


# NEW COACH

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*Tennis Australia Coach Membership* T: 03 9914 4191 F: 03 9650 1040  
Email: [coachmembership@tennis.com.au](mailto:coachmembership@tennis.com.au) Website: [www.tennis.com.au/membership](http://www.tennis.com.au/membership)

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A photograph of Rafael Nadal, a professional tennis player, wearing a bright red jacket with black accents. He is surrounded by several men in uniform, including police officers in dark blue uniforms with 'POLICIA CNP' visible on their jackets, and other security personnel in light blue shirts. The scene appears to be at an airport or a public transit station. In the top right corner of the image, there is a small text box with a quote.

Whenever the chance arises Rafael Nadal travels back home.

# Committing to travel

High profile athletes are constantly travelling around the world in pursuit of tennis titles and ranking points, but this commitment could be one made by a coach as well.

By DANIELA TOLESKI

Living out of a suitcase is usually a small price to pay for athletes no matter their sport of choice. It can last for a couple of weeks, months to even a whole year through.

This slight inconvenience can easily be pushed back of mind especially when goals are accomplished. This also rings true for a travelling coach, but the initial decision to travel with an athlete may be a difficult one.

Tennis Australia's AIS and Tours Manager Mark Edney says that the travel aspect can be the defining decision for many coaches.

"You need to love the travel if you are to succeed in this sport. Europe is the epicentre of the world for tennis and unfortunately the distance is a disadvantage. However, our implementation of the new European Base has allowed our athletes optimal tour preparation and a 'home away from home' feel while in Europe," he says.

"The most important aspect of travelling is making use of the time you have. If it is sitting at airports or travelling across countries on a train, you need to be comfortable on how you spend that time.

With technology these days staying in touch with family or friends, listening to music or watching movies becomes easier."

From Toni Nadal to Marian Vajda, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic's coach respectively, it's easy to see the dedication these two have made in order to be by the side of their athletes throughout the year.

In fact both have become personalities in their own regard and are quite possibly recognisable worldwide, but their main aim is to support and guide their athletes to glory.

But not all coaches can leave their family and friends behind for a life on the road and this is especially relevant for junior coaches.

This is why Tennis Australia has established a group of touring coaches to take junior athletes on their journey abroad.

## Junior travelling tour

It's inevitable that there will come a time when athletes are ready to explore the possibility of a life on the professional tour and this begins with adding international tournaments to their schedule.

Tennis Australia's international tours program is designed with the assistance of National Academy coaches to ensure Australia's tracking athletes are provided with the most suitable international competition. Tours are designed with specific selection criterion. This includes coach recommendation (due to application and work ethic), previous results and also a medical screening.

"Players must meet the criteria to be eligible with the national selectors making the final decisions. There are many components and it is important that the athletes are prepared in all aspects of their development to take advantage of an international opportunity," Edney, who manages Tennis Australia's international tours, says.

The tours are split up in specific age groups, which allows a structure to be formulated and certain objectives to be achieved.

"The 12s and 13s tours are education based," Edney says. "Here the players learn how to travel, take responsibility for themselves, deal with adversity, deal with homesickness, learn how to be resilient, learn



how to compete on the road, understand their strengths and weaknesses and understand how to treat their body with nutrition, hydration and training.

“With the 14s tour we work harder to educate them tactically on clay. This age is a big benchmark year to really give us an understanding of where our athletes fit on the world stage. Their games are more developed so we can educate them more regarding tactics, how to expose opponents with their strengths and how to use the court more effectively in constructing points. Our best 14s will spend time in Asia, Europe and possibly North America and might accumulate up to 12 weeks of international experience throughout the year.”

The 15s tour is focused on continued development and further competition, but the overall aim is to improve the athletes’ ITF ranking while trying to keep them injury-free. As they are growing so fast, the focus on physical preparation is very important.

“It is a fine line in this birth year because you need to take care of their bodies, further their skills and development but also make sure they can achieve an ITF ranking of around 250, 300, so they can start their 16th year between approximately 100 to 150 in the world. Then they are not far from reaching the ITF Grand Slams and can begin their Pro Circuit pathway.”

By the time athletes enter the 16–18s tour it’s all about a pathway to continue improving and ultimately transition into the Australian Institute of Sport and onto the ATP or WTA Tour.

“Some athletes will follow a Futures pathway and others through the ITF pathway. There are a lot of options here that can be adapted to the needs of the athlete,” Edney says. “They continue to develop tactical awareness and how to adapt to certain situations and are consistently learning how to compete. Here

we also develop a good understanding of their commitment level.”

In essence, all of the various junior international tours work together to give athletes the best opportunity to eventually succeed on the WTA or ATP Tour.

“In our AIS Pro Tour program if players are self-sufficient and understand what it takes to become successful then the coaches can do their job purely and focus on coaching,” Edney says.

### Grass court season

With various court surfaces on the tour, athletes need to become accustomed to each, but with the grasscourt season being a short one in Europe this surface is one to master early.

“The juniors only have two led up events before Wimbledon. The ITF G2 in Halle aligns at the end of the ATP event and the ITF G1 Roehampton is in London. There is not a lot of preparation time so as soon as we arrive the aim is to get as much time on the grass as possible. The advantage is that due to our Australian Nationals and tournament calendar the players have had a reasonable amount of exposure on grass so the concept is not completely foreign,” Edney says.

“It is important to teach the players how to handle the transition for clay to grass in Europe. This will be one of the most important parts of their professional schedule so making sure they are comfortable with this transition is vital.”

The tradition of Wimbledon is another element that can add a little more pressure to athletes as the occasion itself can have quite an impact.

Australian juniors Luke Saville and Nick Kyrgios are some of the juniors who have benefited from the junior international tours.

“Being at Wimbledon last year surrounded by the rich history it has to offer was a great experience. It was a huge

## Luke Saville’s travel experiences

*Junior Wimbledon 2011*

*boys’ singles champion*

*Junior Australian Open 2012*

*boys’ singles champion*



My first trip was to New Zealand when I was 10 years old. This particular trip was for only a week, however I learnt to become more self-reliant and responsible without my parents. As I travel more and more I continually pick up and gain more valuable experiences that will hold my tennis in good stead.

Des Tyson and David Jones who are my tennis and fitness coaches respectively assist hugely in supporting me while on the road. When times get tough and losses start to flow, their support is crucial in identifying the reason why I am not performing and then going about working on improving and getting back on track to win more matches.

honour and privilege to play at the All England Club. Wimbledon is the pinnacle of world professional tennis and playing there again one day in the men’s event is my motivation to train as hard as I can everyday I take to the court,” Saville says.

“To be around Wimbledon is an opportunity I used to wish for. The history behind the tournament motivates me to play harder and perform to my very best,” Kyrgios adds.

Travel is a necessity for tennis players who wish to make it on the big stage and there are coaches who have dreamed of coaching an elite athlete. You may see an array of airports and hotel rooms, but at the end of the day it’s a sacrifice worth making.



Fans greet Kim Clijsters at Brussels International Airport.



Ana Ivanovic has become accustomed to travel.

# Basics developed early

This month's feature analysis compares the forehand volley of a professional player, Andy Murray and a junior, Sasha Djurovic. Murray (GBR) is 25, currently ranked world No. 4, was a semi-finalist at this year's Australian Open and is coached by Ivan Lendl. Djurovic (Vic.) is seven and coached by Adrian Lombardi and Pete McCraw. The side view allows us to more comprehensively highlight and comment on the similarities and differences in technique.

## Preparation phase

Andy Murray and Sasha Djurovic are prepared for the oncoming ball, athletic ready position (knee's flexed, feet shoulder width apart, non hitting hand supporting the throat of the racquet) and a continental grip.



## Preparation phase

Both players have turned so that their shoulders are side on to the oncoming ball. This initial turn commences the backswing and the wide base of support ensures a balanced preparation. Murray has turned his shoulders slightly more than Djurovic and both players have the strings in line with the path of the oncoming ball.

Murray has flexed his knees slightly more than Djurovic. That aside, there are very few differences between Murray and Djurovic. It is very important to get the technical fundamentals right from the start.



## Backswing phase

At the end of the backswing Murray has the racquet head above the wrist, the racquet is in line with his right shoulder. His weight is on the back leg in preparation for forward body weight transfer.

Djurovic has her racquet head above the wrist, the racquet is in line with her right shoulder and unlike many juniors has not laid the wrist back and hasn't taken too big a swing. As per the previous slide she is more front on at this point in comparison to Murray.







### Forwardswing phase

Murray has the strings of his racquet behind the ball at impact height well before impact. This preparation almost guarantees a clean hit and a successful volley. His weight has transferred to the front (left for a right-hander) foot, the left arm is used to track the ball and keep the shoulders from turning front on too early. He remains side on.

Djurovic has the strings behind the ball, the racquet face is slightly open and is at impact height (see next image), she is stepping forward with her left foot. Djurovic is slightly more front on in comparison to Murray but is showing sound fundamentals on the volley.

### Impact phase

Murray and Djurovic are both balanced, ideally not stationary, ensuring that forward movement is contributing to ball speed (Murray's volley was captured during practice and is not as dynamic as his volley during match play).

Djurovic demonstrates impact prior to her left foot landing. This ensures forward movement at impact. She has the racquet above the level of the wrist and the racquet slightly open. The racquet, ball and non-racquet arm form a line through impact.

### Follow through phase

Weight has moved to the left leg, the knee flexes to slow the forward movement. Both players have the shoulders rotated more front on to the net. As a consequence of less shoulder turn initially, Djurovic is more front on (right shoulder in front of left) than Murray at this point.

Murray has the racquet face straight with the strings facing the direction of the hit. Neither player has "dished" or scooped the volley, a common error on the volley amongst many players.

### Follow through phase

The racquet and hand are aligned through impact followed then by racquet moving in the direction of the hit in the follow through.

The key take home message in comparing 25-year-old, world No. 4 Andy Murray to seven-year-old Sasha Djurovic is that the technical fundamentals are critical and should be developed from the commencement of a player's development. These fundamentals should stay with Djurovic throughout her career.

*By Geoff Quinlan, Tennis Australia – Manager Coach Development, Bachelor of Applied Science (Honours) Human Movement, Tennis Australia High Performance coach*

# Leg loading and posture



*Novak Djokovic maintains his balance when he is pushed out wide.*

**W**ide balls at end range trouble many tennis players at all levels. The ability to maintain balance and stability when pushed out wide requires great strength and body awareness to not only get into position but to then execute a ground stroke effectively to either stay in the rally or to hit a winner. To perform the combination of movements necessary to execute you must develop the following three attributes:

- Leg strength.
- Postural awareness.
- Stability and control.

All players can benefit from these exercises prescribed as they can be extended easily for all intensities and limits. These exercises create a strong foundation, which you can modify to challenge and develop. Implement these exercises into free time during the day or into your specific gym program. These exercises are also great for helping to reduce lower leg injuries and enhancing your strength when pushed out for those difficult wide shots.

## Single leg squat

This is a vital exercise for the development of strength and stability in the lower body.



This will create a strong foundation and is the perfect place to start with a basic routine to develop lower body strength. There are many variations with each getting progressively more challenging.

1. This exercise can be done on a step or an elevated surface.
2. Ensure there is alignment between foot, knee and hip and maintain a strong, straight spine during the entire exercise.
3. From the standing position, push hips back and lower hips down.
4. Lower until instability or knee angle of roughly 90° then rise to standing again.



Note: You can place a bench behind you and sit down onto it, or to just touch it. Ensure that it is at a challenging depth to ensure continued development.

## Lunge and cable T rotations

This exercise will build low leg stability for open stance strikes on wide balls. Performing it with a rotational component challenges you to maintain a strong postural position while replicating a swinging movement.

1. Lunge out perpendicular to cable. Ensure hips and spine sit neutral.



# for wide balls



Body strength helps Jelena Jankovic stay in the point.



Even on the stretch Roger Federer is capable of hitting a winner.



2. Hold strong position at depth and turn to cable handle.
3. Holding the cable with both hands, rotate 180 towards the thigh that is lunging forward. Only the upper body rotates, keeping hips and pelvis stable and secure.
4. Create a triangle between thumbs, eyes and sternum as you rotate.
5. Perform rotation smoothly and slowly, returning to the start position after the rotation is completed.

## Lateral leaps/skater hops

This exercise develops stability, postural awareness and eccentric strength. The body needs to learn to decelerate the body when moving laterally. This way you can maintain balance, body position and technique execution when pushed to the wide ball.



1. Start in a half squat position on one leg (hips back). Ensure foot, knee and hip are aligned. Shoulders should be back and posture upright.
2. Jump to the side, extending leg fully.
3. Try to land in identical position as original position on opposite foot, absorbing the impact with a nice soft controlled landing.
4. During this exercise, always maintain square hips, sit your hips back at starting and finishing positioning and maintain strong, aligned posture.

## Bench side step

Bench side stepping incorporates foot speed, postural awareness and strength during a lateral movement. When hitting a ball out wide you must coordinate all



these to execute at a high level and ensure good recovery to next shot.

1. Start in similar position to the skater hops, with hips back and knee bent.
2. Step laterally onto the step/bench quickly.
3. With a fast foot contact, replace the outside foot with the inside foot, continuing to move body weight laterally over the bench/step.
4. Goal of the exercise initially is to land on the other side of the bench/step with the outside leg bent and hips back to soften the landing with control and balance.
5. As you control the landing, begin to transfer body weight back in the opposite direction repeating sequence in reverse to land back in the starting position.
6. To progress this, shorten the time in contact with the ground to create a more ballistic plyometric exercise.

*By Alex Hynes,  
Physical Preparation Coach  
- National Academy ACT*

# COACHES' CORNER

## Adapting for the grass court season

It is vital and self evident for any coach to assist in the preparation of their player before any event. This is particularly important when the player intends to embark on a series of matches on grass as it is a surface to which most Australian junior players have had limited exposure. However, many coaches believe that playing on grass helps develop a well rounded all court game.

Former South Australian Sports Institute coach and current Tennis Australia High Performance coach, Graeme Neville says that playing on grass is of utmost importance to the development of junior tennis players.

He believes that coaches should have their players train for a full term on grass to help further develop players in this country.

"I strongly believe that a full term of coaching each year on grass would benefit our players. It would force players and coaches to put emphasis on skills that we don't use as much like the slice, volley and even return of serve," he says.

Neville says that preparing junior players for grass court tournaments can be challenging.

He states that "the most difficult thing to determine is how your player will perform tactically. That is, do they simply continue to play their own game or do they try to move forward more."

To make certain that players have sound preparation, Neville believes that during lessons leading up to grass court tournaments coaches need to ensure experimentation is encouraged not only in training but during competition to enhance development.

"Essentially, coaches need to have their player practice more shots with a



*Victoria made it a clean sweep in the 2012 Optus 12s National Grasscourt Championships with Matthew Romios and Jaimee Furlis winning the singles titles in Mildura.*

continental grip and encourage players to come in and volley more along with utilising the slice before and during tournaments on grass," Neville says.

Tennis Victoria's Player Development Coordinator, Emily Rea supports Neville's philosophy and is acutely aware of the challenges facing junior players prior to grass court tournaments.

Rea, who heads the Future Stars program, has 12 players under her guidance all of whom have competed in national events.

Because natural grass only accounts for approximately 17 percent of tennis courts found in this country, accessibility is problematic.

Despite this, Rea still maintains that coaches can help players train for the grass court season by "structuring drills

that require players to stay up on the baseline which in turn will force them to adapt their backswings."

While preparing her charges, Rea suggests that two-on-one drills are a great way to assist in preparation.

"For example, on the side with two players one can be at the net and the other on the baseline. The single player is on the baseline and must alternate one ball cross-court to the baseline player and one down the line to the net player. This helps players adapt to different ball speeds and court positioning," Rea says.

Both Rea and Neville believe that while preparing their players for grass court tournaments may be more challenging than preparing for other surfaces, for the players overall development it is essential.



*Preparing for grass court tournaments is essential for juniors such as Jessie Mount from Victoria.*



*Playing on grass has helped Alana Bourgeois from New South Wales develop an all-court game.*



# The intergenerational impact



## Australian great Harry Hopman had some influence on Jay Deacon's early tennis fundamentals that have translated to Deacon's own coaching techniques.

Harry Hopman may be known as Australia's most successful Davis Cup captain, but to Jay Deacon he is much more. He is like family. He is his godfather.

A strong believer in fitness, Hopman inspired his Davis Cup teams to great heights during his tenure as captain and a young Deacon was quick to learn, from the Australian legend, how tactics played a significant part in the sport.

"We went to Florida when I was 15 years old and Harry Hopman came on to give my brother and me a hit," he reminisced.

"I quickly learnt that hitting a ball, while important, was not as useful as manoeuvring an opponent and constructing a point as I ran from behind the baseline to the net and from side to side like a dog fetching a ball."

This experience has held Deacon, who began swinging with a racquet at a tennis ball as a two-year-old, in good stead for coaching athletes.

Although Deacon believes his family ties played a large part in the direction he ultimately took with his career, exposure to other coaches also had its impact.

"With my mother, father, brother and godfather all tennis coaches, I guess fate played some part but I found early I could not only communicate well, but teach. Students absorbed concepts, ideas and meaningful instruction and the look of delight and satisfaction as their self-esteem grew was the positive feedback that led me to coaching," he says.

"One of the greatest opportunities I had growing up in a tennis environment was the intergenerational involvement from my parents' friends. Despite having two tennis coaches for parents, they did not give us any lessons. I guess like most children, my brother and I would probably not have listened anyway, but would listen to their friends.

"It was here I would hit with my brother or whenever we could cajole one of our parents' friends into hitting with a couple of enthusiastic boys. It was from these people we learnt a lot about the art of playing tennis as opposed to just hitting a ball."

Throughout his career, Deacon has kept an open-minded attitude that has seen him learn from other sports, and the likes of former Wallabies coach Alec Evans and swimming motivator Laurie Lawrence.

"I watched and learned from Alec, especially how he engaged players through his honest and direct communication skills. And I used to be on the pool deck and watched Laurie, the greatest motivator I've ever known, channel and direct his enthusiasm like arcing electricity into his swimmers. I guess I try to do the same but on a much smaller and quieter scale," he says.

Deacon has been coaching full-time for the last 23 years and this also included expanding his horizons by coaching elite athletes in swimming, water polo and rugby union.

The focus for Deacon for almost eight years now is being the Head Coach of the tennis program at Somerset College on the Gold Coast in Queensland.

"With the help of very progressive headmasters, we have produced an expansive tennis program to cater for the needs of all students and staff," he says.

The support of the College has also assisted with upgrading the facilities

available to students. Three of the courts were resurfaced from synthetic grass to hardcourt and now the College has four hardcourt and two natural grass courts.

"The grass courts are in magnificent condition, and it is wonderful to see many people discover the nuances of playing on this surface," he says.

"We have also increased the level of involvement within the curriculum of the school particularly through Hot Shots and Cardio Tennis programs, exposing more and more students to tennis."

The integration with the curriculum has definitely allowed more students to experience tennis and each participant can also strive to achieve a set of objectives from Deacon.

"I hope they all take away an understanding of the game combined with a balanced critical self-analysis, reflection and appropriate goal setting," he says.

And having been lucky enough to learn a few tips from Hopman himself, Deacon is a strong believer of the impact other generations can provide to his students.

"I think there is much to be gained from the intergenerational involvement, whether it is effective patterns of play not seen in today's game or thought processes and psychology from an experienced player, developing athletes can learn from older players," he says.

"Peter Froelich (who still competes on the ITF Seniors Tour) trains with our junior athletes and offers a different skill set and



approach to the game, which is thoroughly appreciated by the juniors."

This exposure provides an added advantage to the Somerset College tennis program and Deacon says he would like to continue to engage more people in the sport to let them discover the enjoyment and benefits the sport can bring over a lifetime.

"With continued support at all levels it is hoped that the growth and success of Somerset Tennis continues."

# NATIONAL TALENT DEVELOPMENT CAMP



*A selection of talented juniors trained at the Australian Institute of Sport in May 2012.*

**T**hirty-two of Australia's most promising 10 and under tennis players came together in May 2012 to take part in the annual National Talent Development Camp.

Sixteen boys and girls were selected to train for four days at the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra under the guidance of Tennis Australia staff and their private coaches.

The purpose of the camp was to create an intensive environment for players and private coaches to thrive in, learn from and be motivated by.

The overall theme of the camp was for players to compete, move and hit with key outcomes surrounding these within each session.

Players were exposed to a packed schedule that included both physical and skills testing, on court activities and match play.

Project Talent Leader Kim Kachel wanted to really challenge the players throughout the camp.

"Specific and more challenging activities were conducted that reflected our key themes. For example, perception, preparation and wide base exercises. These were selected as we have found that players need to improve on these across the board," Kachel says.

Private coaches were also able to gain valuable professional development around the key themes of the camp including sessions from Scott Draper, Alex Hynes and Gary Stickler. They were able to spend a lot of time sharing ideas and mapping out a developmental plan for each of their players.

Kachel was pleased with the outcome of the camp for players and coaches alike.

"The camp went extremely well. I'm hopeful that the players gained a lot from the experience. We were fortunate to have 26 private coaches attend the camp, which ensures that the camp has real depth and breadth and a lasting impact. These coaches will be able to impact all the players they work with and their assistant coaches," Kachel says.

Tennis Australia High Performance coach Terry Saunders thoroughly enjoyed his experience at the camp.

"Overall I found the camp to be extremely positive. It highlighted development aspects of players that I can take back to my own coaching program."

Saunders says that the camp provided both players and coaches with welcome acknowledgement for the hard work that they have been doing.

"Players received recognition for the proven talent that they possess and

coaches were provided with the realisation that the work they are doing is following the right path."

Events like the National Talent Development Camp must continue to run in order to foster the development of young tennis players along with providing an opportunity for coaches to work together to achieve this.

"I hope that players and coaches can continue to implement what they have gained from the camp in their daily training environment and look forward to seeing their progress," Kachel says.

Planning has already begun for the 2013 Talent Development Camp.

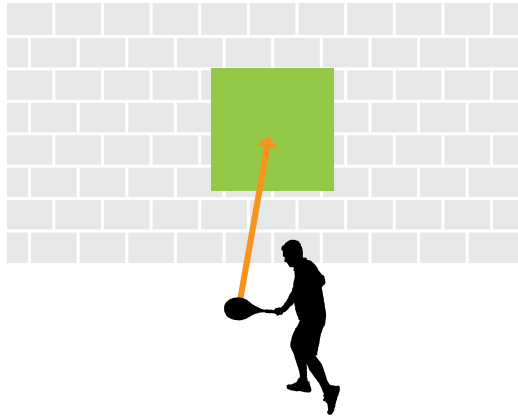
"We certainly raised the bar with this camp but we can still strive to raise it higher next year. We have already begun reviewing the camp in order to make the next one better again," Kachel added.



*A variety of activities were conducted during the four day training camp.*



# National Talent Development Camp Drills



## 1. Wall volley

### Objective:

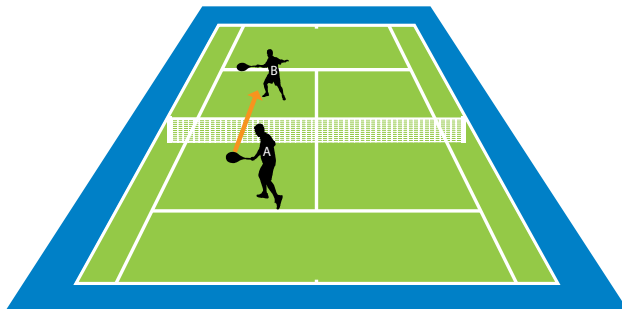
- To improve hand and racquet face control.

### Description:

- Coach marks off a one x one metre box on a wall approximately one metre above the ground.
- Player stands approximately three metres from the wall.
- Player must alternate forehand and backhand volley directing the ball into the box.
- Player must try to hit as many volleys in 30 seconds.
- Player must count how many balls hit the wall within the marked box.

### Coaching point:

- Ensure player has a wide base and keeps hands out in front.



## 2. Bump and hit

### Objective:

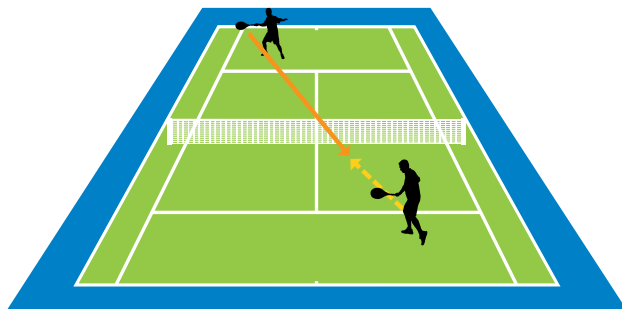
- To improve racquet face control on the half volley and encourage early preparation.

### Description:

- Players stand in opposite service boxes.
- Player A feeds ball to Player B.
- Player B bumps up ball and lets ball bounce.
- Player B then hits a half volley back to Player A and the rally continues.
- Players can then progress to alternating sides. For example, bump on forehand side and hit on backhand side.

### Coaching point:

- Ensure players complete their backswing before the ball bounces.



## 3. Three, two, one

### Objective:

- To encourage players to move forward during a rally.

### Description:

- Play commences with a serve and return.
- Players receive three points if a clean winner is hit out of the air (volley or smash).
- Players receive two points if they hit a ball out of the air and force their opponent into an error.
- All other winning points are worth one.

### Coaching point:

- Have players look at their opponent's racquet and body cues to identify opportunities to move forward and take the ball out of the air.

### Key



Coach  
Player

Coach feed



Thrower/Catcher



Ball direction

Player movement



Spot markers

Drop down lines



Buckets



Hoops