

TENNIS...PLAY AND STAY – INCREASING TENNIS PARTICIPATION WORLDWIDE

Intro

The ITF recently launched a global campaign aimed at increasing tennis participation worldwide. **Tennis...Play and Stay** centres around the slogan of “**Serve Rally and Score**” and seeks to promote tennis as easy, fun and healthy. Fundamental to the campaign is the use of slower red, orange and green balls by coaches working with starter players, which help to ensure that the first experience of tennis is a positive one involving playing the game (serving, rallying and scoring).

The **ITF Play Tennis Course** is one of the important educational tools of the ITF Tennis Play and Stay campaign and aims to provide coaches with ideas on how to work effectively with starter players of all ages, including Mini Tennis, using a **game-based approach**.

It covers areas such as:

- ideas on how to introduce the game to starter players in a stimulating and simple way
- the use of different balls and court sizes to allow all starter players to play the game from the start
- effective communication and organisation, including methods of organising groups of players
- simple competition formats
- the ITF International Tennis Number (ITN) On-Court Assessment

The ITF Play Tennis Course is 4 days (28 hours) long and is directed at those interested in promoting tennis at the grass roots levels up to the initial competition stage. Participants on the course can be tennis coaches, school teachers, sport leaders, officials, etc.

Why was Tennis...Play and Stay introduced?

The ITF recognised that, whilst tennis is growing in many nations, some of the more established nations are facing challenges related to participation resulting primarily from lifestyle changes that have occurred. The key finding was that tennis seems to be better at attracting people than retaining them and that there was a need to adapt the sport to the needs of the customer, the starter player, and to agree a common position related to starter tennis.

The key messages of the Tennis...Play and Stay campaign are:

- Tennis can be easy and fun ...when coaches working with starter players use slower red, orange or green balls
- Starter players should serve, rally and score from the first lesson
- Tennis competition can be fun...and formats and scoring systems exist to suit all lifestyles
- Tennis is healthy and research conducted in 2006 by the ITF supports this
- Tennis is a sport for all and all players should have a rating which helps them to find players of a similar level to play with

Play Tennis Fast....the ball is key!

Using the right ball with starter players was recognised by the task force as crucial to retention. There is no doubt that the slower balls give players more time and control and make it easier for players to rally. Yet less than an estimated 10% of coaches worldwide are currently using slower balls with starter players, which makes the promotion of the slower balls to coaches a key element of Tennis...Play and Stay.

Slower Balls, Smaller courts, Better Juniors!

The slower balls are also important for developing high level juniors as the balls help players to more easily develop efficient technique and allow them to implement more advanced tactics than could not be performed using a normal ball on a full court.

Adults....Play tennis fast!

The slower balls are not just for juniors. Some of the major nations including France have had a lot of success with the slower balls in introducing tennis to adults.

What about Technique?

Technique is still very important and once coaches have used the slower balls to give players the taste of playing tennis, they should then look to give the players "relevant" technical (and tactical) instruction that can then help them to serve, rally and score more effectively. This is in effect the simple definition of the **Game Based Approach** which is sometimes misunderstood by tennis coaches.

Is it more difficult for coaches to organise the lesson using different balls and courts sizes?

Some coaches are concerned that the logistics of using different balls and court sizes will make their lessons more complicated to organise. However learner centred coaching means doing the right thing for the student....not just doing what is easiest for the coach! It does require additional organisation and planning but the smaller courts can be set up very quickly by using throw down lines, more players can be organised to play on each full tennis court and the slower balls last longer than pressurised normal balls. So there are many advantages in using slower balls and smaller courts including the most important one of a more positive first experience for the starter players and increased retention!

The overall reaction to the campaign has been overwhelmingly positive. 35 of the 40 major nations invited (including the 4 Grand Slam Nations) have already signed up and over the coming months many of these nations will be organising activities including specialised Tennis Play and Stay coaches workshop to support the launch in their countries.

Tennis...Play and Stay also has the committed support of the ATP and WTA tours, the TIA , the tennis manufacturers, and the major coaching bodies, including the PTR. In fact some of the top professional players including Federer, Henin, Kuznetsova, Ivanovic, Roddick and Nadal have recorded video messages in support of the campaign which are being used by the ITF to promote Play and Stay.

The Website

To back up the campaign the ITF has produced a range of promotional material and coaching tools in a number of different languages all branded with the Tennis...Play and Stay logo. To view these materials and for other important information related to Tennis...Play and Stay readers should go to www.tennisplayandstay.com

Remember... Tennis coaching is not a sport. Tennis is the sport!

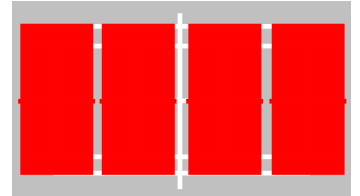
Our job as tennis coaches is primarily to organise people to play tennis. Starter players need to experience the best part of tennis.... actually playing the game.

Over the coming years the ITF will be targeting coaches worldwide through the Play and Stay campaign and the Play Tennis courses so that coaches of starter players worldwide use the slower balls with a game based methodology to ensure that as many people as possible have the chance to **Serve, Rally and Score and to enjoy our great sport!**



STAGE 3 RED

- Sponge and low compression felt balls used on the 11m/36ft Red court
- Recommended racket size: 41-53cm/16-21in
- Starter children aged 4-8 and adult introduction

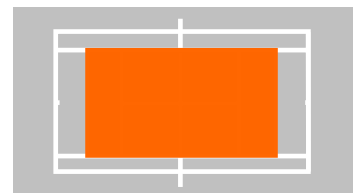


4 Red Courts across 1 full size court.
Each court is 11m

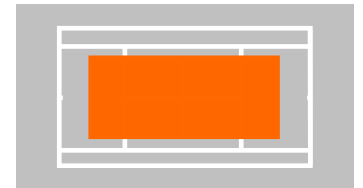


STAGE 2 ORANGE

- Low compression balls, around 50% slower than normal balls
- Courts are 18m/60ft long and between 6.5-8.23m/21-27ft wide (narrow court recommended)
- Recommended racket size: 53-63cm/21-25in
- Starter children aged 7-11 and starter adults



18m Orange court – full width

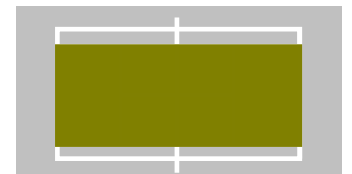


18m Orange court – sidelines moved in for narrower court



STAGE 1 GREEN

- Low compression balls, around 25% slower than normal balls played on full-size courts
- Recommended racket size: 63-68cm/25-27in
- Starter children aged 7-11 and starter adults



Green court is the same as the full size court