

Spots, Spots, Spots

Games, Drills, and Exercises

For Fun and Fitness

by Joe Dinoffer

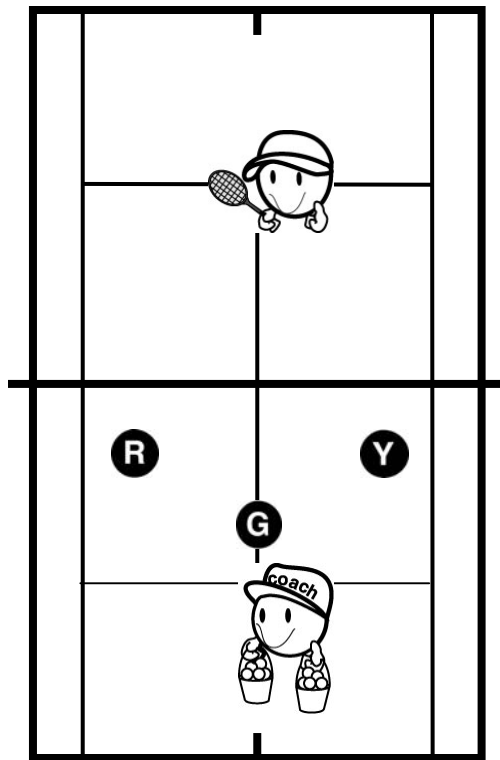
President, Oncourt Offcourt, Ltd.

About the Author

Joe Dinoffer has had an extensive "world class" career in the tennis industry, having conducted clinics and exhibitions in over 50 countries, personally logging over 30,000 hours of instruction in English, Spanish, and German. He is a USPTA and PTR Master Professional, a distinction that has been awarded to only a handful of tennis professionals in the world. He is also the founder and president of Oncourt Offcourt, Ltd., a company exclusively serving the needs of tennis, fitness, and physical education coaches with innovative training aids and educational tools.

Joe is the author and editor of 9 books, 18 DVDs and hundreds of magazine articles, having written numerous articles for *Tennis Tennis Life*, and *Racquet Sports Industry Magazine*. He has also appeared numerous times on television on The Tennis Channel in the United States.

#1 Introduction to Disguise and Decisions



MINI-TENNIS DRILLS: Coach uses Red, Yellow, and Green spots to create fun games that are skill-building at the same time.

Variation #1: Coach feeds and calls out Red, Yellow, or Green for the player to aim towards.

Purpose: To develop control and disguise.

Variation #2: Coach calls out two colors at one time. Player hits the first ball to the first color named and the second ball to the next one.

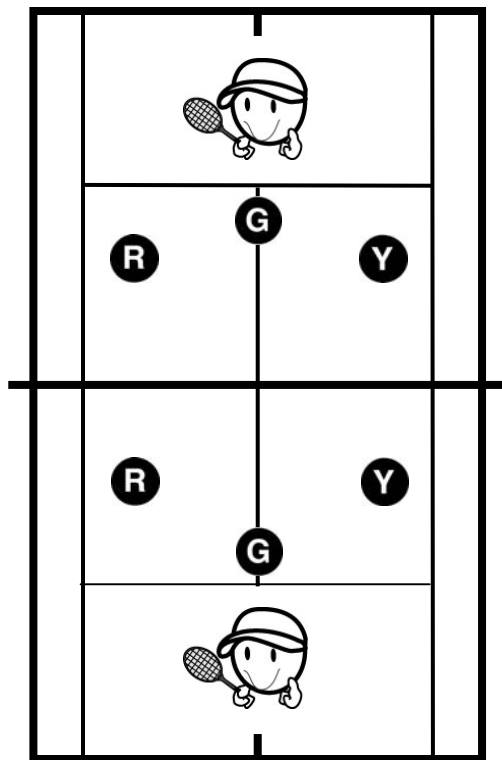
Purpose: Learning the importance of planning.

Variation #3: Same as variations #1 and #2, except this time the player calls out the colors before they hit the ball.

Purpose: To make decisions and plan ahead.

Tips: To make these drills most challenging, the coach should call out colors later or have the student call the color of the target sooner.

#2 Disguise and Decide Games



MINI-TENNIS DRILLS: Live ball games with two to four players, plus Red, Yellow, and Green spots to create skill-building games.

Variation #1: Players cooperate but call out which color they are aiming towards themselves before they hit the ball. See how many they can hit in a row with control.

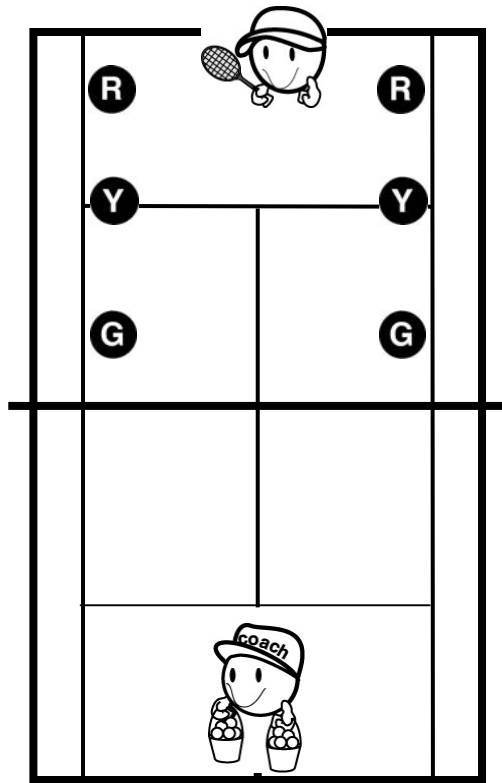
Purpose: Learning the importance of planning.

Variation #2: Players cooperate and say, Red, Yellow, or Green for the other to aim towards.

Purpose: For players to develop disguise.

Tips: Every shot in tennis should have a purpose behind it. The games and drills with this pattern are all based on the premise that the players are learning two things: To decide where they are going to hit each shot in advance, and also to develop the ability to disguise their shots as well.

#3 Defense – Neutral – Offense



APPROACH DRILLS: This pattern works well for singles or doubles and teaches players when they should approach the net.

Variation #1: Coach feeds balls of varying depth. Player returns balls calling out the color of the section where they are standing at contact.

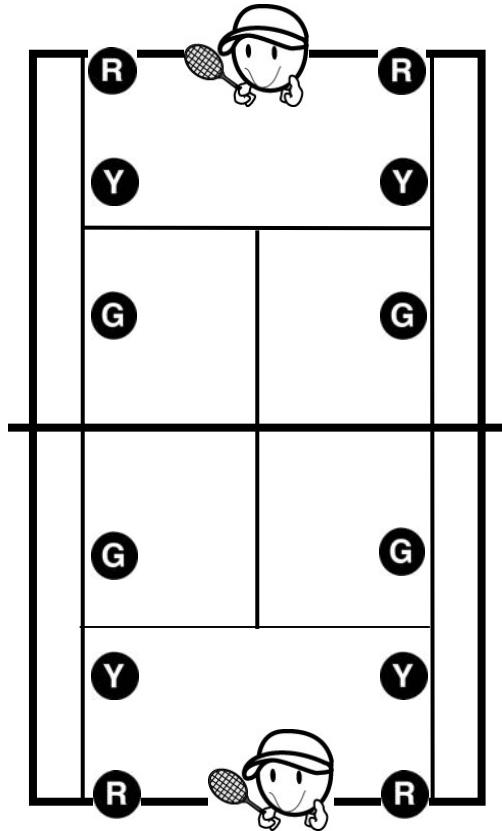
Purpose: Helps players identify court zones.

Variation #2: Similar to #1 but points are played out. Player goes to the net from the Green zone, and makes decisions in the Yellow zone. From the Red zone he or she stays back on the baseline.

Purpose: Helps players make early decisions and have a purpose behind every shot, knowing when they should or should not approach the net.

Tips: Have advanced players call out the color of their expected court position before the ball even lands on their side of the net.

#4 D-N-O Stoplight Games



APPROACH DRILLS: This pattern works for singles or doubles, guiding players to learn when to approach the net in play situations.

Variation #1: Start with a bounce-hit. Players call out the color of the section where they are standing at contact. For Yellow, they decide to go to the net or stay back; but on Green, they must automatically charge forwards.

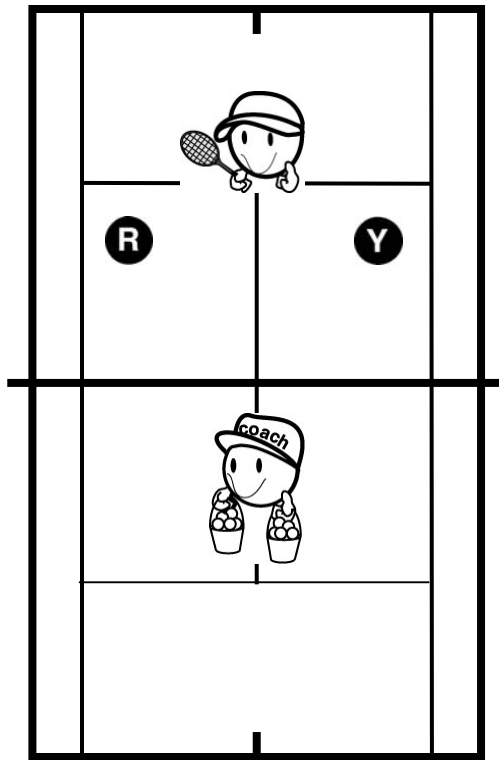
Purpose: Helps players identify court zones and move accordingly.

Variation #2: Similar to #1 but now players call out a color right after they hit their shots where they think the opponent will be standing when he or she returns the ball just hit.

Purpose: Develops anticipation and planning.

Tips: Note that advanced players should call out the colors earlier and earlier.

#5 Recovery Run-arounds



MINI-TENNIS DRILLS: Coach uses two spots to create fun games that emphasize building movement and recovery skills.

Variation #1: Coach feeds softly on a bounce. After each shot players run around the spot that is crosscourt from where they hit the ball.

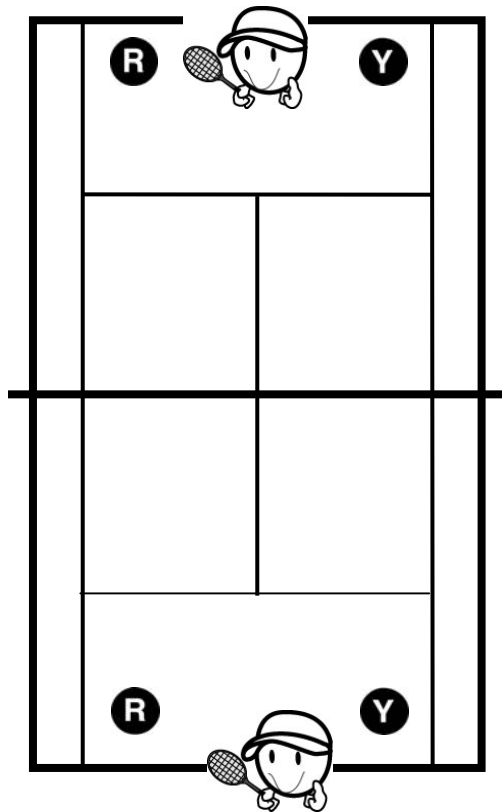
Purpose: This exercise teaches players to recover crosscourt from their groundstrokes and also to be in position as early as possible.

Variation #2: Same as variation #1, except the player must also call out whether they hit their ball down the line or crosscourt.

Purpose: Learning how to properly plan.

Tips: To give players more challenges, the coach can hit his or her shots lower over the net, giving the players less time to recover and run around the spot between shots.

#6 Baseline Run-arounds



SINGLES DRILLS: This pattern uses spots to train baseline recovery and movement skills.

Variation #1: Play begins with a bounce-hit. Players cannot hit dropshots, nor charge the net. After each groundstroke, have them run around the spot crosscourt from where they hit their ball.

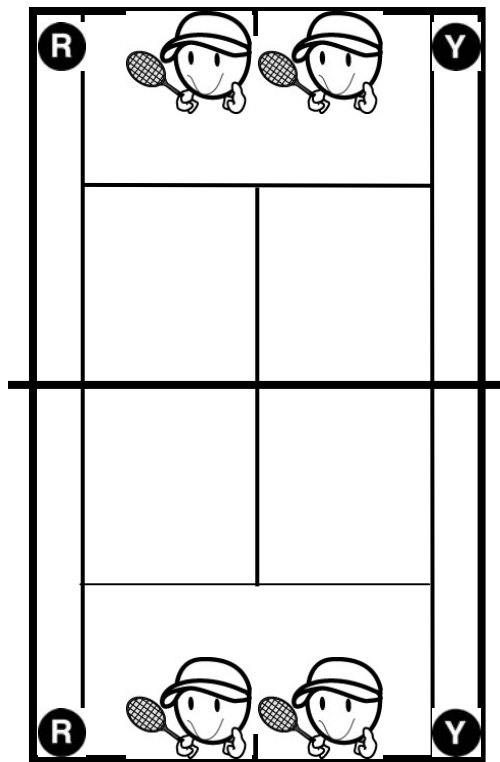
Purpose: This exercise teaches players to recover crosscourt from their groundstrokes and also to be in position as early as possible.

Variation #2: Same as variation #1, except players also call out whether they intend to hit their ball down the line or crosscourt before contact.

Purpose: Learning the importance of planning.

Tips: Encourage players to learn that if they need more time to recover, or are fatigued, that they can slow the point down by hitting the ball higher over the net.

#7 Teamwork and Movement



GROUNDSTROKE DRILLS: This pattern works best with four players on a court. Do not allow dropshots or running to the net.

Variation #1: Start with a bounce-hit. After each shot the player runs around the spot that is nearest them. Use one ball with four players.

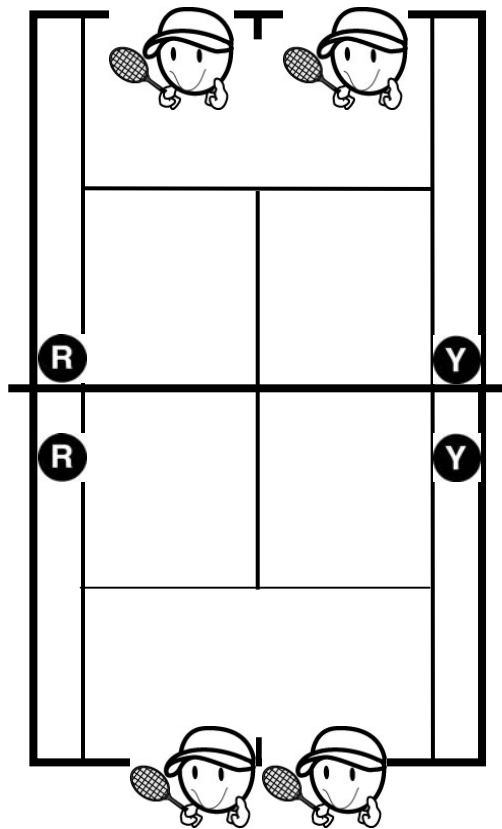
Purpose: This exercise teaches players to recover quickly after their groundstrokes instead of standing and "admiring" their shots.

Variation #2: Same as variation #1, except players must alternate hits on their side of the net.

Purpose: Training teamwork and movement.

Tips: To give players an even more challenging workout, simply place the spots further outside the court. Play games until one team reaches 15 or 21. For beginning players, just have them touch the spot with their racquets instead of running around it.

#8 More Teams and Movement



GROUNDSTROKE DRILLS: This advanced player pattern works best with four players on a court. Everything is allowed and interesting tactics will evolve including dropshots and lobs.

Variation #1: Start with a bounce-hit. After each shot the player touches the spot that is nearest them. Use one ball with four players. Have players alternate hits on their side of the net.

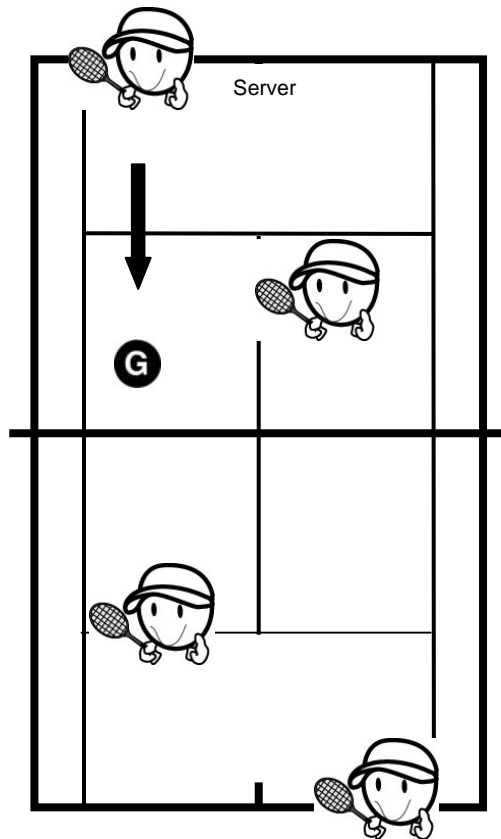
Purpose: This exercise teaches players to recover quickly after their shots and communicate well with their partners.

Variation #2: Same as variation #1, except that only one volley or overhead is allowed per team per point. Play games to 11, 15 or 21 points.

Purpose: Teamwork and communications.

Tips: Encourage players to plan tactics and strategies that will be effective for this pattern.

#9 Kamakaze Serving



DOUBLES DRILLS: Coach uses one Green spot to guide servers to aggressively serve-and-volley.

Variation #1: Play a regular doubles match with two rule changes. The receiver cannot lob the return, and the serving team loses the point immediately if the return bounces on their side of the net.

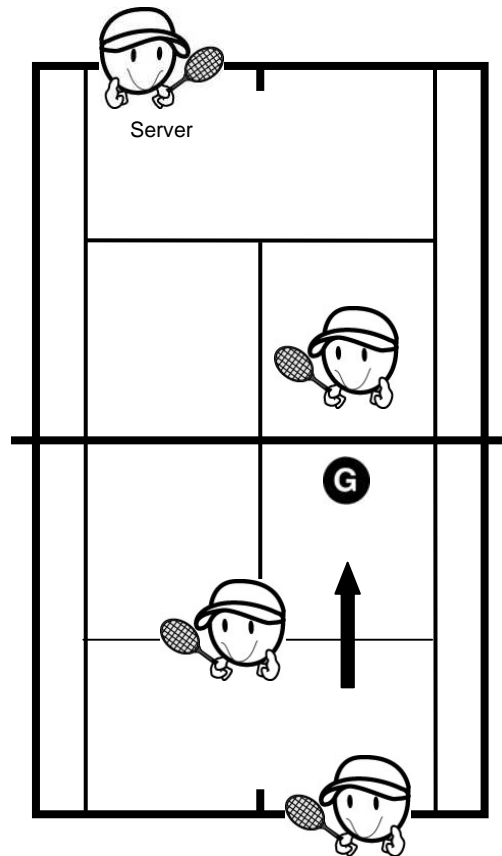
Purpose: For players to aggressively serve-and-volley.

Variation #2: Same as variation #1 except allow the receiving team to lob the return of serve one time per game.

Purpose: To learn aggressive doubles mixed with a touch of reality.

Tips: With these games, remind players that this is just one way to serve-and-volley in doubles, namely to charge without a split step.

#10 Kamakaze Receiving



DOUBLES DRILLS: Coach uses one Green spot to guide receivers to learn the chip-and-charge.

Variation #1: Play regular doubles with three rule changes. The serving team cannot lob at all during any point, the receiver loses the point for their team immediately if they do not chip-and-charge, and the server only gets one serve. The serving team may be allowed to serve-and-volley after the receiving team gains confidence with their skills.

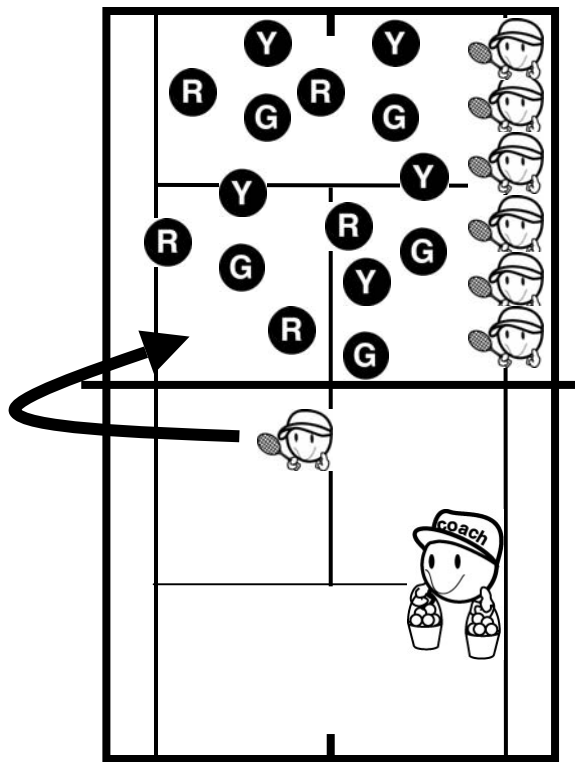
Purpose: To learn the art of the chip-and-charge.

Variation #2: Same as variation #1 except allow the serving team to lob one time per game.

Purpose: To learn aggressive chip-and-charge doubles mixed with a touch of reality.

Tips: With these games, remind players that this is just one way to return serve in doubles, and can be especially effective on second serves.

#11 Color Tag



JUNIOR DRILLS: This is an example of dozens of games that can be created for children using spots. Creating fun movement games are critical to the success of any junior tennis program. Remember: Children love games and if they have enough fun they will keep coming back. If they keep coming back, the program succeeds.

Game Variation: This game is suited for almost any age group. You need one less spot of each color than children in the field. The coach calls out a color and the children scamper to find the correct color spot to stand on. The extra child runs away from the tagger who has 30 seconds to tag that other child who is not standing on a spot.

Tips: The success of this game depends on keeping the children within a controlled area. In this example, if the running child steps outside the half court, he or she becomes the next tagger.