

DOUBLES FOR DUMMIES

PRESENTED BY JASON SPEIRS, RIRC ADULT PROGRAM DIRECTOR, USTA PRO



PREMATCH

- Get to the facility about 20 minutes early so you have time to dynamically stretch (ask coach)
- Leave your ego's at home and be ready to work with a partner. Team work is a must
- Review with your partner two goals you'd like to achieve from the match (e.g. transitioning early, being active at net, or maintaining a high first serve percentage)

STARTING THE MATCH

- Compare opponents with your partner during the warm-up
- Righty/lefty?
- Choppy strokes?
- Consistent?
- Make all decisions together (serve/receive, sides)
- Generally receive if you win the coin toss/spin, unless you're confident you'll get a lot of first serves in (ask coach)
- Position responsibilities:
 - Server
 - Get those first serves in to set up your partner (net player)
 - Serve & volley if first serve goes in
 - Serving down the T allows the volleyer to be more distracting/active
 - Server's partner
 - Catch the eye of the returner
 - Must be actively moving
 - Returner
 - Get that ball sharp cross-court, open the court
 - Attack net on a second serve
 - Returner's partner
 - Call the serves in/out
 - Keep all three players in sight
- Having both teammates at the net is the ideal position and should be your goal each and every point
- If not both up, then both back
- Avoid one up, one back except when starting the point
- Hit up the middle
 - Test their communication skills



- Be a productive partner by being consistent
 - Provide opportunities for your partner to succeed
- Don't go for winners early! Keep the ball in play and look for weaknesses
 - Are they aggressively attacking the net?
 - Are they communicating?
 - Are they making a lot of errors
- Once the ball is in play, keep your feet active
 - Make people think you are doing something strategic



COMMUNICATION

- Start a dialogue that is constructive and productive. This way you can give and take criticism
- Open the lines of communication by sharing your short comings
 - e.g. I'm working on coming to the net, please be patient
 - e.g. My second serve is a bit weak, maybe you want to start a step closer to the service line.
- 3.5s are responsible for being the lead communicator within the team
- If there is any shred of doubt who should hit the ball call it, especially up the middle!
- Call your shots early so you have time to set-up and hit the ball
 - Yours/mine
 - Stay/switch
 - Up/back/halfway
- If you call a shot, commit and go for it
- Help each other call lines
- Call each other off out balls (e.g. 'bounce')
- Compliment your partner (e.g. great shot, good get)
- Encourage your partner while playing, then talk to captains about performance if a problem
- Cheer your teammates on after your match. Cheer for your winners, not unforced errors. Make supporting comments at any time

TACTICAL DECISIONS

- There are 5 tactical priorities that you need to remember. They need to be mastered in order. Power without having consistency won't get you anywhere
 - Consistency
 - Be a productive partner and keep the ball in the court
 - Accuracy
 - Hitting the ball where you want to
 - Depth
 - Controlling whether deep or short
 - Spin
 - Using spin to vary tempo
 - Power
 - Knowing when to use it. More importantly, when not to
- Apply the dead ball drills we do in practice to match play scenarios
- Control the your center and attack your opponents'
- Move when hitting the volley (two-three steps then return to home base). Home base is a few feet inside the service line



- If the ball goes by you (the volleyer), back-up until the ball is struck by your partner, then act accordingly
- Know where your partner is at all times. This doesn't mean watch them hit their shots
- You can learn a lot from watching your opponents

COURT COVERAGE

BOTH OF YOU AT THE NET

- Whoever controls the net, controls the match
- Always shift a step or two towards the ball
- Move two-three steps to hit the volley. Then recover a few feet inside the service line
- If your partner moves in to hit an overhead backup to at least service line
 - Compensate for your partner being out of position while hitting the overhead
 - If your opponents get it back, it will likely be another lob.
- If your partner is pulled wide, be sure to move together to cover the center (remember the string)
 - Force the cross court angle You do not need to stand in the center, but make sure you're within a racquet length
- If your partner is very close to the net, you have to back up a step or two from the service line to cover for the potential lob
 - Tell your partner not to get so close unless striking the ball because they are leaving too much open court to lob.
- When two people are at the net, pick your targets carefully
 - down the middle
 - into the alleys
 - at their feet
 - lob over their head

TRANSITIONING

- Create opportunities to attack the net (e.g. lob, drop shot, sharp angle, hitting to the feet or middle)
- Attack the net, but once there become a backboard and defend
- If the opposing team is in trouble and looks to be hitting a lob, come up half way (service line). Do not stand at the baseline watching!
- When the other team is hitting an overhead, move back to return (not to the side)
 - Most players don't hit the angle
 - There is a better chance of returning it (plus avoid getting hit).
- When retrieving a drop shot, both parties should not rush too closely to the net. Have one person stay back near the service line (even a tad bit closer to the service line) to cover the lob
- When retrieving lobs
 - keep your eye on the ball so you know where it is!
 - Look one way (over your shoulder at the ball) while running forward in the other direction
 - Stay away from the ball so you have a chance at hitting a forehand or backhand, not a blind over the head shot.