cont.)

The shortened backswing, particularly obvious in the bottom image, decreases the distance that the racquet travels to generate racquet head speed. The speed of the return will utilise the ball speed of the oncoming serve.

The racquet and hand are visible on the hitting side of the body, with the non-dominant hand balancing the backward trunk rotation.

Federer’s torso is upright so that effective rotation around the vertical axis can occur.

Swing Phase — Forwardswing

Federer is assured of good contact by having the racquet face behind the path of the oncoming ball early. The forwardswing is more compact and therefore the racquet doesn’t “trail the trunk” as it rotates forward as significantly as it does in the forehand drive.

In the top image, Federer’s racquet face is still slightly above the level of the ball as he looks to meet a second serve on the rise. In the bottom image Federer’s racquet and hand are slightly below the level of the ball as part of a low-to-high racquet trajectory as he returns a first serve.

This month we analyse Roger Federer's forehand return of serve, which helped him win Australian Open 2010. The prolific champion is currently equal-second for points won in returning first serves (34 percent). The net post view and side view allows us to highlight and comment on various aspects of technique.



Swing Phase – Forwardswing (cont.)

Federer demonstrates impressive dynamic balance, which refers to his ability to keep the centre of gravity (COG) over his base of support (BOS) while his body is moving. The racquet face is vertical at this stage, which is important for a longer hitting zone. His head remains stable, with his eyes focused on the impact point. The hips and shoulders have rotated forward to be more front-on to the net.

Impact Phase

Observe how far out in front Federer has made contact with the hitting arm extended and racquet face vertical. His contact is made at almost an identical position relative to his body for both the second serve (top) and first serve (bottom) in terms of distance out in front, height of contact and lateral distance from his body. The wrist and forearm are stable and the position of the wrist indicates an eastern grip. The forward rotation and ground reaction force (GRF) has caused Federer to be off the ground at impact.

Follow-through Phase

Note the extension through impact (top impact particularly), Federer has rotated so that his shoulders are facing the net. He has kept a stable head position with his eyes fixed on the impact position, even after the ball has left the racquet. These two images give more evidence of Federer's impressive dynamic balance. GRF has caused Federer to remain off the ground.

Follow-through Phase (cont.)

The arm has continued to accelerate such that the upper arm is almost parallel to the ground, with the elbow pointing in the general direction of the return.

The follow-through also allows the racquet time and distance to decelerate without the breaking forces of an abrupt finish, which could have potential for injury over time. Federer demonstrates strong posture and balance in preparation for the next stroke.

*Geoff Quinlan
Tennis Australia – National Academy Manager
Bachelor of Applied Science (Honours) Human Movement
Tennis Australia High Performance coach*

WHERE SCIENCE MEETS ART

EVER WONDER...

Whether first serve percentage is really that important?

You hear it from commentators routinely ... a player's first serve percentage has just dropped below 60 per cent and the inference is that he or she should 'pick it up'. So, are the commentators right?

Well, based on the data from the men's game you'd say that this inference relates to a first serve percentage 'pass mark' of sorts. Five players out of the current ATP top 100 serve at more than 70 per cent, 12 serve at 65-69 per cent and a further 34 get 60-64 per cent of their first serves in. This means that virtually half of the game's best male players still serve at less than 60 per cent.

And it's here where physicians or statisticians, like Howard Brody¹, rally

against the blanket advice provided by commentators. They argue that it's too general, even plain wrong; particularly as it fails to take into account other data that must be considered to accurately shape serve strategy. They suggest that serve percentages of less than 60 per cent may in fact be desirable for certain players depending on the percentage of points that they win on their first and second serves as well as their second serve percentage. Of course, the underlying assumption here is that it's difficult for most players to increase their first serve percentage and simultaneously maintain or increase the percentage of the first serve points that they win (recent

work has confirmed that a moderate negative correlation, -0.43, exists between these two stats²).

In a practical sense, Andy Murray's first serve percentage is often lamented. He's currently ranked 72 in the first serve percentage statistic. On that basis alone, the lament appears warranted. However, when we also consider that he's ranked equal sixth in first serve points won, we're provided a great example of why Brody suggests that we need to look a little deeper.



FROM THE STANDS...

Are there more 'lefties' playing tennis than watching it?

Left-handers make up about 10-12 per cent of the population. However, as recently reported in other sports, there is mounting evidence pointing to 'lefties' being over-represented near the top of our game - think Rafael Nadal, John McEnroe, Martina Navratilova, and Rod Laver. The numbers stack up and have done for a long period of time. For example:

- Between the years 1973 and 1999, left-handers comprised 30 per cent and 34 per cent of the year-end world No. 1s in the women's and men's games respectively.³
- In the 32 years from 1968, ~22 per cent of all Grand Slams were won by left-handers.⁴
- 13.4 per cent of the top 500 ATP ranked players between 2000-2006 were left-handed.⁴

There is no shortage of anecdotes to explain this phenomenon. Indeed, former world No. 1, Pete Sampras explained the tactical advantage of left-handers by stating

that the "patterns of play are opposite to those you normally encounter against a righty ... (so) you need to think things through because nothing is automatic."⁵ More recently, science has coined the phrase "negative frequency effect" to partly describe this advantage (i.e. the effect that limited play against left-handers has on a right-hander's ability to compete against a left-handed opponent). Analysis of Hawk-Eye data from 8098 rallies across 54 Grand Slam matches has attempted to quantify this advantage by showing that:⁶

- Right-handers hit fewer balls to the backhand side of left-handed opponents than against right-handed opponents, while left-handers appear to adapt shot placement (forehand to backhand side) to the handedness of their opponent.
- When hitting from the backhand side of the court, right-handers play more balls crosscourt into a left-handed opponent's forehand side than left-handers do when



placed in similar situations against right-handed opponents. (i.e. left handers appear more willing or better able to break the backhand-forehand crosscourt pattern and play backwards down the line.

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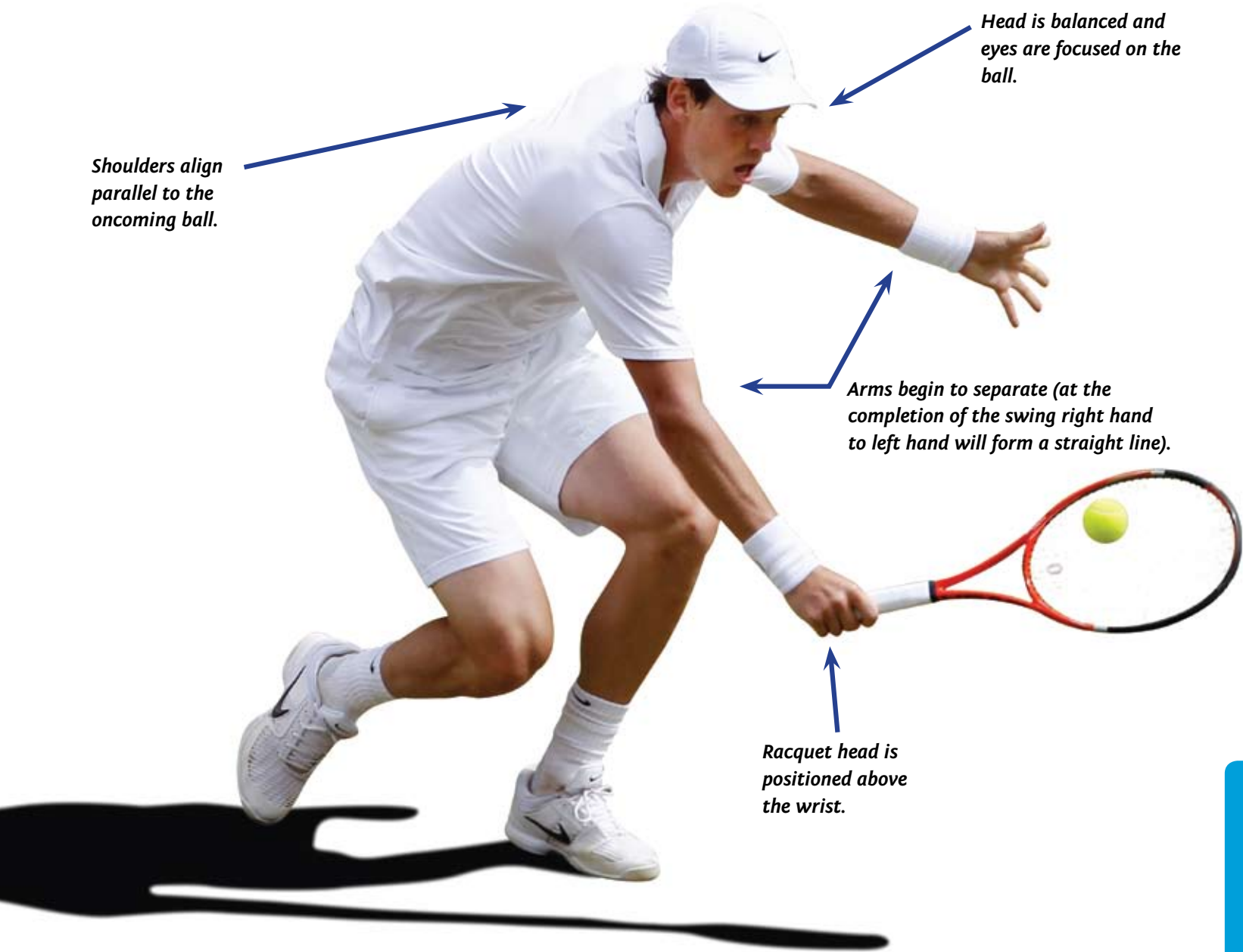
Maچار Reid (Tennis Australia Sports Science and Medicine Manager) and Darren McMurtrie (Tennis Australia Performance Analysis Coordinator).



What do you see?

By the Stroke Master

Tomas Berdych is having a career best year. He is one of the few players to beat Roger Federer twice in one season (in Miami and at Wimbledon this year). His gamestyle features a powerful serve, consistent ground strokes and great volleys at net. Check out the key points to this backhand volley.



Head is balanced and eyes are focused on the ball.

Shoulders align parallel to the oncoming ball.

Arms begin to separate (at the completion of the swing right hand to left hand will form a straight line).

Racquet head is positioned above the wrist.

COACH TALK

SA Local Advisory Group forum

The SA Local Advisory Group (LAG) forum is planned for Saturday 18 September as part of the Tennis SA Industry workshop.

- LAG forum objectives include:
- Providing a forum for coaches to discuss issues and challenges within their catchment area.
 - Making recommendations on possible solutions (feeding into the National Coaching Advisory Group).
 - Focusing on 'coal face' coaching issues.

The SA forum will be facilitated by Michael McLaughlin, while Karen Clydesdale will present on the club and coach relationship, as well as Tennis Australia and Tennis SA's marketing direction for clubs and coaches.

Please fax your completed registration form to (08) 8212 6518, post to Tennis SA PO Box 43, North Adelaide SA 5006 or email sareception@tennis.com.au by Friday 10 September 2010.

Outcomes from the WA, NSW, Victoria and Queensland LAG forums are available on tennis.com.au/voiceofthecoach.

Demands of red, orange and green

Must see workshop for those who coach young children! A workshop prepared by Mike Barrell for Australian tennis coaches. Mike is the Director of evolve9 in the UK, and a world renowned expert in the area of children's tennis.

- The workshop will cover:
- Environment demands – the demands created by the courts, balls.
 - Physical demands – the movement skills required at each stage.
 - Mental demands – how the development of the child at different ages produces new skill requirements.
 - Tactical demands – linked to the cognitive development of the child.
 - Technical demands – the technical skills required linked to environment, movement and tactical demands
- Mike Barrell's content will be delivered by



trained presenters in Launceston on 22 August, Canberra on 29 August. Full day workshop is only \$66 (Tennis Australia coach members) or \$88 for non-members). Prior booking is essential. Contact your local Coach Development Coordinator or visit tennis.com.au/pd to access further details and booking forms.

Tennis Australia coaching courses

Tennis Australia coaching courses and qualifications – September and October

Course	Location	Start date	App.close
Intro to MLC Tennis Hot Shots coaching course	Perth	10 Oct	5 pm, 6 Oct
Trainee coaching course	Perth	30 Sep	5 pm, 10 Sep
Junior development coaching qualification	Rockhampton	22 Sep	5 pm, 30 Jul
	Sydney	25 Sep	5 pm, 27 Aug
	Melbourne	27 Sep	5 pm, 20 Aug
	Geelong	27 Sep	5 pm, 20 Aug
	Brisbane	29 Sep	5 pm, 20 Aug
	Perth	1 Oct	5 pm, 10 Sep

For application forms and schedules please visit the Tennis Australia coaching course calendar at tennis.com.au/tacourses. The Tennis Australia coaching course calendar is continually updated, so please check to see if any upcoming courses have been added online. For further information please contact your local Coach Development Coordinator.

Do you want to upgrade your membership with the ticketing upgrade?

Coach members who would like to purchase the ticketing upgrade can do so by calling the Coach Membership team on (03) 9914 4191 and pay \$50 with their credit card over the phone.

- Benefits of the ticketing upgrade include:
- Two Australian Open 2011 ground pass tickets OR two reserved seats at Australian Open Series event 2011
 - Australian Open/Australian Open Series pre-sale tickets **
 - Davis Cup and Fed Cup home ties pre-sale tickets
 - French Open and Wimbledon ticket ballot offer (new in 2010).

Please refer to the Coach Membership e-brochure for full details. **Pre-sale tickets go on sale for Australian Open 2011 from: 9:00 am–23 August to 25 August 2010 for series packages 9:00 am–26 August to 30 August for single tickets Information on how to purchase tickets will be mailed to all members with the ticketing upgrade or is available on tennis.com.au/membership.

SAVE THE DATE!

2011 Australian Grand Slam Coaches' Conference
 13–15 January
 On site at Melbourne Park prior to Australian Open 2011.
 Australia's premier professional development event for coaches.
 Go to tennis.com.au/coachesconference for further details.



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Join or renew online by 30 June 2010 and save!



Australian touch in Singapore



Tennis was a passion for Chris Mullins from a young age and he has turned that strong passion into a rewarding career.

While he played many sports, it was back in the north-east Victorian city of Wangaratta that tennis legends inspired Mullins to take a second look at tennis.

“Margaret Court (Albury), Rex Hartwig (Greta) and Pat O’Kane (Katamatite), to name a few, lived close to Wangaratta and so many in the area gained a firsthand understanding of the necessary qualities required to dominate the sport,” Mullins says.

“My family and the schools I attended had very strong sports histories and I was fortunate to be exposed to excellent value sets, work ethics and the generous giving of time by many talented coaches and mentors.”

Such was the influence that Mullins, like many passionate young players, wanted to become the best tennis player in the world.

“I continually pushed the envelope to excel by training hard and seeking whatever edge I could get via information and tips,” he says.

But the supportive base that encouraged and molded the desire for Mullins to excel in the sport didn’t seem to carry out of Wangaratta and this was the starting block

he needed to turn his attention to coaching.

“I felt a strong desire to give back what had been generously provided to me by many passionate and caring coaches and friends who assisted me,” Mullins says.

“I refined my coaching by spending more than 10 times the required 200 hours around mentors to eventually gain one of world’s most respected tennis coaching qualifications existing at that

time – the Tennis Coaches Australia (now Tennis Australia Club Professional) qualification.”

Mullins started as a part-time coach in 1987 and this turned to a full-time role in 1995. The enjoyment his job brings him is second to none.

“The great feeling derived from passing on information that you know is going to improve a player’s current level and watching them enjoying their newly acquired tools.”

After visiting his younger sister Gay Gauci, who trained horses in Singapore, Mullins identified a missing piece that didn’t exist yet.

“I thought of building a sports’ based business that could assist to change an existing global mindset and that of Singaporeans themselves that they cannot excel in sports, tennis in particular,” he says.

“I also saw this was an exciting opportunity to create a strong reputation in Singapore as a coach and site manager then grow the

model into Asia and develop a platform for Australian coaches and players to use as a base to interact globally.”

This vision became a reality in 2000 and Mullins was given the privilege of naming the new site – the Marina Sports Centre.

The centre is conveniently located in the centre of the main shopping complex of Singapore, immediately surrounded by five world-class hotels, the newly built Sands Casino and directly over the longest straight of the only night Formula 1 GP race.

The greatest challenge is changing the sporting culture and global reputation for sports in Singapore but this view is slowly being shifted.

“Now many Asian countries view sports as an excellent base to platform business so there is a noticeable change in their desire to promote participation into it,” he says.

“I believe the introduction of MBPSPORTS into the Singapore market in 2002 was excellent timing. We have demonstrated a strong commitment and created a strong community and corporate presence to now grow a viable sports management business via tennis.”

And the Australian traits that Mullins possesses are holding him in good stead as he makes an impact in Singapore.

“Although each culture may exhibit tangible differences, sports, and specifically tennis, bring them to a common base that allows the best of their qualities to be showcased.

“I believe tennis is experiencing a strong global increase in interest and Asia is emerging as the future leaders in this sport. I am excited to be in Singapore and have an opportunity to play a small part.”





COACHES' CORNER

Baby to boom

InDeep Tennis and Fitness runs programs from MLC

Tennis Hot Shots to full-time training for budding professionals.

We are passionate about bringing kids through the ranks beginning from the day they pick up their first racquet to the day they turn professional.

We believe in creating the optimum environment to encourage kids and give them a pathway to fulfil their dreams.

Each age group and standard is covered:

- Tiny Shots (3 to 5 year olds)
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- Junior Development Squad (8 to 12 year olds)
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- Part-time Pro program (13+)
- Full-time program (14+)
- Tournament singles match play (weekly)
- Elite weekly competition (teams event)
- Tournament travel state wide, interstate and internationally.

We also offer a range of participation programs including MLC Tennis Hot Shots, Stay & Play groups, adult hit/fit sessions, social night and holiday camps.

We have found that the digital world is helping us to promote our club and the programs on offer and this include our website – indeep.com.au – and also through our facebook and twitter pages.

Cross promoting is also established with the websites or newsletters of our Canterbury Bankstown Tennis Association and the Bankstown City Council.

All this helps us to create and provide a pathway for tennis players across the board. We are also keen to see our talented athletes prosper via a sports scholarship with one of the best schools in Sydney.

We specialise in providing the pathway for gifted athletes and

Resources assisting day-to-day business

I would like to say thanks to the Tennis Australia Coach Membership team for their help in assisting with various coaching-related issues over the past year. They have assisted with some excellent advice and I have also found the coach-club documents on the Tennis Australia website (tennis.com.au/your-coach) very helpful.

I would strongly recommend to other coaches to utilise these resources in club-coach negotiations, and for their own knowledge and professional development. The 'Communication and Review' template is particularly beneficial in providing coaches with a template to document their coaching accomplishments and to establish and achieve coaching goals.

Shane Scrutton

*Tennis Australia Club Professional coach
Yarra Tennis Coaching, Vic*



scholars to the best colleges in the world, but no matter where you fit in the system, there is a place for you to join in at InDeep Tennis and Fitness.

David Deep

*Tennis Australia Club Professional coach and Talent Development coach
InDeep Tennis and Fitness
Deverall Park Tennis Centre, NSW*

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- Fitness testing with leading sport medicine experts
- Tournament travel and management
- Private/State School or Distance Education

Players programs are supervised by Gary Stickler (Australian Tennis Coach of the Year 2005/2006) and Graeme Brimblecombe (former AIS men's coach and Qld State Coach). Gary and Graeme have worked with a number of Australian stars inc. Pat Rafter, Scott Draper, Paul Handley, Nick Lindahl, John Millman, Joel Lindner, Jason Kubler, Sam Stosur, Ashling Sumner and 30 other state and national titleholders incl. 2010 Australian 12's champion Naiktha Bains.



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Attack the alien

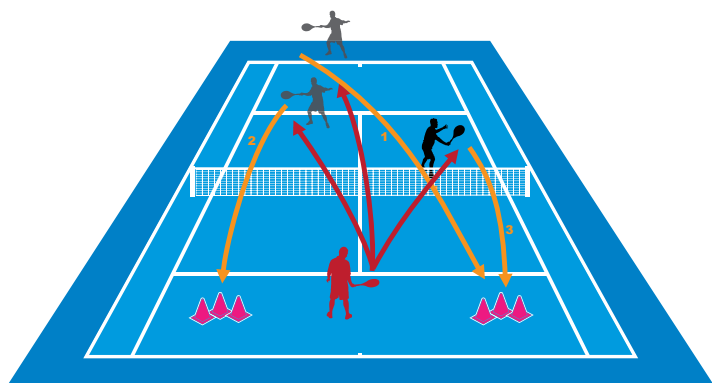
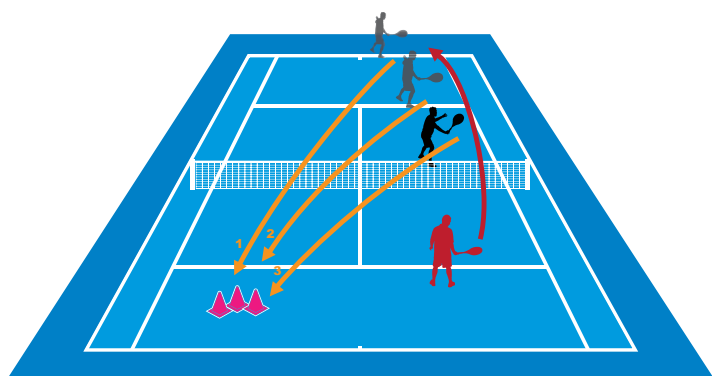
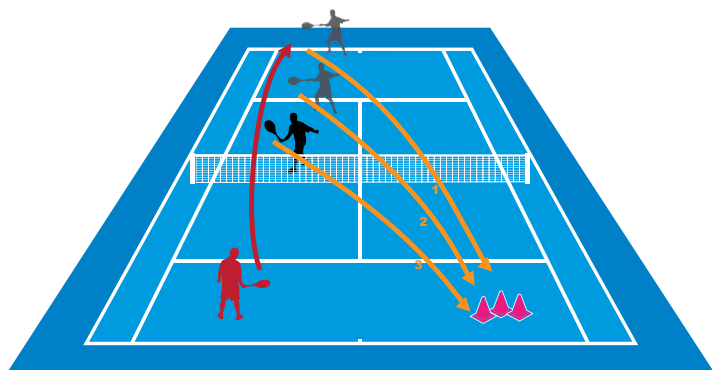
By Pat Conte, Tennis Australia Club Professional coach

Focus: first forehand, second forehand (close to net), forehand volley at the net

Stage: explore (4–7 years), develop (7–10 years)

Equipment: modified balls, cones

Time: 10 mins



Objective

Hit consecutive forehand strokes and then turn grip and perform a forehand volley. With older students aim both forehands to cones as marked.

Description 1

- Use green balls with the coach feeding from the opposite side of the net.
- Player hits forehand topspin towards the cones (directional) drill.
- Players learn to approach the net and therefore minimises fear of coming to the net.
- Players learn how to adapt to play forehand strokes at different distances from the net.
- Player hits forehand volley and receives reward for putting away a winner.

Description 2

- As the players develop, the backhand strokes can progress to performing drill with backhand topspin approaches and then a backhand volley.

Description 3

- Combine forehand and backhand sides with a choice of either a forehand or backhand volley. This develops decision making and perception of point. Would expect this with older children.

Description 4

- Combine forehand and backhand combination of up to four ground strokes and then volley of choice at the net.
- Have cones as targets and for the players to nominate the cones aiming at before hitting shot.

Key	Coach	Coach feed	Ball direction	Spot markers	Buckets
	Player	Thrower/Catcher	Player movement	Drop down lines	Hoops