

Multi-ball Training

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Multi-ball is an intensive type of training first introduced by the Chinese but now adopted throughout the world as a key coaching and training tool. It normally involves the coach feeding a high repetition of balls from the side of the table but players themselves can also be taught to feed. It can be used to develop all levels of play and is a means of extending the boundaries experienced in general play.

Multi-ball has the following benefits:

A high repetition of balls in a short period of time allows for grooving of strokes and also the accuracy of the feed is of great benefit in the early learning stages.

At a higher level it can be used to improve footwork patterns, reaction time, anticipation and also endurance levels and speed of players.

It also gives a coach greater flexibility within a session as several players can be involved at once.

When used on an individual basis the practice can be tailor made to the player's requirements with one to one feedback given in 'real time'.

It is important that the feed is appropriate to the level of the player if they are to benefit. For example a fast feed to a beginner who is repeating an incorrect technique will only serve to make the fault permanent. Likewise if the requirement of the practice is to improve speed and endurance and the boundaries of the feed are not extended sufficiently the player will not benefit.

It is essential that a realistic trajectory of the ball is achieved. When feeding a backspin ball it is usually advisable to drop the ball from a very low position and contact under the ball.

A topspin ball can be fed either straight from the hand or from a drop feed a little higher than that used for backspin.

The position of the feed can also be moved nearer or further from the net which will decrease or increase the time the player has available to play the ball. A service feed can also be used to practice receive of serve. Like most things practice is the key to good multi-ball feeding.

There are however some pitfalls to be aware of when feeding multi-ball. The positioning of the coach/feeder down the side of the table is not optimum for viewing the player's lower body and therefore some technical faults may be missed. If the coach is concentrating too much on his/her feeding and not watching the performer then it is possible that the required technical corrections are not made and the player is therefore intensely practising a fault. It could also be argued that a multi-ball feed is not totally replicating real play and the key anticipation skills used when watching an opponent's body language etc are missing.

In summary we can say that multi-ball is an excellent and effective training tool when used appropriately, fed correctly and in conjunction with normal training methods. Basically use your imagination- there are endless

possibilities to try!

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