

# Green Ball Tennis

## Considerations and activities for developing green ball tennis players.

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#### Orange demands of the game

Each time a player moves to the next court, the first thing that happens is the player learns to adapt to the demands of distance and pace. This environment is not just about the size of the court but also the characteristics of the ball.

#### Players now:

Require some more competencies that were rarely used before. The ball is harder, and energy transferred into the ball (spin, height, pace) has more influence when it bounces.

#### Green – tactical awareness

##### **Players should now be developing:**

- Better understanding of court geometry
- Know how to create space and time.
- Understand the strengths and weaknesses of their opponents.
- Use anticipation cues.
- Link shots as part of a plan

#### Green – technical skills

##### **Skills now need to be based on:**

- Hit the ball with height, spin and pace moving their opponent away from the baseline
- Hit from all court positions
- Use the oncoming ball speed to create pace
- Contact the ball at higher contact points
- Hit some balls off the back foot
- Take the ball early

## Reception Drills for Green Level Players

### Drill 1: Readiness - Progression

- **Cue:** "Move – Hit"
- **Purpose:** Improve players' footwork and timing before hitting.
- **Instructions:** Players call "Move," take a small adjustment step towards the ball, and then call "Hit" as they make contact. This encourages dynamic preparation and better positioning before hitting the ball.
- **Side skill:** Enhances footwork and positioning under time pressure.

### Drill 2: Direction Detection - Progression

- **Cue:** "Left/Right – Step"
- **Purpose:** Increase the complexity by integrating footwork specific to the detected direction.
- **Instructions:** After calling "Left" or "Right," players must take a lateral step in the corresponding direction before positioning to hit the ball. This progression adds an element of dynamic movement, forcing players to quickly adjust their position.
- **Side skill:** Improves lateral quickness and balance.

### Drill 3: Depth Perception - Progression

- **Cue:** "In – Out"
- **Purpose:** Develop better adaptation to ball depth with an additional step or drop.
- **Instructions:** After calling "In" or "Out," players must either step in (for short balls) or out (for deep balls) before preparing to hit. This drill encourages players to actively adjust their positioning in and out of the baseline based on the ball's depth.
- **Side skill:** Enhances agility and adaptability in positioning.

### Drill 4: Height Awareness - Progression

- **Cue:** "High/Low – Adjust"
- **Purpose:** Improve the ability to adapt swing technique based on ball height.
- **Instructions:** Players call "High" or "Low" and then adjust their racket angle and stance to match the height of the ball. This progression focuses on adapting the stroke technique to the ball's height.
- **Side skill:** Refines stroke mechanics for different heights and situations.

### Drill 5: Speed Recognition - Progression

- **Cue:** "Fast/Slow – Control"
- **Purpose:** Further enhance reaction time and control of shot preparation based on speed.
- **Instructions:** After calling "Fast" or "Slow," players must adjust their backswing length and racket speed accordingly. Faster balls require shorter, quicker swings, while slower balls allow for a longer, more controlled backswing.
- **Side skill:** Develops the ability to modulate racket speed and shot power.

**These progressions build on the foundation laid by the Orange ball drills, adding layers of complexity and requiring more advanced skills in anticipation, footwork, and shot preparation.**

## Skill Builders for Green Ball Players

### 1. Volley Rally

- **Objective:** Develop quick reflexes and control at the net.
- **Instructions:** Players rally using only volleys, focusing on maintaining control and keeping the ball in play. To increase difficulty, players can alternate between forehand and backhand volleys or introduce half-volleys.
- **Skill Focus:** Enhances reflexes, touch, and net play.

### 2. Spin Control Challenge

- **Objective:** Master the ability to control and vary spins during rallies.
- **Instructions:** Players rally while alternating between different spins: topspin, slice, and flat shots. The goal is to maintain consistency while varying the spin, with a focus on adjusting the racket face and swing path accordingly.
- **Skill Focus:** Improves adaptability and spin control, crucial for managing different rally scenarios.

### 3. Drop Shot and Lob Rally

- **Objective:** Improve touch and awareness of court positioning.
- **Instructions:** Players alternate between hitting drop shots and lobs in a rally, focusing on placing the ball accurately and reading the opponent's movements.
- **Skill Focus:** Enhances touch, control, and strategic play, helping players develop the ability to change the pace and height of the ball effectively.

### 4. Two-Ball Rally

- **Objective:** Increase focus and coordination under pressure.
- **Instructions:** Players rally using two balls simultaneously, hitting one with the forehand and the other with the backhand. The goal is to keep both balls in play for as long as possible.
- **Skill Focus:** Builds advanced coordination, concentration, and ability to handle multiple tasks at once.

### 5. Serve and Attack

- **Objective:** Develop the ability to transition from serve to an aggressive baseline position.
- **Instructions:** Players practice serving and immediately follow up with an aggressive groundstroke aimed at setting up a winning point. Emphasis should be placed on quick movement and shot preparation after the serve.
- **Skill Focus:** Reinforces the importance of the serve as the starting point for attacking play and improves the ability to capitalize on a good serve.

### 6. Inside-Out Rally

- **Objective:** Improve footwork and the ability to create offensive opportunities.
- **Instructions:** Players rally focusing on hitting inside-out. This drill emphasizes movement around the ball and the use of the forehand as an attacking weapon.
- **Skill Focus:** Enhances footwork, shot selection, and the ability to turn defensive situations into offensive opportunities.

## Activities for Green Ball Players

### 1. Target and Transition

**Objective:** Improve the ability to transition from defence to offense.

**Instructions:**

- The court is divided into two halves: defensive and offensive zones.
- Players start the rally in the defensive zone and must transition to the offensive zone after hitting a defensive shot.
- The goal is to hit the ball into a designated target area in the offensive zone, forcing the opponent into a defensive position.
- Play first to 10 points, switching roles after every game.

**Skill Focus:** Enhances strategic thinking, movement, and shot selection when transitioning between defence and attack.

### 2. Angle Game

**Objective:** Develop the ability to create and exploit angles in rallies.

**Instructions:**

- Players rally with the specific goal of hitting angled shots that pull their opponent wide off the court.
- Points are scored for successfully hitting an angle that forces the opponent to hit outside the doubles alley.
- If the opponent retrieves the ball and returns it inside the singles court, the point continues.
- Play to 15 points, with bonus points for hitting a winner off an angled shot.

**Skill Focus:** Improves ability to control the ball's direction and exploit court angles, enhancing offensive play.

### 3. Baseline Battle

**Objective:** Enhance consistency and power from the baseline under pressure.

**Instructions:**

- Players start every point with a deep baseline rally.
- The first player to break the opponent's baseline consistency by either forcing an error or hitting a deep winner scores a point.
- Players must hit at least three consecutive deep balls before they can attempt to finish the point.
- Play first to 12 points, focusing on maintaining depth and pressure.

**Skill Focus:** Builds endurance, consistency, and the ability to maintain pressure from the baseline.

#### 4. Approach and Volley Duel

**Objective:** Improve approach shots and volleying under match conditions.

**Instructions:**

- One player serves or feeds the ball short, encouraging the other player to approach the net.
- The rally continues with the server trying to pass or lob the net player, while the net player tries to finish the point with a volley or overhead.
- Points are scored based on successful net approaches and finishes or successful passing shots.
- Play first to 15 points, alternating roles after every set of five points.

**Skill Focus:** Enhances net play, approach shot accuracy, and ability to handle pressure at the net.

#### 5. Serve and Return Activity: Serve and Attack/Defend

**Objective:**

- To develop the ability to serve with purpose and follow up with an effective attacking or defensive shot.
- To improve returners' ability to neutralize a strong serve and transition into an offensive position.

**Instructions:**

**Setup:**

- The server stands on the baseline, while the returner positions themselves to receive the serve.
- The court is divided into specific target zones for both the serve and the return. For example, divide the service box into two zones (wide and T) and the return zones into three areas: deep (near the baseline), short (inside the service box), and angled (near the sidelines).

**Execution:**

**1. Serve Focus:**

- The server aims to serve into a designated zone (e.g., wide or T).
- After serving, the server must immediately move to follow up with either an attacking shot (if the serve puts the returner on the defensive) or a neutralizing shot (if the returner manages a strong return).

**2. Return Focus:**

- The returner's goal is to either neutralize the serve by hitting deep into the baseline zone or take control by aiming for a sharp angle or a deep return that pushes the server back.
- The returner can also aim to vary their returns by incorporating slice or topspin to challenge the server's positioning.

**Scoring:**

- **Server:**
  - Earns 2 points for serving into the designated zone and winning the point on the next shot.
  - Earns 1 point for serving into the designated zone and maintaining a neutral rally after the return.

- **Returner:**
  - Earns 2 points for successfully returning the ball into the deep, short, or angled zone and winning the point.
  - Earns 1 point for neutralizing the serve and maintaining a neutral rally.

### 3. **Variations:**

- **Pressure Serve:** Introduce a scenario where the server must serve under "pressure" conditions, such as being down in a game or serving for the match. The server has to focus on maintaining accuracy and composure.
- **Return and Charge:** After returning, the returner immediately follows up with an aggressive approach to the net, trying to finish the point quickly with a volley or overhead.

### 4. **Rotation:**

- After a set number of serves and returns (e.g., 10 serves), players switch roles. Play multiple rounds to allow both players to practice serving and returning under different scenarios.

### **Skill Focus:**

- **For the Server:**
  - Enhances accuracy and strategic placement of serves.
  - Improves the ability to follow up serves with an appropriate attacking or neutralizing shot.
- **For the Returner:**
  - Builds the ability to read and react to different types of serves.
  - Develops the skill to neutralize a strong serve and transition into an offensive position.

This activity not only refines both serve and return techniques but also integrates strategic decision-making and quick transitions, crucial for higher-level play.

**These activities are designed to challenge Green ball players with more complex scenarios, encouraging them to think strategically and develop a more well-rounded game.**

## 4 Constraints Led Approach Sessions for Green ball tennis.

*Individual – Task – Environment. We create the problems; players find the solutions.*

### Session 1: Advanced Movement and Recovery

**Objective:** Improve players' ability to move efficiently around the court, recover quickly to the optimal position, and prepare for the next shot.

**Introduction:** Discuss the importance of efficient movement and quick recovery in maintaining control of the rally, emphasizing how proper footwork can create more time for shot preparation.

**Warm-Up:** Dynamic footwork drills, focusing on lateral movement, split steps, and quick recovery to the centre of the court.

#### Main Activity:

**Objective:** Players practice moving to different positions on the court, hitting the ball, and recovering quickly to the optimal position for the next shot.

#### Directional Movement and Recovery:

- **Cue:** "Move – Hit – Recover"
- **Instructions:** Players are fed balls to different areas of the court (wide, short, deep). They must move quickly to hit the ball and then recover to the center or appropriate position based on the next anticipated shot.
- **Side Skill:** Enhances players' ability to stay balanced while moving quickly and efficiently around the court.

#### Wide-to-Narrow Recovery:

- **Instructions:** Players start in a wide position, hit a shot, and then recover to a narrow central position. This drill simulates the need to move quickly from wide to central positions, preparing for the next shot.
- **Coaching Notes:** Focus on the importance of the split step and staying light on the feet to enable quick, efficient recovery.

**Modified Game:** Players play points where they must return to a marked recovery position after each shot, reinforcing the habit of moving back to a neutral or advantageous position after hitting.

**Cool Down / Reflection:** Discuss how effective movement and recovery can reduce unforced errors and improve overall court coverage, giving players more time to prepare for their next shot.

## Session 2: Spin Differentiation and Strategic Control

**Objective:** Improve players' ability to use topspin as an attacking weapon and slice as a neutralising or defensive shot, adapting their tactics based on the rally situation.

**Introduction:** Discuss how topspin can be used aggressively to apply pressure on the opponent, while slice can be effectively employed to neutralize the rally or defend.

**Warm-Up:** Drills focusing on racket angle and swing path, preparing players to generate heavy topspin and controlled slice shots.

### Main Activity:

**Objective:** Players practice alternating between topspin and slice shots, learning when to attack with topspin and when to defend or neutralize with slice.

### Topspin vs. Slice Decision-Making:

- **Cue:** "Attack – Neutralize"
- **Instructions:** Players call out "Attack" before hitting a topspin shot aimed at putting their opponent under pressure, and "Neutralize" before hitting a slice shot intended to control or reset the rally.
- **Side Skill:** Enhances players' ability to read the rally situation and choose the appropriate spin to either continue attacking or regain control.

### Attack and Defend with Spin:

- **Instructions:** Players alternate roles, with one player using topspin aggressively to attack, while the other responds with slice to neutralize or defend. The drill encourages players to recognize opportunities to switch from defensive to offensive play and vice versa.
- **Coaching Notes:** Emphasize the use of topspin for attacking when the ball is in the strike zone, and the slice for controlling low or deep balls, or when the player is out of position.

**Modified Game:** Players score extra points for successfully using topspin to win the point or for transitioning from a defensive slice to an attacking topspin shot. Bonus points are awarded for making the opponent uncomfortable with well-placed slice shots that force errors.

**Cool Down / Reflection:** Reflect on the strategic use of topspin and slice in matches, discussing how to identify the right moments to switch between attacking and neutralizing shots based on the opponent's positioning and the flow of the rally.



### Session 3: Tactical Play and Pressure Management

**Objective:** Develop players' ability to make tactical decisions under pressure and manage different match scenarios effectively.

**Introduction:** Discuss the importance of tactical awareness and the ability to manage pressure during crucial points in a match.

**Warm-Up:** Simulated match situations, focusing on quick decision-making and adapting to different types of pressure (e.g., defending break points, closing out games).

#### Main Activity:

**Objective:** Players practice making tactical decisions under match-like pressure, learning when to attack, defend, or neutralize.

#### Pressure Point Scenarios:

- **Cue:** "Attack – Defend – Neutralize"
- **Instructions:** Players play out specific scenarios (e.g., 30-40 down, serving for the match), calling out their tactical approach before executing the shot.
- **Side Skill:** Enhances mental toughness and the ability to stay composed under pressure.

#### Positional Play under Pressure:

- **Instructions:** Players rally while simulating pressure situations, focusing on maintaining composure and making the correct tactical decision based on their court position and the ball's trajectory.
- **Coaching Notes:** Encourage players to recognize when to switch from defence to offense or maintain a neutral stance.

**Modified Game:** Points are played with a "pressure" condition (e.g., must win the point within three shots), rewarding players for smart tactical decisions and effective pressure management.

**Cool Down / Reflection:** Discuss the role of mental resilience in handling pressure and how strategic thinking can help players navigate challenging match situations.

## Session 4: Serve and Return Strategy Enhancement

**Objective:** Refine players' serve and return strategies, focusing on varying serve placement and return tactics to gain a tactical advantage.

**Introduction:** Highlight the tactical significance of the serve and return in setting the tone for the point and how variety in these areas can disrupt the opponent.

**Warm-Up:** Targeted serving and returning drills, emphasizing accuracy and variety in placement.

### Main Activity:

**Objective:** Players practice serving with varied placement and spin, followed by a focused return strategy aimed at gaining control of the point.

#### Serve Placement and Spin Variation:

- **Cue:** "Wide – T – Body"
- **Instructions:** Players alternate serves between the wide, T, and body areas, varying the spin and placement with each serve.
- **Side Skill:** Develops the ability to keep opponents guessing and off-balance with a varied serve.

#### Return and Attack:

- **Instructions:** Returners focus on different types of returns (e.g., deep, angled, chip and charge) based on the serve received, aiming to neutralize or gain control of the point immediately.
- **Coaching Notes:** Emphasize the importance of reading the serve and adjusting the return accordingly, using it as an opportunity to take the initiative.

**Modified Game:** Serve and return game where players earn bonus points for successfully executing pre-determined serve placements and returns that disrupt the opponent's rhythm.

**Cool Down / Reflection:** Reflect on the effectiveness of varying serve and return strategies and how these can be used to control the flow of the match from the outset.