

TEACHING METHODS – Tennis, a game of open skills.

Tennis, as a game of open reality, is not necessarily an unpredictable game; however, it's usual to hear that no situation happens twice in a row or that the ball is never hit the same way.

This may cause some confusion making the coaches believe that, in order to keep the practice reliable, it must reproduce exclusively the same characteristics of the game, apparently varied and unpredictable. Practically, it almost does not happen. Sincerely, it should rather happen more often.

In tennis, we can observe that, despite the variability implicit in the game, situations are often repeated creating tendencies that allow us to know the game better and to obtain a higher level of predictability. Even to teach it better.

According to the rules, players always alternate the serving and the returning games; score defines where to serve and to return from and the service must bounce into the service box. In recreational levels the players risk the first service and generally fail, returners move forward to take advantage of a weak and insecure second service, on higher levels is proportionally quite the same. Common phrases reflect frequent events: "the player always returns the ball back", "the backhand is weaker", "the forehand is powerful", "never comes to the net", "only slices", "in doubles I prefer to play on the right side", "gets easily angry", "the ball always comes to his hands", "this style of play adapts better to a slow court", "women win more games returning than serving".

Statistical analysis demonstrates that, in higher levels, the player who serves the first service in wins about 80% of the points but loses about 60% playing on his second; at 80% of the points players do not rally more than eight strokes added together (two of them are service and return); points take, in average, seven to eight seconds (tennis is anaerobic alactic); players hit at least three unforced errors for every winner; players win 70% of the points when approach to the net; 80% of the shots are under comfortable situations (no distance pressure). With the help of reviews it's also possible to obtain more specific and detailed information from a certain player or match.

Just from simple observation, we realize the best players become specialists. They adopt tendencies and acquire typical styles that easily identify them and turn them into models of inspiration and imitation. Players and coaches must know how their opponents play. It's part of the game. There is some predictability.

These data and many more are relevant to understand the game better and to organize the way we teach and practice.

When we mention that tennis is a game of open reality, we refer that a player, with his actions, exerts influence on his opponent's actions and vice-versa. This way, players are able to deduce and, in the best of cases, to induce the actions of each other. Even if this means to repeat constantly the same match plays, preferably those who work successfully. It may sound uncoherent but it is not rare to observe players who prefer to lose the game instead of changing the way they play the game.

Therefore, a game of open characteristics, of actions that imply in reactions and so continuously, makes players take decisions constantly. The open skills the players develop are in fact the techniques they decide to use when react in the most varied situations. During the practice sessions, teacher's roll is, among others, to introduce the different game situations to the students, to teach to recognize them and to take the right decisions. It means how to react better.

Ideally, the practice must be responsible for making the players automate the decision-making and fit them to the technical execution. Precisely, because during the points there is no time enough to think. This way, practice can assume tactical meanings helping to perceive the different game situations and to decide the most convenient ways to play; or technical meanings, teaching how to execute correctly the proper strokes for each situation.

The coach, together with the players, should decide if the practice emphasizes the tactical aspects – how to play in the different situations – or the technical aspects – exclusively the strokes' execution.

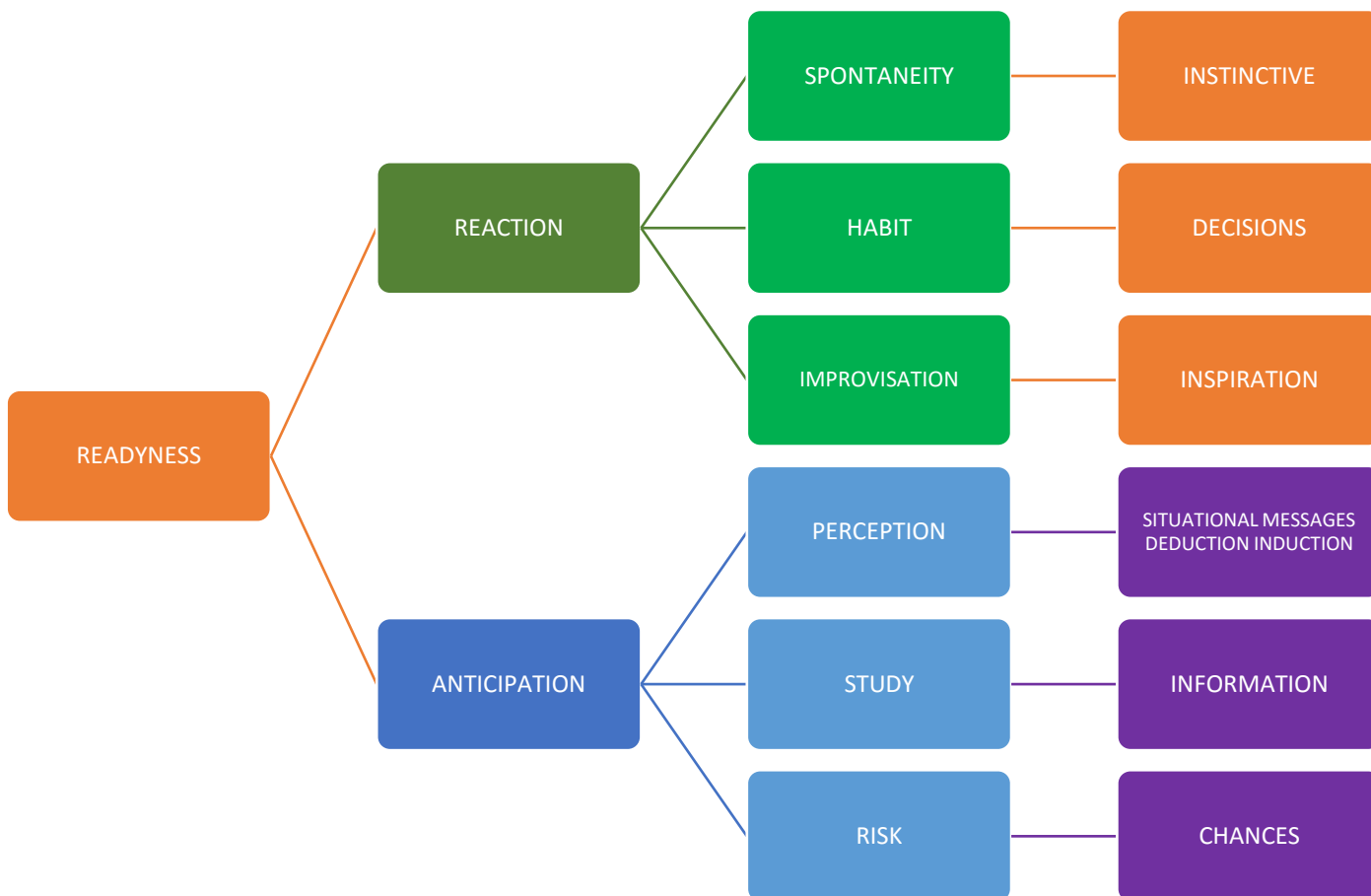
Worth to remind that a tactical practice - oriented to play against an opponent - is also technical and should be an open exercise. A technical practice cannot be tactical because it is not oriented against an opponent but to the ball control (tactical function) or to the stroke performance (biomechanics) and should be a closed exercise.

One of the functions of the practice is to provide the possibility to train repeatedly until automate. Therefore, in order to learn and improve reaction, the decision-making as well as the shot production (the way to execute the strokes - neuromotor system education) in a particular game situation, it is necessary to repeat the same situation.

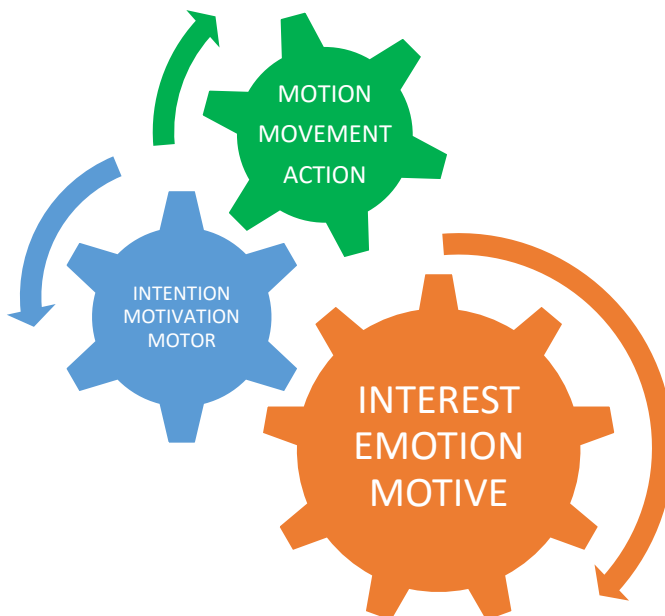
Considering that the players learn and improve concomitantly many aspects, the coach has to plan the teaching contents and the respective proper methods, as well as the working intervals with the corresponded rest breaks according to the intensity of the exercises.

I. Tennis, a game of open skills

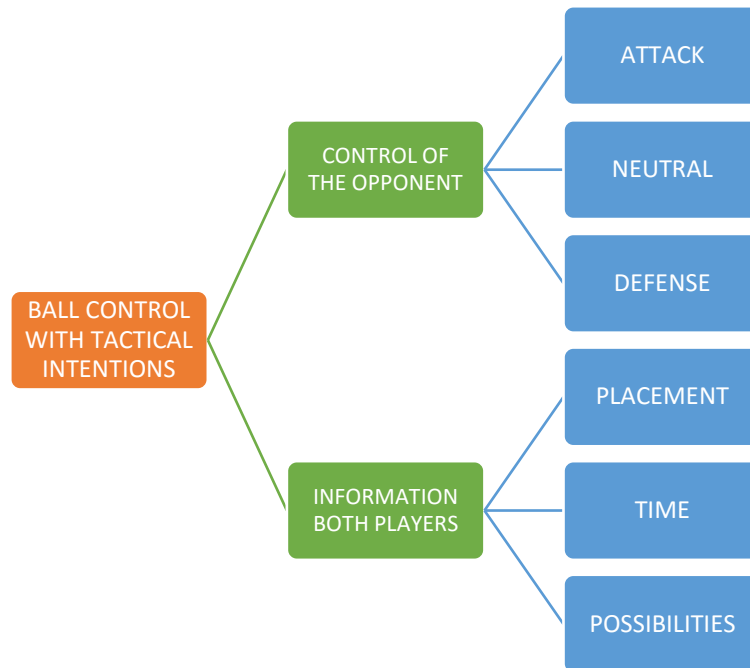
- 1) Players exert and suffer reciprocal influence acting and reacting respectively.
- 2) Is a “varied and unpredictable” game. Teacher’s roll is to turn it habitual and predictable to the players.
- 3) Implies in perceiving and taking decisions: first what to do, second how to do.



- 4) Actions linked to interests / intentions / reasons
 EMOTION → MOTIVE → MOTIVATION → MOTOR → MOTION → MOVEMENT
 MOTIVATION: wish to leave normality / wish to come back to normality



- 5) Control of the ball with tactical intentions:
Control of the opponent / Information about both players.



Any tactic set in advance cannot substitute the feeling / intuition / instinct of the player during the point.

II. Tennis, a game of mistakes.

- 1) Learning process based on failures. Create exercises to promote instabilities and provoke the failures.
- 2) Open system promotes the unexpected "out of script" fail. Trying to control the ball, the eventual fails demand a respective immediate adjust, unusual, unexpected and improvised.
- 3) The practice inside the practice. Learning process happens by reacting trying to correct the fail, recognizing and distinguishing wrong from right. Differentiation: perception of right contrasted and compared with wrong.
- 4) Ideal challenge: always take in mind that students must succeed.
- 5) Progression / Overload. As long as players improve, the increased difficulty generates a new instability.
- 6) Beginners are not aware of their errors. As they practice, get experiences, sensibility and become conscious.
- 7) As long as players improve, "fail more". The margin between right and wrong is thinner. However, they learn techniques to increase the margin and tolerance to deal and get along with their fails.
- 8) Create a context to stimulate the perception of wrong and right (hits and misses) and to experiment again. A game!

III. Methodological option

- 1) Before memorizing the way of hitting the ball, is important to recognize and identify the different ways of receiving the ball. It's fun to find out.
FAQ: Do we run the risk to learn "wrong movements"?
ANSWER: No. Memorizing "right movements" prevents from mastering other patterns of movement and from understanding the utility / function of the movement; running the risk to limit our knowledge.
Open skills come before close skills. Mechanics is a way to make order but first comes the disorder.
- 2) Only through an open system where situations are varied (unexpected, unpredictable, unusual, aleatory) is possible to develop open skills and to take decisions.
- 3) To control the ball is fundamental so players are able to practice by rallying or playing (through an open reality system) and improve their skills, having fun, increasing their confidence and motivation.
- 4) Players understand that the reception of the ball is a consequence of the previous projection, learn to get ready and to predict it.

IV. Practice: the movement linked to a task, as a problem solution, intentional, aleatory, creative, spontaneous, joyful and unaware. Learned by necessity or wish, by experience or imitation.

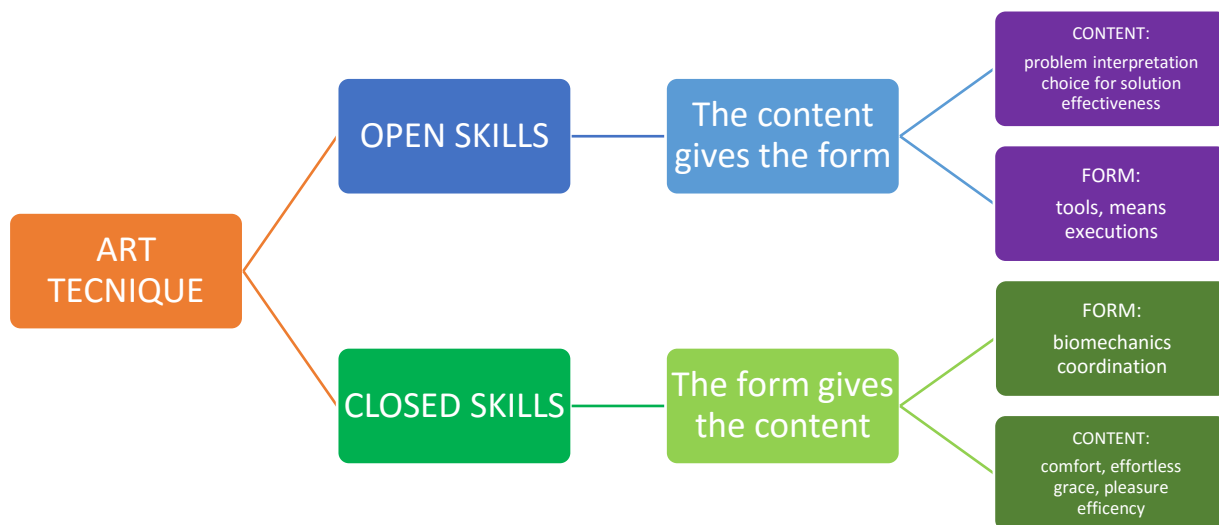
Control of the ball linked to a committed cooperative rally. Players must learn the ethics and benefits of training.

- Players must learn to touch and feel the ball in order to control it and be able to play before they learn the “strokes from the book”.
- Coaches must promote this stage and get along during the initial phase while players learn how to play before (or concomitantly) learn how to hit.
- As long as players improve dexterity and develop open skills, a bigger variation of strokes can be learned, acquired, utilized, enjoyed.
- As long as players play the game, situations demand for solutions and justify the learning of established and gradually more sophisticated strokes.

Control of the ball linked to an emotional state (of mind), calm, concentrated, relaxed, harmonious, fluent, balanced.

- When the player is concentrated on the task, there is no analysis of the movement but a release of criticism.
- Allowing the student the creation of his own movements is a demonstration of trust on his abilities and a delegation of responsibilities. True leadership.
- Introduction and demonstration of suggested appropriated models should be conveniently opportune.
- Imitation is the most authentic way to learn and a graceful game. Therefore, should be a personal interest and not an imposition.

V. Practice: the movement as a universal solution for most of the problems, an athletic throwing motion, intentional and premeditated learned by orientation.



“Groping in the uncertainty is as unproductive as the blind obedience to rules. The uncontrolled self-analysis can be harmful as also the artificial primitivism of that person that refuses to understand why and how performs”
 Rudolph Arnheim – German psychologist



Chapter V

CONSIDERATIONS TO PREPARE THE TRAINING SESSIONS

1. Educative goals of the Physical Education
2. Long term development
3. Games based approach – rules and fun
4. Teaching through games
5. Didactic strategies
6. Effective communication
7. Monitor performance to ensure results. Ideal Challenge
8. Methodological options

CONSIDERATIONS TO PREPARE THE TRAINING SESSIONS

"The main goal of education is to create men able to do new things, not only to repeat whatever other generations have done. Creative men, inventors, discoverers. The second goal of education is to form minds capable to criticize and verify who do not accept everything proposed to them."

Jean Piaget – Swiss pedagogue

1. EDUCATIVE GOALS OF THE PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- Physical goals:
 - Provide a healthy and long lasting life through proper habits.
 - Develop physical capabilities and motor abilities.
- Cognitive goals:
 - Think, analyze, interpret, deduce, associate, conclude, decide.
 - Know, recognize, perceive, remember, classify, qualify, order.
 - Comprehend, learn, explain, argue, justify, teach, orient.
 - Imitate, imagine, idealize, create, invent, represent.
- Emotional goals:
 - Fun, happiness, joy, to allow, to conform, to delude.
 - Empathy, tolerance, patience, motivation, self-esteem, self-confidence, initiative courage.
 - Deal with pressure, with fear, with hits and misses.
- Social goals:
 - Be related, integrated, adapted, identified, to belong, participation, representation
 - Cooperation, competition, leadership, delegate, trust, motivate, teach, learn, allow, forgive.
 - Be responsible, committed, independent.

2. LONG TERM DEVELOPMENT

"Takes ten years to make a champion."

Bill Tilden – American tennis player

- Physiological and psychological development
- Commitment to a progressive plan
- Periodization of the practice sessions and exercises

LEVEL OF THE PLAYER

1. Beginner
2. Intermediate
3. Advanced

LEARNING STAGES

1. Initiation
2. Instruction
3. Development
4. Performance
5. High performance

LEARNING PHASES

1. Cognitive
2. Associative
3. Automatic

LEARNING CONTENTS

1. Familiarization
2. Introduction to the strokes/game situations
3. Introduction to the strokes technique
4. Tactical intentions and ball control
5. Stroke elements (BIOMECH)
6. Inner game
7. Game styles, attack/defense
8. Advanced technique
9. Physical fitness

PLAYERS' LEVEL	BALL CONTROL	CORRECT STROKES	GAME KNOWLEDGE	GAME EXPERIENCE
BEGINNER	Learning by trying autonomous	Learning by following models	Learning the rules (adapted)	Learning the game situations
INTERMEDIATE	Control the ball, knows the rotation	Able to execute the models	Know the rules and plays informally	Know the game situations Conservative game
	Learning to control the ball executing correct strokes			
ADVANCED	Use with tactical means	Varied, special, advanced	Compete formally	Know the game styles Risky game

THREE PARTS OF THE TRAINING SESSION

BEGINNING – Initial conversation, connection with past sessions, introducing contents. Warming up.

- Physical (activation, coordination)
- Technical (basis, control)
- Mental (concentration, inner game)
- Tactical (anticipation)

Characteristics:

- Preparatory
- Fun, relaxed
- From low to medium intensity

MIDDLE – Main part. Training

- Technical (efficiency, movement, stroke combinations, specific strokes)
- Technical-tactical (effectiveness, positioning, strokes combinations, specific strokes)
- Tactical-technical (game situations, game styles, making-decisions)
- Tactical (game situations, game styles, making-decisions)
- Physical (aerobic to learn, anaerobic alactic to fix – with respective rest breaks)

Characteristics:

- Serious, intense, demanding.
- Fatigues, stresses, requires concentration.
- Commitment to improvement.
- Foot-work (low intensity and long, high intensity and short – with respective rest breaks)
- Alternation of functions and rotation dynamics.
- Cooperation, competition.
- Tasks, goals, scores, internal tournaments.
- Quality into quantity.
- Discipline, organization, control of the group, control of the times.
- Good habits bring confidence to the player.

END – Cool down. Final conversation, positive feedback. Connection with future sessions.

- Physical (relaxation, recovery)
- Mental (dispersion, motivation)
- Tactical (easy games, fun, groups)
- Technical (release, align)

Characteristics:

- Soft
- Relaxed
- Permissive

*"We must always follow the path that leads to the top."
Plato – Greek philosopher*

3. GAME BASED APPROACH – “RULES AND FUN”

"The game is older than the culture because presupposes a human society"
Johan Huizinga – Holland historian

Human kind plays games

- The game is a human invention to substitute the war and soften the conscience of death.
- To have fun, learn, play again and overcome.
- Rematch! One more life! A better life!
- Recreational space, represents the procreation. Parents play, so their sons can be better.

Education and living together

- Games represent a ruled environment where the players can exploit their competitive instincts trying to win their opponents in a pacific atmosphere with low risks of injuries.
- Playing games is a social phenomenon that develops and explains our stage of civilization (fair play).
- Create, learn, agree, keep and improve the rules of the game in order to play better and again.

Games of power

- The relationships established between people are based on relationships of convenience and interest, on games of power and control.
- When people play games, represent those relationships of power. However, conveniently in a less offensive way. After all, want to play against their opponents one more time.

In which way does this apply to the game of tennis?

- Tennis is a game of ball control.
- Players try to control their own actions and their opponents' actions too.
- "IDEAL PLAYER" concept – hard to control
 - Physically fitted: healthy, in shape, resistant. Hard to brake.
 - Mentally prepared strong, balanced. Hard to destabilize.
 - Tactically disciplined: aware, intelligent, astute. Hard to overcome.
 - Technically competent: versatile, efficient, effective. Hard to explore.

In which way does this applies to the teaching process?

- Integral training: include all the aspects.
- Group lessons
 - Players learn more if practice and play more time among themselves.
 - Players learn to practice and play with independence.
 - Players know and vary partners and opponents.
 - Recreation: fun, sociable, stimulant, motivator.
 - Education: ethics and values, cooperation, respect, tolerance, example.
 - Lessons can be longer and rentable.
 - The group and each individual have benefits

The versatile coach identifies and considers the individual needs when programs the exercises in a group lesson.

"The necessities of the team are better answered when we attend the individual necessities."
Max Depree – American writer

4. TEACHING THROUGH GAMES FOR UNDERSTANDING

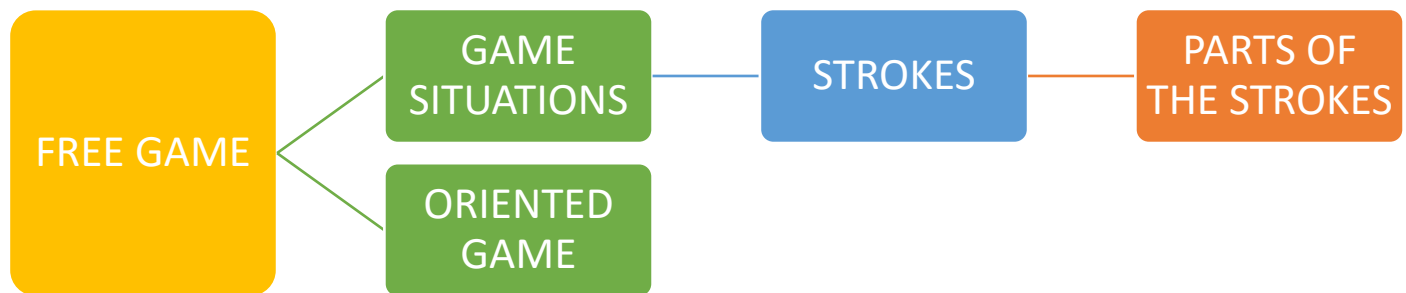
"Don't educate the children in many disciplines using force, but as it was a game, so you can also observe better which the natural disposition of each one is."
Plato – Greek philosopher

Methodological option – Tennis is a game of open skills

- Players exert influence one on each other, acting and reacting respectively.
- Is a varied and quite unpredictable game.
- Implies in perceiving and taking decisions: first what to do and second how to do.

Holistic purpose

- From global to specific.
- From simultaneous to synthetic to analytical.
- From the experiment to the experience.
- From the discovery to the orientation.
- From induction to deduction.
- Adaptation, differentiation, inclusion.



Importance of playing

- Tennis is a game. Funny, real.
- Illusion, represent rolls.
- Interest and personal need for challenge and overcome.
- Experiment, create and acquire experience.
- Rematch! Try again with the acquired experience.
- Share experiences with others.
- Players learn to play, become, feel and are treated as players.
- Players identify and learn integrally the aspects of the game:
 - Rules
 - Playing time, rhythm, intensities, fatigue, rests.
 - Playing experience, knowledge of the situations, of the adversities and adversaries.
 - Reading of the ball, notion of court, strokes, match plays and own skills.
 - Awareness of the opponent position and possibilities, reading of the opponent movements.
 - Concentration, tactical discipline, mental routines, momentum.
 - Deal with pressure and emotional changes.
- Develop self-image, self-criticism, motivation
- Perform what is learned in real situations. Play > Learn > Play
- A game is also a test, a possibility to evaluate the progression

"Children play with a perfect serenity"
Johan Huizinga – Holland historian

Advantages

- Situations of pressure, commitments.
- Game situations, attack and defense, scores.
- "Between points" experience.
- Initial and connection strokes (1-3-5, 2-4-6).
- Tactical function of technique.
- Make players think: tactics and strategies according to rules.
- Real energetic demand.
- During the match / games is also possible to practice (depending on the game and on the goals).
- The best practice is the most similar to the mental reality of the match.
- The practice after the match / games.

Disadvantages (?)

- Practice volume quite low (lot of "dead" time). How to avoid / reduce? (stand by / rotations).
- High variability and, consequently, low frequency of repetition. How to increase? (guided games).
- Many factors of dispersion.
- Will to win pressures. Competitive tension reduces confidence and inhibits the experiment.
- Preferably, do not practice during the match / games (depending on the game and on the goals).
- During the game is hard to learn and practice the conformity of technique.

When teaching through games:

- Invent games with specific rules to achieve the educative goals.
- Decide the rules with the players.
- Check if the game happens to achieve a qualitative practice.
- If necessary, differentiate individually to equalize the levels and to include.
- Keep the concentration and only refer to the established goals.
- Promote the experience: organize rematches, change opponents.
- Remember the disadvantages of an open system.
- If necessary, modify closing or opening the method opportunely.



"You can discover more about a person during one hour of game than in one year of conversation"
Plato – Greek philosopher

5. DIDACTIC STRATEGIES

ADAPT the games to the capacities of the players and turn them the most real as possible:

- Material, facilities, rules, formats (cooperation, opposition, personal record, individual, groups).
- Familiarization (adaptation phase).
- Motor development.
- Pre-sport, Pre-game.
- Minitennis.
- $\frac{3}{4}$ court, green dot ball.

To adapt allows everybody to play and practice accordingly with success.

EXAGGERATE the conditions and situations according to the capacities and necessities:

- Modify material (balls, rackets).
- Play without racket, with two rackets, object instead a racket.
- More touches, more bounces.
- Add concepts, actions, words, elements to concentrate to the rally.
- Play with two balls, with both hands.
- Play in specific areas.
- Play with determined tasks (one service, three services, only valid / not valid, styles of play)
- Modify rules and scores (two against one, three points in a row, until 100, 30 love – love 30).
- Modify court dimensions (higher net, short baseline area, doubles without alleys, singles with alleys, half court against all court).

To exaggerate promotes an adaptation contrasting with the reality of the game.

SAMPLING from other sport modalities and daily situations that require and develop similar abilities than tennis.

- Court experience, ball control, attack and defense, changing functions and rolls, coordination, peripheral vision, perception, anticipation, camouflage, dribbling, bluffing, team work, communication.
- Soccer (movement, adjusting, head the ball, balance).
- Handball (throwing, catching, bounce the ball).
- Volleyball (conducting, blocking, deviating, smashing, net game).
- Fights (pushing, pulling, standing, falling, pulling down, hitting, kicking, dodging, cushioning).
- Dance (rhythm, synchronism, frequency, harmony, balance, flexibility).
- Athletics (coordination, capacities, throwing motions).
- Hockey, Golf, Baseball, Rackets (use of implement).

Sampling illustrates, makes associations, varies, promotes imitation and enriches motor skills.

ASSISTING, advising and orienting the players to comprehend what they do and be able to evaluate their level of performance, skills and achievements through an effective communication method:

- Teaching means to present the new.
- Learning implies in experimenting the unknown.
- Teaching promotes curiosity and discovery.
- Learning awakes the interest and increases capacities.
- Teaching requires patience and to enable learning time.
- Learning requires time to get experience.
- Teaching allows creativity and fearless trying.
- Learning implies in audacity, risks and responsibilities.
- Teaching implies in teaching to learn, motivating and provoking the wish to learn.
- Learning facilitates and encourages new learnings.
- Interpret the students, comprehend their intentions and difficulties, recognize tendencies.
- Orient the students through effective communication and make them draw useful conclusions.

Assisting, as in coaching, implies in someone who wishes to be assisted, trusts on his advisor and vice-versa.

6. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

*"Sons of men, among all young animals, are the most difficult to treat."
Plato – Greek philosopher*

MORE	LESS
POSITIVE VERBAL AND NON VERBAL COMMUNICATION	NEGATIVE VERBAL AND NO VERBAL COMMUNICATION
ATTRACT ATTENTION	REQUEST CONCENTRATION
VERIFY THE COMPREHENSION	DEMAND UNDERSTANDING
OFFER PRAISES	TRANSMIT CRITICS
EVIDENCE WHAT IS GOOD	DENOUNCE WHAT IS WRONG
QUESTIONS	AFFIRMATIONS
LISTENING	TALKING
SILENCE	SHOUTS
DEMONSTRATIONS	EXPLANATIONS
COOPERATIVE	AUTHORITARY
WHAT DO YOU CHOOSE?	I DECIDE!
ENABLING	REQUIRING
SUGGESTING	COMMANDING
DELEGATING	TAKING RESPONSIBILITIES
LEADING	CONDUCTING
MOTIVATING	INTIMIDATING
MAKING EASY	MAKING DIFFICULT
PATIENCE	IMMEDIACY

- Sharing with students the decisions related to the objectives of the exercises promotes self-image, delegates responsibilities, increases motivation and provokes commitment.
- Dialogue, more than a healthy exercise, is a demonstration of mutual respect.
- Communication proceedings:

Before the exercise

WHAT (contents, goals, rules)

WHY (reasons)

HOW (practice method)

HOW MUCH (quantity of balls, match plays, points, games, rotations, series, reps, rotations)

WHEN (planning)

During the exercise

- Maintenance of the objectives
- Rhythm, count, score, hits and misses
- Specific and honest praises, avoid criticism
- Positive body language

After the exercise

- Players comments. Effective questions
- Check the performance, recognize the progress
- Positive feedback (keep or modify the exercise) oriented to the future

*"The teacher does not teach, but arranges ways to make the children discover.
Creates problem-situations."
Jean Piaget – Swiss pedagogue*

7. MONITOR PERFORMANCE TO ENSURE RESULTS

*"Giving less than your best is sacrificing a gift."
Steve Prefontaine – American runner*

Evaluation is necessary to determine the ideal challenge and set realistic goals.

Verify:

- The motivation, commitment and mental intensity of the players.
- The comprehension of the game/exercise.
- The necessity of experimenting the task if it is a new one.
- The physical condition.
- The performance.

Then:

- Set goals.
- Ensure success.
- Monitor progression.
- Plan (keep or modify).

IDEAL CHALLENGE

How to know if the challenge is ideal? Coefficient of performance: 2/1 (hits/misses)

- Easy exercise demotivates, disperses and depresses.
- Difficult exercise frustrates decreases confidence, increases tension and discourages.

Consider the Principles of Individuality, Adaptation, Overload and Progression.

Every exercise well applied develops the mental abilities.

- If the goal is set according to the player's reality (interest/need/capacity), it will keep or raise the levels of MOTIVATION.
- If provokes to accomplish an established objective, it will add a certain level of TENSION.
- In order to execute it constantly correct, it will demand a minimum of CONCENTRATION.
- If the goal is accomplished most of the times, it will raise the levels of CONFIDENCE.

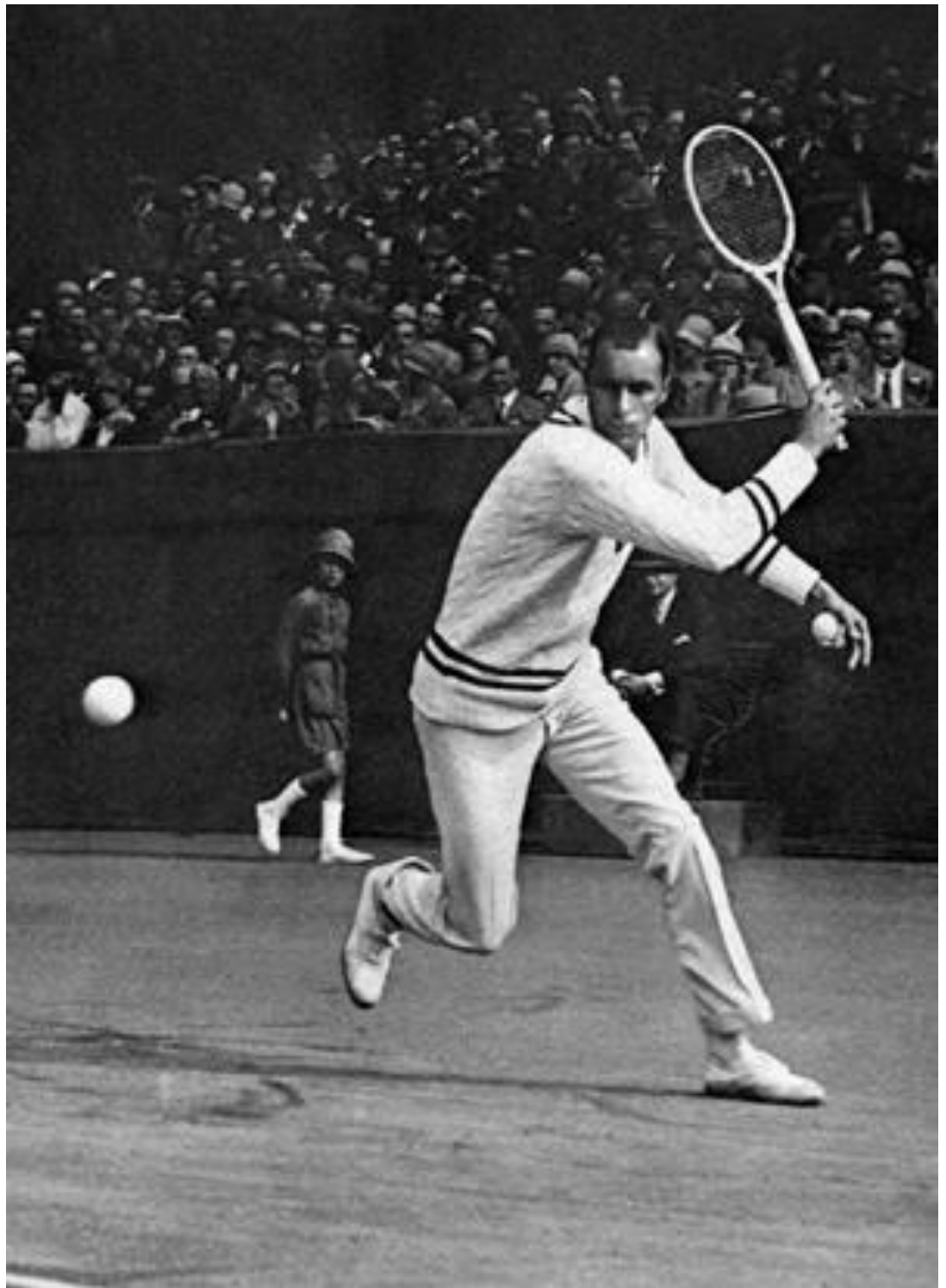
Modify opportunely and progressively the volume, intensity and complexity of the exercise.

- From easy to difficult, from simple to complex, from rude to refined.
- From slow to fast, from close to far, from low to high.
- From light to heavy, from short to long.
- From soft to intense, from control to power.
- From global to partial/specific. Then, from partial/specific back to global.
- From open to closed. Then, from closed to open.
- From simultaneous to synthetic to analytical and vice versa.

To practice through the IDEAL CHALLENGE provokes the players, demands overcoming, rewards the effort, ensures success and stimulates new challenges. Requires concentration, raises motivation, teaches to deal with tension and promotes confidence.

Coaches must find out the IDEAL CHALLENGE and ensure the success of the players. This way, they can always praise the students because of their success and suggest a new challenge, a little bit more difficult. Sounds interesting for everybody.

*"People use to say that motivation does not last forever.
Well, the effect of the bath neither, that's why is daily recommended."
Zig Ziglar – American motivational author*



*"Everything maybe would get planed if a second chance just remained".
Goethe - German philosopher*

8. METHODOLOGICAL OPTIONS

"Men do not desire what they do, but the objectives that bring them to do what they do."
Plato – Greek philosopher

The methodological choice determines the quality and the performance with which the goals are practiced and, consequently, assimilated.

THREE TRAINING METHODS

METHOD BASED ON FEEDING BALLS FROM THE BASKET

- Close system: the ball hit is not returned.
There is no making-decisions nor anticipation.
The tasks are previously programmed. Predictability is high.
- Methodology: mixed/partial
- Technical goals: closed skills (effectiveness, conformity, movement).

What to check?

- Number of hits (goal) upon number of tries.

How to modify the practice?

- Place on court.
- Type of feeding, reception targets, predictability, condition the decisions making.
- Targets of projection.
- Volume, frequency, pace, respective rests breaks.
- Combination of goals.

METHOD BASED ON COOPERATIVE RALLIES

- Semi-open system: players return the ball in cooperation.
There is making-decisions and anticipation.
The tasks are previously programmed. Predictability decreases.
- Methodology: mixed.
- Technical-Tactical objectives: closed skills (effectiveness, conformity, movement), open skills (making-decisions, perception, reaction, discipline, anticipation).

What to check?

- Players' capacity to cooperate and rally.
- Ability to react according to trajectory of the ball and to anticipate the next shot.
- Players' concentration and capacity to accomplish goals in addition to rallying.
- Numbers of hits (goals).
- Capacity to accomplish the objective without prejudice to the rally.
- Reciprocal tolerance between players.

How to modify the practice?

- Place on court. Type of ball.
- Type of feeding, reception targets, predictability.
- Projection targets.
- Volume, frequency, pace, respective rest breaks.
- Combination of goals
- Practice partners.

"The hardest you work, the luckier you will be."
Gary Player – South African golfer

METHOD BASED ON GAMES

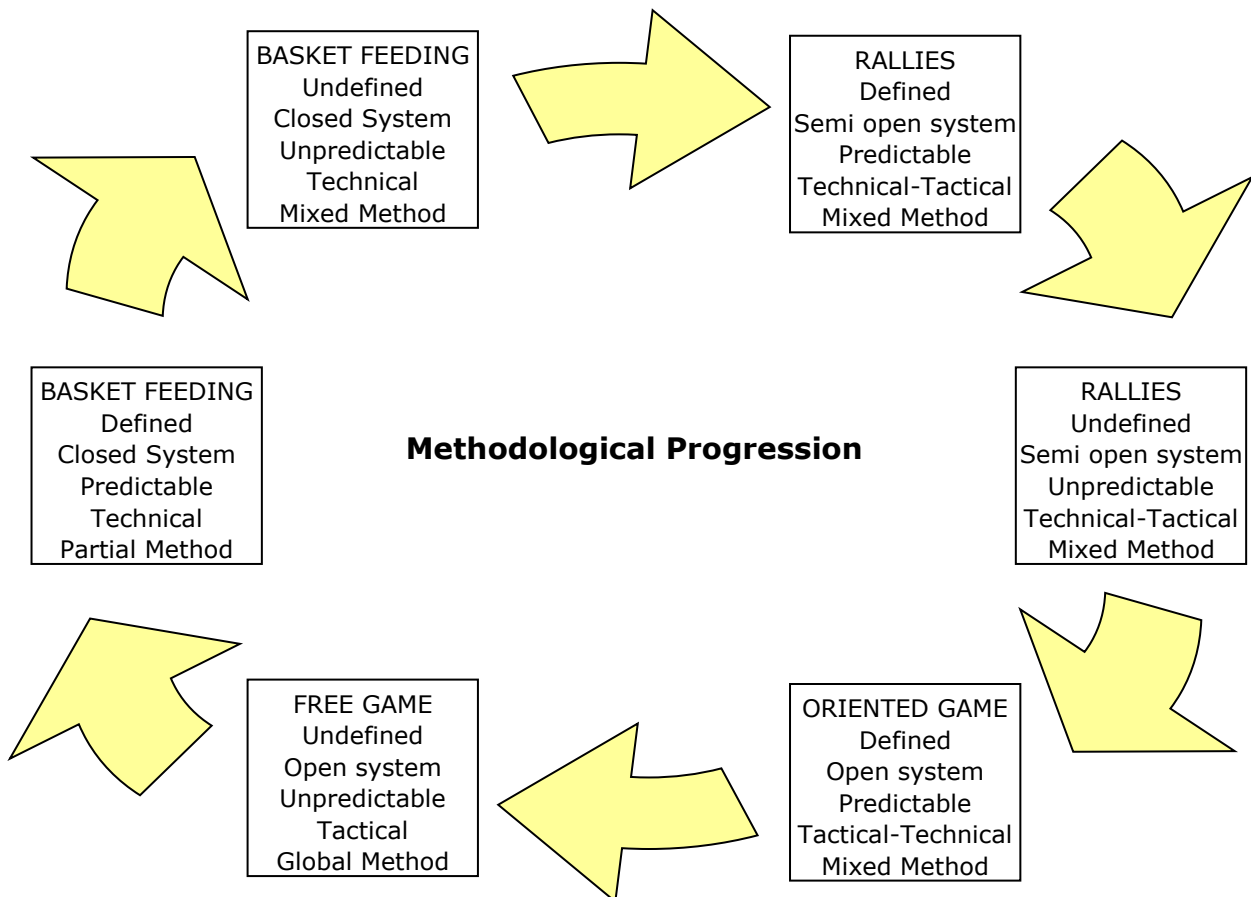
- Open system: players return balls in opposition.
There is making-decisions and anticipation.
Tasks can be conditioned. Predictability is low.
- Methodology: mixed/global
- Tactical goals: open skills (making-decisions, perception, reaction, discipline, anticipation), variability (situational, tactical use, emergency and improvised shots).
- Technical goals: closed skills (effectiveness, conformity, movement).

What to check?

- Balance between players (points scored by each player).
- Number of long points. Consistency and mutual resistance between players.
- Number of points that the task is accomplished. Discipline and competence.
- Number of points won when the task is accomplished.
- Technical performance at game situation (to win is not important or is important).

How to modify the practice?

- Adapting, Differentiating, Exaggerating, Advising.
- Building the game, conditioning the game, limiting the game.
- Changing opponents.



*"It's not the size of the dog in the fight but the size of the fight on the dog."
Magic Johnson – American basketball player*

METHOD BASED ON FEEDING BALLS FROM THE BASKET

The feedings from the basket are useful to learn/practice the established goals comfortably. The variables are minimal because the one who feeds has total control, either the coach, another player or the own player that feeds to himself. The feedings are always from the same place and the frequent systematic repetition of the same situation allows the exclusive practice. The goals are merely technical; once there are no rallies, there are no possibilities to exert mutual influence/induction nor necessity of reading/deduction. The system is defined as "closed". The predictable feeding eases the learning because does not require from the players making-decisions. All the actions are pre-established. The feedings can be even varied, meaning to practice the same goals in different situations and or different goals according to the respective variations. However, the players know previously the sequence of feedings and are ready in advance to practice the specific goals accordingly.

The unpredictable feedings increase considerably the level of difficulty because require making-decisions and speed reaction from the players. Are ideal to practice the same goal in varied situations, different goals for different situations and to check the assimilation of the goals as problem solutions.

The method of feeding balls from the basket is the most distant from the game reality and that less reproduces the opposition conditions. Must be used as an accessory method that helps the learning/practicing of contents that are difficult to learn/practice through open systems. In fact, the method totally eliminates the competitive pressure of the game and allows the players to feel confidence to try and to learn new contents as to review, fix and improve contents already known. Only advanced players are able to delude themselves imagining the opponent behind the scene.

That's why is defined as partial and analytical. However, it's possible and necessary to transform the practice into a challenge, turning it ideally an interesting game. Checking and rewarding the hits (goals achievement) to provoke the interest of players, increase the motivation, put some pressure and create possibilities of evaluation, all the practices must be structured preferably as games that test and entertain.

METHOD BASED ON COOPERATIVE RALLIES

Hitting balls in cooperation with a partner is an intermediary method. More complex than the method based on feedings because requires from players more control of the ball and responsibility. It is less threatening than the game and promotes the mutual help. However, includes certain dose of unpredictability occasioned by the involuntary fails to which the players must be ready to react.

This aleatory unpredictability provokes interesting situations in many fields: socially, foments the mutual tolerance; emotionally, increases the challenge and the resistance to frustration; tactically, players perceive how they influence on each other; technically, develops open skills, effectiveness and, depending on the level, conformity; and physically, endurance and speed reaction.

When competing, the opponent errors are desired, forced and welcome. When rallying with a partner, the misses must be avoided the maximum. Players, responsible to control the ball, practice their own success as offer each other the opportunity to practice. As they ensure a positive environment for the practice, hitting safety relatively neutral shots, also reproduce quite conservative tactics - "waiting for the opponent unforced error".

The system is defined as "semi open" and the methodology is mixed because analyses specific aspects through a global practice.

Besides promoting intrinsic motivation, practice will be possible only because of the mutual commitment between players that must ensure quality and partnership. Then, is justified for shaping ethical attitudes. Provoking the players suggesting them to set their own achievement goals - how many shots they hit in a row - in order to win imaginary opponents is fundamental to introduce challenges, to create competitive tension and to increase interest, resembling the practice to the game reality. As the goals are achieved, the challenges and levels of tension can be increased.

METHOD BASED ON GAMES

In the match, predictability is quite high, because of the high level of the players that defined their styles of play and developed anticipation skills, or because of the low level of the players that do not have many resources and, fearfully, do not risk and just keep the ball in the court. Otherwise, we must be watching a bad match. Anyway, the not so occasional errors, the intentions to harm the opponent and to raise the degree of incognita, increase enough the unpredictability.

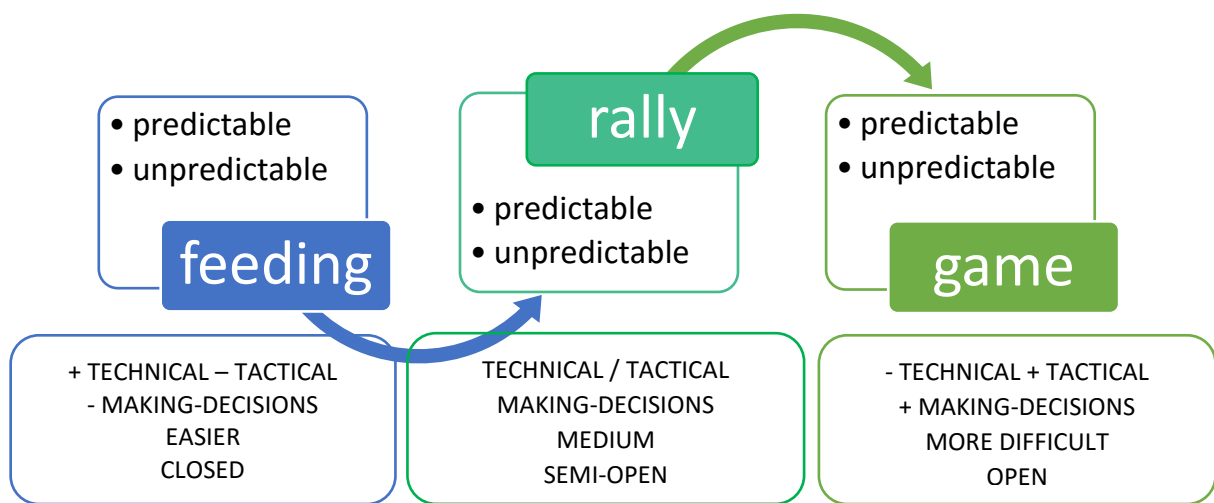
Considering mainly the motivational aspect, to experience the real game must be part of the practice of those who want to be players and improve their game level.

The sensible difference between the match and cooperative rally is the competitive tension. Players pass through ups and downs. Unless they play doubles or teams, the benefits and prejudices are entirely individual. Each stroke and every decision may imply in, at least, losing the point. In open situations and under pressure, players must decide for convenient tactical options - what to do with the ball and with the opponent when attacking or defending, and for technical options - which stroke they will use.

Learning to get along with emotional instabilities and looking for the best way to win justifies organizing the practice based on games. With this method is possible to automate the making-decisions and the correct strokes production to be used during the matches.

The training games may be conditioned to the necessities of the players, most of the time oriented and, certainly, predictable enough. Intending to improve a specific aspect, they must preferably repeat the same situation systematically. This way, the game situations, match plays or strokes can be practiced specifically and easily.

Eventually and intentionally is necessary to play freely in order to promote the full experience of the real game and intending to evaluate the assimilation of the learning contents and their respective transference into total open situations. In any case, the system is precisely defined as "open" and the methodology is global, generally oriented to practice some specific goal, mainly tactical.



LEARNING AND TEACHING METHODS	
Pure Global	Total execution of the task. Ex: pre-tennis, minitennis, free game.
Global with emphasis	Total execution of the task with polarization of the attention. Ex: technical, tactical, mental aspects.
Global with changing conditions	Total execution of the task with convenient adaptations. Ex: material, feeding method, rules.
Analytical progressive	The task is divided in parts, learned separately in order to add new ones successively. Ex: pendulums, levers, service toss of the ball, body turn.
Analytical continuous	The task is divided in parts, learned the original order. Ex: ready position, preparation, footwork, hit, recovery.
Analytical pure	The task is divided in parts, learned according to the coach decision. Ex: contact point with the ball, lateral position, racket trajectory, spin.

Content	Method – System	Goals	Specific goals	Methodology
Free game	Game based - Open undefined: Low predictability	Tactical	Styles and game situations - perception, reaction - making-decisions - discipline - anticipation	Global pure Global with emphasis
		Technical	Effectiveness – ball control Efficiency - conformity Movement - footwork	Global with emphasis
Guided game	Game based - Open defined: High predictability - Open undefined: Medium predictability	Tactical	Styles and game situations - perception, reaction - making-decisions - discipline - anticipation	Global with emphasis
		Technical	Effectiveness – ball control Efficiency - conformity Movement - footwork	Global with emphasis
Game situation	Game based - Open defined: High predictability - Open undefined: Medium predictability	Tactical	Styles and game situations - perception, reaction - making-decisions - discipline - anticipation	Mixed: Partial and Global with emphasis
		Technical	Effectiveness – ball control Efficiency - conformity Movement - footwork	Mixed: Partial and Global with emphasis
	Rally based - Semi open defined: High predictability - Semi open undefined: Medium predictability	Technical -tactical	Effectiveness – ball control Efficiency - conformity Movement - footwork Styles and game situations	Mixed: Partial and Global with emphasis
	Feedings based - Closed defined: Total predictability - Closed undefined: Medium predictability	Technical	Effectiveness – ball control Efficiency - conformity Movement - footwork Styles and game situations	Mixed: Partial and Global with emphasis
Strokes	Game based - Open defined: High predictability - Open undefined: Medium predictability	Tactical	Styles and game situations - perception, reaction - making-decisions - discipline - anticipation	Mixed: Partial and Global with emphasis
		Technical	Effectiveness – ball control Efficiency - conformity Movement - footwork	Mixed: Partial and Global with emphasis
	Rally based - Semi open defined: High predictability - Semi open undefined: Medium predictability	Technical -tactical	Effectiveness – ball control Efficiency - conformity Movement - footwork Styles and game situations	Mixed: Partial and Global with emphasis
	Feedings based - Closed defined: Total predictability - Closed undefined: Medium predictability	Technical	Effectiveness – ball control Efficiency - conformity Movement - footwork Styles and game situations	Mixed: Partial and Global with emphasis
Parts of the strokes	Feedings based - Close defined: Total predictability	Technical	Effectiveness – ball control Efficiency - conformity Movement - footwork	Partial with emphasis

GLOBAL

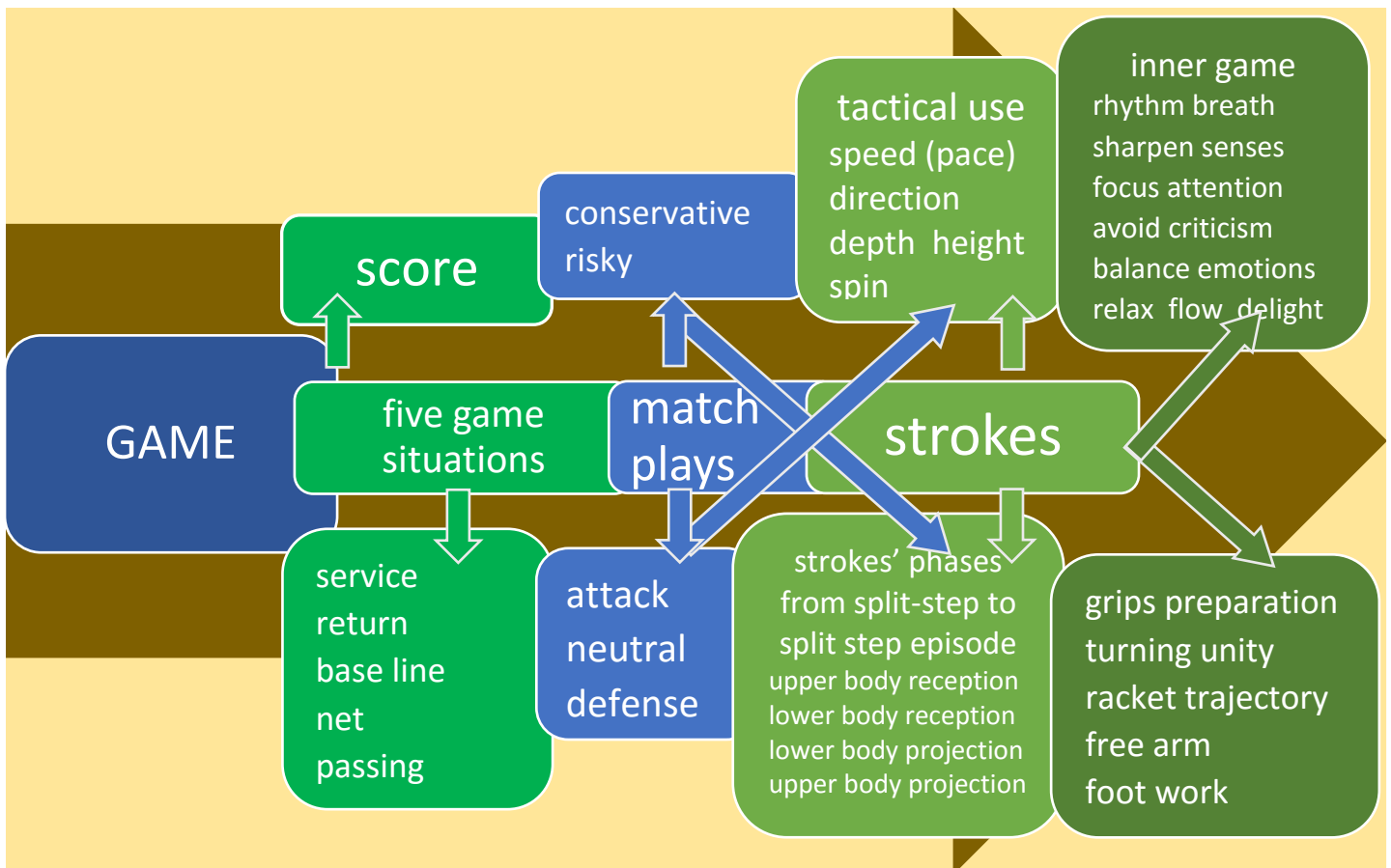
SIMULTANEOUS

SYNTHETIC

ANALYTICAL

MIXED

PARTIAL



GAME SITUATIONS

The game is compound by five game situations, starting with the opening strokes, respectively the **service** and the **return**. Once these are executed successfully, the players continue playing the point from the **base line** or, eventually, one of them **approaches to the net** and, consequently, his opponent confronts him with **passing shots**. Occasionally, **one faces the other near the net**, in doubles much more.

ATTACK AND DEFENSE

In all those situations, according to the conditions of the players, the match plays can be attacking or defending. Obviously, one player will be defending because the other is attacking. In tennis, players face constantly problems of time or distance, sometimes face both together. The position in court and the conditions to hit the ball comfortably determine the possibilities to attack and put the opponent in a defensive situation. For instance, the player that hits the first service into the service area, generally aggressive, is in good conditions to attack. The returner, positioned at one of the corners and out of the court, finds himself originally in a defensive situation. Besides having to run to the center of the court to cover the empty space, his return can be short and relatively easy for the server. When serving a second service, generally weak and timid, the advantage turns to the returner that moves into the court intending to avoid the short bounce and to decrease the reaction time of the server. Once the rules are fair, players alternate the serving games. Although, not always take advantage from serving or returning. If no player is attacking, no player will be defending. In this case, it is said that both are playing in a neutral situation.

CONSERVATIVE AND RISKY

It's quite interesting as obvious to notice that having two chances to serve defines the mental behavior of the players, courage in the first and fear in the second. The same way, the score could determine the tactical behavior of the players, risky when ahead and conservative when even or behind. In this case, alternating the way of playing is important to balance the tension, modify the rhythm and keep the game unknown. Definitely, it is not recommended to play only risky or conservative. It would be very usual and predictable to the opponent.

Playing a conservative way means to keep the ball regularly in the court waiting for the error of the opponent; at least, testing his physical condition, his emotional state, checking his decisions and finding

out his arsenal. Forcing his errors with more intentioned strokes could incur in some risk, maybe necessary but conformable, driving the ball to his weakness, or to the sides to make him move, or deep to keep him far, always consider the drop-shot, or fast to shorten his time. It would be an attacking game with a "defensive mentality", waiting for an error or for an easy ball. The same way is possible to play a defensive game with "aggressive mentality", complicating the opponent's attack, waiting for the error by impatience or imprecision, even counting with retaking the attack. It's important not to confuse the concept of defense with pushing the balls back and the concept of attack with risking winners.

Playing a conservative way means passing the responsibility to the opponent, getting ready, in any case, for the next shot. Therefore, is providential to be positioned in the right place at the right time.

Good players know where to hit intending to position themselves in the best conditions to expect for the next ball. Driving the ball crosscourt when defending from the base line and down the line when approaching to the net favors a shorter displacement to reach the ideal position. Once the players get more experienced, they are able to deduce according to their situation, which are the conditions of each one and what are capable to do in that circumstances.

We can conclude that playing a risky way is the opposite of playing in a conservative way, increasing irresponsibly the chances to miss and or to position incorrectly on court. Most of the times, the player who tries to win the point hitting winners uses to gift unforced errors to his opponent. Risking the first service, defending with down the line shots, approaching to the net with cross-court shots, passing straight the net player and smashing to the corners decrease sensibly the chances to win the points. As an option for variation can be valid, as can be risking a first service, always when the scores favors the decision and allows risking a second service too. Otherwise, in order to raise the chances, rather be conservative and hit the first service cautiously in.

EFFECTIVENESS OF TECHNIQUE – THE TACTICAL FUNCTION

The technical quality of a player in terms of effectiveness can be defined by his control of the ball. The technical controls – direction, deep, height, speed and spin – are ingredients that compound the trajectory of the ball with tactical intentions, to attack or to defend.

Nevertheless, having an effective technique (or an efficient one) does not mean the use of a proper tactic. The choices depend mainly on external factors like the opponent and the environment. In this case, the technical competence - a physical ability - exerts a tactical function, must be useful and serve preferably an intelligent decision – a cognitive ability. Moreover, decisions are learned to take (percentage tennis, angles theory, anticipation), sometimes are intuited.

EFFICENCE OF TECHNIQUE – THE BIOMECHANICAL MODEL

The technical quality of a player also depends on his ability to execute correct movements. Biomechanical principles orient the definition of the most convenient coordination of the parts of the body and the racket aiming to produce the ideal strokes. Coaches resort to many methods and many repetitions so that players adopt successfully the necessary technical adaptations. Having an efficient technique, players increase the error margin, their possibilities to add power, vary the strokes and improvise. Despite the excessive wear the modern game causes, even in recreational levels, they certainly decrease the risks of injuries.

INNER GAME

Having an efficient technique, although raises the chances, does not ensure the players make a good use of it. A tool can be great but its use depends on the task to be executed, on the instructions for use that must be followed, and on the emotional state of the one who uses it. The player must have objectives and orientation to achieve them, keep himself motivated, concentrated and confident.

Therefore, it is important to understand that the player's execution of the "correct" strokes is linked directly to their tactical utility (varied, situational, emergencies), meaning to control the ball trajectory in order to influence the action of the opponent aiming to win points, games, sets and matches. Above all, players must be in comfortable mental conditions to execute the strokes as means to perform a convenient game plan.

Many factors contribute to change the levels of tension unbalancing emotionally the players. The different levels between players, the will to win and not to lose, the importance assigned to the match and to different moments of the match, the eventual presence of people watching, the hits and misses of both, the physical condition, the own expectations and from others about the performance and result are already enough among many others. The same way players dedicate themselves to practice their technical competence and, hopefully, their tactical discipline, they should engage on practicing their

mental strength. Precisely because they will need their abilities at the most difficult moments of the match when the pressure is higher.

Concentration techniques based on breathing exercises and focusing on the senses (vision, audition, tact, taste) provide calm, comfort, inspiration and enthusiasm. Added to the absence of criticism, those techniques harmonize the player bringing him to the present time, armoring him inside a peaceful shield, energizing him through a graceful rhythm. Transcending to the called "mental zone", the player feels free to play confident, inspired, delighting relaxed and effortless strokes.



"Sport is the only kind of entertainment wherein, no matter how many times you watch it, you will not know its end".
Neil Simon – American dramaturge