

Conditioned Games to improve the return of a singles low serve



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Warning and Challenges

This document will give you and your players 4 Conditioned Games that provide different situations to use and develop their return of a singles low serve. **Merely playing the games does not guarantee improvement.**

You will need to identify the thoughts, spoken words, actions or rituals to use when preparing to and when returning to return service. These are important and you must challenge yourself to create the rituals and thoughts that work for you.

Returning serve is your first opportunity to win the point, influence how the rally starts, or influence the server before they serve

Do you think any of that is possible?



Players and coaches may find some of the games challenging and show resentment or challenge. Work to find the key learning points and experiences. Then test these in both practice and competition so that they do not fail when stressed at critical points in a match.

The task for the Coach and Player is to use these Conditioned Games as a framework or starting point. It is often the discussions and the experimenting on the court that will make the difference to a players development.

Just playing the games will not guarantee that players become better at returning the low singles serve.

How to use the Conditioned Games breakdown

Each game is divided into the categories below with advice and points of interest for the coach and player. The various purposes of each game are stated, there may be several. There is a set of player questions that allow the coach and player to find varying starting points. Using these questions will enable faster progress and development. Finally, the games, variations and progressions are given for you to try.

A rating system of *, **, ***, has been included to provide a snapshot of difficulty and complexity within each category.

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Mentally challenging | Each game will provide a different level of mental challenge. The amount will vary between different players and coaches. It will also vary as both become accustomed to the type of challenges posed. Note; this could increase as well as decrease. (* easy --> *** stressful & possibility upsetting) |
| Physically challenging | Some games require physical endurance and will test the players over long periods of time whilst others will require short fast-paced rallies and test alternative energy systems. (* as normal singles --> *** additional demands) |
| Game-likeness / restrictions | The games try to reflect real match play as closely as possible. Players should be encouraged to 'win' and to hit winners. Games should allow the casual observer watching the practice to believe that they are watching a real competition (* almost real --> *** very restrictive) |
| Ease of understanding | The games are designed to be simple to understand and carry out. However, some may require further explanation. (* easy ---> *** challenging) |
| Applicable to what standard | Not all games and the variations contain within them are suitable for all standards of players. |
| Discussion points | The most crucial aspect of this document. Discussion is required to establish the level of understanding and development. Sample questions and prompts are given for coaches and players to use. |

Low serving only games

Purpose

- To introduce players to the art of returning the low serve in singles
- To encourage tactical thinking when preparing to receive low serve
- To develop the technical skills of returning a low serve
- To develop effective returns of low serve at critical points of a game
- To encourage & develop the use of rituals in preparation for receiving a low serve
- To develop an understanding of increasing server tension throughout a game

Player questions and issues resolved

- How can I beat someone who low serves against me?
 - Where and how should I return a low serve to gain an advantage?
 - What should I be thinking before I receive a low serve?
 - I want to be more attacking and seemingly aggressive when I receive a low serve in singles
 - What is the best way to return a low serve, is there one?
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The Game, Variations and Progressions

| Games | Rules & Thoughts |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Both players only low serve in a singles match</p> <p>Outright winner on the 2nd or 4th shot i.e. the receiver's 1st and 2nd strokes score a bonus point (amount to be decided)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal rules, shorter games to allow for discussion and change of opponents. 11 or 15 points • To encourage a 'go for it attitude' from the receiver • The server will be subject to 'server tension' • Will both players take more time to consider how they will act? • What strokes/strategies would you expect to be used to gain bonus points? |
| <p>2. Outright winners when returning low serve score 2pts</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To encourage the receiver to try deceptive replies and to explore the use of aggressive 'as if to play ...' approaches to the shuttle |
| <p>3. 5 serving rallies followed by 5 receiving rallies</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal rules • Players will have a series of serves to consider and practice serving or receiving • Do they win more points when serving or receiving? |
| <p>4. One player serves throughout the game, serving from the side as per their score, (both players score but only one player serves)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal rules • Players will have a whole game to consider and practice serving or receiving • Play shorter games to say 11 points • Allow to winner to decide they wish to serve or receive in their next game. This will encourage coach /player interaction through discussion and questions |

Low serving only

| Mentally challenging | Physically challenging | Game-likeness / restrictions | Ease of understanding | Applicable to what standard | Discussion points |
|---|--|---|--|---|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;">**</p> <p>Can be initially frustrating as rallies may be short.</p> <p>Try to balance motivations concerning development vs success/failure</p> <p>Some players may exhibit resistance to 'attacking' the low serve.</p> <p>Emphasise that it is valuable to practice <i>returning</i> low serves, especially at critical points</p> <p>The desire to be 'aggressive' yet' also to 'be in control' may make players uncomfortable.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">*</p> <p>Rallies may be very short therefore the game may not be physically challenging</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">*</p> <p>After the return the game is open and all tactics can be used</p> <p>Encourage tactical thinking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How should I stand (prepare) to receive the low serve • How quickly (aggressively) should I approach the shuttle • What rituals help to aid preparation <p>Players must receive from their normal singles receiving position and NOT encroach forward</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">*</p> <p>Simple to explain and easy to understand</p> <p>Be aware of possible resistance/complaints from players who are not suited to low serving games</p> <p>The request to be 'aggressive' yet' also to 'be in control' may make confuse some players</p> | <p>Use with players who are inquisitive about how to gain an advantage when receiving a singles low serve.</p> <p>Encourage when players are too 'passive' when returning low serves.</p> <p>All players should experience the aspect of trying to gain an advantage.</p> <p>When an alternative 'aggressive' receiving style can be seen to increase server tension.</p> | <p>Do you believe that players can be aggressive yet 'still in control' when receiving low serves?</p> <p>What rituals did you try and what worked for you? (show me, how do they help)</p> <p>Did you score more outright winners (shuttle is unreturnable) than you thought you would when receiving low serving?</p> |