

Working with Advanced Players

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If you have an entire team (or a good portion of your team) at an advanced level:

- Focus on live-ball drills where players are hitting with each other. These players normally get enough fed-ball drills in private lessons or other practices so they don't need these during team practice.
- Keep the drills competitive. Whether it is playing points, or hitting towards targets, advanced players thrive on competing with each other instead of just going through the motions, so keep score and have something on the line for the winner (even as simple as not picking up balls).
- Directional Hitting: Even when warming up for practice, have these players focus on hitting cross-court or down-the-line, instead of just keeping it in the court. Drop-feed singles games can also be restricted to just half the court to require more focus among the players.
- Depth of Shot: Have these players focus on hitting groundstrokes deep in the court, bouncing beyond the service line. Cones can be used to restrict the area even more to the back third or quarter of the court, or the corners, if hitting directionally. Drop-feed singles games can be played where any ball landing in the service boxes is considered out.
- Play lots of doubles matches in practice. These advanced players are often more focused on singles matches from tournament play, so they have more room to improve in doubles, especially once you find the right pairings for your team.

If you have just one or a few advanced players, who are significantly better than their teammates:

- Don't have these players just hit with each other every practice. Having them warm up together is beneficial, because they can keep the rally going longer and push each other, but they will also get bored if that's all they do. They can help their teammates improve by having them hit with everyone else on the team at some point.
- Directional Hitting or Depth restrictions can be added to just one side of the court, so a more advanced player might have to hit all cross-court and beyond the service line, while the player on the other side of the court can hit it back anywhere in the singles court.
- A favorite activity of mine is playing singles tiebreakers where the winner moves up a court and loser moves down a court, to allow players to play many opponents in a short amount of time. If you have a better player or two who will always beat everyone else, make them start out behind, for example down 0-3 or 0-4 in the tiebreaker and then they have to battle back to win.
- The score disadvantage could also be used when playing sets, with the better player starting out down 0-30 every game, or just service games depending on the difference in ability. This puts pressure on the better player to make every point count and simulates a match when they would need to come back in a game, since their teammate may not push them as much otherwise.
- Take input from your advanced players on drills or games they would like to do in practice. They often have good ideas, and can help lead and teach them to their teammates.