

APPENDIX C

WHEELCHAIR TENNIS BEGINNER DRILLS

Coaching beginners' wheelchair tennis starts with the basics, including teaching the rules of the game (e.g. the 2-bounce rule), how to hold the racquet, how to impact the ball, the various strokes and how to play a game of tennis. Given you may only have ONE chance at a first impression, it is important to create an environment that is fun and engaging to allow for early success for all participants.

The drills below outline a seamless progression to introduce beginner players to the game and to lead them to the next step of the development pathway.

1. Self rallies

Balancing the ball on the racquet face

- Continental grip (hammer grip)
- Palm up first, then palm down
- The player balances the ball on strings trying not to let it drop to the ground

Progression:

- The player balances the ball and moves it clockwise and counterclockwise around the racquet face
- Include "pit stop": players have to get the ball to land in 'open throat' below the racquet head and then bring it back onto the strings

Self rallies without bounce (volley)

- Continental grip (hammer grip)
- Palm up
- The player bounces the ball (red, orange, green dot, red depending on skill level) off the middle of the racquet face and catches it.

Progression:

- Same drill with palm down
- No catching
- Alternate between palm up and palm down

Self rallies with bounce

- Continental grips (hammer grip)
- Palm up
- The player bounces the ball (red, orange, green dot, red depending on skill level) off the middle of the racquet face and lets it bounce on the ground and then catches it.

Progression:

- Same drill with palm down
- No catching
- Alternate between palm up and palm down
- Put a flat marker on the ground. The ball has to bounce on the marker (create competition: the first player to hit the marker three times wins)

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2. Cooperative rallies:

Balancing the ball on the racquet face

Players go through the drills above in pairs of two. You can create games with teams competing against each other for the most rallies

3. Feeding Rallies (Coach drop or racquet feeds the ball)

- Coach and player at the service line
- Coach drop feeds balls to the forehand. The player hits the ball cross-court over the net towards a target on the opposite side (wheelchair, chair, box, etc.)
- The player gets a point if they hit the target.
- Coach makes corrections (if need be): impact point, racquet path, etc.

Progression:

- The same drill on the backhand
- Include movement (player has to push towards the spot where the ball has dropped and recover back after shot)
- Alternate between forehands and backhands
- Competition can be held. i.e. the first player/team to three successful target hits wins
- The same drill with volleys (close to the net)
- The same drills with the coach feeding across the net

Note: targets are a great way to keep drills fun while working on technical fundamentals

Team Tennis: to finish a session

- One team on each side of the net
- The team can be made of as many players as are available
- Players have to get the ball across the net. They can do so by:
 - hitting over the net
 - hitting past the net
 - hitting under the net
 - hitting around the net
 - hitting against a wall first
 - passing the ball to a teammate before hitting it over the net
 - a team scores a point if the ball comes to a dead stop on the other side of the court. The first team to three or five points wins.
 - Recommendation: players with reduced mobility skills should be positioned closer to the net. Players with more athletic abilities should try and allow their teammates to hit balls across the net.