

Lesson Theme: Intermediate Singles (1)

Objectives: Introduce Strategies for Singles Play

Skill Level: 3.0 / 3.5

Duration: 90 minutes

Equipment Needed: Balls and Cones



| Mins | Activity | Details | Teaching Points | Comments |
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| 5 | Meet & Greet | Welcome, names, housekeeping | | Create a welcoming environment. Remember some people will be brand new to singles and may be nervous. |
| 7 | Technical Warm Up | Select activities from the WARM-UP MENU. | | Warm-up should include volleys, groundstrokes, serve and return. |
| 10 | Play & Observe | Real singles points without restrictions | | Circulate and encourage but no teaching yet. |
| 3 | Collect Balls & H2O | | | Make it quick! |
| 2 | Debrief / Observations | Praise effort and focus. Explain that while you were watching the points as a whole, there were some things that stood out. We will address them in a systematic way. | | |
| 3 | Direct Instruction | Return and Run. | Just like in doubles pickleball, it is important to return serve and come to the net. Moving forward applies pressure by taking away the opponent's time to react. We also give ourselves the chance to volley, and to use angles we can't use from the back of the court. | Many people think singles is a baseline-to-baseline game, largely because they are scared to get passed at the net. |
| 5 | Activity: Play Real Points – with restrictions. | Returner must return serve and run to NVL. | If the returner does not attempt to move to NVL, automatic loss of point. | Players will win points by moving forward but will also lose points because they get passed. This is ok as it will lead to the next teaching point. |

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| 2 | Debrief | Emphasize the good effort of coming to the net. Requires players to be brave since they have to cover the net by themselves. | Coming to the net can apply pressure, but also comes with risk. If the server has time to set up for the third shot, the passing shot is quite easy. | |
| 4 | Direct Instruction | Improving the Quality of the Return. | If the opponent is on balance when hitting the third shot, it will be easy for them to hit a good pass. We must use our return of serve to stretch the opponent since it will be harder for them to hit a good shot if they are reaching. | In doubles, the focus of return is often depth. In singles, it is more about making the opponent reach for the ball. Aiming to a sideline is key, and short balls can be effective. |
| 5 | Activity: Controlling the Return (direction) | Place a cone at $\frac{3}{4}$ court about 5 feet from the sideline. Player A serves and Player B tries to return crosscourt, so the ball passes between the cone and sideline (depth not important). Player A catches the ball and repeats. After 4 attempts, players switch roles. After doing this as a crosscourt activity, make the return down the line. | The direction the ball travels is directly controlled by the horizontal paddle angle at impact. A balanced set-up and good impact point will make controlling the paddle angle easier. | Difficulty can be adjusted by making the serve more/less challenging and the target bigger/smaller. This activity is about direction, not depth. For now, do not be concerned with depth, so long as the ball passes between the cone and sideline. |
| 2 | Debrief & H2O | | | |
| 5 | Activity: Play Points while controlling return direction | Play Real Points but focus on using directional control to stretch the server. Keep markers on court if flat and not a hazard. If not, use tape/chalk. | Focus on controlling paddle angle to control return direction. Players should still come to NVL after returning to apply pressure. | Bonus points can be awarded for good returns. Challenge can be increased by calling a return not in the target area "out". |
| 2 | Debrief | Coming forward to the net can apply pressure, and this is especially true if the return stretches the server | . | Recognize that there is some risk hitting near sidelines. But there is also risk in not moving the opponent. |
| 4 | Direct Instruction | When serving, we want to make it harder for the returner to hit a good return against us. Our serve should reflect this desire. Many ways to cause a poor return. Easiest is with good directional control of serve. | The horizontal paddle angle will determine the direction the serve travels. Aiming to a weakness (e.g. a backhand) or making the opponent move can cause them to struggle with the return. | Connect serve direction control to return direction control (e.g. paddle angle). |

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| 5 | Activity: Serve to Target | <p>Two cones are set up at $\frac{3}{4}$ court in each service box: one 3ft from sideline and one 3ft from centreline. This space between cone and sideline is the <i>wide</i> target; between cone and centreline is the <i>T</i> target; between two cones is the <i>body</i> target.</p> <p>Player A prepares to serve. Player B tells them which target to aim to: wide; body; T. Player A serves to the target and Player B catches the ball. Player B is now the server and must serve to the target that Player A selects.</p> | Players should concentrate on controlling the paddle angle in order to control the direction of the serve. | <p>Players should hit all serves from the same position. Otherwise, they are communicating their intention.</p> <p>Most common target should be wide or T. Body serves typically only effective if hit very hard.</p> |
| 11 | Activity: 2 Serve Points | <p>Play Real Points but focus on using directional control to challenge the returner</p> <p>The server is encouraged to “go for it” on their serve by hitting near the sideline or centreline. If their serve goes out of bounds, they get a second serve with no penalty.</p> | <p>Focus on controlling paddle angle to control serve direction.</p> <p>Returners should still attempt to come to NVL after returning to apply pressure.</p> | <p>Use flat markers or tape/chalk to avoid injury.</p> <p>Challenge can be increased by calling a return not in the target area “out”.</p> |
| 10 | Play Real Points | Play Real Singles Points. | | Although there are no special rules re: serve or return, challenge players to be thoughtful about their first shot. |
| 5 | Wrap Up | Summarize key points. | | Use this wrap up to identify improvement, encourage practice and promote future lessons or events. |

Instructor Notes: