

# TennisPro®



The International Magazine for PTR Tennis Teachers and Coaches

March 2024



## *In this issue*

- Game On: Using Games to Build Skills
- What Great Leaders Do
- Mastering the Art of Strategic Play in Pickleball: Proactive Tactics for Success
- My 3 Key Takeaways from the 2024 PTR International Racquets Conference: Networking, Education, & Trade Show
- Don't Wait For Your Boss: Taking Initiative in Mentorship ...and lot more



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## TENNISPRO®

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# For the Record

We were thrilled that almost 700 attendees got to experience the PTR's new home at the iconic Saddlebrook Resort during the recent International Racquets Conference (IRC). While the location and name changed, one thing remained the same. The IRC featured a wide variety of educational topics delivered by a star-studded group of speakers and panels.

Saddlebrook Resort recently started to improve its racquets facilities featuring a new designed pickleball facility, upgraded tennis courts including two new grass courts, and the promise of padel courts before next year's event. The good news is that you will see even more improvements next year.

There were two new events added. First, was the 4-team Collegiate Tournament held just prior to the IRC that was won by St. Leo. We were thrilled to have at this inaugural event, the CEO of ITA, Tim Russell, and the COO, Dave Mullins. It was a great way to help kick off the season for these four talented teams.

The college event was followed by the \$25,000 Women's USTA Pro Circuit event. PTR members enjoyed watching some great tennis. Hopefully, some of the women competitors will eventually choose to coach tennis after their playing careers finish.

Thanks to the strong support shown by the USTA, who sent a large amount of their staff to attend, led by USTA CEO Lew Sherr and USTA Chief of Community Tennis Craig Morris, for attending the conference. Special thanks to the amazing PTR staff who did a fabulous job making sure all the attendees had a fabulous time. As well as the PTR Board who played a big role in our move to Saddlebrook Resort. Also a big thank you to Saddlebrook, General Manager, Pat Farrell, and his hard-working hotel staff. Plus, kudos to the Director of Racquets, Sean McQuillan, and his talented staff.



**Dan Santorum**  
CEO/Executive Director

*Dan Santorum*

We surveyed all of the attendees and we received a great response. We will be analyzing the feedback so we can make sure next year's event is bigger and better than ever. If you were unable to attend, we hope to see you at Saddlebrook Resort next February!

Keep Making a World of Difference



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Thank you to Delaine Mast for her many years of service as a PTR Board Member.

Interviews were completed Dec. 6, 2023 by the Nominating Committee of Karl Hale (Chair), Lynne Rolley and Martin Van Daalen.



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# Member News



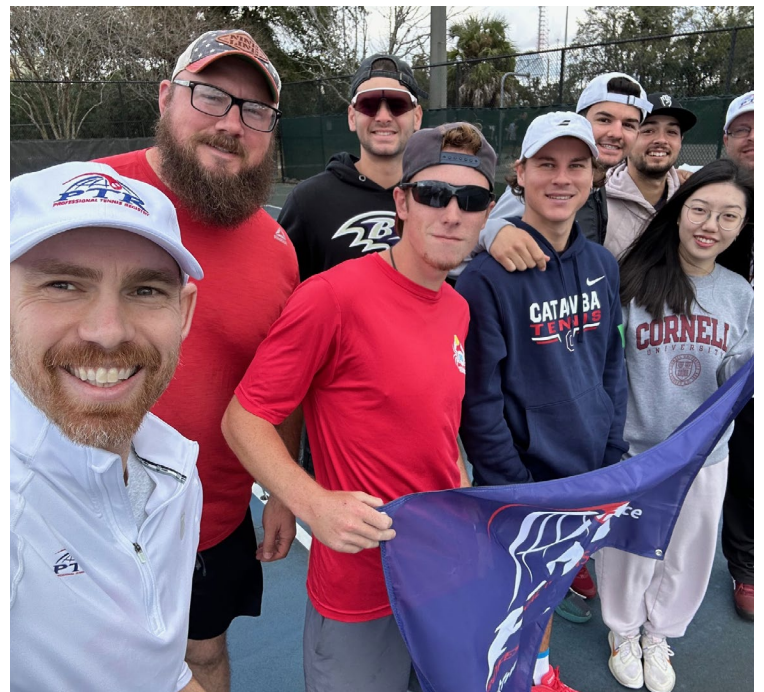
## MISSOURI CITY, TX: PTR LEVEL 1 WORKSHOP

PTR Level 1 workshop at Lexington Colony Tennis Courts in Missouri City, TX, Host Jack Foster and PTR Coach Developer was Tim Clay.



## COCOA BEACH, FL: PTR LEVEL 1 WORKSHOP

PTR Level 1 workshop in Cocoa Beach, FL at Racquet Club of Cocoa Beach hosted by John Sanders and ran by PTR Coach Developer Kelly Anchors in January 2024.



## JACKSONVILLE, FL: LEVEL 1 WORKSHOP

Level 1 workshop in Jacksonville, FL in January at Southside Tennis Center hosted by Harrell Thomas and ran by PTR Coach Developers Mitch Case and Isaac McBroom.



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# 2024 PTR Awards



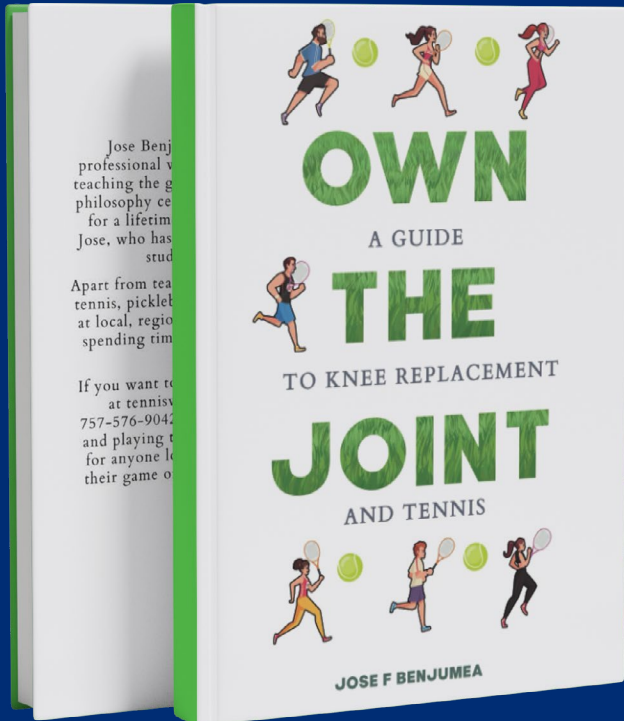




## 2024 PTR AWARD WINNERS

- 1. PTR Pro of the Year**  
Simon Gale
- 2. PTR Coach Developer of the Year**  
Tim Clay
- 3. International Master Professionals**  
Patricia Rogulski & John Powless
- 4. PTR Humanitarian of the Year**  
Lisa Pugliese-LaCroix
- 5. PTR College Coach of the Year**  
Dom Manilla
- 6. PTR Young Professional of the Year**  
Julian Morales
- 7. PTR Tour Coach of the Year**  
Bruce Lipka
- 8. PTR Developmental Coach of the Year**  
Kyle Beynor
- 9. PTR Wheelchair Coach of the Year**  
Jason Harnett
- 10. PTR Public Facility of the Year**  
Sportsmans Tennis & Enrichment Center
- 11. PTR Private Club of the Year**  
Cliff Dysdale Tennis
- 12. PTR Partner of the Year**  
FITP
- 13. PPR Private Facility of the Year**  
Wheaton Sports Center
- 14. Public Facility of the Year**  
Oasis Pickleball Club
- 15. Humanitarian of the Year**  
Steve Lerner
- 16. PPR Clinician of the Year**  
Lamar Scott
- 17. PPR Professional of the Year**  
Marina Anderson

# Member News



## OWN THE JOINT: A GUIDE TO KNEE REPLACEMENTS AND TENNIS

**AUTHOR: JOSE F. BENJUMEA**

Rediscover the joy of tennis post-knee replacement with expert Jose F. Benjumea's "Ultimate Guide to Knee Replacement and Tennis." Embrace a pain-free comeback with tailored strategies and wisdom from decades on the court. Order now—step up your game and reclaim your passion. Own the joint!

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What I love about the PTR International Conference is the attitudes people have toward one another. There is no boundary and this safe place allows the freedom to approach anyone and converse. This conference allows a wall to break down no matter the level.

Paolo Mataia



It's my first time here and I loved the ability to network with a different group of industry professionals than in other organizations I'm involved in. I was able to have poignant conversations with industry leaders about diversity and inclusion.

Greg "Moose" DeMoustes



## SCHOLARSHIP OPPURTUNITY

### 2024 NOVO NORDISK DONNELLY SCHOLARSHIP

Application open February 1, 2024  
Deadline: May 1, 2024

For more information, please visit [www.ustafoundation.com/scholarship\\_opportunities/](http://www.ustafoundation.com/scholarship_opportunities/) or contact Diane Stone at [dmdstone@comcast.net](mailto:dmdstone@comcast.net)

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### \$75,000 in diabetes/tennis scholarships available

The application portal will open February 1 for the 2024 Novo Nordisk Donnelly Scholarship. The program, in its 26th year, will be distributing scholarships to 12 high school or college students who play tennis on a team or in tournaments and are living with diabetes. \$75,000 in scholarship funds will be available as follows: Two (2) National Winners in the amount of \$10,000 each; Ten (10) Regional Winners in the amount of \$5,000 each. The scholarships are intended to support the student's cost of tuition, educational materials, and other related expenses at the college or university the student selects. There are also two (2) coach awards of \$2,500 each, available to tennis professionals or coaches who teach tennis and live with diabetes. The title sponsor of the Donnelly Scholarship is Novo Nordisk and other supporting sponsors include Dexcom, Tandem Diabetes Care and Cecelia Health. The application deadline is May 1, 2024.

# Member News



I've been coming to this conference for more than 40 years. What keeps me coming back are all of my friends, even from when I first started, like Dan, Julie, Steve, and previously Dennis and his wife. These longtime friends always welcomed me to be a part of the family. They adopted me, and I stayed

Precious Morgan



I love this conference because it's a family feeling; very welcoming and personal. I've always loved that because I can always learn. Being face-to-face with others makes it so much easier to connect.

Richard Spurling

CALL FOR MEMBER NEWS

Share your latest successes in teaching or playing the sport we love! Send an email to [cate@ptrtennis.org](mailto:cate@ptrtennis.org) with your member news (pictures or videos are always welcome), and we'll share it with the rest of the membership in the next issue of TennisPro Magazine!

The graphic features a blue-tinted background of a tennis court with a person in the foreground and a woman in the background. A red banner at the top contains the text 'CALL FOR MEMBER NEWS'. A black banner at the bottom contains the text 'Share your latest successes...'. A logo for PTR (The Pathway to Coaching Excellence) is visible in the center.



**PTR INTERNATIONAL  
RACQUETS  
CONFERENCE**





# Game On: Using Games to Build Skills

by Mitch Case and Tim Clay

"I never teach my pupils. I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn." - Albert Einstein

## Why do people play games?

The most obvious answer is "to have fun." When we play, we experience joy for a number of reasons. And it is this joy that brings us back to an activity over and over again.

But where does this joy come from? What is it about play that creates these feelings?

Research continues to show that play is an essential method for how we explore our world: our environments, our relationships to others, and ourselves. Play creates the opportunity for discovery, and discovering new things is fun.

This joy of discovery is what makes play so vital to the human experience. It motivates us to evolve. It pushes us forward, as individuals and as a species.

When we play games, our play is focused -

this structured play is an incredible platform for learning and skill development.

### **The Role of Motivation**

When coaching, it is best practice to adapt to the needs of the player. Understanding how to motivate a player is foundational to how we design our practices. Is a player intrinsically driven by self-improvement? Or by the trust and connection to the coach? Are they eager to achieve, or compete? Do they just want to be around people they like?

Some players truly enjoy work, and the process of working - coaches usually enjoy working with these players since they are often willing to do whatever the coach suggests. Most players, however, require a more thoughtful approach - they need some other reason to stay engaged and on task.

When the benefit of work is not immediately noticeable, games provide a micro-environment in which progress and success are more obvious. According to Dr. Steph Acaster, "Games almost always produce perceptible results and have clear, predictable achievement and reward systems, which can act as a path to fulfillment." For players motivated by competition or achievement, games can create a more tangible link between work and reward; when reward feels within reach, players will be more willing to do the work. And when a game is expertly designed, work starts to feel more like an opportunity to excel.

For players fueled by the social element, games can provide a platform to share experience with others: an opportunity to collaborate and connect. According to Amy Jo Kim, "That's the power and pleasure of a game — you get to take a mini-break from

daily life, and spend time (together) in an alternate, simplified reality."

### **Reframing a Mindset**

"You are never really playing an opponent. You are playing yourself, your own highest standards, and when you reach your limits, that is real joy." - Arthur Ashe

Helping players deal with success and failure is a foundational part of coaching. Some players love the thrill of competition - the challenge of being tested and seeing the effect of their efforts. Other players recoil at the potential pressure, stress, and perceived loss of social status.

While no one likes to fail, we all know it is an inevitable part of being human. Incorporating games regularly into practice provides constant opportunity to both deal with loss, and to gradually reshape a player's perspective on the role of failure in personal development. Competition becomes a vehicle for self improvement instead of a way to determine superiority or value.

Practicing competition in a lower stakes environment can help build resilience and a growth mindset over time. By continually incorporating challenge into practice, coaches can help shape feedback to promote productive responses, instead of thoughts and feelings of inadequacy. We can build a perspective that enables athletes to better handle adversity - in both sport and life. Competition can serve to highlight our current strengths, and what we will need to work on to be successful going forward.

"When we play, we are at our happiest, and we can withstand incredible hardships." - Laura Huerta Migus

## Working hard, or hardly working?

"The beauty of game-based learning is not that it's easy, it's that you get people to do it themselves." - Dr. Christopher See

Work and play are not mutually exclusive. As sport coaches, we understand the effort that goes into performance: we practice, and practice, and practice more, in order to prepare for competition. But what does that practice look like? What are we trying to achieve? And how do we motivate the athlete to do the work?

Most practice is built around skill acquisition and mastery, or creating "muscle memory," (the ability to execute a skill without having to think about it). In order to build that muscle memory, we rely on a whole lot of repetition. Repetition, on its own, is easy to create - for example, just feed the athlete a million forehands. However, this setup fails to deliver on several fronts: it lacks major elements of realistic match conditions, as well as specific goals/challenges.

So how can we structure practice in a way that:

1. better replicates match conditions
2. helps the players to generate their own feedback
3. creates a sense of progress
4. all while keeping them engaged?

We build it into a game.

## Designing for Development

When planning for practice, we must first identify the skill, or skills, we wish to improve. We've sorted them into the following categories:

1. Physical/Technical (Stroke Mechanics, Movement, Athleticism)
2. Tactical (How to use physical skills to win points, Problem solving)
3. Mental (How to perform under pressure, Dealing with adversity)
4. Life (Character skills that help players develop and succeed in life as well as sport)

Once we've selected a primary skill, we use rules/constraints to produce an environment with lots of opportunity for the skill to be applied. Ideally, this environment provides more opportunity than what might occur during standard point play. We also consider incorporating as many realistic elements as possible. To produce the desired scenario, we might limit the court space, choose a specific shot target, incentivize a particular choice, or modify the scoring system. To integrate realistic elements, we could start with a serve/return, liveball, playing from both sides of the net, and/or using a variation of traditional scoring.

We then give players a clear path to achievement by incorporating challenge with measurable goals - for example, serve percentage, winning 2 points in a row, hitting to a specific target, or positioning into a specific part of the court. The level of challenge should be appropriate for the skill level of the player(s), as goals that are too easily achieved will not require a player to improve, while goals that are too difficult will potentially de-motivate and destroy confidence. These goals then allow a player to determine their current ability and serve as a benchmark target to aim and problem solve towards.



With the environment and challenge in place, players can generate feedback for their own progress. They can reflect on their experience with questions such as: what went well, and how do I know it went well? What adjustments can I implement to make it even better? What things were easy or challenging? What stood out overall, and how does that change how I'll think about things going forward?

If the player struggles to produce feedback, a coach can lead a reflection using variations of these questions. By modeling this process, players can learn how to gather and analyze essential information from their own experience, in order to apply in the future.

## Sharing in the joy

"It's the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge." - Albert Einstein

As coaches, we are in the self-improvement business - we serve our clients by helping them evolve as tennis players, athletes, and as human beings. Like a chef watching a diner enjoy a painstakingly crafted meal, or a musician watching an audience dance, we as coaches share in the joy of our players when they learn and have fun on the court.

By improving the player experience, we improve the coaching experience. This keeps more people in the game, and more people in the game is good for everyone.

PURPOSE	EXAMPLE	NOTES FROM MITCH & TIM
LESSON'S FOCUS GAME	Focus on just one thing Primary Skill Develop FH as a weapon Only Fearhands!	Focus on just one thing
PHYSICAL	Motor Skill Developed Backwards crossover step Movement Pattern on IO FH Secondary Skills	Main skill to coach (could be physical,tactical, or mental, but we've used technical for this example)
TECHNICAL	Tennis Specific Turn shoulders against hips Applies to all FHs	Once main skill is established
TACTIC	Develop and use FH as strength	Chance to see decision making skills of athletes
MENTAL	Do not get to use BH	Dealing with adversity
LIFE SKILL	Big picture, we are developing Human Beings Confidence is developed by building FH into a strength and seeing it	Sport transcends life. Use this to your advantage You are more than just a tennis coach
SETUP	Scoring & Rules All balls received on bounce that land past service line must be hit w/ FH	Use constraints that facilitate & bonuses that incentivize Take advantage of the power of positive reinforcement

VARIATION	Player chooses 2 points for using only all FHs or Player chooses 1 points for being able to use either FH or BH w/being able to use either FH or BH w/ groundstrokes	By changing a single element the game has the potential to adapt to a different skill or focus
CONSIDERATIONS WHEN MAKING GAMES	<p>How games multiply into 100s Consider all the possible changes</p> <p>Score, Space, Direction, How the Points Starts &amp; Bonuses</p> <p>How games become even better</p> <p>Fostering the use of FEEDBACK.</p> <p>Internal with self</p> <p>External with other coaches and athletes</p> <p>Consider your audience. Games that do not succeed immediately are not bad games. Consider 1-2 changes.</p> <p>Good games are fun, but great games facilitate the learning</p> <p>Having the game is one part, still need to explain and demonstrate the game</p>	



**Mitch Case** is the Director of Tennis at Woodridge Lake in Goshen, CT. Mitch wears many hats as he is also a Staff Pro at Farmington Valley Racquet Club; Head Coach of the Northwestern Regional 7 High School Boys Tennis Team; a Coach Developer for the PTR; a certification tester for the USRSA; and a member of Tennis Magazine's Playtester Panel. Mitch achieved his Master of Tennis in Junior Development from the PTR in 2020, and is a certified ITPA Tennis Performance Trainer and Kovacs Institute certified Tennis Serve Specialist.



**Tim Clay** With over 25 years of coaching experience in racquet sports, Tim Clay has adeptly guided individuals of all ages and skill levels. Holding certifications such as NCSI Background Check clearance, Safe Play Program approval, Red Cross First Aid, and CPR, Tim Clay is a distinguished Level 4 Certified Coach with PTR, a Certified Coach and Charter Member with PPR. His accolades include being named the 2024 PTR Coach Developer of the Year and the 2019 & 2020 PTR Illinois Member of the Year. Tim's background includes collegiate tennis at the University of St. Francis, where his team reached nationals, and he is also recognized as an ITPA Tennis Performance Trainer.



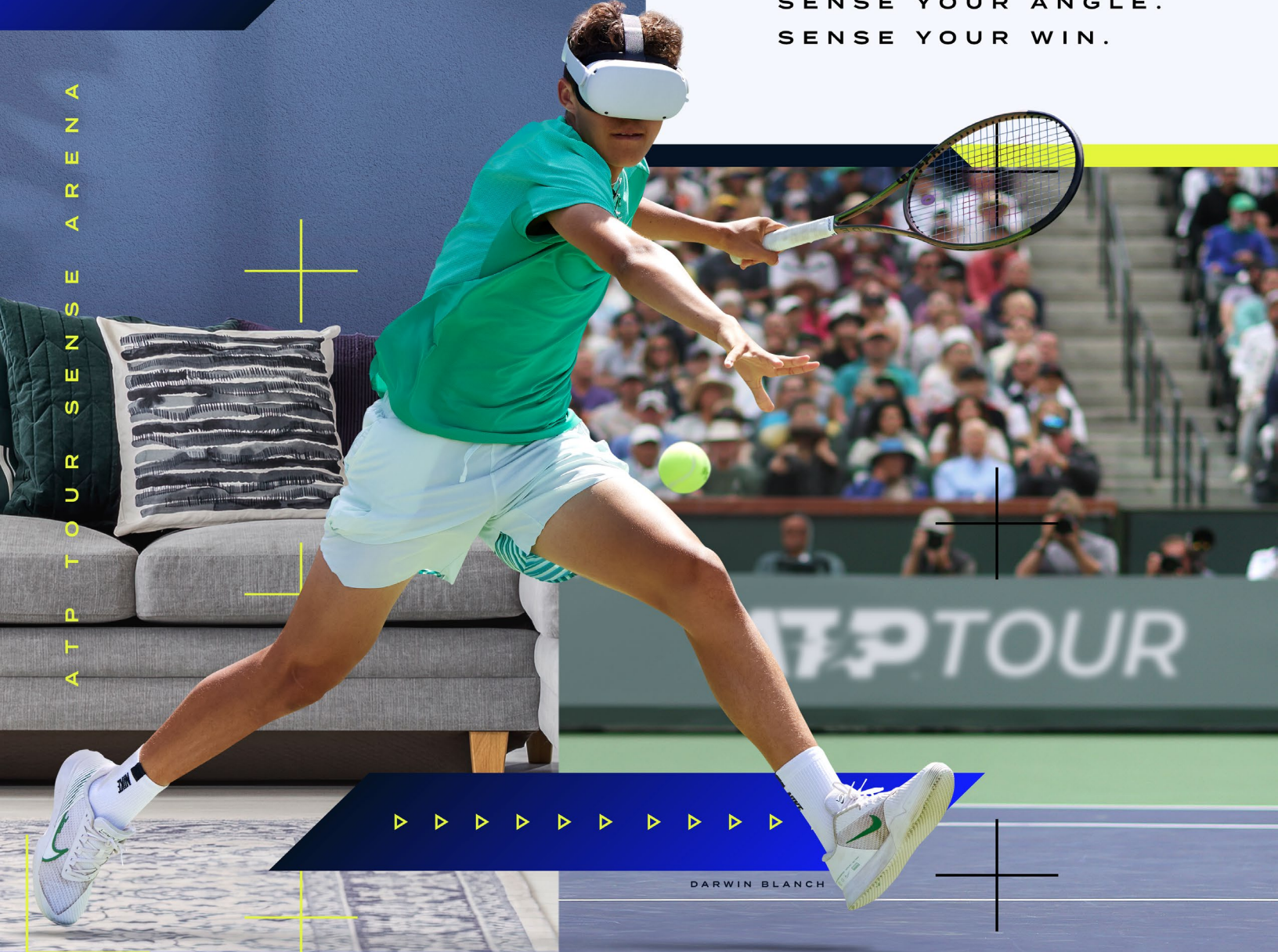
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# Pillars of Efficiency: Transforming Tennis Clubs with Modern Mobile Solutions

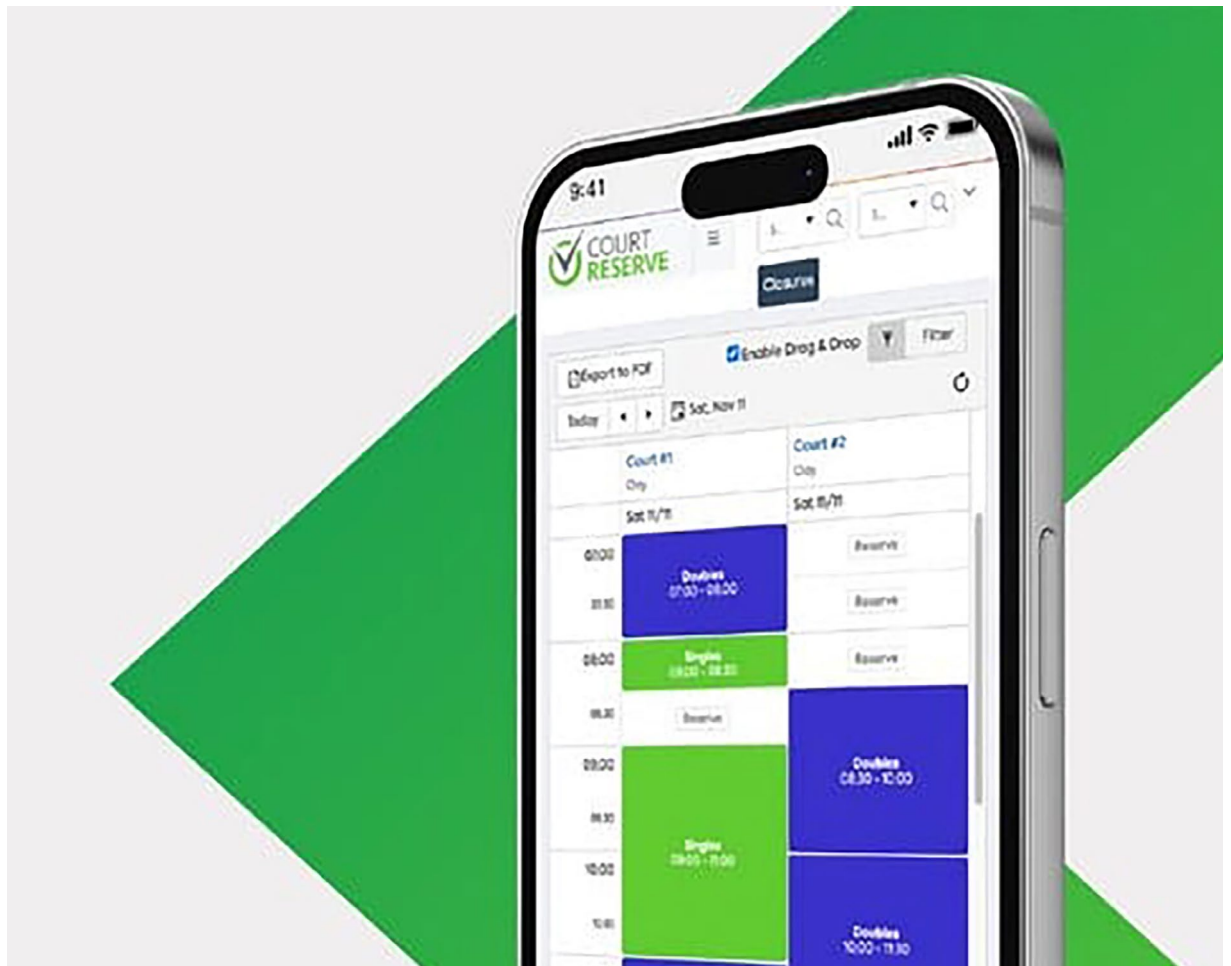
by Kimberly Arnold

Technology has revolutionized modern society and how we live our lives. We can have almost anything delivered to us within two days or have a full takeout meal arrive at our doorstep in 30 minutes. So, why not offer that same level of convenience to the members and players of our tennis facilities? As technology advances, it's important for tennis club owners to have their fingers on the pulse of the digital landscape so they can provide a seamless user experience for players--anywhere and everywhere. And

that starts with going mobile.

Off the courts, players are all leading rich lives with busy schedules, just like you! Providing an easy-to-use mobile experience limits unnecessary contact with your organization when everything players need can be found in one place. With a mobile solution, players can effortlessly check-in, book their favorite courts, snag a pro lesson, and form new friendships with other members to benefit everyone involved in your organization.





## A Modern, Streamlined, and User-Friendly Interface

Happy players, happy life. Investing in a top-tier mobile software solution is not just a luxury, it's a necessity to drive revenue, increase member retention and loyalty, and ensure player satisfaction. Tennis club owners should aim to provide a user-friendly mobile experience where less tech-savvy players can intuitively engage with your club from their smartphones. But the mobile solution should be advanced enough to simplify your club's management (and your life)!

## A Smooth Check-In Process

Say goodbye to long lines and crowded lobbies! A mobile software solution allows your players to seamlessly check-in by accessing a QR code or bar code--no

front desk staff is required. Not only does this simplify the entry process, but it also empowers your front desk staff to attend to more arduous tasks. The result? More efficiency minimized crowds, and no more tedious check-ins for everyone involved.

## Streamlined Reservations Process

With so much time spent on our phones, offering a simple reservation process will give your club a competitive edge. With a mobile events scheduler, you can allow your players to effortlessly view what's happening at your facility at any given time so they can book, cancel, edit, and pay for their reservations at their leisure! This feature not only promotes an enjoyable user experience, but it also takes reservations off your staff's plates so they can, again, tackle other club management tasks.

## Boost Business with Offerings Beyond Reservations

Reservations may be at the core of your business, but with a robust mobile software solution, you can also broaden your club's offerings. Think events, classes, clinics, and lessons, which will boost business and provide a clear gateway for members to explore and engage in diverse tennis experiences! Plus, this is an excellent way for members to interact in larger group activities and enhance fellowship amongst the players in your organization.

## Foster a Sense of Community with a Player Directory

Community is at the heart of every thriving tennis club, so offering ways for your members to engage with each other is vital. With a mobile player directory, players can easily access other members' information (if they've opted in for their information being

displayed) to start conversations with other players or even plan an upcoming booking! With this feature, you can transform your tennis club into a vibrant hub for camaraderie where members can build lifelong connections through their shared passion for tennis.

While the game of tennis may be timeless, tennis club owners should strive to be nimble to cater to the ever-changing digital landscape of modern society. Providing an expert mobile app solution provides immense value to players' busy lives by streamlining reservations, check-ins, events, and communication with just a few taps. For tennis club business owners, a comprehensive software solution will allow you to unlock a new era of sophisticated club management that propels business, community, and efficiency--saving you both time and money! If CourtReserve can help your club transformation, reach out!



**Kim Arnold** is a product leader at CourtReserve. Her superpower is she is the Master of Product Alchemy - Blending roadmaps, teams, and customer enchantment!

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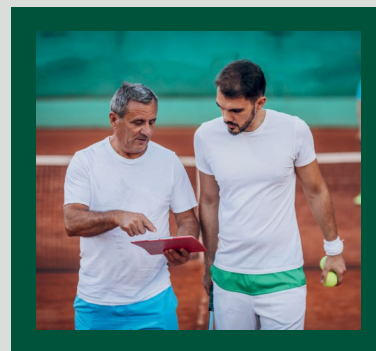
### PROGRAMMING

With continued growth in the coming year clubs and their racquets professionals must continue thinking and acting creatively in these areas...[\[read article\]](#)



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# Tweaking The Recipe For Effective High School Tennis Practices

By Marvin Hedgepet

In my more than forty years of coaching high school tennis in both public and independent schools, I've had the honor of guiding athletes of all calibers- from novices to nationally-ranked high-flyers. Not many years ago, one of my teams actually included two individuals who went on to achieve college All-American status. As a coach, when you are approached by athletes at either end of this skill spectrum with the

query," What's on the menu for today's practice?", you'd better be prepared with some real substance. A generic reply might sound adequate to you, but may do nothing to address the needs and expectations of your athletes. Let's agree that the one-size-fits-all daily practice plan is a myth. Each team, and indeed, every player enters the season with their own set of aspirations and goals.



While a good coach may have a preconceived vision for the team at the start of each season, this vision must be flexible and dynamic. The coach needs to take the time to identify what the expectations of each team member are. This will increase the chance that there will eventually be a shared or common vision for the team as a whole. To that end, it is ultimately the responsibility of the coach to plan daily practice sessions that are challenging, relevant and fun. Depending on the skill and interest level of the athletes, the structure and specific content of daily practices will have a tremendous impact on attendance, individual growth and team spirit. Poor or irregular attendance to practices is a common issue that many coaches have to deal with from time to time. This can even create a potential rift between teammates. Athletes will often find reasons to miss practices, especially if they feel that they're not really missing anything important to their own development or status on the team. Some years ago, an area tennis coach shared the following story with me: Two brothers claimed to be too ill to attend tennis practice. They were spotted later that afternoon with their surfboards strapped to the top of their van on the way to the beach. I guess this was their idea of a therapy session. Assuring that each practice is as relevant as possible for every team member is quite a tall order for the coach.

Typically, a high school tennis practice lasts about two hours. There is usually a warm-up period which might include a brief jog and dynamic stretches. To gradually increase the heart rate and intensity level, plyometric exercises, often using an exercise ladder, may be employed. This may be followed by drills (basic or situational) or a cooperative team hit-around where

players rotate and switch rallying partners every several minutes. Practicing the serve and return of serve at each practice cannot be over-emphasized as it is now widely accepted that during match play, most points (about 70%) are decided in 0-4 shots. I have found that less-experienced players seem to relish long periods of rally practice rather than spending more time and effort becoming better servers and returners as the analytics would suggest. What we sometimes refer to as developing "shot tolerance" is an exciting part of a less-experienced player's development as they take pride in maintaining longer and longer rallies, despite the fact that most points during actual match play will end within about four shots. On the other hand, experienced players seem to benefit from more match play situations as they tend to be focused on strategies (ex. shot patterns or precise shot placement) rather than basic techniques. At practice the effectiveness of these match play scenarios can be further enhanced by adding caveats such as allowing only one serve or playing pressure points (ex. 30-all) or pressure sets from 4-all.

Each practice session should include games which can be both fun and competitive. These games allow for important social interaction that is great for team bonding.

Practice sessions should also include time for serious reflection, especially the day following a match. Allow players time to express how they feel about their efforts and progress. This reflection can be done individually or as a group, but should always be positive in tone with the goal of building confidence, whether matches are being won or lost.



I have come to accept the fact that often high school athletes choose to participate in a particular sport for reasons other than the pursuit of excellence in that sport. I actually had one athlete confide in me that competing in tennis matches was the least favorite part of her experience on the tennis team. She found the drills, games, road trips and overall camaraderie to be much more gratifying. At the other extreme would be the player who aspires to play at their highest possible level, including college tennis. It is incumbent upon the coach to provide a meaningful experience at practice

each day for both these individuals. Again, it is tall order!

As we plan our practices, it might be helpful to assume the role of an accomplished chef preparing a special meal for a group of very discriminating diners. Just as this chef will carefully combine all the right ingredients as the meal is being prepared, the coach should regularly tweak every aspect of each practice session so that all athletes receive maximum benefit. Cook up something special for each and every practice and it will be a successful feast!



**Marvin** is a PTR-certified instructor and PTR Century coach with over 450 career victories as a high school tennis coach. With more than 30 years of active PTR membership, Marvin has participated in the Visiting Tennis Professional Program in Jamaica on multiple occasions. Currently, he is the Varsity Boys' and Girls' tennis coach at Hampton Roads Academy in Newport News, Virginia.

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# What Great Leaders Do

by Michael Mahoney

Are you the director or leader of a team, or are you an up-and-comer? Whoever you are in your organization, you made the right decision to participate in the PTR Symposium in Saddlebrook. The opportunity to learn from experts, dialogue with industry peers, and network with fellow coaches is invaluable.

I've had the great fortune of being employed by the same family-owned company, Midtown Athletic Clubs, for over 40 years. During this time, I've worn several hats and I've worked with lots of great people,

taken cues from them, learned from their leadership and management styles, and developed a personal set of beliefs and routines I hold in high regard. I believe they've benefitted me, so I'm sharing them with you:

## BE ON TIME

Promptness is a virtue. Nothing you do will better indicate your interest in, and the importance of a meeting than being on time. Popping in when the bell tolls is not a good look. Being on time shows respect to fellow co-workers and their busy schedules.



## BE PREPARED

While we're talking about being on time, a positive meeting trait, whether leading or participating in a meeting, is preparation. Arriving to a meeting, as if your presence is the requirement, is a big miss. In addition to being prepared, my colleague, Butch Staples, taught me a phrase that I often repeat, "a short pencil is better than a long memory". Show up to a meeting with pen and paper and take notes. You and your teammates will appreciate you capturing the discussion points and assignments. This phrase has also served me well, "if it is not written, it is not true."

## MAKE TIME TO LISTEN

Great leaders are great listeners. We have two ears and one mouth for a reason. Genuinely listen to the people you work

with. Avoid formulating a response while someone is speaking. Being a great listener demonstrates your interest in what someone is saying and that you care. Equally important, you may learn something you didn't know.

## LOOK SOMEONE IN THE EYE AND APOLOGIZE

Leaders, all leaders, make mistakes. It is an unfortunate part of the job, however, one that forms some of our most memorable learning experiences. When you make a mistake or handle a situation poorly, own it, and apologize. I learned from someone I deeply respect, when making an apology look the individual or group in the eye and say, "I'm sorry". That's it. Don't deflect or give excuses for what you could have done. Accept your responsibility and move on. You will be respected for the honest truth.

## **BE VULNERABLE**

Let's not confuse being vulnerable with apologizing. Great leaders know they don't need to be, and often aren't, the smartest person in the room (or on the court!). That's why they have a team. They are skilled at managing a meeting, staying on subject, and mining for participation. They pursue all contributors.

Being vulnerable starts by saying out loud, "I don't have the answer", and "I need your help". Vulnerability also starts by sharing your background; where you grew up, your first job, or how you got started in the industry. Providing this information to your co-workers gives them insight into your belief systems, what's important to you, and how you make decisions. Vulnerability in a department or organization starts with the leader.

## **MAKE OTHERS' WORK A PRIORITY**

From time to time your co-workers will come to you for your opinion, input, and help. When this happens, prioritize their request. Don't put it at the bottom of your to-do list. Your interest in their work and willingness to help will create an indelible positive working relationship. Who knows, you may need their help on a future project. You can anticipate the gesture being returned.

## **SHOW YOUR APPRECIATION**

When work by an individual or group is well done, show appreciation. Genuinely recognizing the contributions of your teammates is a trait great leaders share. Don't hold back and don't qualify the recognition. Deliver an impassioned message.

Something that I've learned and appreciated as a recipient, is a written thank you card recognizing work accomplishments. It is by far one of the greatest forms of recognition. Sure, an email or text can work to send your message. There's something about opening an envelope, and a handwritten note that elevates the message. One more suggestion, mail the card to the recipient's home address. Let their family know the time spent away from them is appreciated. Buy personalized thank you cards and send them for deserving work recognition. I think you'll thank me.

## **WORK ON HOLIDAYS**

We are in the Service Business. We work when our members and clients are available to play. Generally, our facilities are open on holidays. As the leader, I believe it is important for you to demonstrate exemplary leadership by showing up and contributing on a holiday with your team. I know this may not be a popular belief, or not necessarily expected by your employer. I'm also not suggesting every holiday or for the entire day. By experience, I do know your participation on a holiday will go a long way to elevate the spirit of your team to see their leader contributing.

## **BE UNDERSTANDING OF PERSONAL FAMILY MATTERS**

All of us are different, and yet we're a lot alike. We have families and responsibilities to them. We're human and face unexpected or anticipated challenges. Personal emergencies occur without warning. When they do, show kindness and support. Great leaders recognize when teammates are struggling and do all they can to help.



Some routines are so simple it may be why they are overlooked as important leadership skills. Nothing here is “rocket science”. In fact, my list of behaviors are simple, thoughtful routines that demonstrate who

you are as a leader and what is important to you.

Good luck.  
MM



**Michael Mahoney,**  
National Racquet Sports Director/ Midtown Athletic Clubs

Michael Mahoney has proudly been a part of the Midtown Athletic Clubs for over 40 years. He was named National Racquet Sports Director in May 2023 and is responsible for all locations, maintaining Midtown’s position as the industry leader in racquet sports programming. Since 1990, he served as both Senior Vice President and the General Manager of the flagship Midtown Athletic Club in Chicago.

Mahoney began his tenure as a tennis instructor at the Rochester, NY club location, followed by various promotions, including head tennis pro, director of tennis, general manager, regional vice president and national tennis director. From 1990 until 2023 Michael led Midtown’s flagship Chicago location as Senior Vice President and General Manager.

A past president of the Chicago District Tennis Association, the Chicago arm of the United States Tennis Association, Mahoney is certified by both the Professional Tennis Registry and the United States Professional Tennis Association. He is a graduate of the University of Rochester.

During his career, Mahoney’s achievements include two-time Large Facility Manager of the Year (2009 & 2018), #1 rankings in men’s singles, USTA senior age categories in Chicago and Midwest divisions. Racquet Sports Industry, Champions of Tennis, Private Facility of the Year (2006), and Midwest Division Men’s 35 age group Playing Professional of the Year in (2002).

# Mastering the Art of Strategic Play in Pickleball: Proactive Tactics for Success

By Suzee Anderson

As a dedicated pickleball coach, I frequently encounter players grappling with the challenge of handling opponents' tricky shots. The crux of success, however, lies not merely in reactive responses but in the proactive prevention of those shots. In the dynamic game of pickleball, emphasizing prevention over cure becomes paramount.

## THE POWER OF OBSERVATION

A crucial initial step in effective prevention is keen observation. Understanding how opponents exploit weaknesses is central to strategic play. Let's delve into specific scenarios and strategic approaches:

### Dealing with Lobbers

- **Identify the Pattern:** Recognize whether opponents consistently lob on the forehand or backhand and from

specific court areas.

- **Timing is Everything:** Observe if lobbing is triggered by a certain number of dinks. Adjust your strategy to disrupt their rhythm.
- **Example:** I once faced an opponent who would lob every time we dinked to him three times. Disrupting the pattern by dinking to him twice and then to his partner eliminated the threat.

### Countering Cross-Court Dinks

- **Angle Control:** Avoid giving opponents easy cross-court angles. If you give a big angle you usually get a big angle in return. Target their inside foot to limit their options.
- **Tactical Stacking:** Use strategic positioning to counter opponents with specific playing styles.





- **Example:** In a past tournament, we faced a mixed doubles team with a female player favoring heavy topspin cross-court dinks. Predicting her preferences, we defensively stacked with me in front of her, disrupting her playing style and securing a comfortable victory.

### Facing Bangers

- **Middle Awareness:** Prevent opponents from driving up the middle, their easiest drive option, by returning deep to backhands or down the line.
- **Slow it Down Strategically:** Counter aggressive play with offensive dinks and drops to disrupt the opponent's rhythm. Move them around and keep them off balance. A player must be balanced and in position to attack effectively. When we take that away, we take away their advantage.
- **Aim High:** Utilize deep lob serves and returns to further disrupt their ability to drive. The high ball causes them to have to wait for contact and gives them no power to work with.
- **Example:** By strategically slowing down the game with well-placed offensive shots, you make it difficult for bangers to stay balanced and consistently attack.

### ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES IN ACTION

Strategic adaptability is a hallmark of successful prevention:

- **Switching Strategies:** Be ready to switch strategies mid-game based on your observations. If something isn't working, change it!
- **Court Positioning:** Adjust your position to neutralize opponent strengths and exploit their weaknesses.
- **Example:** Adapting court positioning by stacking against a specific opponent can turn a challenging match into a comfortable victory, as seen in the aforementioned pro career example.

### THE TAKEAWAY

In pickleball, an ounce of prevention is indeed worth a pound of cure. Active observation and adaptability empower players to control the game, turning potential weaknesses into strategic advantages. Mastery of the art of strategic play requires not only skill but also a sharp eye for observation and the flexibility to adapt on the fly. Remember, by prioritizing prevention over reaction, players can dictate the flow of play and elevate their overall performance in competitive play.



#### Suzee Anderson

Suzee Anderson is a PPR certified Pro & Clinician, former Top 10 Pro as well as a multi US Open and Nationals Medalist. As the Head Teaching Pro and Director of Club Pickleball USA Training Academy she oversees 10 coaches in 2 facilities with a total of 27 indoor courts. Suzee's progressive curriculum and academy framework addresses the needs of players from intro to advanced in both individual and group settings. Suzee's passion for the sport and her love of seeing others improve ensures success for both her coaches and students.



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# Using a Game-Based Approach to simplify high school practice plans.

by Kelli Holmes, Independent PTR Certified Professional, Maumelle, and Bella Vista, AR; PTR Coach Developer; Arkansas Activities Association State High School Coach Developer.

More highly qualified and educated coaches are needed for our sport in general, but nowhere more than in the high school space. High school coaches need the skills to manage all the variables the environment brings. Being a successful high school coach does not mean one has to be a highly rated player or professional tennis instructor but have access to resources and be open to continuing education and practicing their coaching skills. Please see my article "Coaching High School Tennis..."

'First, Do No Harm!'", in a previous issue of Tennis Pro.

Factor's high school coaches manage are unique to their program and not the same for all: access to practice and match-play space, varied number of participants not matching space available, mixed skill development and match-play experience, short length of season and practice time, and most importantly the coach's skill, knowledge, and behavior. A coach's

experience level directly impacts their ability to manage all the variables of their program. Keeping practices simple and productive is imperative. Using a **Game-Based Model** to plan practices is ideal for high school practice planning and management.

As we know, tennis is an open-skill sport. Players must continually adapt movement and positioning in fluid game situations, making decisions based on the opponent's positioning and shot patterns, learning to recognize where their shot (or their doubles partner's shot) positioned their opponent(s), while recovering, taking that information deciding where to go, and what shot to hit next. Then the process repeats, until the point is over. As PTR International Master Professional Wayne Elderton would say, "Move, Hit, Think, Move, Hit, Think, then Do It Again!"

Whew! That's a lot of skill development for a coach to manage in a team setting. A high school season doesn't allow time to work on technical aspects of every stroke, and not all high school coaches are comfortable or possess the skill to facilitate technical practice. So, why not let them play and help them practice **how** to play.

By choosing 1 or 2 game situations players find themselves during point play; **-serving, returning, rallying from the baseline, approaching the net, and playing the player approaching the net;** we can design lesson plans that facilitate live game progressions emphasizing those situations. Players can practice skills needed during a game situation, as they play. This makes practice easy for coaches to manage and keep on task, and simple for players to execute with clearly defined practice situations. It also ensures practices are a realistic microcosm

of what really happens in a match.

This practice model ensures both experienced and developing coaches keep in-season focus on team play, not individual skill development, which benefits both the team and developing coaches, who may not be as comfortable or as skilled in explaining and demonstrating accurate stroke technique. The format also gives coaches opportunity to move around, observe, analyze, and decide what skills need developing, while all players are moving, involved with no standing, or waiting to participate. Coaches now see players' skills from all angles, making better decisions regarding skill development needed. In addition, high school coaches have the job of deciding singles lineups, and doubles combinations and lineups. If coaches are in position to see more, the information used to make those decisions is more complete. And most importantly, when coaches move around the playing space, observing, positively motivating, and providing feedback, the environment is now play, player, and **TEAM-centered**, rather than coach centered.

Beyond the organizational advantage of running game-based practices for coaches, it is far more beneficial for players. Why do players **play** tennis? Because they want to **PLAY!** Adolescents want to join friends and play, not spend the bulk of their time on the court repetitively practicing technical skills. Why not let them play, while organizing games that help them practice **how** to play? As players play and practice **how** to play, they teach themselves proper technique, by measuring what they are doing against the outcome. This combined with observation of accurate technique and outcome by more experienced players, reinforces proper



technique. Now, having a team of mixed ability levels with experienced players is not only a positive for match-play, but also a positive for the skill development of the less experienced players on the team.

So, what does the practice plan look like? Assuming this is not the first day of practice and the coach has seen their team members play, they can pick 1 or 2 game situations players need to practice. After body warm-up and athletic skill development linked to chosen game progression(s), set up the game(s) and let them play as you continue to observe and analyze areas for improvement. Move into drill progressions facilitating practice of skills. After giving players time to practice, with positive feedback and motivation, move them back into the game so they can play again. Hopefully, this time, with improvement. Go Play, Go Practice, Go Play, Again!

When coaches have access to a simple way to plan practices, with the understanding they don't have to be an expert, stress is

mitigated. With less stress, coaches can focus on facilitation and positive verbal and non-verbal communication behavior to motivate, team-build and create a fun environment for skill building. When players are in an organized, positive, high-energy practice environment, they teach themselves.

High School Tennis is an important gateway to the growth of our sport, and the student athlete. It oftentimes is the only opportunity for high school student-athletes to participate in sport or be part of a team. Access to sport gives them the opportunity to be part of a community, improve self-esteem, social development, and the importance of teamwork. Life skills such as the capacity for abstract reasoning and creative problem-resolution, along with an understanding of the importance of lifelong fitness habits.

This age group makes decisions to invest time in activities that give them opportunities to socialize with friends, while improving skills in a fun, positive environment. Fun

and personal success in skill development equates to retention and a lifetime of tennis involvement.

I want to say thank you to PTR International Master Professional Wayne Elderton. After attending Wayne's master class at Indian Wells in fall of 2022, his game-based approach to coaching inspired me to design high school practice plans around

that model. It is now the basis for all my instructional and coaching lesson planning and is perfect for coaching high school teams.

Please be sure to go to <https://acecoach.com> to find more in-depth information about Wayne Elderton, tennis as an open-skill sport, and the game-based approach to coaching.



**Kelli** is a dynamic and enthusiastic independent PTR Professional Instructor, and Coach Developer, with 27 years of experience. Her business offers services throughout the state with primary contracts in Central and Northwest Arkansas. Kelli works with the Arkansas Activities Association to develop coach education for all high school tennis coaches throughout the state. She played 4 years of college tennis at Bethel College in N. Newton, KS, winning conference, and district titles in singles and doubles all 4 years, earning degrees in Mass Media Communications, Broadcast Journalism, and History.

Kelli has operations management and training development experience in both the recreation and transportation industries. She is a former Board Chairperson for the Bella Vista POA, facilitating budgets for one of the largest recreational POA's in the country. Also, a former Intermodal Terminal Operations Manager for the BNSF Railway, where she managed operations and developed and implemented intermodal processes for their Southern California terminal facilities.

Kelli's priorities are to continue teaching and coaching players, working with PTR and USTA peers in Arkansas, making tennis the premier high school sport in the state, and growing her coach development knowledge and skills, and coach development partnership with PTR. Kelli won the PTR State Member of the Year Award in both 2017 and 2021, and the USTA/Arkansas Victor Sheshunoff Meritorious Education Award in 2015.

# PTR & GRSA UNITE, PROVIDING THE TOOLS TO IMPROVE YOUR FUTURE

It's no secret that **PTR** has been taking care of coaches across the globe with initiatives and incentives that provide education, support, and continuous innovation in order to give their members the best tools for success. For this reason, the union with **GRSA International** as global certification and education partner is a step forward in helping coaches not just know more about the stringing process, product knowledge and science behind stringing, it's also possibly provide a new income stream.

We all know that seasons change, business goes up and down and it's always good to have other options to help us earn a living. Knowing more about stringing, the tech behind the service and how it benefits players, will essentially help provide an even more in-depth service to your clients. Knowing why a ball reacts differently with certain strings, tensions, combinations of string, string patterns and more just adds to your professional all-round service, if we add to the fact that you can also re-string rackets, then you're definitely on to a winner.

In this first stage of the partnership, **GRSA** are offering a very special introductory offer to all **PTR** members. As an active **PTR** member, you can sign up to **GRSA's** business membership for €99 and receive 2 online courses absolutely free. You'll be able to start from the beginning, getting the base knowledge of how to string a racket and move up to a more advanced level.

These courses are online and valued at over **€300**, this also includes a certification exam.

If this weren't enough, until Sep 15th, 2023 and exclusive to **PTR** members in the US, the first 500 to sign up for this amazing offer will also benefit from a special string and accessory pack from **HEAD** valued at over \$80! If you'd like more information about this great deal, you can contact **PTR** through normal channels, or you can visit the **GRSA** website and click on the **PTR** banner.



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# My 3 Key Takeaways from the 2024 PTR International Racquets Conference: Networking, Education, & Trade Show

by Tom Ruth

If you missed the redesigned and revitalized International Racquets Conference this year you missed an amazing opportunity! You will want to mark your calendar for next year's unmissable annual event. As a resident of the greater Hilton Head area, I was initially skeptical about the conference moving to a new location. However, PTR exceeded

expectations with the revamped 2024 program. This was immediately evident in the conference branding as soon as you walked into the lobby of the Saddlebrook Resort, including the giant PTR Tennis Ball in the lobby that my son loved having his picture taken with. Here are my 3 reasons why you should plan to be there next year.



## Networking

The “World Class” networking remains to be one of the top reasons (at least for me) to attend this event each year. The New Attendee Meeting, hosted by Dan Santorum and Nigel Pugh, emphasized the “PTR Family” spirit. Despite the new venue, the familiar warmth as soon as my wife, son, and I arrived at the resort was immediately felt. It truly shows you that it is the people, and not the place, that truly make this event what it has become! The check-in process for the conference was quick and easy, facilitated by the warm and welcoming PTR staff. You will often hear from a lot of Conference veterans that there is as much to learn in the hallways between sessions as there is in the sessions themselves. That is simply because when else do you have so many experts in one place and all of them with a similar goal of improving their programs back at home. It is great to see friends that you might not have seen since last year. While catching up with those you might not have seen since last year, it is also equally as important to meet new people. This could be someone that is just getting into the industry or could be an industry veteran. I have found over the years it can be easy to fall into the trap of only talking with the people you already know. It is very important to get out of your comfort zone and meet new people. It is amazing how much we all have in common even though we may come from different areas or even countries. You may just find your next best idea in the hallway between sessions.

## Education

While the networking is great, the educational offerings at the International Racquets Conference were unparalleled, drawing industry experts from across various roles within racquets sports. The

only drawback is the logistical impossibility of attending multiple concurrent sessions. This illustrates the depth of talent within the Racquets Conference speakers. This challenge, however, underscores the value of networking; exchanging insights with those who attended a conflicting session expands the learning horizon. I aim for at least three takeaways from each presentation, compiling them for actionable implementation at my club when I return. I look to share these three takeaways with anyone that is willing to help me. Many conversations will start with “WOW, did you see (insert amazing presenter here)” and if that answer is no that is an opportunity for me to ask for the takeaways. If it is something extremely profound it may be worth seeking out the presenter for them to elaborate. What is truly great, is that you will see many of the presenters around for the bulk of the week listening to other presentations and trying to learn as much as they can as well. After all, how do you think they became so amazing? Presentations often ignite new ideas or resurrect successful past strategies that have been overlooked. With all the information and ideas being exchanged you could say it is like “trying to drink from a firehose.” This is why the conference doesn’t end when you leave the resort. In order for true change, you must take out little nuggets from each presentation and use the information when you return. (I stole that from a presentation this year.) I like to debrief when I return home by organizing my key takeaways and putting them into action where applicable. Some of those impacts may be immediate and others will be used down the road. The key is that you keep your notes handy and avoid putting them in a drawer not to be seen until you clean out that file sometime in the future.

## Trade Show

For a club manager the Trade Show is invaluable in connecting with the top vendors in the racquets industry. It is an opportunity to engage with my current vendors and also develop new partnerships, offering a glimpse into emerging technologies and products. This year, my club had specific needs, and the Trade Show provided the opportunity to meet with those specific vendors in the product space to help solve issues at our club. This year it was also an opportunity for my 1-year-old son who was with us to get a lot of fun swag! If you hit the right booths, at the right time, you have amazing opportunities to score some cool

swag including keychains, dampeners, or even a hat. A new part to the Trade Show this year was quick hits from vendors to present their products or services to audiences on the Trade Show Stage. A great opportunity to hear about something that you may have otherwise overlooked.

## A Must-Attend for Industry Professionals

Whether you're involved in on-court coaching, off-court management, or any related field in the racquets industry, this conference is the best investment in yourself that you can make. I eagerly anticipate next year's PTR International Racquets Conference and hope to see you there.



### Tom Ruth

Tom Ruth serves as the Sports Center Director at Long Cove Club in Hilton Head Island, SC, and is recognized as an experienced racquets professional. He is certified by both the USPTA and PTR. Tom serves as a Coach Developer for PTR. Additionally, Tom holds leadership positions as Vice-President for USPTA SC and Director-at-Large for USTA SC. His wife Katie Ruth is also a well-regarded Racquets Director in the Hilton Head area and mother to their two children Charlotte & Jaxon.



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# Less Confusion, More Play: Avoiding Confused Players When Explaining Drills

by Gavin Glider

Imagine you are attending a tennis clinic. The coach calls you and your fellow attendees to the net to explain the drill. The coach begins, "Sarah is going to serve the first point and we will play it out. Whoever wins the point gets fifteen points. Regardless of if she wins or not, Sarah will serve the second point. Whoever wins that will also get fifteen points. Are you with me?" You tentatively nod your head yes as you make eye contact with the other attendees. You are definitely not with the

coach. The coach continues, "now here is where it gets confusing—if Sarah and her partner won the first two points and they win the third point it is only worth ten if they win. If John and his partner win the first two points the third point is also only worth ten if they win. If the first two points are split it is still worth fifteen." The coach, frustrated that the attendees don't understand, starts again.

If you didn't catch on, the coach was

describing a simple service game, but they did it in the most complicated way possible. As tennis professionals, we are the masters of confusing our clients with, what seems to us, simple drills. This is such a well known phenomenon that it has been featured in the recent I'm a tennis player... social media trend. So why is that? Why do we struggle with communicating directions to players?

If you are familiar with learning styles, you know that most people prefer learning in one (or more) of the following ways: visual, auditory, read/write, and kinesthetic. When we explain drills to players up at the net, we are gambling that those players are expert auditory learners. This is a bold gamble that doesn't always pay off. Similarly, if we explain the drill by demonstrating it in front of the players we are gambling that they are visual learners. While this may be more effective in the moment—that is to say your clinic attendees can see it so they aren't entirely confused—they often arrive on their courts ready to play only to realize they do not in fact understand what to do in the drill.

One solution to this problem involves a bit of coordination, but the payoff for you and your clients is worth it. If you can manage a staggered drill setup, you can engage your attendees in an auditory/kinesthetic demonstration that will leave them almost instantly ready to play. If you are running

three courts of four players by yourself, you can start on the first court placing the participants in position for the drill. Give an explanation of the drill step by step as you engage the participants in play. While this method of hear then do is not effective for everyone, it is one of the most accessible ways for players to understand instructions. Once your first court is engaged in play, you can move to the next court, and then finally the third. By now, your first court is finishing their drill and are ready for the next set of instructions. While this method of staggered drill instruction is very effective in limiting confusion for your players, it does have its drawbacks like leaving very little room for coaching during the drill. If coaching is the expectation, you will likely need to use a different clinic setup such as adding more coaches to the clinic.

Regardless of your setup, limiting drill confusion is very important. Players who are confused by instructions are more likely to struggle while playing. Players often allow confusion to lead to poor play decreasing their levels of enjoyment. Having a frustrated clinic roster is not providing hospitality, which is, after all, the business we are in. If you can find a highly effective way to get your clinic attendees playing fast and having fun, you are far more likely to have a successful coaching business.



**Gavin** is the Head Pro at Apex Racket and Fitness, the largest tennis club in Maine, where he oversees the teaching staff, coaches the performance academy, and runs the pro shop. He is a master racquet technician and stringer with expertise in racquet customization. Gavin is also a tennis influencer on Instagram where he works with a number of brands like Wilson and produces online coaching content.



# Don't Wait For Your Boss: Taking Initiative in Mentorship

by Jon Sarosiek

In the ever-evolving world of racquet sports, where every swing and serve carries the weight of strategy and precision, mentorship emerges as the unseen force shaping the trajectory of individual success. While conventional wisdom places the onus on direct leadership to spearhead discussions about professional growth, personal needs, and overall job satisfaction, a compelling paradigm shift is needed. Professionals in the racquet sports industry are finding that

taking the reins of their own developmental narrative can be transformative.

## PROACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

The concept of proactive engagement in mentorship transcends mere initiative; it's a strategic move toward self-empowerment. Waiting passively for mentorship discussions to unfold may mean missing out on valuable insights, tailored guidance, and career-defining advice. Proactivity in



seeking mentorship not only accelerates personal growth but establishes a robust foundation for a symbiotic professional relationship. It positions individuals as active participants in their own success story rather than passive recipients of guidance.

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relationship. It positions individuals as active participants in their own success story rather than passive recipients of guidance.

### **GOAL DISCUSSION**

The cornerstone of a successful mentorship dynamic lies in candid discussions about both short-term objectives and long-term aspirations. Beyond setting goals, it involves an open dialogue about uncertainties and challenges. Expressing vulnerability about areas requiring improvement creates an environment of honesty and mutual understanding. This vulnerability is not a weakness but a strength that fosters a mentorship bond built on trust and shared objectives.

### **STRENGTHS AND AREAS FOR GROWTH**

Effective mentorship begins with profound self-awareness—a nuanced understanding of one's strengths and areas for growth. Actively seeking constructive feedback on personal strengths and areas requiring improvement serves as a guiding compass for professional development. It's not just about acknowledgment; it's a testament to the individual's commitment to personal growth and the willingness to embark on a journey of continuous improvement.



## CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Mentorship isn't a passive engagement; it's a dynamic process fueled by the insatiable desire for continuous improvement. Beyond receiving guidance, professionals should actively seek strategies and insights on how to enhance their skills and elevate their performance. This proactive approach transforms mentorship from a one-sided learning experience into a reciprocal exchange of knowledge and expertise.

## ALIGNMENT WITH CLUB VISION

Thriving in the racquet sports industry necessitates a profound alignment of personal goals with the broader vision of the club or organization. Engaging in meaningful discussions about the club's vision for Racquet Sports unveils opportunities for individuals to contribute in a manner that aligns with organizational objectives. It's not just about personal success but a strategic alignment that propels both personal and collective triumphs.

## STAYING INFORMED

Remaining relevant in the racquet sports industry requires more than passive awareness—it demands a commitment to staying abreast of trends and advancements. Actively seeking guidance on how to stay knowledgeable about developments and

trends within racquet sports demonstrates not only a dedication to professional relevance but also a proactive stance toward anticipating and adapting to industry shifts. It's about being ahead of the curve rather than catching up.

## CONTRIBUTING TO CLUB SUCCESS

Understanding the pivotal role of racquet sports in the overall success of the club is not merely a footnote; it's a foundational aspect of effective mentorship. Actively exploring and presenting ways to contribute effectively to the club's achievements showcases initiative and a holistic understanding of the industry's dynamics. It transforms mentorship from a one-sided learning experience to a collaborative effort towards shared success.

In the vibrant tapestry of the racquet sports industry, mentorship isn't a transaction; it's a dynamic, two-way street. By taking the initiative in discussions about goals, strengths, and areas for growth, professionals actively contribute to their own development and the overall success of the industry. The key lies in not waiting for your boss to drive these conversations—seize the opportunity, shape your narrative, and propel yourself towards success in the dynamic world of racquet sports.



**Jon Sarosiek** is certified by the PTR, PPR, PPTR, one of first 200 professionals that were certified in three (3) racquet sports. Sarosiek is also certified as an Elite Professional by the USPTA, and works as a search executive and consultant within the racquet sports and fitness/wellness industry with Len Simard, who is the lead search executive and consultant for the racquet sports and fitness/wellness division of KK&W. Additionally, Sarosiek currently serves as the Head Racquet Sports Professional at Farmington Country Club, in Charlottesville, Virginia. Farmington Country Club is perennially recognized as a "Platinum Club of America". Previously, Sarosiek was the Director of Sports & Wellness at Boar's Head Resort, and also served as the Director of Tennis at Wintergreen Resort.

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