

MAKING TENNIS FUN FOR ALL LEVELS

TEAM BONDING AND GROWING THE LOVE OF TENNIS

As rewarding it is to win, bring home trophies and titles to your school, I find helping the kids on my team to bond and forge long term relationships even more important. The memories they make will last them a lifetime. I would venture to guess none of the kids on my team will see the center court at Wimbledon, and few will play college tennis. That's why I find it important to make their high school tennis experience rewarding and memorable.

Tennis by nature is a solo sport and bringing together a bunch of players of different levels is not an easy task. My goal is not only to do that, but have fun doing it. Kids aren't going to stay with tennis unless they really enjoy being there and playing the game. Here are two of the drills I use on a regular basis.

Poaching Drill

-You set the players up as if they are playing doubles. You start with four players on the court and the rest lined up at the net post ready to rotate in. It is as if one player has served and you are feeding in the return on serve, so you want to be ready to feed from about the service line on the returner's side. The player at net with the server is who you feed to. The object of the game is for the side with the fake server to win three points from the receiving side to take their place as king or queens of the court. If the net person misses on the feed then he/she is then moving to the backcourt as the fake server. As the player is moving they need to be aware of the court as the drill continues and the next person moves into position at the net.

When I feed this drill the first feed, I put just out of reach of the net player moving in so they have to move towards the middle to get the ball (the poach). The second ball I usually go back behind the net player and if they get to the third ball I put a lob over the net players head so they have to switch sides. If the team wins three points they then have 5 seconds to get to the other side and take their position as champions. As the players get better at the drill I mix it up and give them different feeds as not to be predictable.

The nice thing about this drill is you can tone it up or down depending on the levels of players that are teamed up together. The play is quick and continuous and partners are continually switching. You may have your number one teamed with your number 15. I do tell the kids that I am the final word and there are no do overs. That if a kid gets in their way then that's to bad

and tell them to move off the court next time. This is a very quick moving drill. I recommend not playing it for more than 20 mins. This drill is good for 6 to however many players you have. Eventually, you can have one of the kids on the team feed the drill and you can take another player over to another court and work with them.

Variation

Instead of having players set up for doubles you have two at net and two in the backcourt on the other side. As the feeder you set up between the two kids at the backcourt. The rest of the players line up behind the player to your left or on the forehand court. As the feeder you start the ball to the team at the net. You can lob, try to pass, hit at them, ect. The object is for the team on your side to win three points off the net team. If the team on your side hits a winner they automatically get to go over and take the net. I give them like 5 quick seconds and then put up a moonball overhead. They have to touch the ball or the next team goes over.

The players rotate like in the other drill. If the team on the back court fail to win the point, then the player on the left moves to the right side or the backhand. The next player in line then slides into the left or forehand spot. Again, I am the final word and I keep it moving as quickly as possible so no one is waiting in line for to long.