

## National Academy Core Drills Variations to adopt in your coaching program

The National Academy Core Drills, that were presented in CoachesWorld, June 2008 Australian Tennis Magazine, are designed to help players master five core tennis skills commonly found in the world's best players. This edition contains the last two core drills of the series.

The five core skills are:

- Serve and return
- Defend and attack
- Two weapons
- Transition
- Physically complete the point without compromise

The core drills form the foundation for training the core skills. For the advanced competition player, training and skill development would be driven by a third component, match analysis. The coach analyses data obtained under match conditions and by aligning the data and player performance, core skills needing attention can be identified. By concentrating on specific core drills, training at this level becomes intensely focused. Regardless of the level and in the absence of match analysis, there are many variations within each drill that you can introduce in order to:

- Individualise training to player specific objectives
- Ensure the drill does not break down at all levels of play
- Manipulate scoring and the value of points in order to educate players tactically
- Maintain interest and keep training fresh and stimulating.

Coaches should not assume that all players understand the implication of the drills and the transfer to match play. A reference to core skills being developed should be made in each drill and clearly understood by both coach and player in order to derive maximum benefit. In this article you will find suggestions in manipulating the core drills using and combining one or more of the drills as an example.

The first and most basic of the core drills is Cross Court Plus. An example of individualising Cross Court Plus, achieving a specific objective in a pre-competition phase, would be to start the drill with a Serve and Return. By introducing Serve and Return, the coach has modified Cross Court Plus, integrating two core drills into one drill. By making players aware of the core skill – defend and attack – the coach has set up a controlled simulated match play situation.

In the above example, coaches may find the drill breaking down. By scaling back to starting the point with a hand-fed ball and introducing a low compression ball (green), the drill becomes more manageable for players. By slowing down the speed of play, confidence is restored. This specific part of

training may be devoted to working toward gaining mastery of a standard ball in a closed Cross Court Plus environment.

By using a constraints-based approach in Cross Court Plus, coaches can improve a player's awareness of tactical implications and the concept of "good errors". By manipulating the scoring to reflect the outcome you want to coach, players will modify their play to reflect the implication. An example of this would be saying that when players hit a ball into the net, they lose all points earned up to that point and start again at zero. The by product of this scoring rule is that players would rather miss long than in the net, resulting in fewer balls hit short and better depth.

By using your imagination and thinking about objectives you have for your players, you can manipulate the core drills in any number of ways to keep practices fresh and stimulating, while still teaching the needed core skills. Focusing on doing the ordinary things extraordinarily well will always provide the best results.

Below are the final two core drills in the National Academy series:

### 2 on 1

#### Core skill

Physically complete the point with compromise.

#### Key point

Control of ball and body.

#### Tactical fundamental

1. Play consistent percentages
2. Limit directional changes
3. Centre the ball
4. D-N-O (defensive, neutral and offensive).
5. Hold the line on low volleys
6. Change gears (change tactics and rhythm during a match)

#### Objective

The drill establishes control and consistency in a high intensity environment.

#### Description

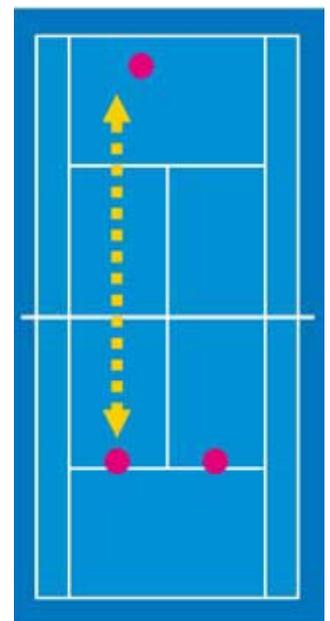
Three athletes – two athletes volley and one athlete hits ground strokes.

#### Execution

The two volleyers put the baseliner under pressure without trying to win the point. The baseliner attempts to hit consistent, quality shots, getting into the best position possible.

#### Variation

2 up 1 back, one ball.



## Serve and Return

### Core skill

Serve and return.

### Key point

All of the core skills can incorporate serve return, including 2 on 1.

### Tactical fundamental

1. Play consistent percentages
2. Know the zones of the court (traffic lights)
3. Understand the court and the target areas
4. Limit directional changes
5. Centre the ball
6. Attack the short ball
7. Winning plays (1-2 sequence)
8. D-N-O (defensive, neutral and offensive)
9. Hold the line on low volleys
10. Change gears (change tactics and rhythm during a match)

### Objective

The drill establishes starting the point with either a serve or return of serve.

### Description

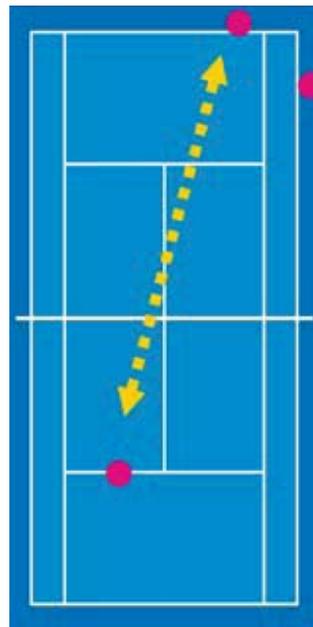
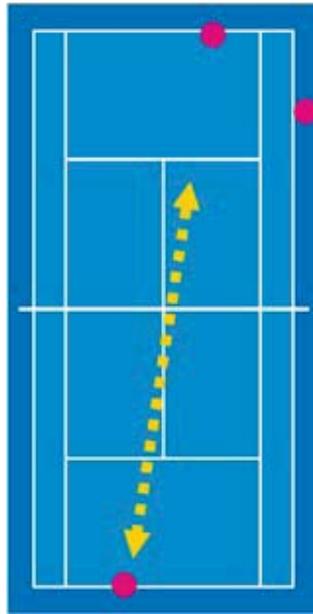
Serve and Return can be manipulated by the coaching staff to reflect specific objectives.

### Execution

Serve and Return can be incorporated into most drills that begin with a ball hit out of the hand, such as Cross Court Animal.

### Variation

Tie breakers, sets or points to 21, seven or three.



## Tennis Australia coaching census 2008

All coaches invited to participate in the Tennis Australia coaching census 2008. The research, and subsequent data collection, will assist Tennis Australia and the Coach Development department to more clearly identify the current roles and activities of coaches at clubs/centres and schools around Australia. Additionally, we aim to identify the coach membership and professional development needs of the professional coach out in the field.

Your contribution to this research will be recognised by Tennis Australia with the provision of two professional development updating points for all coaches that complete the survey.

In addition, one set of 250 personalised branded Tennis Australia post cards will be provided to all coaching census respondents that are Tennis Australia premium and standard coach members. Other coaching census respondents receive two Australian Open match analysis DVDs.

To access the online survey simply email Fiona McCarroll on [fmccarroll@tennis.com.au](mailto:fmccarroll@tennis.com.au)

## National Coaching Advisory Group (NCAG) election

Tennis Australia, together with the state member associations are conducting a NCAG election. A chance for Tennis Australia coach members to nominate. A chance for Tennis Australia coach members to vote.

Go to [tennis.com.au](http://tennis.com.au) to download the NCAG nomination form and read more about the NCAG election process

For more information on the National Academy core drills or National Coaching philosophy, log on to [tennis.com.au/exclusivedownloads](http://tennis.com.au/exclusivedownloads).

For further information, please contact the Coach Membership team on (03) 9914 4191 or contact your state or territory coach development coordinator or email [coachmembership@tennis.com.au](mailto:coachmembership@tennis.com.au).

## Find out why Tennis Australia's Coach Membership is Australia's Favourite

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