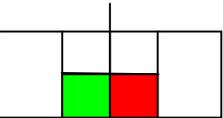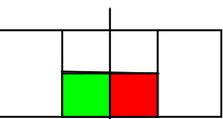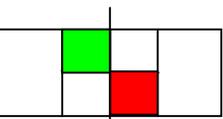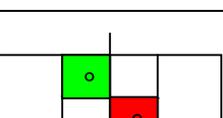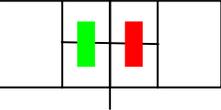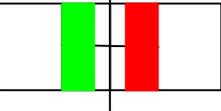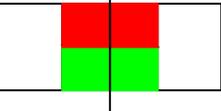# RALLY DEVELOPMENT FOR STARTER PLAYERS
by Mark Tennant and Hrvoje Zmajic

The starter players will experience tennis when they are able to maintain the rally. The feeling of control together with the ability to direct the ball are crucial for experiencing the „spirit" of the game of tennis. After reaching this stage most people will stay in tennis for good!

In the traditional approach of teaching tennis coaches are focused on development of technique or being more precise with movement mechanics. At the same time the biggest problem for starter players and especially ones with limited experience in ball games are receiving skills. In the modern approach of teaching tennis coaches are looking to establish the game from the very first lesson and the *rally* is the essential part of the game. In order to reach this goal as soon as possible coaches can use smaller courts, slower balls and different equipment to provide the optimal environment for players with different levels of receiving skills. The modern approach enables players to develop their technique through „behavioral constraints" by focusing on function instead of form and combining the mechanics with different stimuli in competitive match situations.

Rally Progression drills

Reccommended court	Recommended ball	Cooperative exercise	Competitive exercise	Check points for coaches
	Red ball (felt)	Rolling the ball between the players	Playing across 1 service box, players roll to try to get the ball to cross a 3 metre goal line at the back of each end of the court. When achieved, this wins one point. Players must stop the ball with the hand and roll from where they stop the ball. Winner is the player who wins 5 points.	**Tactical** Accuracy - Directing the ball to space Moving the opponent **Technical** Tracking the ball Contact point in front of the body
	Red ball (sponge or felt)	Underarm throwing and catching the ball	2 players inside one service box. Players must throw the ball upwards throwing into space to prevent the opponent catching before the ball bounces twice. Play first to 5 points	**Tactical** Accuracy - Directing the ball to space Moving the opponent **Technical** Receiving skills - perception of the first and second flight
	Red ball (sponge or felt)	Self rally in service box	Who can do the most sets of 5 shot rallies in the time allocated?	**Tactical** Consistency **Technical** Contact point in front of the body Grip - continental Racket movement „down-up" Follow through
	Red ball (sponge or felt)	Partner rally in the service box (with the target in the middle of the box)	Play a match, first to 3 points with alternate 'serves'. After hitting 3 shots in the target player get 1 point. No volleys are permitted.	**Tactical** Consistency and accuracy to win points **Technical** Same as the above and Footwork – keeping the ball between player and target Balanced hitting position

	Red ball (sponge or felt)	Partner rally in close distance	Play a match, first to 3 points with alternate 'serves'. Players rotate after every match. Each player rotates 3 times so each plays 3 matches. Player wins point if he hits first 2 shots in the circle (serve doesn't count!).	**Tactical** Consistency and accuracy to win points **Technical** Contact point infront and aside of the body Grip – Continental Racket movement „back down-up forward"
	Red ball (sponge or felt)	Partner rally in circles over obstacle and increased distance	For every 6 shots without mistake a pair received 1 point. Which pair will achieve more points in 2 minutes.	**Tactical** Consistency and accuracy to win points **Technical** Contact point infront and aside of the body Grip – eastern variations and grip changing Follow through – up forward Balanced hitting position
	Red ball (felt)	Partner rally in circles over the mini tennis net and increased distance	Players play 5 points. The winner play on "centre court".	**Tactical** Consistency and accuracy to win points **Technical** Same as the above
	Orange ball	Partner rally in the service box over the regular net from the service line	Play a match, first to 5 points with alternate 'serves' in 2 service boxes. 1st serve is "throwing serve" and 2nd underarm serve. If the player wins against both players from other team he receives 1 point for his team. No volleys are permitted.	**Tactical** Consistency Discovering effectt of cross court and down the line shots and court coverage **Technical** Same as the above and Simple backswing – flowing motion / rhytm Split step
	Orange and Green ball	1 or 2 bounce rally (player has a choice to let the ball bounce twice for short balls)	Play a match in mid court with 1 or 2 bounces, first to 3 points. One player serves (1st – overarm serve and 2nd underarm serve). 2 players are playing 1 point each against a player on the other side. Players rotate after each match.	**Tactical** Consistency and accuracy to win points Court positioning to prevent opponent winning points **Technical** Adaptation of receiving skills to increased distance and different ball Same as the above Early preparation – unit turn
	Green ball	1 bounce rally (player has a choice to let the ball bounce twice for short balls)	Play a match, first to 5 points on half court (full length and double alley) with alternative serves. Players have 3 serves, 1st overarm serve, 2nd overarm throwing and 3rd underarm serve.	**Tactical** Consistency and accuracy to win points Court positioning to prevent opponent winning points **Technical** Same as the above