



Minor League TENNIS Implementation Guide





Foreword

The purpose of this manual is to provide league organizers all the necessary information to run a successful league. This program is an integral part of Tennis Canada's mission of growing the game and as well ensuring the love of tennis is instilled at a young age.

Acknowledgements

Tennis Canada wishes to acknowledge the contributions of the individuals that participated in the development of this guide.

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Minor League Implementation Guide

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VISION / OVERVIEW

1A. What is a minor league?

The minor league is a tennis program that provides participants with the opportunity to combine practice and play, with a focus on skill development through match play. Games are played using the Kid's Tennis format, which includes appropriate equipment (based on age and skill level) with corresponding court sizes. The minor league is structured in four divisions, which are (1) Red Ball, ½ Court (recommended ages 6-8) (2) Orange Ball, ¾ Court (recommended ages 8-10) and (3) Green Ball, Full Court (recommended ages 10-12) and (4) Green or Regular Ball Full Court (recommended ages 12-16). Players are placed on teams in a manner that ensures teams are of similar strength and the format ensures that players play matches against others of similar ability. Scores are kept and the results are counted towards a team's overall score to ensure that every participant's efforts are rewarded.

1B. Why is the league different from traditional lesson programs?

Historically tennis has been a sport where it is perceived that a fairly high level of skill is required to compete. This led parents to often choose lessons as the method to get their child involved in tennis. This resulted in children often not getting the opportunity to play long after being introduced to the sport, the general feeling being "they aren't good enough to play yet."

This minor league concept provides the participant the opportunity to play right away and be part of a team. The minor league introduces tennis as a game, where playing as part of a team is the main focus. Children learn as they play and have fun while improving. As soon as they can start the point with a feed, they can play. This can be accomplished in the first few weeks of the league before official match play begins. Once match play begins the practice portion of each day of the league provides children with basic tips on how to improve their game for match play.

Even though points will be short and technique will not be refined yet, kids will have more fun if they are playing and scoring points for their team. Over time the points will become longer and the technique will develop. Through team play children will be hooked on tennis and will often be motivated to further develop their skills and seek additional training.

The minor league operates much like a recreational house league, and fills the gap between lessons and tournament competition. It serves the greater number of kids who like to play tennis recreationally, but in a competitive environment. This is structured similar to hockey or soccer leagues, where there are playoffs at the end of the season, which gives purpose to the league.

1C. What are the benefits?

From an organizer perspective:

The minor league can be easily integrated into the existing junior tennis programs of many clubs or as an independent program at community centres or gyms.

The minor league can be structured on a financial model similar to standard junior programs. Operating costs are covered by registration with the potential for profits.

A minor league can accommodate a large number of participants with a wide range of skill levels. This is because players of similar ability are grouped together to play on the same court level, just like other sports (hockey and soccer). It is also one of the best programs to keep children engaged in the sport for life. Players can progress from Red Ball, ½ Court through to Regular Ball, Full Court, while having fun, learning and developing core tennis skills.

It is also great from a teenager's perspective as teens tend to drop out of sport at this stage. The league structure offers teens a team format that is more social in nature which will help retain their interest in tennis.

From a parent perspective:

Parents want to see if (1) their kids are playing tennis with their friends and other kids; (2) their kids are having fun; (3) their kids are improving; (4) their kids are gaining confidence; (5) and for some, if their kids have competitive potential in the sport. The minor league is an ideal program to accomplish all of the above objectives. As players progress from Red Ball, ½ Court through to Regular Ball, Full Court, parents can watch their children visibly improve. This structured progression from one skill/court level (player pathway) puts tennis in equal footing with other sports like hockey and soccer, in which there is a clear progression from one level to the next.

From a kid's perspective:

From a kid's perspective, they can join a team with their friend. The friendly, learning-based team environment of the minor league fosters self-improvement and promotes teamwork. If a kid enjoys it, he or she will encourage his or her parents to sign-up season after season. Research confirms that kids prefer this league format over the traditional approach of taking lessons.



GETTING READY

2A. Find a facility

Minor leagues can be run in tennis clubs (indoor and outdoor), public tennis courts, community centres and school gyms. Specific factors to consider when looking for a facility are:

- Check how much space is needed and if there is room for future expansion. As a general rule of thumb, each court size can accommodate 4 players, and a Red Ball, ½ Court League will require less space than a Full Court League. For example, one full tennis court (the approximate size of a gym) with 4 mini-nets can run a red ball, ½ court league with 16 players, while 4 tennis courts are required to run a full court league for 16 kids.
- Check if multiple time slots are available.
- Determine the best time to run the league time when participants, organizers and volunteers are available. Check facility availability. Recommendation: Avoid the time that other hockey or soccer leagues are running in your area.
- Determine the rental cost or court fee for the duration of the league.

2B. Identify Key Personnel - Roles and Responsibilities

The minor league has four distinct key roles and responsibilities described below:

The convener:

The convener is the backbone of the league and oversees the program from beginning to end. Ideally, the convener should have connections to one or more feeder organizations (other programs that will feed into the league) for player recruitment purposes. A convener is an organizer, has excellent communication skills, and is passionate about increasing youth participation in tennis. Compensation should reflect the time spent and the success of the league.

Responsibilities include:

- Liaising with club management, tennis directors, program leaders and the community stakeholders to map out the league logistics and details.
- Creating the program description.
- Marketing the program and ensuring that all the spots are filled and overseeing registration.
- Responding promptly to enquiries and maintaining an up-to-date participant database.
- Recruiting parent coaches and volunteers.
- Attending every session to ensure the league progresses smoothly.
- Working with the head coach to ensure that the children are having fun and that player skill development
 is progressing smoothly. In some cases, the convener can also be the Head Coach if he/she possesses the
 skill set.
- Posting score standings.
- Communicating with parents on a regular basis, and dealing with any specific issues that arise.
- Sourcing and organizing team shirts and medals.
- Organizing the league awards ceremony and celebration party.

The head coach:

The head coach ensures that the program operates smoothly and that the children are having fun. If the children have fun, they will return every season. The head coach should ideally be a certified Tennis Professional. The head coach is positive, energetic and has excellent interpersonal skills. Compensation should reflect the hours spent on court teaching.

Responsibilities include:

- Conducting a training session for parent coaches and volunteers. These individuals are a major part of the organization and they help with league management.
- Conducting a skill assessment session and arranging teams based on skill rating to ensure that the teams are balanced.
- Ongoing assessment of levels to ensure competitive matches via adjustment of team player order.
- Creating and executing the weekly lesson plan.
- Communicating with parent coaches and volunteers on a weekly basis.
- Running warm-ups and practice demonstrations.
- Keeping parent coaches and volunteers motivated, and guiding them to ensure effective practice time for maximal skill development of the players.
- Guiding and motivating children so that they can excel in tennis.
- Conducting the awards ceremony along with the convener.

Parent coaches:

Parent coaches are team leaders who help nurture a team and its players. Parents have the opportunity to engage in their own child's development. Typically a team will have one parent coach assigned. In a situation where you have eight players per team (32-player league) you may choose to assign two parent coaches per team. In certain cases, it is also possible to have one parent and one non-parent volunteer (e.g. a high school volunteer) to manage a team. A parent coach should ideally have basic knowledge of tennis, and to be willing to receive some ongoing training from the head coach. Parent coaches are positive, energetic and care about helping other kids. A parent coach is a volunteer and is not compensated.

Responsibilities include:

- Providing guidance, team leadership and direction and most importantly creating a fun, inclusive and welcoming environment.
- Assisting their team with the practice portion of a session, and providing basic technical assistance for players.
- Motivating and encouraging players in match play. Helping direct the players to the correct positions on the court and good behaviour.
- Helping with court set-up and cleanup.

Scorekeepers:

Scorekeepers are volunteers who monitor the scores during match play. They also act as an umpire to supervise players and address issues such as line calls. Having scorekeepers in the league is crucial as it help the kids to concentrate on playing the game and foster a positive fair play environment. Scores results are important information that helps parent coaches to manage their team by identifying the strength and weakness of their team. A good place to find scorekeepers is in high schools, where students are looking for volunteer hours or kids from the club's junior development program. Scorekeepers should be responsible, punctual, committed to the program and good with kids.

Responsibilities include:

- Keeping accurate score.
- Instructing players about the play format.
- Addressing issues such as line calls.
- Helping court set-up and cleanup.
- Assisting parent coaches with practice sessions, if needed.

2C. Determine League Structure

League Divisions:

The minor league is made up of four distinct divisions, which are based on age and ability. These four divisions are:

- (1) Red Ball, ½ Court (recommended ages 6-8)
- (2) Orange Ball, ¾ Court (recommended ages 8-10)
- (3) Green Ball, Full Court (recommended ages 10-12)
- (4) Green or Regular Ball, Full Court (recommended ages 12-16)

The ultimate goal for long term success of the league is to have a league that includes all four of these divisions, as it will provide a clear pathway from the age of six through teen years and thus allow a child the opportunity to stay involved with tennis throughout their childhood. However, most likely you will need to build this four division league over time. Note: do not mix different divisions (red ball, ½ court; orange ball, ¾ court; green ball, full court; and green or regular ball, full court).

The decision as to which division you will begin with will be mainly based on two factors:

- 1. The number of players that you are confident can be recruited
- 2. The number of courts and/or gym space that are available

Recommendation:

All things being equal, it is suggested that you start with a Red Ball, ½ Court division first as it requires the least amount of space. More importantly, as the kids in the Red Ball, ½ Court division become bigger, older and more skilled, it is logical to create an Orange Ball, ¾ Court division the following year. Organizers will gain valuable experience from the first Red Ball, ½ Court division before attempting multi-divisions.

2D. League Logistics and Considerations

The following information will provide all of the requirements to start a league.

- 1. Number of participants, court set-up and ball type
- 2. Duration
- 3. Equipment, other resources and awards ceremony
- 4. Program cost
- 5. Program description

1. Number of Participants and Court Set-Up

The minimum number of participants to run any division of the league is 16 players for the following reasons:

- It will ensure credibility as a "league" implies that there are several teams and participants.
- It will allow players to play a variety of opponents, instead of playing the same players each week.
- It will allow for easy substitution in the case of absent players.

This minimum requirement of 16 players allows for 4 teams of 4 players each. The divisions can then be expanded up to 24, which includes 4 teams of 6 players and then 32, which includes 4 teams of 8 players. This incremental increase of eight players will allow two players to be added per team for each of the four teams.

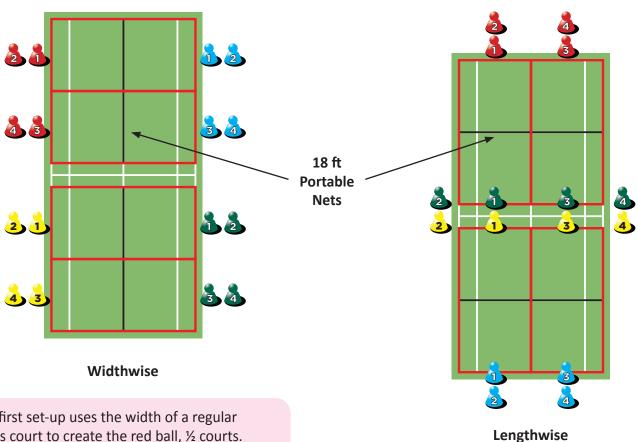
The format of the competition pairs players together based on their skill level. In a four player team (16 player division), the top two players (#1 and #2) would play on the top court and the next two players (#3 and #4), third and fourth best would play on the second court. In a six player team (24 player division), the fifth and sixth best players (#5 and #6) would play on the third court and finally in an eight player team (32 player division), the seventh and eighth best (#7 and #8) players would play on the fourth court.

The following are the standard 16 player court set-ups and ball types for the 4 divisions:

NOTE: The Appendix will show court set-up for 24 participant divisions and 32 participant divisions.

RED BALL, ½ COURT SET-UP (RECOMMENDED AGES 6-8)

The red ball, ½ court division uses the red ball. The red ball, ½ court set-up can be done in two ways on a tennis court.



The first set-up uses the width of a regular tennis court to create the red ball, ½ courts. This is the ideal set-up as there are a number of natural lines that can be used to create the red ball, ½ courts. It provides more space and this set-up can also be easily expanded to 6 courts. The challenge with this format is that since the ball is travelling width-wise, more balls could end up in the adjacent court.

The second set-up uses the length of a regular tennis court to create the red ball, ½ courts. This is a good option if there is a real concern with balls travelling to the adjacent court, as per above.

Remarks:

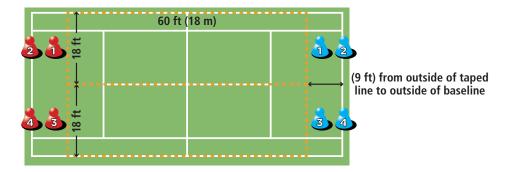
- The red ball, ½ court division can easily be implemented in a gym. Most gyms can fit 4 red ball, ½ courts side-by-side and thus can easily accommodate a 16 player league.
- There are two types of red balls that can be used. The first is the felt ball which is like a regular tennis ball only
 larger and softer. This is best used on tennis courts. The alternative foam ball is best used in gyms as it is safer
 and does not skid on the smooth gym floor.

ORANGE BALL, 3/4 COURT COMPETITION SET-UP

The orange ball, ¾ court division uses the orange ball. An orange ball, ¾ court set-up has two versions.

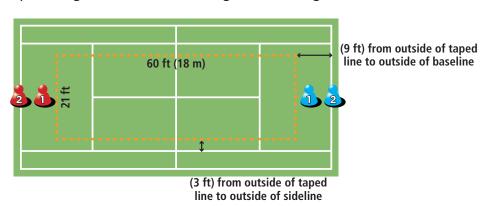
NOTE: The baseline of a ¾ court is created ½ way between the regular court service line and baseline as shown below. The sidelines are created by using the regular court doubles sidelines as follows:

Modified Orange Competition Set-up



NOTE: The sidelines are created by marking off 3 feet inside the regular court singles sidelines as follows:

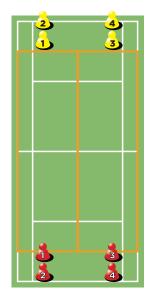
Regulation Orange Competition Set-up

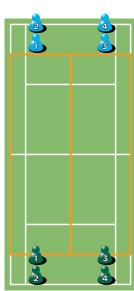


NOTE: A net lowering device, which lowers the net to 80 cm (31.5 in) is encouraged for the \(^3\) regulation orange court set-up.

ORANGE BALL, ¾ COURT SET-UP (RECOMMENDED AGES 8-10) MODIFIED AND REGULATION

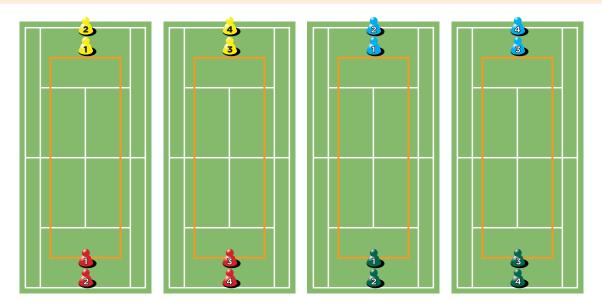
The first version uses a regular tennis court and is able to accommodate two modified orange ball, ¾ courts side-by-side and uses the doubles line as the outside border. This version allows 4 players per modified orange ball, ¾ court or 8 total players per regular tennis court (for a 16 player division two regular tennis courts are required).





Modified Orange

The second version uses a regular tennis court and is able to accommodate one regulation orange ball, % court. This version allows 4 players per regulation orange ball, % court (for a 16 player division four regular tennis courts are required).



Regulation Orange

Remarks:

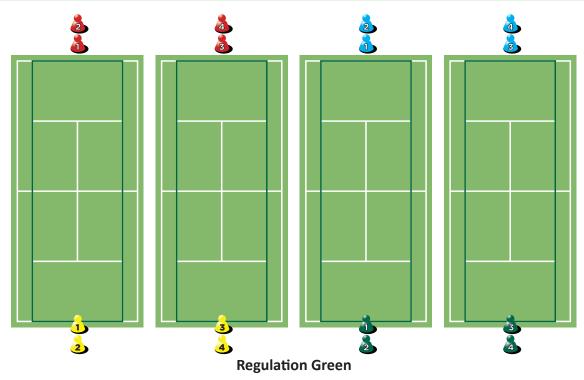
- Players coming from the red ball, ½ court and/or those beginner players starting at orange ball, ¾ court will have an easier time using the modified orange ball, ¾ court as there is less space to cover.
- If the bulk of the players have already participated in an orange ball, modified ¾ court season a natural progression would be for the next season for the same division to use a regulation orange ball, ¾ court (this assumes that four courts are available rather than two). This will provide players with the opportunity to now cover more court area, serve cross-court into the service box and experience more angles of play.
- The number of courts you have available may also influence the decision to use either the modified or regulation orange ball, ¾ court. A 16 player division using a modified orange ball, ¾ court will require two regular tennis courts and using a regulation orange ball, ¾ court will require four regular tennis courts.

FULL COURT SET-UP FOR GREEN OR REGULAR BALL (REGULAR AND MODIFIED)

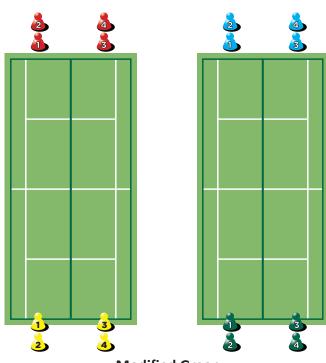
The full court (full length tennis court) has two divisions. The 10-12 age group uses the green ball which is slightly softer than a regular tennis ball. The teen division (12-16) can use a regular tennis ball, but can also use the green ball depending on their skill level.

A full court set-up has two versions.

The first version, which is ideal, uses a regular tennis court. This version allows 4 players per court (for a 16 player division four regular tennis courts are required).



The second version uses a regular tennis court split into two width-wise. This version allows 4 players per modified court or 8 total players per regular tennis court (for a 16 player division two regular tennis courts are required).



2. Duration/Timing of the League

A minor league can be run for 8 to 11 weeks (this is flexible). An 11 week league would include:

- Weeks 1-3: skill assessment, learning the league format and creating teams
- Weeks 4-9: regular season play, where each team will play each other twice
- Weeks 10-11: playoffs and awards ceremony

An 8-week league would include:

- Weeks 1-3: skill assessment, learning the league format and creating teams
- Weeks 4-6: regular season play, where each team will play each other once
- Weeks 7-8: playoffs and awards ceremony

Any league duration shorter than 8 weeks will not be sufficient (assuming one session per week). There is flexibility to run the league over a shorter timeframe i.e., by having two sessions a week for 6 weeks. Thus, you will follow the same format, but during a shorter period.

Timing of the League:

- Leagues should ideally be offered by season: i.e., Fall (Oct-Dec); Winter (Jan-Mar); Spring (April-June) and Summer (July-August)
- The advantages of having the league offered by season include:
 - Players who are interested can participate in tennis year-round.
 - Each new league session will give a chance for new players to join and for returning players to have new competitors.
 - It provides flexibility for parents who have their children participate in other activities.
 - It also gives those players, who have improved their skills enough, the opportunity to move up to the next division (i.e.,red ball, ½ court to orange ball, ¾ court division).

NOTE: It is discouraged to run a league over 11 weeks that runs through multiple seasons as it will often prevent parents to commit their children.

Duration of each session:

- Ideally the duration of each session is 1.5 hours as it will provide a half hour for practice and one hour for match play.
- If court time is limited, the duration of each session could be reduced (i.e.,60 or 75 minutes) or if court time is readily available, you may consider lengthening the time frame of each to 2 hours especially for the older age divisions.

3. Equipment, Other Resources and Awards Ceremony

Equipment Requirement for each division:

Red Ball, ½ Court	Red balls (felt or foam), portable mini-nets, masking tape, 19" - 23" racquets (if they are supplied by the organizers)
Orange Ball, ¾ Court (recommended ages 8-10)	Orange balls, yellow temporary court lines (for baselines and sidelines), masking tape, 23" - 25" racquets (if they are supplied by the organizers), portable mini-nets (if in gym).
Full Court (there can be two distinct divisions: ages 10-12	Green dot balls for both the 10-12 + teen divisions (12-16)
and teens 12-16)	Note: regular balls could also be substituted for the green dots for the teen division.

Remarks:

- The amount of equipment required depends on the size of your league.
- Most equipment will last multiple seasons.

Team shirts, medals and the awards ceremony are essential aspects of the league and enhance the overall experience for participants. Arrangements will need to be made to order the following:

Team Shirts

• It is important to create a team atmosphere. Having colour-coded team shirts help players identify with their team and contribute to team spirit.

NOTE: League organizers should have extra shirts on hand in case a child forgets his/her team shirt.

Medals

- Medals are a form of achievement recognition, whether for participation or being a finalist or champion team.
- If possible, give all participants a medal at the end of the session to recognize their efforts.
- Identify each medal with a season date (e.g. Winter 2014 Minor League) and the type of accomplishment (e.g., participation award, finalist, or champion).

Awards Ceremony

• At the end of your play-offs, it is important that an awards ceremony is organized to recognize all the players which will include a pizza party to celebrate the conclusion of the league.

4. Determine the program cost

Once all the details for your league have been determined, a budget can be created which will ultimately determine how much you charge each participant. The following is an example.

Assumptions:

- 1. 16 players for a Red Ball, ½ Court division.
- 2. One tennis court is used.
- 3. 11-week program, 1.5 hours per week (total is 16.5 hours).
- 4. All the equipment is already available at the facility at no extra cost to the organizers.
- 5. The convenor will spend equal on and off court time with their organizational responsibilities.



Budget: The budget below outlines an 11-week league with 16 kids.

Items	Per week or per unit cost	Cost	Total Cost
Court Fee	\$25 x 1.5 hr/week = \$37.50	\$37.5 x 11 weeks	\$ 412.50
Convener	\$30 x 3 hr/week = \$90	\$90 x 11 weeks	\$ 990.00
Head coach	\$30 x 1.5 hr/week = \$45	\$45 x 11 weeks	\$ 495.00
Team shirt	\$5 per shirt	\$5 x 16 kids	\$ 80.00
Coach shirt	\$6 per shirt	\$6 x 4 coaches	\$ 24.00
Medals	\$5 per medal	\$5 x 16 kids	\$ 80.00
Pizza, marketing, and miscellaneous	\$10 per kid	\$10 x 16 kids	\$ 160.00
Fund for equipmen	t		\$ 100.00
		TOTAL COST:	\$2,341.50

Cost per player = $$2,341.50 \div 16 = approx. 147.00

Remarks:

- The registration fee charged should ensure at least a breakeven program, thus being self sustainable. Otherwise it will put pressure on the organizers to find sponsorship money to sustain the league.
- The program cost per hour based on approx \$147 for 16.5 hours equals \$147/16.5 = \$8.90, which is afford able and competitive with other recreational sports, such as soccer, hockey and baseball. This will help ensure that the league is affordable and that minimum registration numbers are attainable.
- If a profit is the goal or if there are additional administration fees adjust the registration fee accordingly.
- If the head coach and convenor is the same person (ideal situation) the cost of a head coach can be eliminated from the above budget. This will result in a lower cost per play (registration fee) or a profit.

5. Create a program description (to be used in the marketing material)

A program description is important to prepare. In creating the program description, thought must be given for all the major components of the league (2D) and what is being offered.

A clear and concise program description is important to effectively communicate the details of the league to parents. An appealing program description (with artwork and benefits included) helps market the league and ultimately leads to improved registration.

Aside from the program content, the following information should be included in the description:

- League location
- The type of league(s) offered and its recommended age group(s)
- Date and time
- Special features offered, e.g. team shirts, medals and celebration parties
- Minimum and maximum participants
- Where to register
- Program cost
- A contact name, email and phone number

It is also a good idea to include an advertisement to recruit parent coaches in the program description.

See "Appendix" for samples of program descriptions.

FILLING YOUR PROGRAM

3A. Determining the Registration Method

Set a minimum and maximum number of players for registration.

Have an efficient registration system in place. It may make sense to use either your club registration or a community centre registration system. It is also important to have a waiting list in the registration system if, for whatever reason, someone decides to drop out and to maintain a list for the next league.

Once a program description is created, it can be used to help attract potential participants; however the key to success is to proactively recruit and market the league in order to fill your registration.

3B. Finding Players

Feeder Organizations:

It is critical for organizers to think in terms of where the players will be coming from before the league is set up. For long-term success, a clear feeder system should be identified and nurtured. Feeder organizations could be community tennis clubs, schools or community centres used to regularly recruit players. No matter what type of feeders, the convener should have strong ties with one or more of these organizations to ensure an ongoing supply of players.

Here are some of the key strategies you may consider:

- Word of Mouth
 - Running a high quality league is the most important thing. This will ensure the bulk of the players are returning season after season, which will ensure player retention. Word of mouth is the most authentic and cost-effective method to use to market your league.
- Email Distribution
 - Email distribution is an inexpensive way to reach a wide audience. Well before the next season starts, email league information to all previous participants, those who were on the waiting list, those who inquired about your program, and all potential participants from feeder organizations. When emailing your program information, include the program description. Use attractive subject titles such as "Keep your kids in the game this fall!" Monitor the registration once the first batch of emails is sent out. Send a second batch of emails if registration is not filling up quickly. Your goal is to fill up the spots as soon as possible.
- Social Media: Twitter and Facebook (See "Appendix" for sample)
 Social media is a powerful marketing tool. Post your program description on these web sites. Post comments. Word of mouth and referral is a powerful form of marketing.
- Post your league information on Kijiji or in other forums.
- Put an ad on the feeder organization's website. Place a Google advertisement.
- Create an attractive and colourful poster flyer (See "Appendix" for sample). Post it at the community centres, tennis clubs and feeder organizations.

LEAGUE IMPLEMENTATION

4A. Training for Parent Coaches and Scorekeepers

Once the participation numbers are finalized, the convener, along with the head coach, should make sure that a sufficient number of volunteer parent coaches and scorekeepers are recruited. In general, one scorekeeper is required per court and one parent coach is required per team.

A training session should be conducted by the head coach a week or two before the league starts. The purpose of the training is to ensure all the volunteers:

- understand the purpose and structure of the league
- are familiar with court set-up, playing format and scoring system
- know their role and responsibilities
- understand the practice content

Welcome Email:

A welcome email to parents should be sent by the convener prior to starting the league. This email will provide an overview of the league. (See "Appendix" for sample email)

4B. Skills Assessment to Create Balanced Teams

Forming balanced teams is the head coach's responsibility and is a **critical factor for league success.** The head coach should spend one to three weeks conducting a skills assessment, scrimmaging and team rebalancing. See 4E, Week-by-Week Outline for specific details.

Below are two examples of skill assessment approaches that can be used to evaluate the player's level and ultimately make balanced teams.

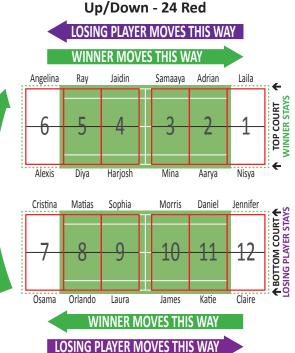
Up/Down Court (or Ups and Downs)

Up/Down Court is a commonly used and accurate way of assessing skill level. For it to be used, you will require enough court space to run it. For example: for the red ball, ½ court, a maximum of 12 players can play on one regular tennis court.

Below is an example of how to run an Up/Down Court Skills Assessment for 24 kids on Red Ball, ½ Court. Resources required are:

- 2 tennis courts
- 12 mini-nets
- Tape and lines to mark court boundary
- 12 clipboards and 12 total helpers (parent coaches and scorekeeper volunteers)

12 mini-courts will be set up with 2 players playing each other in a time-based match (e.g., 5-7 mins per round). At the end of each round, the winner will move up one court and the losing player moves down one court.



LEAGUE IMPLEMENTATION

By the end of the session(s), skill level in the group will be fairly clear. Volunteers on each court will help keep score and move the players to the correct location. In the "Appendix" you will find an example of a score sheet.

King or Queen of the Court

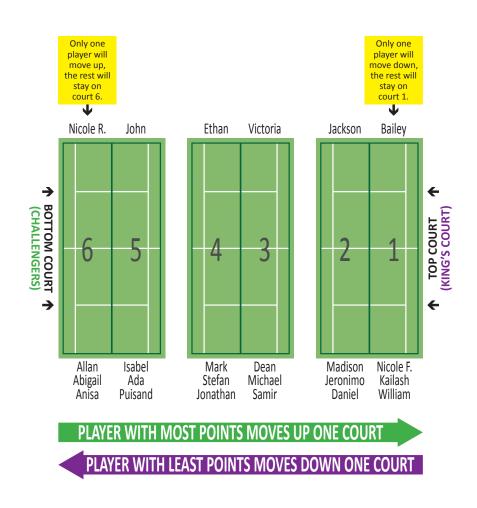
If space is an issue, the King or Queen of the Court skills assessment can be used. This assessment is run using the same number of courts as required for the league. Depending on the size of the division, up to four players play a game of King or Queen of the Court on each court area. One player is designated as the king or queen while the rest are designated as challengers. Each challenger will play two points against the King/Queen, and if he/she wins both points, he/she will become the new king/queen. For the purpose of the assessment, each point counts. At the end of a timed round (e.g., 7-10 minutes), the player with the most points will move up one court and the player with the least points will move down one court.

Example:

24 kids are on Orange Ball, modified ¾ court. The resources required are:

- 3 tennis courts (6 modified ¾ courts)
- 3 sets of rubber lines to mark the baseline of the ¾ court
- Tape to mark off court boundaries
- 6 score clipboards and 6 scorekeepers

King / Queen of the Court - 24



By the end of the session(s), skill level in the group will be fairly clear. Volunteers on each court will help keep score and move the players to the correct location. Each court is best monitored by a scorekeeper who can help keep score and move the players to the correct location. In the "Appendix" you will find an example of a score sheet.

4C. Creating the Teams

After skill assessments are completed, the head coach should rank the players according to skill level and create balanced teams.

Example: With a league of 24 players, there will be four teams of six players each.

Steps:

1. In order to have fair teams each team will have one player from each of the 6 levels (tiers). The levels (tiers) are created by identifying the top four players that go into tier No. 1. The next best four players go into tier No.2 and so on until you have created 6 tiers of four players.

Level	Players	Remarks
Tier 1 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d These are the 4 k		These are the 4 best players. They are of similar ability.
Tier 2 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d These are second best 4 players. They are of		These are second best 4 players. They are of similar ability.
Tier 3 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d		These are third best 4 players. They are of similar ability.
Tier 4	4a, 4b, 4c, 4d	These are fourth best 4 players. They are of similar ability.
Tier 5	5a, 5b, 5c, 5d	These are fifth best 4 players. They are of similar ability.
Tier 6	6a, 6b, 6c, 6d	These are the 4 weakest players. They are of similar ability.

2. By placing one player from each tier each, balanced teams will be created.

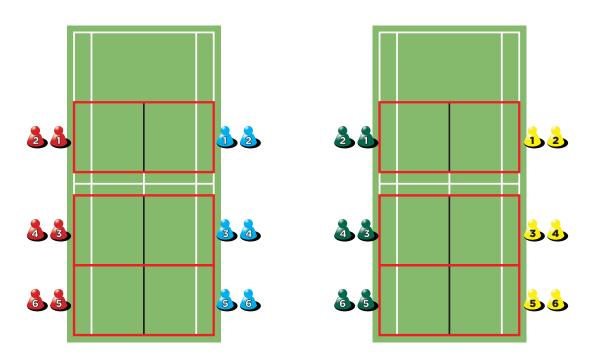
Team	1st Court (Tier 1 & 2)	2nd Court (Tier 3 & 4)	3rd Court (Tier 5 6)
Red (a)	1a, 2a	3a, 4a	5a, 6a
Blue (b)	1b, 2b	3b, 4b	5b, 6b
Green (c)	1c, 2c	3c, 4c	5c, 6c
Yellow (d)	1d, 2d	3d, 4d	5d, 6d

NOTE: A 16-player league will have 4 players per team and two court levels, and a 32-player league will have 8 players per team and will have four court levels.

4D. Format of Match Play

It is important to have a standardized and structured playing format throughout the entire league so that participants and volunteers will know what to expect each week. Each week two teams will face each other. Each match is scored, not by using the traditional tennis scoring (15, 30, 40, ad, etc...) but a simple 1 point for every point won (1, 2, 3, 4, etc...). Each match result will contribute to the overall score of their team, in other words regardless is a player(s)/team wins or loses their point total in each match will be tallied to determine the overall winner of the dual match. For example: the red team could have 104 points and the blue 100 points, thus the winner would be the red team. This will consist of three rounds of 15-20 min timed matches:

- 1. Match 1: Singles the players from the same tier compete against each other (i.e., 1 red vs. 1 blue, and 2 red vs. 2 blue). There are two matches going on at the same time on each court. Each match will play 4 points (each player serving two points each) and then switch with the other match that is taking place on that court who will play 4 points and this rotation will continue for the duration of the time.
- 2. Match 2: Singles the players from different tiers compete against each other (i.e., 1 red vs. 2 blue, and 2 red vs. 1 blue). Same format as match 1 above.
- 3. Match 3: Alternate Hit Doubles players who played in matches 1 and 2 above will now pair up with their teammate and play alternate hit doubles (i.e., 1 red and 2 red vs. 1 blue and 2 blue). Each team serves two points (each player from the team serving one point each). The receiver returns it, then the server's partner must hit it next, followed by the receiver's partner and so on. This alternate hit sequence continues throughout the rally and if a player hits it out of turn (hits two times in a row), the team loses the point.



Widthwise - 2 Courts
Sample for a 24 player league, red court

MATCH SCHEDULE FOR A 24 PLAYER LEAGUE

	MATCH 1				MATCH 2		MATCH 3		
	Crt 1	Crt 2	Crt 3	Crt 1	Crt 2	Crt 3	Crt 1	Crt 2	Crt 3
Red vs. Blue	1R v 1B	3R v 3B	5R v 5B	1R v 2B	3R v 4B	5R v 6B	1R & 2R	3R & 4R	5R & 6R
	2R v 2B	4R v 4B	6R v 6B	2R v 1B	4R v 3B	6R v 5B	1B & 2B	3B & 4B	5B & 6B
Green vs. Yellow	1G v 1Y	3G v 3Y	5G v 5Y	1G v 2Y	3G v 4Y	5G v 6Y	1G & 2G	3G & 4G	5G & 6G
	2G v 2Y	4G v 4Y	6G v 6Y	2G v 1Y	4G v 3Y	6G v 5Y	1Y & 2Y	3Y & 4Y	5Y & 6Y

NOTE: The schedule above will be adjusted as follows for 16 and 32 player leagues. A 16-player league there will only be matches on court 1 & 2 and for a 32-player league there will be matches on a 4th court.

Remarks:

- The goal of this format is to ensure that the stronger players don't play weaker players.
- If a player on a team is absent, the remaining player will play every point in each of the three matches.
- The alternate hit doubles is a more versatile format compared to regular doubles as it easily accommodates absent players.
- As the league progresses, some players will likely improve more than others and will be able to play in a higher tier. In this case a team's line up should be adjusted by the head coach.

4E. Week-by-Week Outline

The following is an example of an 11-week program:

Week #1	Assessment of playing levels for the purpose of establishing balanced teams using King/Queen of the Court and/or Up/Down. Initial dividing of players into tiers (see 4C).
Week #2	Reassessment of playing levels and introduction of playing format. Using the tiers created in week #1 assign each tier of 4 players to their respective court ie: top four players on court #1, second tier players on court #2, third tier players court #3 etc Readjust players as required. Make initial draft of league teams with the utmost care to create balanced teams.
Week #3	Practicing (see section #5) and Scrimmaging with their coach and team. During match play use the regular three-match format (see 4D) with shortened time for matches so that time is allotted for each team to play a second team. This session will be used for final re-balancing of teams, if necessary.
Weeks #4-9	Regular Season. Handout team shirts at the beginning of week #4. The league begins in week 4, each team will play against each other a total of two times over the next six weeks.
Week #10	The Play-Offs Begin. The No.1 ranked team will play against the No. 4 ranked team and the No. 2 ranked team will play against the No. 3 ranked team in the semi-finals.
Week # 11	Play-off Finals. Between - the two winning teams of week 10 along with a consolation match between the two losing teams. This will be followed by the awards ceremony (each participant will get a medal) and pizza (see 4G).

4F. Tracking Results

As in any league competition, it is important to track and post results, as it will help create a fun competitive environment as teams compete to finish first. In the "Appendix", you will find:

- A score sheet to track individual scores on each court and a summary of team results
- A template for league standings

4G. Play-Offs and Awards Ceremony

The play-offs are the highlight of the league and determine the overall champion team. In the semifinal play-offs (second last week of the program), the team that finishes first will play against the 4th placed team and the 2nd and 3rd place team will play against each other. In the finals, the winning teams will play for the championship and the losing teams will play for 3rd and 4th place.

The match play format during the play-offs is the same as the regular season format.

The awards ceremony will take place immediately following the championship play-off matches. It is important to recognize all the players for their participation and improvement over the course of the league. Additional awards may be given to the most improved player, sportsmanship, etc. As well the awards ceremony will allow you to recognize your volunteers for their tremendous contributions to the minor league. The head coach will ask each parent coach to write words of encouragement about their players ahead of time. These encouraging words will be conveyed when giving out the medals.

The awards ceremony will conclude with a pizza party to celebrate the end of the league.



5. GUIDELINES FOR THE PRACTICE PORTION OF THE LEAGUE

Practice is an integral part of the league, as it will provide an opportunity to help the participants improve their ability to perform during their competition stage of the league. As the time for the practice is very short it is essential that what is practiced will help the players instantly perform better when they play. The "Appendix" will have the sample practice court setup or 16, 24 and 32 players for each division.

The following will provide some guidelines for the practice component:

Warm-Up (10 mins)

- Regardless of the level of the players the first part of the practice will include a warm up for 10 minutes in which 3 minutes only are used for getting heart rate up through general physical activity or a game.
 Refer to page 12 of the Learn to Play (LTP) curriculum for a description of some of these games.
- Use the next 7 minutes of the warm up to develop "racquet and ball skills" while moving for continued overall warm-up. Use activities like "centering the ball on the racquet", "dropping the ball and catching on the racquet", "self rally". Note that these activities should be performed while ensuring the players are moving all the time. Refer to pages 26 & 28 of Tennis Canada's ½ court curriculum for a description of these activities.

Skill Development (20 mins)

Overall Procedure:

- After the warm up the head coach gathers all the participants and demonstrates both the skill and the
 activity planned for the session. Players then quickly go to their assigned practice court with their parent
 volunteer coach. Note: once you develop volunteer coach abilities and they become more familiar with
 practice activities there might not be a need to regroup as often.
- Once head coach presents the skill/drill he/she will circulate around to ensure coaches and players are running the activity correctly and focusing on the chosen skill.
- Given the limited time, the practice session should include 2-3 activities at most.
- The players will enjoy playing with the parent coach, so be sure to strongly encourage them to hit in with the players as much as possible during this practice component.
- The selection of the activity is totally dependent on the level of each player of your division.

For Players just starting and having a tough time consistently starting the point

- Focus on starting the ball as this is essential to play in the league. Drop and hit activities are a must for these players. This skill can be combined easily with returning the ball back (rallying for 2 balls). Refer to activities 6-9 (pages 20-23) of the LTP curriculum for a full description of these activities.
- As a general guideline, in order to be ready to participate in league play, a player should be able to:
 - Start the point successfully with an underhand serve "drop and pop" 7 out of 10 times.
 - Return an underhand serve, players should be able to successfully return serve 3 out of 10 times.
- For players who continue to struggle to meet these guidelines, be sure to spend all of the practice time on these skills and you may consider the following:
 - Have players start close to the net and have them slowly progress to moving further away from the net.
 - Have player choke up on their racquet for further racquet control
 - Instead of dropping and hitting, have players start with the ball trapped against the strings and guiding it over (launching).

GUIDELINES FOR PRACTICE

For players who can regularly start and return a ball (for those who can "get to 2 in a row" consistently):

- Focus on consistency and improve the number of rallies players can achieve.
- Favouring the forehand is acceptable at this stage but once players can consistently get to 4 in a row with their use of forehands, then progress to practicing the backhand
- Serve activities should begin to be emphasized at the Orange Ball, ¾ Court. For serve activities please refer to activities 14-17 (pages 29-32) of the LTP curriculum.
- Volley activities can begin to be introduced for the more advanced Orange Ball, ¾ Court Players. For volley activities refer to activities 19, 20, 21 (pages 35-37) of the LTP.

The practice prior to match play can be used to improve the player's fundamentals, as they will help form a solid foundation for a more advanced technique. The 5 fundamentals include:

Grips:

These grips provide most advantages and make it easy to control the racquet's face.

ForehandEastern forehand grip



BackhandEastern one Backhand grip





2 handed backhand grip





Serve / VolleyContinental grip







Set Up:

Preparing to have a good impact point.

Groundstrokes

- Preparing arm and body together.
- Getting sideways
- In proper location and balanced
- All of the above should happen before the ball bounces

Serve

- Starting in a trophy position
- Slightly sideways
- Balanced
- All of the above should happen before the ball starts to decline.

Volley

- Slight shoulder turn
- Balanced
- Racquet higher than wrist
- All of the above should happen before the ball crosses the net







Impact Point:

Centering the ball on the strings in a good relation to the body.

Groundstrokes

- In front of the body
- At waist height
- At a comfortable distance of the body

Serve

- In front of the body
- At a full extension of the arm
- At a comfortable distance over the shoulder

Volley

- In front of the body
- At chest height
- At a comfortable distance of the body







GUIDELINES FOR PRACTICE

Hitting Zone:

When the racquet's face moves towards the intended next shot.



Recovery:

Returning to a neutral and balanced position in preparation for target before, during and after the stroke.



Ball Controls

The 5 fundamentals are closely linked to the ball controls. In other words, what the ball does and making the ball do what it is required to do to perform a tactic or to solve a problem. There are only five ways a ball can be manipulated in Tennis. These make up the five ball controls:



These five ball controls happen as a result of what the racquet does to the ball through the PAS principles:

- P: Path of the racquet
- A: Angle of the racquet
- S: Speed of the racquet

Path of the Racquet		quet Angle of the racquet		Speed of the Racquet
Vertical Path	Horizontal Path	Vertical Angle	Horizontal	 Maintaining speed Adding speed (accelerating)
1. Low to High 2. High to low	 Right to left Left to right 	Affecting the height	Affecting the direction	3. Taking speed off or absorbing speed

Here are some tips and solutions to develop ball controls:

Ball Control	Tips and Solutions
Height	For higher balls: a. Move the racquet from low to high and/or b. Open the racquet's face and/or c. Swing faster
	For lower balls: a. Move the racquet more level and/or b. Close the racquet's face and/or c. Swing slower

Direction

For consistent direction control, keep the horizontal angle of the racquet facing your target at impact, i.e., "keep the eyes of the strings towards your target".

Different Directions:

a) Crosscourt: Hit the outside of the ball.

b) Down-the-line: Hit the back of the ball.

c) Inside Out: Hit the inside of the ball.

Speed

One of the biggest control challenges for starter players is the ability to control the speed of their shots. Often players will hit too fast as a result of too much racquet speed being brought to impact. This is usually the result of excess wrist movement and/or too large of a backswing (preparation). Here are some tips and key words to use that will help control the speed of the player's shot which will help with consistency:

Distance

Distance is a combination of height, speed, and spin. Players at this level don't use spin but they can control distance by controlling height and speed as follows:

For short balls:

- a. Reduce height and/or
- b. Reduce speed

For Deeper balls:

- a. Increase height and/or
- b. Increase speed

Spin

At this level players should hit with no spin. The path of the swing and the angle of the racquet should be the same.

[&]quot;Keep your wrist firm"

[&]quot;Gentle smooth swing"

[&]quot;Bring your racquet slowly to impact point"

[&]quot;Slow and gentle from beginning to end"

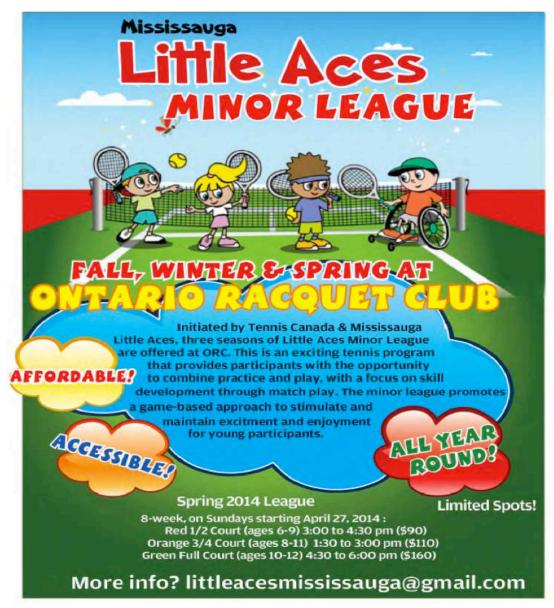
6. APPENDIX

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION SAMPLES (LEAGUE MARKETING MATERIAL)

SAMPLE 1

Initiated by Tennis Canada and Mississauga Little Aces, this league is an exciting tennis program that provides participants with the opportunity to combine practice and play, with a focus on skill development through match play. The focus of the league is on fun, team play and sportsmanship. The first few weeks will be used to assess playing level for the purpose of establishing balanced teams. In the remaining weeks, each team will play a number of matches after warm-up drills. The final week will be used for championship and consolation finals. Each player will receive a team shirt and a participation medal. This is Kids Tennis at its best: featuring half-court play. The league is run in conjunction with Tennis Canada trained volunteers.

SAMPLE 2



SAMPLE 3

LEARN & PLAY WITH ORC MINOR LEAGUES!



Initiated by Tennis Canada and Mississauga
Little Aces, the ORC Minor League is an exciting
tennis program that provides participants with
the opportunity to practice and play with a focus
on skill development through match play. The
minor league promotes a game-based approach
to stimulate and maintain both excitement and
enjoyment for participants.

ORC Minor League (Half Court)

Participants practice and play matches on 1/2 court with low-compression red balls, in a friendly, learner-based team environment similar to the soccer house league model. Players must have a minimum level of skill, but be able to exchange the ball over the net at least 4 times on a 1/2 court. Registration includes a team t-shirt and an awards banquet. Please bring your own racquet. Ages 6 to 9. No Class May 18, 2014.

Program	Day	Time	Date	Ends
14-S-110	Sun	3:00 pm	April 27	June 22
8 Weeks			90 N	linute Sessions
Max 24 Parti	cipants		\$	90/participant

ORC Minor League (3/4 court)

Participants practice and play matches on 3/4 court with low-compression orange balls (faster than red balls), in a friendly, learner-based team environment similar to the soccer house league model. Players must have a minimum level of skill, but be able to exchange the ball over the net at least 4 times on a 3/4 court. Registration includes a team t-shirt and an awards banquet. Please bring your own racquet. Ages 8 to 11. No Class May 18, 2014.

Program	Day	Time	Date	Ends
14-S-111	Sun	1:30 pm	April 27	June 22
8 Weeks			90 N	linute Sessions
Max 32 Parti	cipants		\$1	10/participant

ORC Minor League (Full Court)

Participants practice and play matches on a full court with low-compression green-dot balls (25% slower than regular balls), in a friendly, learner-based team environment similar to the soccer house league model. Players must have a minimum level of skill, but be able to exchange the ball over the net at least 4 times on a full court. Registration includes a team t-shirt and an awards banquet. Please bring your own racquet. Ages 10 to 12. No Class May 18, 2014.

Program	Day	Time	Date	Ends
14-S-112	Sun	4:30 pm	April 27	June 22
8 Weeks			90 N	linute Sessions
Max 16 Parti	cipants		\$1	60/participant

Attention Parents!

Instead of sitting on the sidelines, why not volunteer to be a parent coach? This is a great opportunity for you to engage in your child's development, and reinforce many of the benefits and skills. Learn the five fundamentals of progressive tennis along with your child! If you are interested, please contact Albert:

Albert Fong

National Mentor, Little Aces Programs, Tennis Canada albert@mississaugalittleaces.com

SAMPLE OF WELCOME EMAIL

Dear Parents:

Congratulations on signing up your child to the ORC Minor League. This is an exciting tennis program that provides participants with the opportunity to combine practice and play, with a focus on skill development through match play.

Below is the league structure of this 8-week session:

Week #1 (4/27): Assessment of the playing level for the purpose of establishing balanced teams

Week #2 (5/4): Introduction of playing formats

Week #3 (5/11): Scrimmaging - the players will be divided into 4 teams and we'll do a trial run

and re-balancing if necessary

No league on May 18 - Victoria Day long weekend

Week #4-6 (5/25 to 6/8): The league will begin in week 4 with all teams having their distinctive team shirts!

Each team will play against each other once during the next 3 sessions

Week #7 (6/15): The team with the highest score will play against the number 4 team in a knockout

semifinal; team number 2 will play against team number 3 for a spot in the final

Week #8 (6/22): This is Super Sunday: Minor League Final Playoffs and the Awards ceremony,

followed by pizza

Since this program operates as a team oriented league, it is very important that you ensure your child's participation every week for the next 8 weeks. If, for whatever reason, your child cannot attend a certain week, please let me know by Thursday of that week. Your cooperation is much appreciated.

Best Regards,

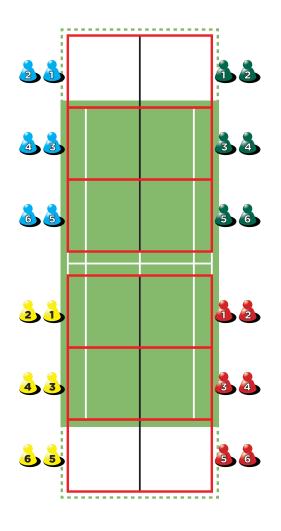
Convener

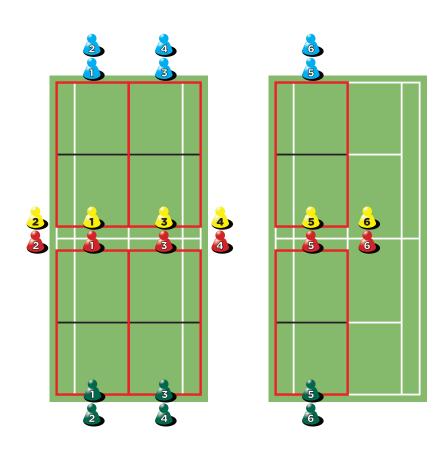
6. APPENDIX... Continued

COURT SET-UP MATCH VARIATIONS FOR 24 AND 32 PLAYER LEAGUES

24 RED (MATCH)

24 RED (MATCH)

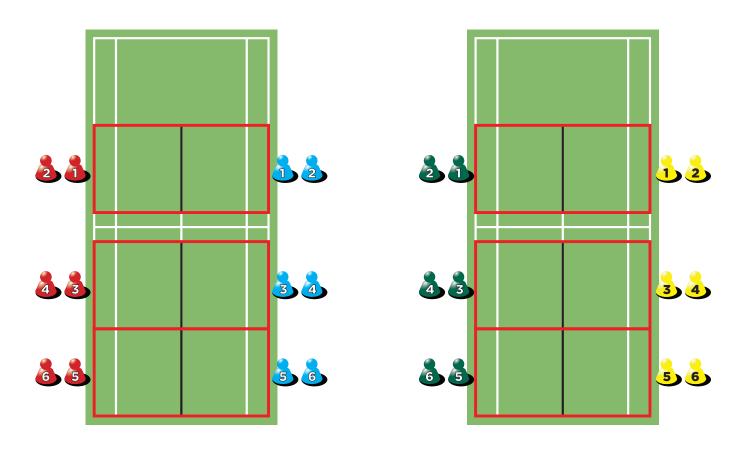




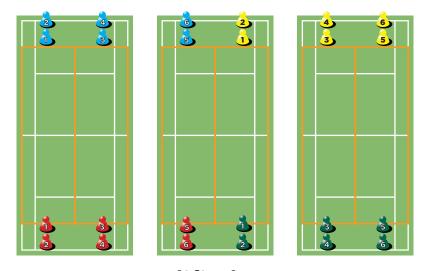
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Lengthwise - 2 Courts

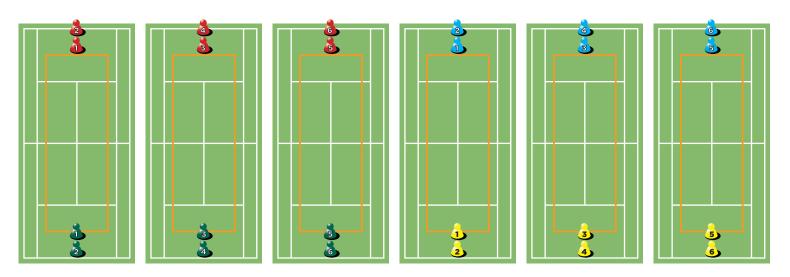
24 RED (MATCH) Widthwise 2 - Courts



24 ORANGE (MATCH)

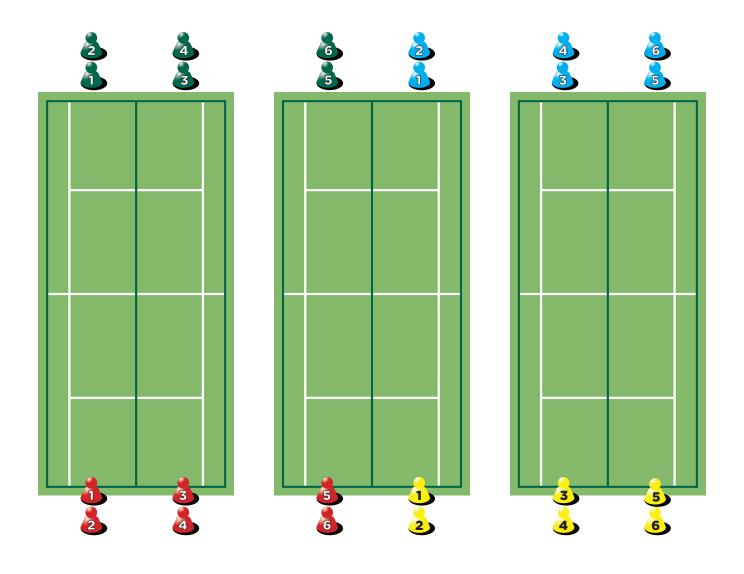


Modified Orange



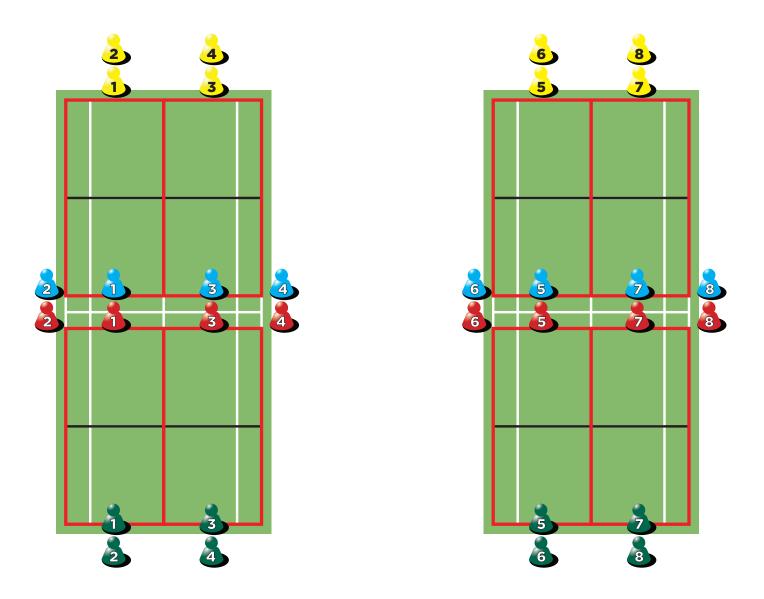
Regulation Orange

24 GREEN (MATCH)



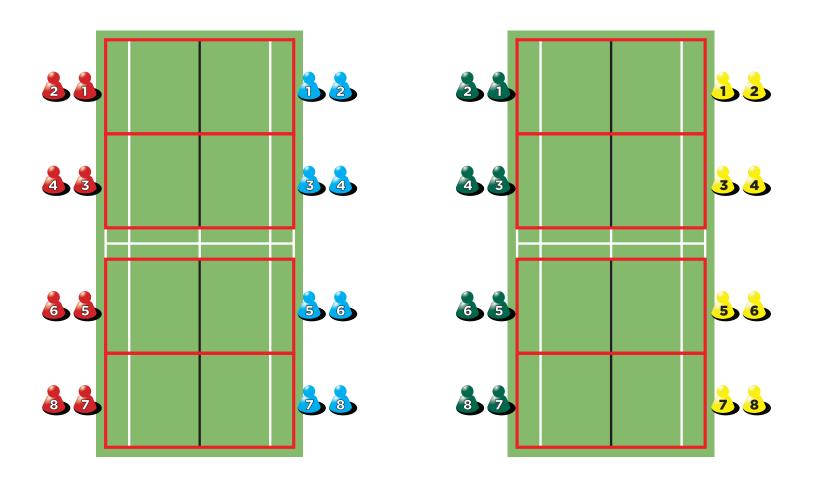
Modified Green

32 RED (MATCH)



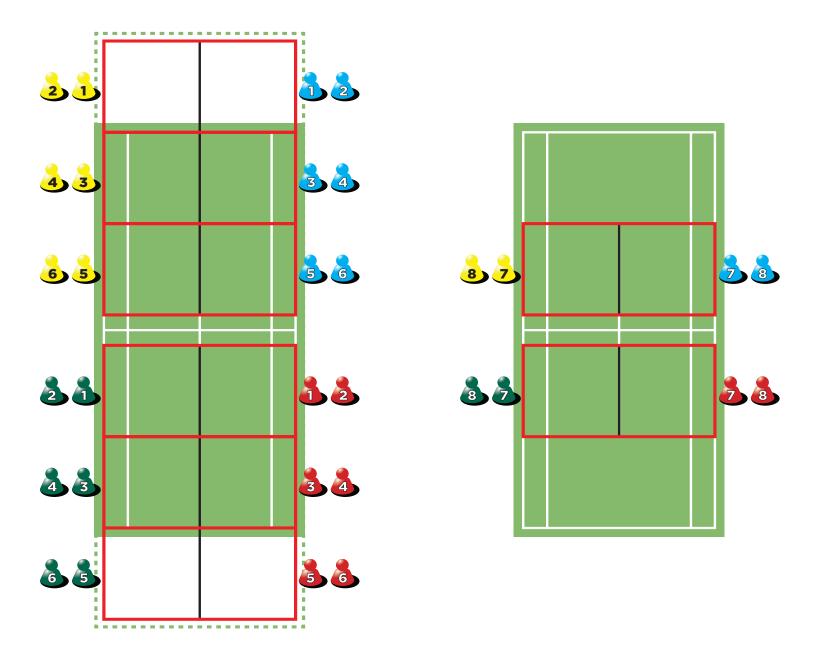
Lengthwise - 2 Courts

32 RED (MATCH)



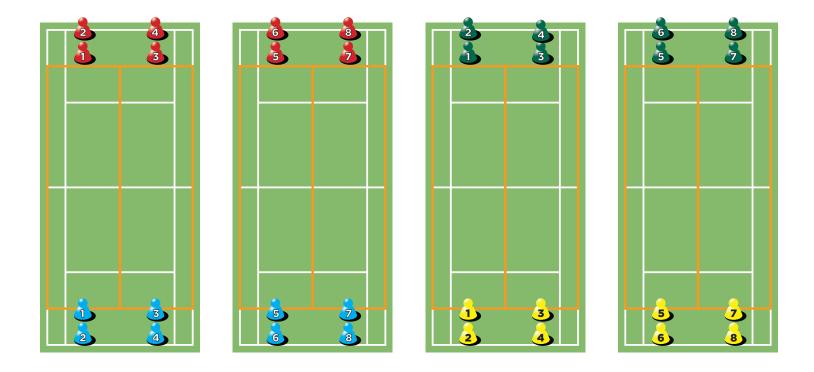
Widthwise - 2 Courts
Option 1

32 RED (MATCH)



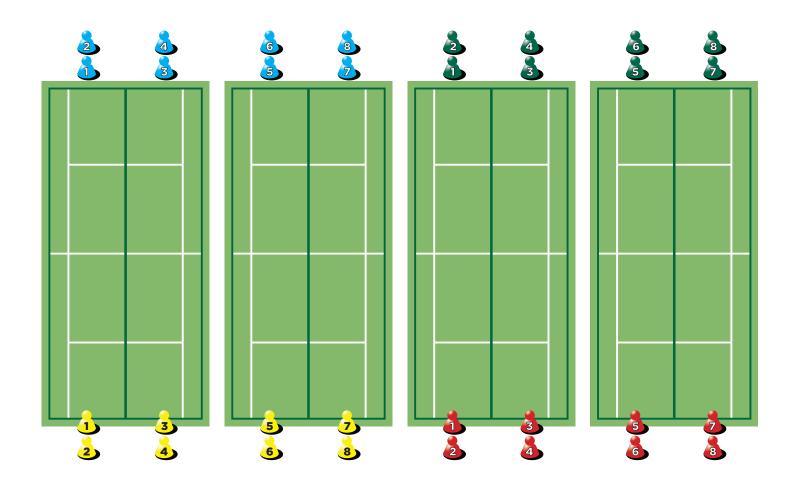
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Option 2

32 ORANGE (MATCH)



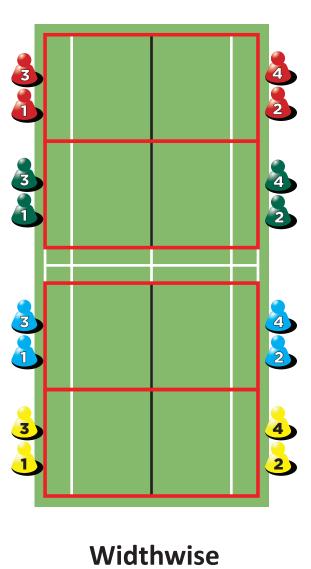
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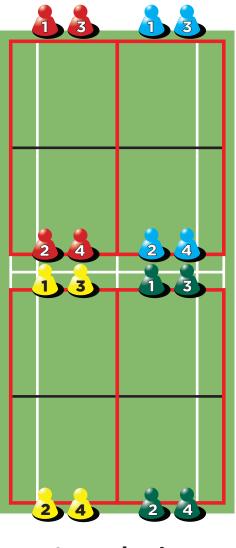
32 GREEN (MATCH)



Modified Green

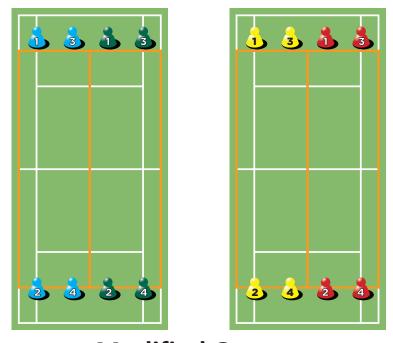
COURT SET-UP PRACTICE VARIATIONS FOR 16, 24 AND 32 PLAYER LEAGUES



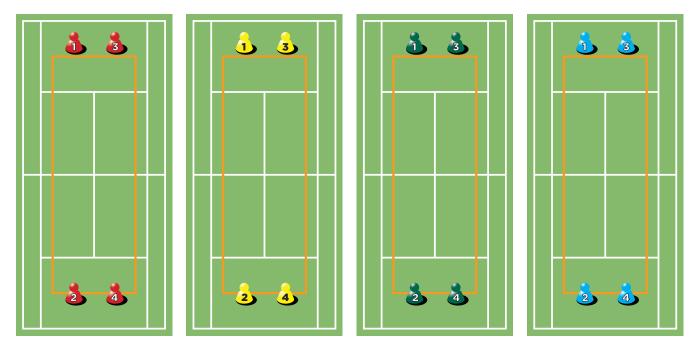


Lengthwise

16 ORANGE (PRACTICE)

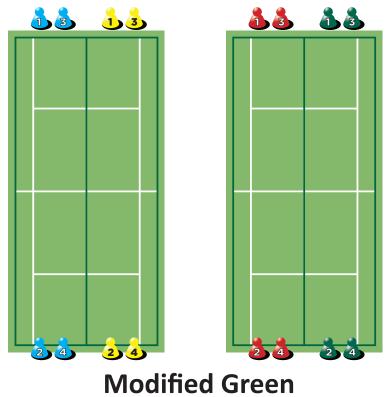


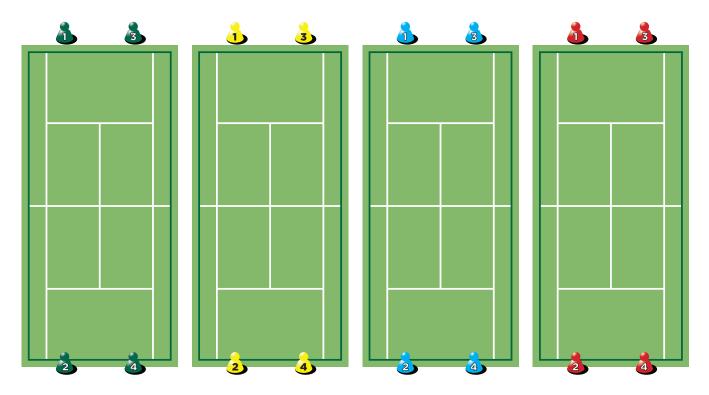
Modified Orange



Regulation Orange

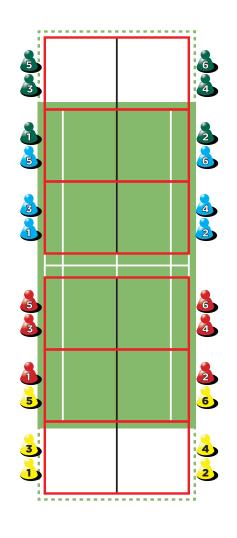
16 GREEN (PRACTICE)

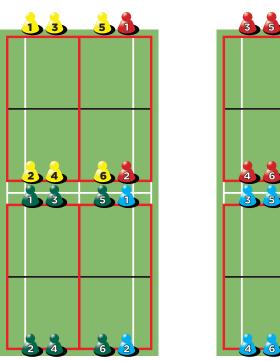


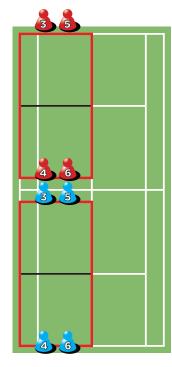


Regulation Green



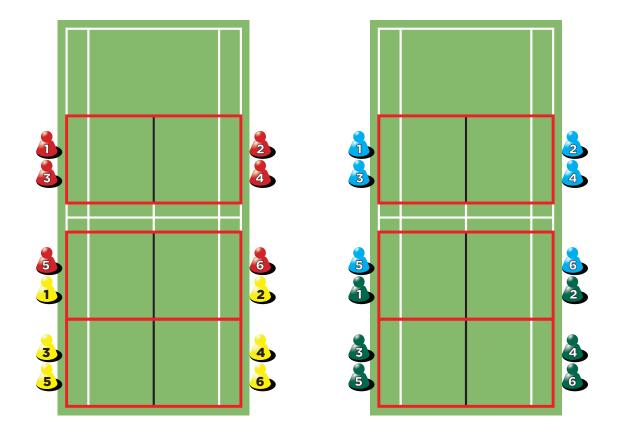






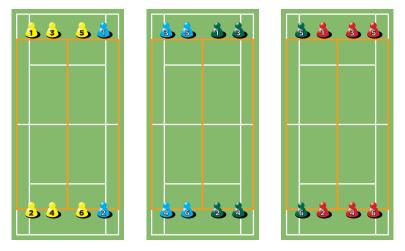
Widthwise - 1 Court

Lengthwise - 2 Courts

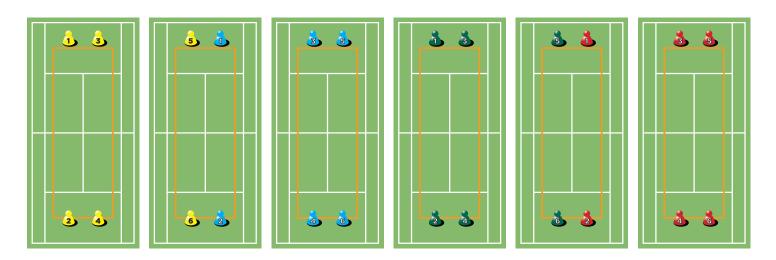


Widthwise - 2 Courts

24 ORANGE (PRACTICE)

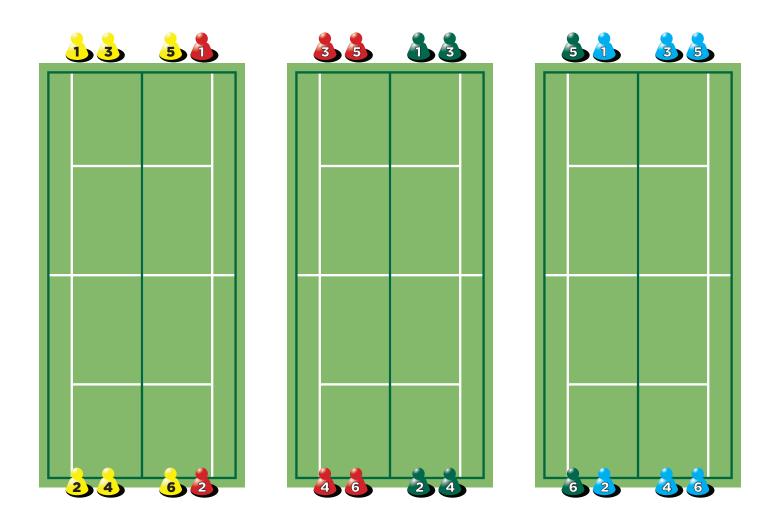


Modified Orange

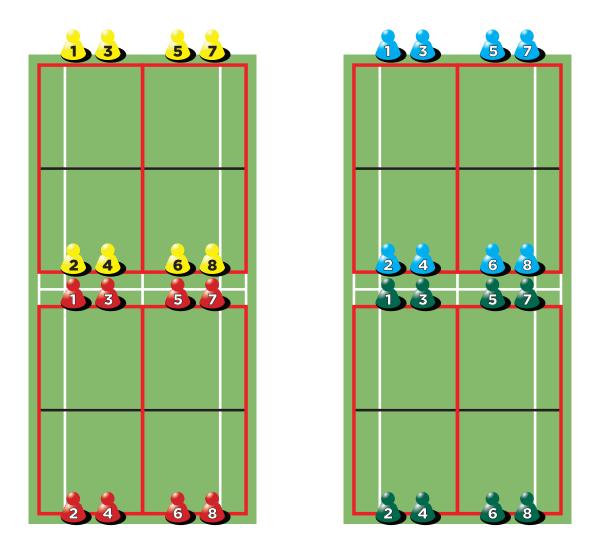


Regulation Orange

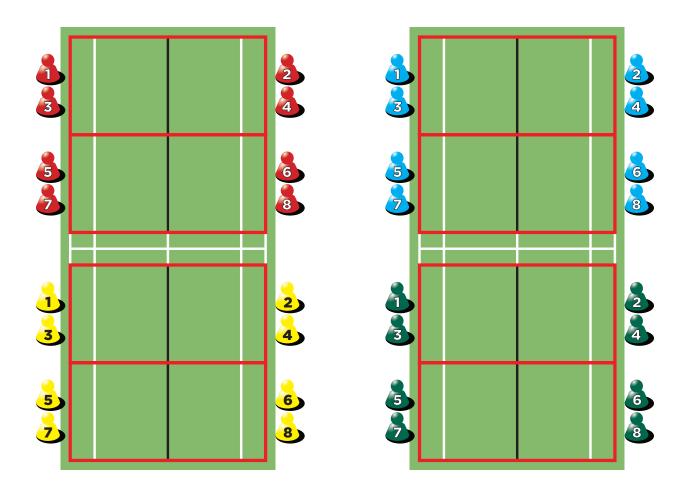
24 GREEN (PRACTICE)



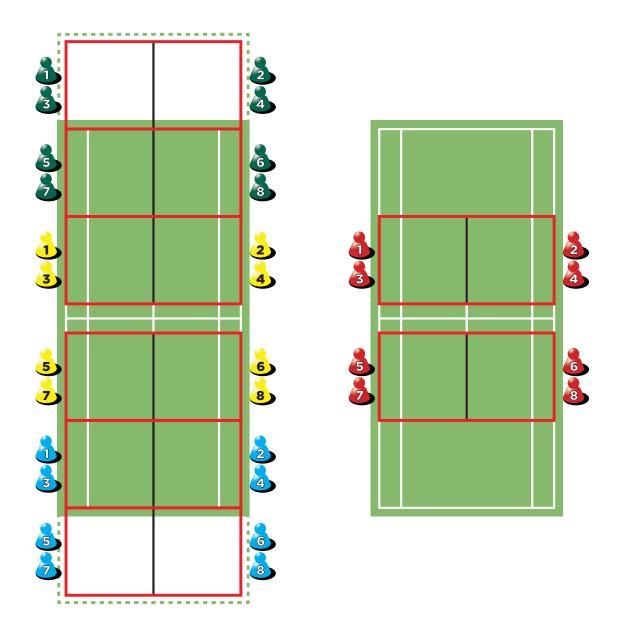
Modified Green



Lengthwise - 2 Courts

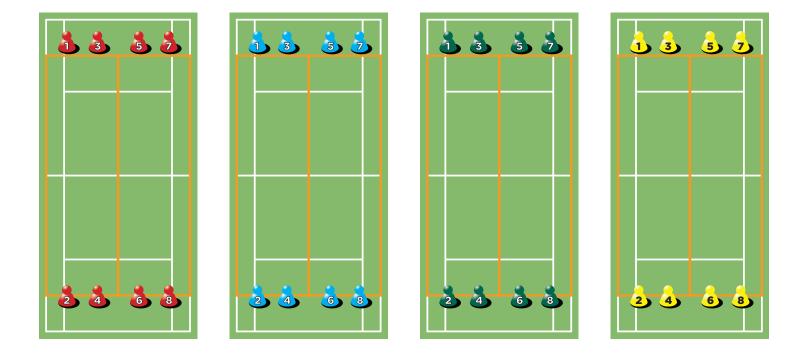


Widthwise - 2 Courts
Option 1



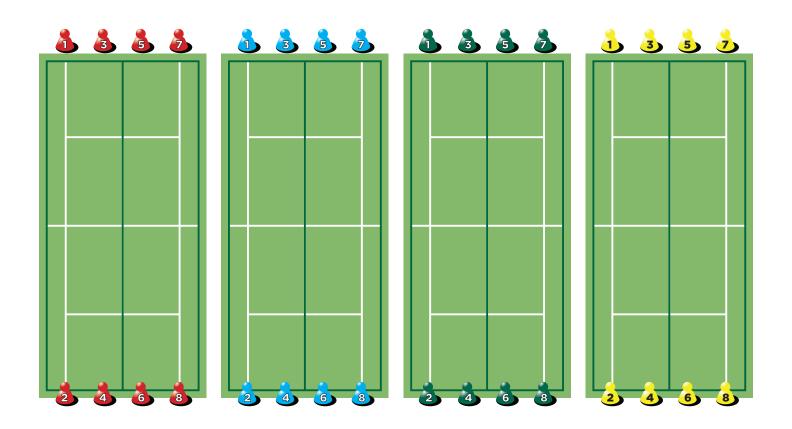
Widthwise - 2 Courts
Option 2

32 ORANGE (PRACTICE)



Modified Orange

32 GREEN (PRACTICE)



Modified Green

6. APPENDIX... Continued

SCORESHEET AND LEAGUE STANDINGS

	OOS	RE SHEET	SCORE SHEET AND MATCH SCHEDULE	CHEDUI	4	
DATE:	TEAM NAME:	.::		TEAM NAME:	VAME:	
	PLAYERS: (list players in order of team rankings)	team rankings)		PLAYERS: (list players in	PLAYERS: (list players in order of team rankings)	
	1 2			1 2		
	1 K 4			1 K		
	r 150 (4			י עז י		
	7 8			0 / 8		
	MATCH 1 (Singles)	SCORE	MATCH 2 (Reverse Singles)	SCORE	MATCH 3 (Alternate Doubles)	SCORE
COURT 1	1 vs. 1 vs 2 vs		1 vs. 1 vs 2 vs. 1 vs		1 & 2 vs. 1 & 2 vs.	
COURT 2	3 vs. 3 vs. 4 4 vs. 4 vs		3 vs. 4 vs vs		3 & 4 vs. 3 & 4 vs	
COURT 3 (If 6 players / team)	5 vs. 5 vs vs		5 vs. 6 vs		5 & 6 vs. 5 & 6 vs	
COURT 4 (If 8 players / team)	7 vs. 7 vs. — vs. — 8 vs. 8		7 vs. 8 vs. 7 vs.		7 & 8 vs. 7 & 8 vs.	
	TOTAL		TOTAL		TOTAL	
		FINAL SCORE	0			

STANDINGS

PLACE	NAME OF TEAM	RECORD