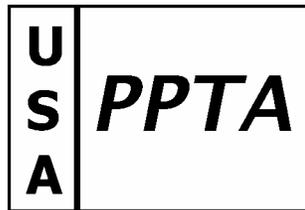


**Certification  
for the  
USA Professional Platform Tennis Association**



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## **Introduction and Acknowledgements**

This manual was written with two purposes in mind. First, it is intended to be a guide to help you prepare for certification or certification upgrade as a PPTA platform tennis professional. Second, the manual has been designed to serve as a reference guide.

The PPTA has set a high standard of excellence for its members in the certification process and in subsequent continuing education efforts. The certification process has been designed to be challenging, yet objective and fair.

The manual has been compiled by charter PPTA Directors Gary Horvath, Hank Irvine, Gerri Viant, Rich Maier, Patty Hogan, and Bob Callaway. Additional input was provided by charter board members Christi Hays, Connie Jones, Steve Nycum, Chuck Poe, Dave Romberg, and Rodney Workman.

In addition, the following players and professionals provided input for the test questions: Bob Brown, Sue Connard, John Embree, Robin Fulton, Kathy Gross-Reilly, Yvonne Hackenberg, David Kjeldsen, Jim McCready, Dick Reilly, Jim Reilly,

A special thanks goes to our allied organizations who played a major role in completing this project: John Horine, President of the APTA, Carolyn Tierney, Executive Director of the APTA, and Matthew Thompson, Director of Certification at the United States Professional Tennis Association.



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## Recommended Resources

Certification in the USA PPTA requires general knowledge of the sport that is gained from teaching it and playing it for an extended period of time. Certification questions are based on your experiences as a player and instructor. In addition this manual will be a great resource. It is also suggested that you review the APTA rulebook, which is on their Web Site or available for purchase from the APTA. Additionally, it is also recommended that you read [How to Hire a Tennis Professional](#), available from the United States Professional Tennis Association.

The following resources are suggested, but not required resources to help with certification.

The rules and code for platform tennis are available from the American Platform Tennis Association and can be contacted at:

APTA  
P.O. Box 43336  
Upper Montclair, NJ 07043  
[www.platformtennis.org](http://www.platformtennis.org)

The following videos and manuals are available through RJ Reilly. They are available by contacting:

Richard J. Reilly, Jr., Inc.  
50 Field's Lane  
Brewster, NY 10509  
Phone: 914.279.7002  
[www.platformtennis.com](http://www.platformtennis.com)

Platform Tennis!

"Taking your Game to the Next Level"

"Fundamentals of Platform Tennis"

"A Platform Tennis Chairman's Guide to Running a Comprehensive Program"

"A Curriculum for Conducting a Championship Instructional Program"

Copies of the video "Bring Your Game To The Next Level" can be purchased from:

Viking Athletics  
80 East Montauk Highway  
Lindenhurst, New York 11757  
Phone: 800.280.1311  
E-mail: [sales@vikingathletics.com](mailto:sales@vikingathletics.com)

There are excellent resources for business and teaching in the tennis industry.

The following USPTA publications are excellent business and coaching resources.

They are available by contacting:

USPTA  
3535 Briarpark Drive  
Houston, TX 77042  
Phone 713.978.7782  
Fax: 713.978.7780  
[www.uspta.org](http://www.uspta.org)

The USPTA Tennis Professional's Business Manual  
The USPTA Junior Development Manual  
The USPTA Complete Guide to Coaching  
The USPTA Sport Science and Sports Medicine Guide  
How to Hire a Tennis Professional  
The USPTA Guide to Country Club Tennis Operations

Additional books about coaching tennis and tennis instruction are available from the USTA. A complete publications list is available by contacting:

USTA  
70 W. Read Oak Lane  
White Plains, NY 10604-3602  
Phone: 914.696.0300  
[www.usta.com](http://www.usta.com)

It is also recommended that platform tennis professionals have a strong knowledge of first aid in the event that injuries or emergencies occur at their facility. While there are many good resources for such information, the PPTA recommends that professionals attend Red Cross classes that deal with basic sprains and injuries, how to deal with accident situations, and cardiopulmonary resuscitations (CPR).

Most professionals live in or near in communities that have a local chapter of the Red Cross who will provide such classes.

## **Overview of the PPTA**

In 1998 a group of men and women platform tennis professionals began laying the foundation for the USA Professional Platform Tennis Association. During 1998 Bob Callaway and Rich Maier conducted two educational seminars on behalf of the PPTA. The PPTA was formally incorporated during 2000 in the state of Colorado.

During the mid-1970s the American Professional Platform Tennis Association was formed to certify platform tennis professionals and operated for several years. The PPTA was formed with the “blessing” of former APPTA officials.

The PPTA was formed with the knowledge, cooperation, and support of the APTA and industry manufacturers.

The PPTA is a not-for-profit trade association for people who teach platform tennis on a full or part-time basis. It is a tax-exempt organization in the United States.

The PPTA is governed democratically by an elected Board of Directors. At present the PPTA is divided into the same 6 geographic regions as the APTA. Each of these regions is represented on The Board of Directors.

The PPTA was created to strengthen the standards of teaching platform tennis as a profession.

In addition, it is the goal of the PPTA to work with players, club owners, club managers, manufacturers, and other allied organizations to increase interest and awareness of platform tennis.

The members of the PPTA will serve as a delivery system for programs, products, and services that will increase interest and awareness of the sport.

While the PPTA has a set of teaching standards against which it measures its members, the organization is a proponent of the fact that there are many ways to effectively teach the sport.

The PPTA has developed guidelines for professional conduct and will encourage its members to support these guidelines as a means of raising the standards of our profession.

## Overview of the APTA

The following overview of the American Platform Tennis Association (APTA) is based on information available on their web site (August 1999).

The APTA is a nonprofit organization, headquartered in Upper Montclair, New Jersey, chartered to promote the growth of the game. The APTA Board is comprised of a board of officers. Six regional directors oversee the development of platform tennis in their respective areas.

- Region I New York, New Jersey, Connecticut through Fairfield County
- Region II Connecticut (North of Fairfield County), New England and Upstate New York
- Region III Eastern Pennsylvania and South along the Atlantic Coast
- Region IV Ohio, Western Pennsylvania, Western New York and Ontario, Canada
- Region V Midwest
- Region VI West and Far West

The APTA promotes and develops the sport at all levels. It supports local, regional, and national participation and sanctions and promotes over 100 platform tennis tournaments a year. These tournaments include juniors, men's, women's, and mixed doubles; all with age group categories. In addition, the APTA Board maintains the rules of the games and works with manufacturers to set standards for platform tennis equipment (paddles and balls). The professional staff of the APTA also answers numerous general questions about the sport, such as how to play the game, where to purchase equipment, where to play.

The APTA has developed a web site [www.platformtennis.org](http://www.platformtennis.org) that serves as a place to communicate news about the sport, send feedback to the APTA, and publicize tournament schedules and results. For addition information about the APTA contact:

APTA  
P.O. Box 43336  
Upper Montclair, NJ 07043  
Phone: 888.744.9490  
973.783.4407  
Fax: 973.744.1190

[volley@platformtennis.org](mailto:volley@platformtennis.org)

## **Guidelines for Professional Conduct**

The platform tennis professional has an obligation to conduct himself/herself with respect and integrity in dealings with their clients, employees, employers, manufacturers, other professionals, members of allied organizations, and other teaching professionals. In addition, they have a personal obligation to themselves to continue to grow in their profession. The PPTA encourages its members to uphold these obligations and the spirit, ideals, and purposes of the organizations by abiding by the following code:

PPTA members will be ethical in the manner in which they seek employment at platform tennis facilities. Similarly, they will be honorable and ethical in accepting a position to work at a platform tennis facility.

While visiting facilities other than the facilities where they normally conduct business, a PPTA member shall not play, solicit lessons, or give the appearance of soliciting lessons without receiving permission from the local professional. In addition, while visiting other facilities, PPTA members should conduct themselves in a manner that would not cause embarrassment to the resident professional.

Depending on their contact, the PPTA member may have financial obligations to their employer, employees, clients, fellow professionals, and manufacturers. All financial obligations as they relate to their profession, should be met in a timely manner.

Members of the PPTA are encouraged to work with and support the programs and activities of the PPTA and of other allied organizations.

PPTA members shall conduct themselves in a manner that does not damage the reputation of his/her fellow members. Likewise their actions should not injure the reputation of the PPTA.

Members of the PPTA should be aware of the by-laws of the PPTA, and should abide by the by-laws and guidelines of the PPTA.

PPTA members should enhance their career through personal development and continuing education.

## Overview of PPTA Certification Process

### Categories

The PPTA certification exam includes testing applicants with a written examination covering all aspects of the game, an on-court examination of their teaching skills, and a playing skills test.

Professionals will be certified as Professionals, Instructors, and Apprentices.

P1 – To receive a P1 rating, professionals must score a P1 in each on each of the tested sections (written, playing, feeding, teaching – group lesson, teaching – private lesson).

P2 – To receive a P2 rating, professionals must score a P2 in each on each of the tested sections (written, playing, feeding, teaching – group lesson, teaching – private lesson).

P3 – To receive a P3 rating, professionals must score a P3 in each on each of the tested sections (written, playing, feeding, teaching – group lesson, teaching – private lesson).

Upgrades – at the end of 6 months, applicants may upgrade to a higher level by retaking the sections of the test where they scored insufficient ratings.

### Written examination

The applicant will be given two hours to complete a written examination. The breakdown by category will vary with each exam; however, a majority of points will be allocated to strategy and teaching categories. Ratings are as follows:

P1 – To receive a P1 rating, professionals must correctly answer at least 85% of the total questions.

P2 – To receive a P2 rating, professionals must correctly answer at least 70% of the total questions.

<b>Percentage of Points as Allocated by Written Test Categories</b>	
Category	Percentage of Points
Strategy	31%
Teaching	26
Business	13
Diagnostics	7
Rules	5
Grips	3
Court Size	3
PPTA/APTA	3
Maintenance	3
Code	2
Equipment	2
History	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

P3 – To receive a P3 rating, professionals must correctly answer at least 60% of the total questions.

### Playing

The playing skill of the applicant will be evaluated based on his/her ability to consistently hit basic platform shots. The playing test will consist of two parts: observation of the applicants in a match situation and hitting with one of the PPTA testers.

#### **Playing Skills Evaluated**

Off the deck  
Screen shots  
At the net  
Serve and volley  
Service return.

While the tester is in a 1-on-1 situation with the applicant during the playing test, the tester will ask the applicant to demonstrate the basic grips. In addition, tester may ask three to five general questions about the sport. On these questions, the applicant will be evaluated on their overall knowledge of the sport and ability to answer questions completely, yet concisely.

### Feeding

Because feeding is an important part of teaching, the applicant will be evaluated on his/her ability to consistently feed the ball to students.

#### **Feeding Skills Evaluated**

Feed for net player  
Feed for basic strokes  
Feed for service return  
Feed for serve and volley  
Feed for screen shots

### Teaching (Group and Private Lessons)

The applicant will be asked to teach both a private and group lesson. Each lesson will take 20 minutes.

#### **Lesson Evaluation**

Appearance  
Communications – Introduction to Student  
Communications –During lesson  
Feeding  
Lesson organization and content  
Explanation/demonstration  
Delivering the Message  
Summary and Wrapup

## Overview of Playing Exam

### Instructions, Shot Descriptions, and Rating Criteria

The playing skill of the applicant will be evaluated based on his/her ability to consistently hit basic platform shots. The playing test will consist of two parts: observation of the applicants in a match situation and hitting with one of the PPTA testers.

While the tester is in a 1-on-1 situation with the applicant during the playing test, the tester will ask the applicant to demonstrate the basic grips. On these questions, the applicant will be evaluated on their overall knowledge of the sport and ability to answer questions completely, yet concisely.

#### **Playing Skills Evaluated**

Off the deck  
Screen shots  
At the net  
Serve and volley  
Service return.

### Playing Skills

#### Off the Deck

Ability to hit forehands crosscourt  
Ability to control forehand direction (crosscourt, down-the- line)  
Ability to control backhand direction (crosscourt, down-the-line)  
Ability to hit consistently or maintain a rally  
Ability to vary the spin on groundstrokes  
Ability to vary the pace on groundstrokes  
Ability to lob

#### Screen Shots

Ability to lob consistently out of forehand corner (back screen)  
Ability to lob consistently out of forehand corner (back-side screen)  
Ability to lob consistently out of forehand corner (side-back screen)  
Ability to vary height of forehand lobs  
Ability to vary direction of forehand lobs (crosscourt, down-the-line)  
Ability to lob consistently out of backhand corner (back screen)  
Ability to lob consistently out of backhand corner (back-side screen)  
Ability to lob consistently out of backhand corner (side-back screen)  
Ability to vary height of backhand lobs  
Ability to vary direction of backhand lobs (crosscourt, down-the-line)  
Ability to hit drives off screens at appropriate times

#### At the Net

Ability to control volleys and the direction of overheads (crosscourt, middle, down-the- line) so that they will not be consistently attacked.  
Ability to hit consistently or maintain a rally

## Serve and Volley

Ability to control direction of serve- deuce court  
Ability to consistently serve with depth – deuce court  
Ability to hit serve in the court consistently – deuce court  
Hit first volley consistently – deuce court  
Hit first volley with depth – deuce court.  
Ability to control direction on serve- ad court  
Ability to consistently serve with depth – ad court  
Ability to hit serve in the court consistently – ad court  
Hit first volley consistently – ad court  
Hit first volley with depth – ad court.

## Service Return

Ability to consistently drive service return - deuce court  
Ability to control direction of service return drives – deuce court  
Ability to vary pace of service returns – deuce court  
Ability to consistently drive service return - ad court  
Ability to control direction of service return drives – ad court  
Ability to vary pace of service returns – ad court

## Strategy

Proper positioning at the net  
Proper positioning at the baseline  
Knowledge of basic strategy as a serving team  
Knowledge of basic strategy as a receiving team

## General Knowledge Questions

As part of the exam you will be asked to demonstrate the various grips mentioned in the grip section of the manual.

You will also be asked to answer three to five questions from the following bank of general knowledge questions. You will be evaluated on these questions based on the following:

- Knowledge of the subject
- Ability to answer concisely
- Composure/confidence while answering
- Eye contact
- Overall communication skills
- Personal appearance
- Effectiveness of your presentation.

You will be given a rating by more than one instructor on each question. Afterwards the instructor will give you their final rating based on their individual ratings for each question. Questions may be taken from the following bank of questions.

1. If you were appointed commissioner of platform tennis, what would you do to improve the sport?
2. How should a court be properly painted? What risks are involved when having courts painted?
3. What causes slipperiness on a court? What can be done to reduce slipperiness on a platform tennis court?
4. Why are platform tennis courts heated? Why are they skirted?
5. What are the key points in an annual court maintenance check?
6. When should courts be inspected for annual maintenance?
7. What are the key factors in learning the screens?
8. How would you serve to a right hand opponent in the ad court who has taken a position with their back to the sidescreen? Explain.
9. When two right-handed players are in the back court, who takes the ball hit to them down the middle of the court? How does this change when the player in the deuce court is left handed?
10. From a tactical standpoint, how do you teach your students to hit a return of serve?
11. From a tactical standpoint, how do you teach your students to hit overheads?
12. What would you suggest to a student who is having trouble returning the first volley because their opponents have a monster forehand.
13. How do you teach your students to deal with lobs that are deep in the court? Do you encourage them to let the ball bounce? If not, what type of shots do you encourage them to hit?
14. From a tactical standpoint, what are the key factors about lobbing on a platform tennis court?
15. What are the ingredients of good defensive screen play? Explain.
16. When should you poach at the net? Explain.
17. Where is the best place to serve to a right hander in the deuce court? Explain
18. How do you teach students to deal with the sun when they are in the backcourt and at the net?
19. Give three examples of how you can use teaching aids to better communicate your message on the platform tennis court.
20. How do you teach your students to deal with situations where they are being cheated or their opponents don't know the rules?
21. From an execution standpoint, what are the differences between teaching a student to lob off the deck or off the screen?
22. How do you teach your students to hit the first volley? Where do you instruct them to hit the first volley?
23. Where would you teach a right-handed student to take their ready position for receiving serve in the deuce court? What about the ad court?
24. Explain the use of spin on the overhead.

25. What are some key pointers in teaching a player to play shots out of the screens on their backhand side? Explain.
26. Should you teach the two handed backhand? Explain.
27. Why is the backhand volley so important on the platform tennis court?
28. Briefly explain the differences between the tennis and platform tennis serve.
29. What are the key elements of a good platform tennis lesson?
30. How would you teach someone to hit the soft overhead down the middle?

## **Overview of Feeding Skills Exam**

### Instructions and Rating Criteria

#### Overall Objective of Feeding Exam

The applicant will demonstrate the ability to feed a ball with control, consistency and the appropriate speed so the examiner will be able to execute all shots with balance and control.

#### Feed for Net Player

<b>Feeding Skills Evaluated</b>
Feed for net player
Feed for basic strokes
Feed for service return
Feed for serve and volley
Feed for screen shots

#### Feed for Backhand Volley

The examiner stands at the net with his/her right foot on the singles line in the deuce court box, two feet off of the net with paddle in backhand volley position. The tester stands on baseline, directly in front of the net player. The tester feeds 5 balls to the examiner within arms reach of a backhand volley.

#### Feed for Alternating Forehand and Backhand Volleys

From the same position, the tester feeds 10 balls to the examiner, alternating between backhand volleys and high soft forehand volleys.

#### Feed for a Lob

To feed a lob, the examiner backs up to halfway between net and service line in the deuce box. The tester remains in the ad court near the baseline. The tester has to hit out of their hand 5 lobs so that the examiner is able to reach the overhead, while staying in the deuce court service box.

#### Feed for Basic Strokes

#### Feed for Forehand Drive

The examiner stands at the baseline and the tester stands at the net. The tester will feed 5 balls to the examiner to be hit as a forehand drive. The feed should land in an area three feet past the service line so the examiner will only have to take a step or two to hit a forehand. The feed should allow for forward movement. Feeds that force the examiner to lunge are not considered a good feed.

### Feed for Forehand and Backhands Lobs off the Deck

The tester will stand in the same position as for feeding forehands. The tester feeds 10 balls, five to the forehand and five to the backhand so that the examiner can hit forehand and backhands lobs off of the deck. The feed should land in an area three feet past the service line and have more loft than the feed for a drive.

### Feed for Serve

#### Feed for Forehand Return of Serve

The tester serves 10 balls, five the deuce court and then five into the ad court. The examiner stands in “ready position” for a right-handed player. The serves must land in the service court so that the examiner can step in and drive a forehand return of serve.

### Feed for Service Return

#### Return of Serve Crosscourt

The examiner serves 10 balls, five in a row to the deuce court then five in a row to the ad court. The tester must hit crosscourt returns so the examiner can successfully serve and volley.

### Feed for Screen Shots

#### Feed For Forehand and Backhand Lobs off the Back Screen

The examiner stands at the baseline and the tester stands at the net. The tester feeds 5 balls to back screen so the examiner can hit a forehand lob. The tester then feeds 5 balls so the examiner can hit backhand lobs. The examiner should adjust their positioning within the service box to allow the tester to execute all lobs moving forward while remaining on the deuce side of the backcourt.

#### Feed For Deuce Court Side Screen

The tester stands in the deuce box and hits 5 balls so that the examiner can hit the ball off the side screen. The examiner stands two feet behind the baseline on the singles sideline.

#### Feed For Deuce Court Side-back Screen

The tester feeds 5 balls to the deuce court, side-back screen. The examiner stands 4 feet behind the baseline and 6 feet from the side screen.

### Feed For Deuce Court Back-side Screen

The tester feeds 5 balls in the deuce court, back-side screen.

### Feed For Ad Court Side Screen

The tester stands in the ad court service box and feeds examiner 5 side screen shots. The examiner will be standing two feet behind the baseline on the singles side line.

### Feed For Ad Court Side-back Screen

The tester hits 5 balls to the ad court side-back screen. The examiner stands 4 feet behind the baseline and 6 feet from the side screen.

### Feed For Ad Court Back-side Screen

The tester hits 5 balls to the ad court back-side screen to the examiner. The examiner stands 4 feet behind the baseline and 6 feet from the side screen.

Note: This point allocation is subject to minimal point changes between categories, as approved by the PPTA Board of Directors.

## **Overview of Written Exam**

### Instructions, Categories, and Rating Criteria

The applicant will be given two hours to complete a written examination. Books, notes, or other research material are not allowed in the exam room during the written exam.

Questions from the written examination are taken from the recommended resources and information provided in this document. The test will include multiple choice questions, short essay questions. Also, a series of photographs will be presented for analysis.

Ratings are as follows:

P1 – To receive a P1 rating, professionals must correctly answer at least 85% of the total questions.

P2 – To receive a P2 rating, professionals must correctly answer at least 70% of the total questions.

P3 – To receive a P3 rating, professionals must correctly answer at least 60% of the total questions.

#### Teaching

This section will include methods and techniques used for teaching private or group lessons, components of a lesson plan, and how to teach players at varying levels, from beginners to advanced players.

Because many platform tennis professionals and their students are also tennis professionals or players, questions will be asked that differentiate between tennis and platform tennis.

#### Strategy

This series of questions will measure the applicant's knowledge of tactics, strategies, and court positioning.

## Business

Questions in this section will focus on junior and adult programming, business terminology, knowledge of relationships between the professional and their facility, setting up leagues, and running round robins.

## Diagnostics Analysis

The applicant will be given a series of photographs to evaluate. They will be asked to analyze what they see as the major problem and identify a way to quickly improve the situation.

## Grips

This section will include the advantages and disadvantages of the two-handed, continental, eastern, western, and semi-western grips.

## Rules

Questions in this section will be based on rules, as defined by the APTA. In particular, this section will focus on some of the more common situations that come up in teaching and playing situations.

## Court Size

Because many tennis players also enjoy platform tennis, it is important to understand the differences in the court size and the impact this may have on teaching and playing the sport.

## PPTA/APTA

In this section, questions will be asked relating to the origin, function, goals, and working relationships between these allied organizations.

## Code

Platform tennis is rich in tradition and much of that tradition is based on sportsmanship. Questions in this section will be based on the code of etiquette developed by the APTA.

<b>Percentage of Points as Allocated by Written Test Categories</b>	
<b>Category</b>	<b>Percentage of Points</b>
Strategy	31%
Teaching	26
Business	13
Diagnostics	7
Rules	5
Grips	3
Court Size	3
PPTA/APTA	3
Maintenance	3
Code	2
Equipment	2
History	2
TOTAL	100%

## Equipment

Manufacturers build their products based on specifications set in conjunction with the APTA and outlined by the APTA in their rulebook. Questions in this section relate to those specifications.

## History

Platform tennis is a relatively young sport that has a rich and interesting history. Questions in this section will focus on significant events in the history of the sport.

## Maintenance

This section will include basic questions relating to the construction and maintenance of platform tennis courts.

Note: This point allocation is subject to minimal point changes between categories, as approved by the PPTA Board of Directors.

## **Overview of Teaching Exam**

### Instructions and Rating Criteria

The guidelines for group and private lessons are similar. In the group lesson, the prospective USPTA member will be rated on his/her ability to work with a group of people. This will obviously include such criteria as keeping all students interested and active, providing instruction at the appropriate level, and keeping the lesson safe.

Each applicant will teach a 20 minute lesson. The applicant will notify the tester when the lesson starts and the applicant is responsible for picking up the balls, completing the wrap-up and ending the lesson on time.

#### Appearance (5 points)

The applicant's appearance will be evaluated based on whether their clothes are neat, clean, well-fitting. Basically, the dress code should be in compliance with dress codes for a typical east coast country club. Specific requirements include a collared shirt or turtleneck. Warmups are suggested and layering may be appropriate. The applicant is expected to wear clean, regulation tennis shoes (without holes in the toe or sides), and their hair should be trimmed, neat, and combed. If hats are worn that display advertising or graphics, the advertisers and graphics should be relevant to the sport.

#### Communications - Introduction to Student (10 points)

The applicant will be evaluated based on his/her introduction to the student. This includes their ability to identify the student's needs, discuss any limitations the student might have, efforts to make the student feel at ease, establish ground rules for the lesson, and use the student's name at least 3 times during the lesson. The applicant will also be evaluated based on whether the warmup addressed stretching and an appropriate warmup for the lesson.

#### Communications – During the Lesson (15 points)

The applicants will be evaluated based on their use of good grammar, good eye contact, projection of their voice, ability to smile, use of appropriate gestures, encouraging the student to ask questions and interact, mixture of verbal, audio, and auditory explanations. In addition the applicant should be positive in his/her approach with the student, show interest in the student, show enthusiasm in delivering the lesson, and have fun teaching the lesson. It is also necessary to establish the skill level by questioning and hitting with the student. Finally, the applicant must minimize the impact of the elements (sun, wind, precipitation, etc.) in the teaching of the lesson.

<b>Teaching Exam Categories</b>	
Category	Total Points
Appearance	5
Communications – Introduction to Student	10
Introduction/Fact finding (5)	
Establish ground rules for lesson (5)	
Communications – During the Lesson	15
Communication skills (10)	
Reaction of student to instruction (5)	
Lesson Organization and Content	25
Organization of Lesson (5)	
Meeting the Needs of the Student (5)	
Identify Problem Areas (5)	
Use of Teaching Aids (5)	
Safety (5)	
Feeding	10
Explanation and Demonstration Strokes/Tactics	20
Demonstration and Explanation of Strokes (10)	
Discussion of Tactical Implications (5)	
Delivering the Message	10
Clarity of Message (5)	
Brevity of Message (5)	
Summary/Wrapup	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

### Lesson Organization and Content (25 Points)

The applicant will be evaluated on their ability to communicate a plan for the lesson, their ability to follow this plan, appropriate deviations from the plan, and the student's progress towards the stated goal. When the applicant uses progressions, they will be evaluated on helpfulness and appropriateness of the progression. They will also be evaluated on whether the actual instruction was directed at the level of the student, whether the drills were appropriate for the student's ability, and whether there was an appropriate mix of live and dead ball drills. The applicant will also be evaluated on his/her ability to identify the cause of the problem and focus on the cause of the problem. In group lesson settings the applicant will be evaluated on his/her ability to allocate equal time and hits to each student, the amount of activity for each student during the lesson and the value of the rotations that are used.

The lesson evaluation will also include appropriate use of teaching aids and visual references. Finally, the applicants will be measured on the safety of their lessons. This will include keeping balls away from student's feet, keeping equipment at a safe distance, and eliminating hazards that inadvertently occur.

### Feeding (10 points)

They will also be evaluated on the appropriate use of live (student) and dead ball (instructor fed) drills/activities and their ability to feed with control, appropriate speed, and appropriate spin for their student.

### Explanation and Demonstration of Stroke/Tactics (15 points)

Even though each applicant may be teaching a different subject or tactic there will be a series of activities that will be evaluated, if they are appropriate to the topic. These topics include the grip, the stance, footwork, backswing, swing, point of contact, other mechanical issues, court positioning, tactical implications, and the applicant's ability to demonstrate the stroke/tactic.

### Delivering the Message (5 points)

An evaluation will be made of the applicant's ability to present information in a manner that is clear, relevant, and concise (less than 3 minutes) and to recognize and clarify any unclear messages. In addition, the evaluation will monitor whether the student was able to implement instructions that were given.

### Summary/Wrapup (5 points)

The applicant will be evaluated based on his/her ability to conduct a lesson within the appropriate time, including clearing the balls off the court. In addition, the applicant should review the key points of the lesson, and when appropriate give an on-court tip for homework and an off-court tip for homework.

Note: This point allocation is subject to minimal point changes between categories, as approved by the PPTA Board of Directors.

## **History of Platform Tennis**

The following account of the history of platform tennis comes from a variety of sources. A majority of the information comes from articles written by John Ware, member of the APTA Hall of Fame and historian of the sport, and information from the APTA web site, written by Johanna Bowen. PPTA Board members have added other events that are significant to the development of the sport.

### **Overview**

In the late 1920s, Scarsdale, New York neighbors James Cogswell and Fessenden Blanchard were experimenting with a racquet sport that could be played outside in the winter. To escape the slush and mud, they erected a wooden platform (48' x 20') and tried badminton. But the wind was too gusty for that sport's lightweight equipment.

Next they tried deck tennis on their platform, but deemed that sport too dull. In a sporting goods store in nearby New York City, Cogswell came upon some spongy balls and heavy wooden racquets used for paddle tennis, a game the Reverend Frank Beal had invented some years earlier for use on that city's crowded urban playgrounds and streets. At first Cogswell and Blanchard used the rules for playground paddle tennis, but they found the court boundaries (39' x 18') too small for adult players. So they increased the size of the court to badminton size (44' x 20'). Since a strong serve gave a powerful server such great advantage, they decided to allow only one serve in platform tennis so that the sport would become more challenging. Their families and friends loved to come by the court and play. So platform tennis had its beginnings as a true family game.

By the next winter, the original court, made of narrow boards, had warped, so Cogswell ripped it out and rebuilt it using wide planks spaced far enough apart so rain could drain away. To prevent the balls from flying off the court and rolling down the hill on which it was built, he surrounded the little platform with an eight-foot fence made of chicken wire.

One day when a ball was hit particularly hard and lodged in the fence, Blanchard raced behind the wire backstop and whacked the ball, then raced back onto the court shouting "The ball is still in play!" This was the start of platform tennis as we know it today. Through the years, it has been fine-tuned as it has been played.

A majority of the changes in the conversion from paddle tennis to platform tennis came within the first five to ten years. These changes include the court measurements, the height of the net, height of the screens, mesh of the screens, the one serve rule, and the development of better paddles.

## The Twenties and Thirties

- 1928 Cogswell and Blanchard built their first court, 48' x 20', on Cogwell's property, and added chicken wire so the white sponge rubber balls they used did not sail off the court. They ruled that a ball could be played off the back or side screens.
- 1931 Fox Meadow Tennis Club in Scarsdale became the first private club to construct a platform tennis court, enlarged by now to 30' x 60', and enclosed by 12-foot high screens. The height of the screens increased from 8-feet to 12-feet. The building cost was \$400. Twenty private courts had been built by this year. There were 42 entries in the first formal men's tournament, with the finals held on the Cogwell court.

Vassar College, built the first court on a college campus.

The first formal men's tournament was held in December with 42 entrants. The finals were held on the Cogswell court and Fesseden Blanchard and Earle Gatchell were the winners. *The New York Times* featured an article on the championships entitled, "Paddled Their Way to Victory on Dry Land."

The magazines, *Sportsman and Sportswoman*, were the first magazines to cover the sport.

- 1934 The American Paddle Tennis Association's charter was written by representatives of Fox Meadow Tennis Club, Manursing Island Club in Rye, New York and the Field Club of Greenwich, Connecticut.
- 1935 The first APTA Nationals were held at the Fox Meadow Tennis Club. Men's and women's singles and doubles were played. Champions were:  
Men's Singles – C.E. Grafmueller  
Women's Singles – Jean Eaton  
Men's Doubles – Clifford Couch, Jr. and Sumner Kilmarx  
Women's Doubles – Jean Eaton and Katherine Fuller.

Donald K. Evans of Scarsdale devised a way to construct the wire mesh backstop to produce a more consistent, true bounce and the "Evans Backstop" was officially adopted.

John Tunis, the well-known sports author, conducted the first radio broadcast covering platform tennis (still called paddle tennis" over NBC – with Blanchard, Frederick Lewis Allen and Charles O'Hearn.

1936 An improved all-weather court surface was developed by sanding the court as it was being painted, and was adopted for APTA play.

1938 The "scrambles" tournament concept, pairing players of different ability levels, was introduced at the Manursing Island Club by APTA President Kenneth Ward.

Singles tournaments were dropped due to lack of interest.

1939 The APTA had 15 member clubs. And the first court on foreign soil was built at the Ardnamurchan Club in Nova Scotia, Canada.

#### The Forties and Fifties

1940 A major article on platform tennis appeared in *Life* magazine, with action shots by Gjon Mili.

1950 The American Paddle Tennis Association changed its name to the American Platform Tennis Association to reflect more accurately the nature of the game.

1952 The APTA began selling plans and specifications for constructing courts at a cost of \$30 per plan.

1963 An orange/red ball was adopted to replace the white ball used previously because it was easier to see against the snow.

The National Junior Boys Tournament was inaugurated at the Fox Meadow Tennis Club. Winners were William de Saussure, IV and Geoffrey Nixon.

1965 The APTA inaugurated the Honor Award for individuals who had made significant contributions to the game.

1968 By its 40th Anniversary, it was estimated that 100,000 men, women and juniors were playing platform tennis.

1969 The APTA issued its first official "Newsletter." The APTA Tournament Schedule listed in the APTA Tournament Schedule.

#### The Seventies

1970 Men's and Women's national rankings were determined for the first time.

The first all-aluminum court was privately built on the property of Tad Bowen in Wilton, Connecticut. Prior to that, Kim Kimberly had an aluminum deck on his court. Though more expensive, it was more durable, required less maintenance, and could be heated.

1972 "The Etiquette of Platform Tennis" was published, and still serves as the "code" of good conduct in playing the game.

1973 The Men's National Championship was held at the Cleveland Country Club- the first time it moved away from Fox Meadow Tennis Club.

The Vat Gold Cup, the first commercial play-for-pay tournament, was organized by Dick Squires and held at Hilton Head, South Carolina.

The APTA was formally incorporated

"How to Conduct a Tournament Draw" was published.

1974 The APTA opened an official office, appointed Gloria Dillenbeck as its full-time Executive Secretary.

The APTA Umpires Committee was established and the APTA published its first Rules Book.

A rules change made a ball which bounced over the screens a loss of a point. There were 3,000 platform tennis courts in 39 states and an estimated 300,000 players in the U.S. The APTA had 265 member clubs. There were courts in 10 countries around the world, including one at the American Embassy in the U.S.S.R. Two courts at the site of a copper mine in Indonesia were farthest away from the home of the game.

Yellow balls were introduced especially for night

1975 Coca-Cola Bottling Company of New York and Tribuno Wines, Inc. sponsored the first professional platform tour.

1976 The finals of the Tribuno World Championship Tour, which had included over 100 top players competing in tournaments in six states, was held in the stadium at Forest Hills. The winners were Doug Russell and Gordon Gray.

The highest court built on an existing building was constructed at the University Club in St. Louis on the 24th floor roof. Court components had to be lifted by helicopter.

The second Tribuno Tour began in the fall and, for the first time, women were included.

1977 The International Platform Tennis Association was established.

And the newly formed Canadian Platform Tennis Association held its first official championship, with 200 players competing.

The APTA Tournament Schedule listed 100 events, including the Passport Tour. Estimates placed the player population at 400,000.

The Hertz Corporation agreed to support "the weekend player" by sponsoring four Regional Championships and the Presidents' Cup, creating a national competition for amateur paddle players.

- 1978 In its Golden Jubilee Year, there were an estimated 400,000 plus avid "paddlers", more than 90% of them using yellow balls.

The construction of the paddles made a change for the better. The mid-size Marcraft SORBA, was introduced.

### The Eighties

- 1980 Although interest in singles play had waned in the '30s, there was a new impetus this year and the National Singles Championships were reinstated. Draws had been small, but enthusiasm was growing.

- 1982 Platform tennis enjoyed increasing popularity in Canada, especially around Toronto.

The APTA Nationals were played indoors in New Canaan, Connecticut for the first time.

Aluminum courts began to replace the traditional wooden ones.

- 1985 Courts continued to be built abroad for recreational use, although logistics made an International Platform Tennis Association impractical.

- 1986 During the mid-eighties, there was renewed emphasis on platform tennis for juniors, ensuring that the level of play would continue to be top-notch in the years to come.

- 1988 There are an estimated 500 clubs from the east coast to the west coast where "paddle" is played

The APTA lists over 100 tournaments on its schedule annually, for all age groups from seniors to 12-year-olds.

- 1989 In the 60th year of platform tennis, the Men's and Women's National Championships and the Presidents' Cup are to be played at Fox Meadow Tennis Club in Scarsdale, New York, where the game began. And the National Junior Boys' and Girls' Championships, played at the Short Hills

Club in New Jersey, attracted 176 participants, including 15 teams from Toronto.

### The Nineties

- 1991 The Men's and Women's National Championships and the President's Cup tournament are held for the first time in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- 1992 The RJ Reilly, Inc. Company opens the RJR Ranch, bringing platform tennis to Montana. This was also the sport's introduction of platform tennis camps and ranches.

The Lineal Grand Prix series is initiated.

- 1993 The Lineal Grand Prix series expands to the Midwest.
- 1995 Wilson Sporting Goods joins the ranks of manufacturers. Marcraft sells their operations to David Kjeldsen of Viking.

The Garden State Nationals men's and women's finals are televised via Cablevision to 2.5 million subscribers.

- 1996 For the first time, the APTA held its annual meeting outside the New York metro area. The L'Hirondelle Club in Baltimore hosted the annual meeting.
- 1997 The "Viking Cup", a new adult/junior tournament brought new interest to the sport for juniors.
- 1998 A group of professionals began meeting to determine the feasibility of forming the USA Professional Platform Tennis Association, an organization for educating and certifying teaching professionals. Bob Callaway and Rich Maier held the initial educational seminars.

## **Common Body of Knowledge**

### The Need for a Common Body of Knowledge

When the PPTA held its initial meetings in 1998, it was the consensus of the interim board that it was mandatory to establish a common body of knowledge that would serve as the foundation for the testing and certification process. In the spring of 1999, a group of professionals taped their thoughts about what should be included in this common body. These thoughts were transcribed and reviewed during the summer of 1999. They have been updated and approved by the Board of Officers of the PPTA.

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide a foundation for teaching and playing platform tennis. These guidelines are intended to eliminate teaching myths, suggest efficient methods for teaching, and reduce unnecessary injuries by doing away with teaching techniques that physically do not make sense.

The common body of knowledge is not intended to be an endorsement of one method of teaching, realizing the teaching professionals will customize the teaching process based on their knowledge, personality, lesson size, and the skill level of their students.

It is expected that with research and changes in rules, courts, and equipment, that these guidelines will be updated. PPTA members are expected and encouraged to challenge these guidelines. The Board of Officers and/or the PPTA will meet periodically to update these guidelines based on consensus, opinion, or research conducted by the top teaching professionals in the industry.

## Serve and First Volley

While the rules do not dictate that players serve and rush the net, it is a tactical necessity that they move to the net after serving to hit their first shot as a volley or overhead. Only in rare circumstances do players stay back on the serve (such situations usually occur during warmer weather or when the receiving team has an incredibly offensive service return). It becomes advisable for players learning the sport to think of the serve and volley as a single unit, rather than thinking of the volley as an option.

### Serving Techniques

- The recommended grip on the serve is the continental grip, although some servers will use an eastern backhand grip. This grip allows the player to put a slight spin on the ball. Beginners may find it easier to use the eastern grip and hit a flatter serve.
- The toss should be in front and to the hitting side of the server. It will be approximately 17 to 20 inches from the out stretched hand. By tossing the ball in front and to the hitting side, it is easier to follow the ball to the net.

### Serving Priorities and Purpose

- The serving priorities are:
  - get the ball in the service court,
  - placement of the serve (depth and side to side movement),
  - spin, and
  - pace.
- The purpose of the serve is to put the ball in play in such a way that you reduce the number of strong returns or force the opponent to hit a weak return.

### Serving - Positioning and Tactics

- As a general rule, the server will be positioned behind the baseline in the middle of the opponent's angle of possible returns.
- The serve is often hit to the inside corner. In the deuce court this is to the backhand side for right-handed players. Serves to the inside corner also reduce the possible angles for the return. By serving to this position, it is easier for the server to come to the net favoring their backhand.
- Players should move to the net under control. Their line of approach to the net is similar to the path of their serve. For returns that are hit to either side, it is recommended that the last step to the ball be at an angle to hit the first volley as a backhand or forehand. It is recommended that movement to the net be continuous, rather than taking a split step (the split step is a technique often used to teach tennis players how to move to the net in a controlled position). Most

players find it easier to hit the first volley if they are closer to the net. This allows them to make contact with the ball higher in its trajectory. Positioning adjustments can be made based on the placement of the serve and the spin, pace, type of returns hit by the opponents. Most players will hit more volleys with the backhand, although they will be required to hit a combinations of forehands and backhands when they play further off the net.

- The objective of the first volley or overhead is to return it deep in the court. Against players who drive the ball hard, the objective may become more basic. It will be to simply return the ball in the court.

## Return of serve

### Return of Serve – Ready Position

- The player will be waiting for the service return in ready position. They will be balanced with their knees slightly bent and their weight on the balls of their feet. The paddle will be in a position that allows the player to move it quickly to either side, although many players will hold it in a position slightly favoring their strongest shot, usually the forehand.
- The paddle will be supported with the non-dominant hand on the paddle. The positioning of the non-dominant hand may vary slightly based on whether the player hits a one-handed or two-handed backhand.
- Typically the returning player will be positioned on the court favoring their forehand or strongest shot. From this position the returner will be in a position that will allow easy movement to hit shots with both forehands and backhands off the deck or off the screens. The returner's position will also allow for easy movement in a forward direction to hit short balls.
- The most commonly used grips for service returns are the eastern forehand grip for the forehand and the eastern backhand grip for backhands. The western and semi-western grips are also popular for hitting the forehands and the two handed grip is popular for hitting backhands. The continental grip for forehands and backhands is the least commonly used grip.

### Return of Serve - Tactics

- Typically, the service return is the only chance the receiving team will be assured of having to attack the ball. Most returners position themselves to attack the return with their forehand, or strongest shot, and return a majority of serves hit to their weaker side with a lob.
- The objective on the service return is to put the ball in play and make the opponents hit the ball, as many players find the first volley the most difficult type of volley to hit. The top players would prefer to hit a controlled drive that makes the server hit a low volley rather than to lob. Lobs are recommended as a change of pace or when a drive return is too difficult.

- Since platform tennis is almost exclusively a serve and volley game, the most common return is to hit the ball crosscourt, away from the netperson, and have it land in the vicinity of the service line. Such a return will force the server to volley up on the ball. It is also advisable to occasionally drive the return the serve at the netplayer or down the alley.
- Service returns should never be missed in the net and it is not advisable to try to hit around the players.
- Factors that affect the type of return and number of returns hit as lobs, include the score, weather conditions, skill level of the returner, confidence of the returner, depth of the serve, spin on the serve, and pace of the serve.

## Net Play

### Volleys – Ready Position

- The player will be waiting for the volley in ready position, with knees slightly bent and the weight on the balls of the feet. A good ready position will allow a player to move easily to hit overheads or volleys directed at their body or to either side.
- The most commonly used grip for volleys is the continental grip, although some players may switch between the eastern forehand and backhand grips. It is critical to be able to get the paddle in a position of strength when hitting volleys on either side.
- The paddle will be in a position that allows the player to move it quickly to either side. For most players this position is one in which the backhand is slightly favored.
- The paddle will be supported with the non-dominant hand on paddle. The positioning of the non-dominant hand may vary slightly based on whether the player hits a one-handed or two-handed backhand.

### Volleys – Fundamental Concepts

- The volley must be hit efficiently, with a minimum amount of motion, especially compared to tennis volleys.
- Overall, about two-thirds of the volleys will be hit as backhands. Specifically, only the shots hit beyond a right-hander's right side (hip or shoulder) will be hit as a forehand. Balls hit to the left, at the body, or at the right side of a right-hander will be hit as backhands.
- Many of the top teams are successful because of their emphasis on the backhand volley. A team that focuses on hitting most volleys as backhands will find it easier to maintain control of the net and will create a "wall effect". They will find that they will have range and stability at the net, making it easier to return hard driven balls. The backhand volley mentality also makes it easier to resist playing out balls, define responsibility for coverage of volleys, and to recover quickly for the next shot.

- As the ball is approaching the netperson, there is usually only time for a shoulder turn and possibly a minimal amount of footwork. The footwork is typically for the purpose of maintaining balance rather than generating power on the volley.
- There is usually not enough time to step in to hit the volley and to recover for the next shot. An exception would occur when a player is positioned off the net and the ball is dropping rapidly, thus making it advisable to step in to volley the ball higher in its trajectory.
- Many players find it helpful to keep their eyes at the same level or slightly higher than the level at which they will make contact with the ball.
- Most volleys will be hit with the paddle face opened slightly. An open face is also beneficial in helping to hit volleys deep in the court. Many of the top team focus on getting closer to the net to minimize the number of balls they have to hit up on.
- Players should be balanced, with their knees bent slightly while hitting volleys to maintain a position of strength. This is especially important on low volleys. From this position it is easier to duck or avoid drives that may be going long.

#### Volleys - Tactics

- The ultimate position for the netperson is to be so close to the net that it will not be possible to volley any shot from below the top of the net. The actual position that the netperson takes will vary based on their height, skill level, hand speed, ability to move up and back and the opponent's shot selection and tactics. A general guideline is to assume the ultimate position and make adjustments as necessary. The most common adjustment is to move back from the net about three to five feet.
- The intent of the volley is to hit it deep in the court. Compared to tennis volleys, platform tennis volleys are usually hit less aggressively. Platform tennis volleys are usually hit with less pace and sharply angled volleys are hit less frequently. Ideally volleys should be hit so that they stay low and the pace should be such that the opponent cannot attack the ball.

#### Volleys – Positioning

- The netperson's position on the court will vary based on where the ball is served and how the opponents return the ball. A general guideline is to move with the ball or to line up across the net from where the opponent on your half of the court will be hitting the ball.
- The team at the net should move with the ball. When a shot is hit to a corner the netplayer on that side of the court will position their outside foot on the singles sideline. They will be typically be closer to the net than their partner. The player crosscourt from where the ball is being played will typically be straddling the center service line. The crosscourt player will be slightly further off the net in anticipation of an overhead.
- Successful team positioning requires that both players move as soon as either team member hits a volley or overhead. In another words, the player not hitting

the ball has a responsibility to move based on where the ball is hit, just as players in basketball, soccer, or football move based on predetermined plays even if they are not touching the ball.

- There is minimal switching at the net in platform tennis, with the exception of left and right-handed combinations at the net. Left and right-handed players will cross to position their overheads in the middle of the court. They should wait to switch until they can hit an overhead that takes a long time for their opponents to return. This is usually accomplished by the net team hitting double-screen shots, preferably side-back, creating time to switch. It is best for the player hitting the overhead to call the switch because they know where they are hitting the ball. Lefty-righty teams can avoid switching by starting in the Australian position when they are serving.
- The positioning for the players at the net is often staggered slightly, with one player being slightly closer to the net and the other player being slightly off the net. In the case of a short shot they will both move closer to the net. This is also true when either player hits an exceptionally good shot.

### Drop Volleys

- The netperson will get as close to the net as possible to hit a drop shot. Upon contact either soften the hands or pull back slightly to let the ball drop short in the service court.
- Tennis players will find the technique of a tennis drop shot and a platform tennis drop shot to be slightly different. In tennis the drop shot is hit both as a volley and after one bounce. The tennis drop shot resembles a miniature lob in that the player has the feeling of carrying the ball over the net and letting the spin make the ball die.
- The drop shot is most effective when both opponents are behind the baseline or when the netplayer poaches. The drop shot is usually used as a change of pace shot to keep the opponents honest. The drop shot will be more effective in cold or wet weather when the ball has less bounce.

### Overhead - Techniques

- Many effective teams will communicate or call the ball on every overhead to prevent confusion on the lobs.
- The grip most frequently used for the overhead is the continental grip.
- When players see that they will be hitting an overhead they should turn their shoulders. This allows them to get their body sideways to the net. It is easier to move up and back to hit overheads when the body is turned sideways to the net.
- When lobs are hit high and netplayers have plenty of time to move to the ball, it is recommended that they move back an extra step so they can keep the ball in front of them and move in hitting position just prior to contacting the ball. This is akin to the movement of tennis players hitting overheads and baseball outfielders catching flyballs.

- Many overheads are hit lower in the trajectory of the ball than a tennis overhead, rather than from an extended position. This makes it easier to hit an overhead that has a lower bounce. Tennis players will find this technique to be noticeably different from hitting tennis overheads.

#### Overhead - Tactics

- The intent of the overhead is to hit it so that the backcourt players cannot attack it. The ideal overhead is hit so that it lands deep in the court and has a low bounce. It is also effective to hit the overhead at the body of the backcourt player or to the player's weaker side, which in many cases is their backhand side.
- Typically an overhead should be hit hard enough to get past the opponents, but it should not be hit so hard that they can drive it off the screens.
- The ideal overhead will die in the back screen. It is much safer to try to make the overhead die in the back screens than in the side screens.
- About the only time that the overhead will be hit so that it bounces inside the service line will be when the intent is to angle the ball for a side-back shot.

#### Overhead - Positioning

- After the serve, the positioning of the team at the net will be determined by the direction and what type of shot is hit. If two right handers are playing, the player on the ad court side will take most of the overheads. Typically most of the overheads will be hit to a safe area which is either to the players weakness, to the corners, or deep and at the player. In all cases, the overheads and volleys should be hit in such a manner that the backcourt players cannot attack the ball.
- When playing the point to the deuce courtside, it is often difficult to determine which player at the net should take lobs hit to the middle of the court. A general guideline is to track the path of the ball and make the decision based on the angle of the lob. A general guideline is that the player in the ad court should hit the lobs down the middle including those hit over the left shoulder of their partner.

#### Specialty Overheads

- Push overhead - If the netperson is pushed back deeper than the service line, they may choose to hit the overhead with more arch and push it back deep in the court. This is accomplished by letting the ball drop to head level and having the paddle face slightly open. When hitting the push overhead the arm is not fully extended on the swing. Although this may be considered a specialty overhead, it is a shot that is frequently hit by many players.
- Slash overhead - The final specialty overhead is a slash overhead. It is hit only off a short lob. It is hit by letting the ball drop to shoulder height or lower. The racquet face is open and the swing is under the ball. This slash will be hit with an extreme amount of spin and will be hit deep and low in the court. It should be used with caution as it is a lower percentage overhead to execute and might cause arm or shoulder injury if it is not hit properly or if it is hit too often.

## Other Overheads (Good and Bad)

- Stiffarm overhead – A stiffarm overhead can be an effective “desperation” shot to hit by a netperson who is pushed off the net by a deep lob. Again, the racket face is open and the arm is only slightly bent when hitting the ball. The ball is usually hit with a high arch deep into the backcourt. This shot is usually hit as a defensive or desperation shot.
- Waterfall overhead - The waterfall overhead is only hit on a very short lobs. The intent is to bounce the ball down into the court hard and short. The intent is to create a high bounce, which will go over the player’s head and roll down the screens and die. This shot can be used as a change of pace to keep the backcourt players honest. It is most effective in cold weather or on courts with loose screens.
- Reverse spin – The reverse spin is hit off short lobs as a change of pace. It is a difficult overhead to consistently execute and has the potential of putting extra strain on the arm or elbow if used consistently.
- Scissors-kick overhead - The scissor-kick overhead is usually hit as a defensive shot off a strong lob. It is a shot that many tennis players bring with them from the tennis courts. It is not recommended that the shot be used frequently because of the increased difficulty and the amount of energy required to hit the shot.

## Playing in the Backcourt

### Groundstrokes and Lobs – Ready Position

- The player will be waiting for the groundstroke in ready position, with knees slightly bent and the weight on the balls of the feet. A good ready position will allow a player to move easily to hit shots with both forehands and backhands off the deck or shots off the screens. The ready position will allow for easy movement forward to hit short balls.
- The most commonly used grips for groundstrokes are eastern forehand and eastern backhand grips. The western and semi-western grips are also popular for hitting the forehand and the two handed grip is popular for hitting backhands. The continental grip for forehands and backhands is the least commonly used grip.
- The paddle will be in a position that allows the player to move it quickly to either side.
- The paddle will be supported with the non-dominant hand on paddle. The positioning of the non-dominant hand may vary slightly based on whether the player hits a one-handed or two-handed backhand.

## Groundstrokes – Technique

- Because platform tennis is played on a small court, the players will have a short reaction time to hit many of their groundstrokes. This will require players to be more efficient or compact in their movement and stroke production. Players who play tennis may find that their strokes in platform tennis are more compact, with more balls being hit with an abbreviated backswing and more shots hit from an open stance.
- Since many platform tennis players also play tennis, it is important to be aware of a major difference relating to topspin. Platform tennis players will often be forced to hit more groundstrokes at shoulder level than tennis players. To hit the groundstrokes with topspin, it will be necessary to bring the paddle back higher than for a topspin tennis groundstroke and hit over the ball, rather than swinging low to high to impart topspin on the ball.

## Groundstrokes - Tactics

- Typically, groundstrokes should be hit at a speed which allows the baseline player to make a majority of their drives in the court. Drives should never be missed in the net.
- The intent of the groundstroke is to hit it so that it forces the opponent to volley up on the ball, make an error, or hit the volley to a position of weakness.
- Generally groundstrokes are driven when one player is off the net. In this case the ball will be driven to an open part of the court or to one of the players in the backcourt. There is less chance of hitting an effective drive when the ball is hit from deep in the court or behind the baseline and both opponents are positioned close to the net. In this situation the ball is usually lobbed. A special emphasis is placed on not driving balls from behind the baseline when the opponents are properly positioned.
- If the team at the net hits a short ball, the team in the backcourt will usually hit a controlled drive to the seam between the two players.
- When the team at the net returns groundstrokes for winners, this is usually an indication that the backcourt team hit the drive to the wrong place on the court or that they chose the wrong time to hit the drive, i.e., the opponents were properly positioned to defend against the drive.

## Lob Techniques

- On most lobs hit off the screens or off the decks it is important to start with the paddle below the contact point. The racket should be opened and most lobs are hit with a controlled or shortened backswing.
- Blocked lobs are balls played directly off the deck. They are often hit to keep the opponents off balance or to protect the corner. The blocked lob should be hit with similar mechanics as a groundstroke with the major difference being a much shorter backswing.

## Lob Tactics

- The objective of the lob is to force the opponents to hit a weak overhead. This can be accomplished by moving the player with lobs and drives
- The target for the lob should be the backcourt, the area between the service line and the baseline. Lobs hit between the opposing net players can often be effective because they may cause confusion.
- It is better to hit a weak lob than to miss. Tennis players will find that platform tennis is different from tennis, in that short lobs are not punished to the extent that they are in tennis. Also, topspin lobs and offensive lobs are seldomly used in platform tennis.
- Lobs with a high arch tend to push the players further off the net. Topspin lobs are virtually impossible to hit in platform tennis.
- The backcourt team can dictate play with their lobs. A crosscourt lob will usually draw the play back to the player hitting the lob, while a down-the-line lob will generally cause the opponents to hit away from the player hitting the lob.

### Backcourt Positioning – Strong, defensive, and attack positioning

The positioning of the backcourt players is contingent upon their shots and the resulting shots hit by the team at the net. These positions can be categorized as strong, defensive, and attack (see below).

- Many lobs from the backcourt have a neutral impact; they do not put the backcourt team on the defensive nor do they put them on the offensive. When the backcourt players hit a good lob they may assume a position of strength if their lob forces the team at the net to hit a weak shot. Once the backcourt players have hit a good lob, they will position themselves to hit a majority of their shots with forehands, or their most offensive shot. (The thinking here is that most players find it easier to hit a running forehand than a running backhand.)
- The backcourt players assume a defensive position when they hit a short lob. This position will allow them to protect the crease and be about one step away from any high percentage shots hit by the opponents. For most players this position is about half way between the baseline and back screen and straddling the singles alley.
- The players will assume the attack position when the opponents hit a short volley or overhead. Both players should move to the net only when they can gain complete control over the point. In situations where the backcourt team cannot completely control the net off the attacking shot, it is recommended that the player closest to the ball hit the attacking shot while the partner remains at the baseline and moves to the middle of the court. Once the player at the net has gained control of the point, the player at the baseline should move to the net immediately.

## Playing the Screens

### General Issues of Playing the Screens

There are five types on screen shots in both the deuce and ad court:

- One-screen shot off the side screen,
- One-screen shot off the back screen,
- Side-back,
- Back-side, and
- Crease or corner shot.

Some general guidelines for playing the screens are:

- Is the pace of the ball such that it will be played off the deck, off one screen, or off two screens (weather, type of ball, sound of contact, overhead or volley, speed of swing, spin, strength and skill level of player).
- Which screen will it hit first?
- Which player hit the ball (or what is the path of the ball)?
- How much spin is on the ball?
- How should the ball be returned (lob or drive).

### General Guidelines for Playing the Screens

- The positioning will be similar for the corresponding shot in each corner; however, there are some subtle distinctions caused by the difference in contact point for the forehand and backhand. The effect of spin is slightly different for both corners.
- A general guideline for playing the screens is that the ball will rebound off the screen at the same angle at which it originally hit the screen. The angle at which a ball rebounds can obviously be altered by the spin or pace of the shot, the temperature, screen tightness, and whether the ball hits a seam.
- Shots hit deep to the middle of the court with minimal angle and enough pace to reach the back screen will usually be played as one-screen shots off the back screen.
- Shots that are hit hard enough to rebound off the side screen will usually be played as one-screen shots if they hit the side screen in the twenty foot area from the net back towards the corner.
- Shots that are hit with minimal angle and hit hard enough to rebound off the back screen will usually be played as back-side shots if they hit the back screens within five feet of the corner. An exception to this guideline is overheads that are hit down-the-line. They will typically be played as one-screen shots off the back screen.

- Shots that are hit with angle and enough pace to rebound off the side screen will usually be played as side-back shots if they initially hit the side screens within five feet of the corner.
- Shots that are hit with an angle and enough pace to rebound off the side screen that hit within five to ten feet from the corner may be played as either one or two screen shots depending upon the spin, pace, temperature, and weather conditions.
- Because balls bounce randomly out of the crease, it is recommended that the backcourt player take a more calculated position on crease shots. The best way to defend against balls going into the crease is to cut them off before they hit the corner. If the backcourt player lets the ball go by and it then hits the crease, the best tactic is to move along the side screen in anticipation of the ball traveling in that direction. This movement will be effective only if the backcourt partner will move to the middle of the court behind the baseline to cover a ball that caroms along the back screen.
- When playing balls off the screens, it is recommended that the ball be always kept in view. There will be occasions when it is necessary to turn or spin to hit a shot out of the screens. In these situations it is best to always keep the ball in the field of vision and turn with the ball.

#### Backcourt Positioning - Understanding How to Read the Screens

The players playing in the backcourt will have a good indication of how the ball will be returned to them based on where they hit their shot.

- When the ball is lobbed short the team at the net will have the option of hitting a wide variety of shots, including one-screen shots off the back or side, and both types of two-screen shots (side-back and back-side). Most likely the team at the net will return short lobs as a two-screen shot.
- When the lob is hit to the service line or beyond, the team at the net is more likely to hit their overheads down the middle of the court or as back-side shots. The shot off the back screen will either be a one-screen shot or a back-side shot.
- When the backcourt player lobs down-the-line, the overhead will usually be hit away from the person hitting the lob. For example, when the ad court player lobs down-the-line, the netplayer will attempt to hit the overhead to the weak side of the backcourt player in the deuce court.
- When a backcourt player lobs crosscourt then the overhead will usually be returned crosscourt.
- When a backcourt player lobs the ball to the middle of the court, the ball will likely be returned back to them, to the middle of the court or to backhand side of the player in the ad court.

#### Backcourt Positioning

There are a number of factors that will make it necessary for backcourt players to adjust their position including: temperature and liveliness of the ball, altitude, spin and pace of the shot, and tightness of the screens.

- It is easier to hit one-screen shots or make the ball die in the screens in colder weather, at lower altitudes, with deader balls, and with looser screens.
- Shots hit with spin can either have a reduced or exaggerated bounce out of the screens depending on the type of spin or the number of screens it hits.
- Effective screenplay is a result of early preparation. This means getting into good enough position to hit every shot in a controlled, yet offensive manner if the opportunity exists.

## Communications

Because platform tennis is played on a small court and many shots are hit so that either player on a team can reach them, communications is extremely important for tactical and safety reasons.

- Most communication breakdowns occur with the team who is at the net. To counter this, most teams will call who is going to take each lob hit to the middle of the court.
- In the backcourt it is more obvious who will take the ball; however, on balls hit to the middle of the court it is advisable for the backcourt players to call who will take the ball.
- When left handers and right handers are playing at the net, it is recommended that they switch so that their forehands are in the middle for overheads. It is common for the switch to occur when one player can hit a two-screen shot. It is advisable for the player hitting the overhead to call the switch.
- The most effective teams should communicate briefly between points, either verbally or with eye contact. It is also advisable to discuss issues that may be of a sensitive nature in a friendly or noncompetitive setting off the court. Such issues may include determining who serves first, who plays on which side of the court, or what to say and not to say to support each other on the court.

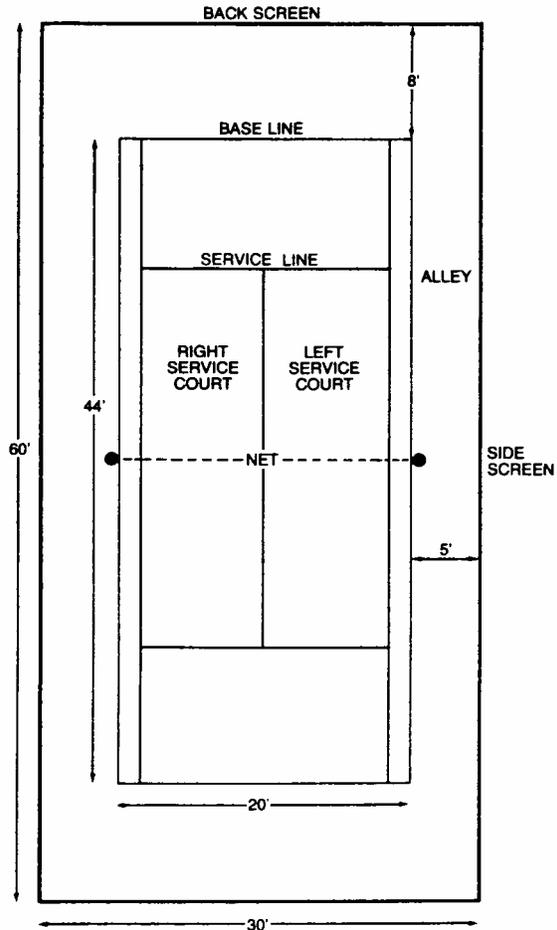
# The Platform Tennis Court

## Court Size (With Comparisons to Tennis Courts)

While a platform tennis court looks like a miniature version of a tennis court, it must be remembered that it is not a scaled down version of a tennis court. The small size of the platform tennis court and its disproportionate size compared to a tennis court affect the way the sport is played.

- The recommended size for a single tennis court, including out of bounds is 120' x 60' and a platform tennis court is 60' x 30', including out of bounds. The width of the playing area of a platform tennis court is 55.6% the width of a tennis court. The length of the playing area on a platform tennis court is 56.4% the length of the doubles playing area of a tennis court.
- The playing area of the doubles tennis court on one side of the net is 1,404 square feet (39' x 26'). The playing area of the doubles platform tennis court on one side of the net is 440 square feet (22' x 20') or 31.3% the size of a tennis court.
- The width of the tennis service court is 13.5 feet. The width of a platform tennis service court is 59.2% smaller, or 8 feet. The length of a tennis service court is 21 feet. The length of a platform tennis service court is 57.1% smaller, or 12 feet.
- The playing area of the tennis service court is 283.5 square feet (13.5' x 21'). The playing area of the platform tennis service court is 33.8% the size, or 96 square feet (8' x 12').
- A tennis net should be 36" at the center of the court and a platform tennis net should be 34" at the center. The height of a platform tennis net at the center of the court is 94.4% the height of a tennis net at the center of the court.

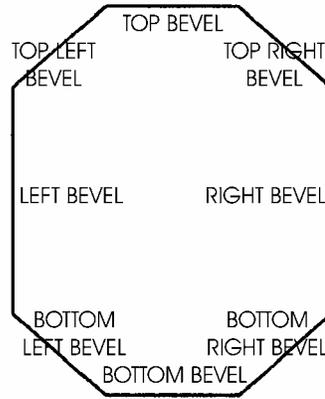
Because a platform tennis court is small, there will be a short reaction time. This will require players to be more efficient or compact in their movement and stroke production.



# Grips

## Overview of Basic Grips

There are three basic grips for the forehand - eastern, western and continental. The diagram below serves as a reference point for the location of the heel of the paddle hand and the base knuckle of the index finger.



## Grips – Eastern Forehand

The eastern forehand grip is often described as the "shake-hands" grip. Place the paddle hand in a "hand-shake position, the fingers will be wrapped around the grip as if shaking hands with it. Another way to get the eastern forehand grip is to place the paddle hand on the paddle face, then slide the hand down the throat of the paddle to the grip, then wrap the fingers around the handle.

From a technical standpoint the description of the eastern forehand grip is:

(Right hand player) The heel of the hand is located on the top right bevel. The base knuckle of the index finger is located on the bottom edge of the top right bevel.

(Left hand player) The heel of the hand is located on the top left bevel. The base knuckle of the index finger is located on the bottom edge of the top left bevel.

## Grips – Western Forehand

An easy way to think of the getting the western forehand grip is to set the paddle on a flat surface, then and pick it up with the face of the paddle being parallel to the court and the edge of the paddle facing the net.

From a technical standpoint the description of the western forehand grip is:

(Right hand players) The heel of the hand is located between the bottom and bottom right bevel. The base knuckle of the index finger is in a similar position.

(Left hand players) The heel of the hand is located between the bottom and bottom left bevel. The base knuckle of the index finger is in a similar position.

#### Grips – Semi-Western Forehand

A semi-western forehand grip is a compromise between the western and eastern grips. Technically speaking, the semi-western grip can be described as:

(Right hand players) The heel of the hand is located between the right bevel and the bottom right bevel. The base knuckle index finger is located in a similar position.

(Left hand players) The heel of the hand is located between the left bevel and the bottom left bevel. The base knuckle index finger is located in a similar position.

#### Grips – Continental Forehand and Backhand

The final recognized grip is the continental grip. From a technical standpoint, the continental grip can be described as:

(Right hand players) The heel of the hand is located on the top bevel. The base knuckle index finger is located on the upper part of the top right bevel.

(Left hand players) The heel of the hand is located on the top bevel. The base knuckle index finger is located on the upper part of the top left bevel.

#### Grips - Backhands

Backhand are most commonly hit with eastern, continental or two hand grips (the continental grip was discussed above).

#### Backhands – Eastern Backhand

There are several ways to think of getting an eastern backhand grip. The eastern backhand grip can be attained by turning the grip one-quarter turn (over the top) from the eastern forehand grip. The eastern backhand grip can also be attained by holding the paddle on the throat with the non-paddle hand and with the paddle face perpendicular to the ground. With the paddle hand "palm" the grip, as a basketball player would "palm" a basketball - then wrap the hand around the grip. In this position, the knuckles will be facing towards the net at the point of contact.

From a technical standpoint the eastern backhand grip can be described as:

(Right hand players) The heel of the hand is between the top bevel and top left bevel. The base knuckle of the index finger is located between the top bevel and top right bevel.

(Left hand players) The heel of the hand is between the top bevel and the top right bevel. The base knuckle of the index finger is located between the top bevel and top left bevel.

### Grips – Two-handed Backhands

To hit a two-handed backhand, the paddle should be gripped with the non-dominant hand above (closest to the paddle head) the dominant hand on the grip. The non-dominant hand will grip the paddle with an eastern forehand grip, while the dominant hand will grip the paddle with an eastern forehand, continental or eastern backhand grip.

### Grips – Advantages and Disadvantages

There are advantages and disadvantages to each of the grips. The angle of the paddle face (open vs. closed) and the position of the contact point relative to the net will vary with each grip.

The eastern forehand grip is particularly popular when teaching beginners to hit forehands. It is easy to conceptualize where the ball is going because the palm of the hand is identical to the angle of the paddle face. In some cases the eastern forehand grip is used to teach the serve to beginning players.

Eastern Grip	
Advantages	Disadvantages
Good for beginners	Grip change is required
Good for waist-high balls	Can be difficult for low volleys
Adaptable in different playing conditions	Can be difficult for high balls
Easy to generate power	Can be difficult for finesse or touch shots
Easy to generate topspin	Can be difficult for slice shots
Easy to use for basic serve	
More support than some of the other grips	
Easy to understand direction of shot	
Good for digging shots	
Palm of hand is identical to angle of paddle face	
Good grip for the backcourt	
Eastern forehand grip can be used to lob backhands	

Western and semi-western grips have become more common as "competitive" tennis players have taken up the sport. These grips have become popular in tennis because they make it possible to hit with more topspin. These grips are effective in platform tennis because many serves have high bounces. A final advantage of these grips is that they allow for a "whippier" stroke, which insures acceleration through the hitting zone. This acceleration allows for "heavier", more deceptive shots. Even though platform

tennis lacks a "baseline" game, high bouncing shots are often common in warmer weather or warmer climates, such as Colorado, California, and Arizona.

### Western Grip

Advantages	Disadvantages
Good for generating topspin Good for high bouncing balls Easy to disguise Good for hitting passing shots Can be used for both groundstrokes	Can be difficult for low balls Bad grip for serves Can be difficult to volley with this grip Can be difficult for shots with underspin Major grip change needed for some shots

Many players using the western and semi-western grips find it difficult to hit lower bouncing balls. This is a major consideration, considering the small size of a platform tennis and the fact that it is typically played in cold weather.

### Semi-Western Grip

Advantages	Disadvantages
Good for generating topspin Good for high bouncing balls Easy to disguise Good for hitting passing shots Can be used to generate power	Can be difficult for low balls Bad grip for serves Can be difficult to hit low volley with this grip Can be difficult for shots with underspin Major grip change needed for backhand

The main advantage of the continental grip is that no grip change is required to hit a forehand and backhand. This makes the grip very popular at the net on quick volley exchanges. The disadvantage of the continental grip is that the position of the hand on the paddle is not one of strength on the groundstrokes. It is necessary for players using a continental grip to have an exceptionally strong wrist and forearm.

### Continental Grip

Advantages	Disadvantages
Good for lower balls No grip change is required Adaptable for different strokes and shots Good for serve and volley Good for generating spin on serve Can hit later on forehand side Versatile grip to use Good for hitting touch shots Good grip to use for overheads	Can be difficult for high balls Difficult for players with weak wrist or forearm Some difficulty in generating topspin Some difficulty in generating power Requires better timing Can be difficult for slice shots

The major debate about backhands is not whether to hit them with an eastern or continental grip, but whether to hit them with one or two hands. (The eastern backhand grip is most frequently used for one-handed backhands because it places the paddle in a stronger position at the point of contact.)

The advantages of the two-handed backhand are numerous. The most obvious advantage is that most people find it easier to learn. In addition, most players can

generate more topspin and pace with two hands. This has allowed many players to develop very deceptive, high-powered offensive backhands.

The major disadvantage of the two-handed backhand is that the placement of the second hand on the paddle effectively shortens your reach. This means that it is necessary to take an extra half-step to hit the ball. While a two-handed grip can make it difficult to hit a two-handed slice shot, slice shots are not frequently hit in platform tennis.

Practically speaking, the ideal backhand is one that begins with two hands and allows for the release of the non-dominant hand near the point of contact. This allows for the benefits of the two-handed backhand and counters the disadvantages mentioned above.

### Two-Handed Grip

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can help players with weak wrist or forearms</li> <li>Easy to teach to younger players</li> <li>Can be hit with power</li> <li>Easy to hit topspin</li> <li>Easy to hit sharp angles</li> <li>Easy to hit with disguise</li> <li>Grip change is not necessary</li> <li>The ball can be hit late</li> <li>Easy to have success or gain confidence</li> <li>Second hand gives support</li> <li>Can ease pain of tennis elbow</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can reduce length of reach</li> <li>Can be weaker at the net</li> <li>More precise footwork may be required</li> <li>May require good body flexibility</li> <li>Can be difficult for inside shots/shots at body</li> <li>Can be difficult to slice</li> </ul>

The optimal contact point is different for the various grips. The contact point for a continental grip is closer to the body and lower than other contact points. When using an eastern grip the contact point will be about waist height and off the front hip. The ideal contact point for the semi-western grip is out front and slightly higher than the eastern grip and the contact point for the western grip is slightly higher than for the semi-western grip.

## **Tennis vs. Platform Tennis**

### *Leaving Tennis Habits on the Court*

*The following summary of differences between the sports was prepared by Gary Horvath. About a week after conducting a platform tennis camp at the RJR Ranch, he received a phone call from "The Cruiser" in Chicago requesting that such a list be put together.*

#### Overall

The major differences lie in the following areas:

- Platform tennis is played with a 17 inch wooden paddle vs. a 28-29 inch racquet.
- A platform tennis court, including out of bounds is 60 feet by 30 feet and a tennis court is 120 feet by 60 feet. You could fit 4 platform tennis courts on one tennis court.
- The net in platform tennis is disproportionately higher than in tennis. It is 34 inches vs. 36 inches at the center. (When you win a platform tennis match you only have to jump over a 34 inch net.) A platform tennis court is not a scaled down version of a tennis court.
- Platform tennis is played with a heavy sponge rubber ball with a thin coat of flocking and tennis is played with a hollow sponge rubber ball with a heavy cloth coat.
- One serve is allowed in platform tennis and two are allowed in tennis.
- Let serves are played as good serves.
- When you bounce the ball out of the court in platform tennis you lose the point, when this happens in tennis you win the point.

#### The Serve

- Since the paddle is about a foot shorter than a tennis racquet, the toss must be about a foot lower.
- The toss in platform tennis is more to the right.
- The toss in platform tennis is more in front since coming to the net is strategically advisable.
- The serve and first volley are considered a unit in platform tennis.
- Tactically the server will seldom go for the "big ace" in platform tennis.
- It is advisable to serve to the inside corner in both sports, most likely a platform tennis server will serve to the inside corner a higher percentage of the time in platform tennis.
- Platform tennis requires an incredible positive mindset, since only one serve is allowed.

## First Volley

- The first volley in tennis is often hit for a winner or with an offensive intent, while in platform tennis the first volley is aimed for the middle of the backcourt.
- Though the court is smaller, there is less poaching in platform tennis. In platform tennis the ball is returned so quickly it is more difficult to get in front of the volley.
- In platform tennis, 75-80% of the volleys are hit with backhands, while in tennis 55-65% of the volleys are hit with backhands.
- The server's path to the net will be along the line of the serve. The server will try to get into position to hit the first volley with the backhand, although this will be more difficult when the first volley is hit further back in the court. Because the platform tennis court is smaller than a tennis court, the serving team will try to get into position to cover a majority of the shots with their backhand volleys.
- When executing a platform tennis volley, there is less movement of the body and racquet than in tennis.
- You play closer to the net in platform tennis than in tennis when volleying.
- Two players at the net cover a higher percentage of the court in platform tennis than in tennis.

## Service Return

- Since the platform tennis court is smaller it is more difficult to hit an effective angled service return.
- In platform tennis, the first opportunity to be offensive is on the service return. In tennis this opportunity often exists on the serve.
- It is necessary to have a higher percentage of "in-bounds" service returns in platform tennis.
- There are more high service returns hit in platform tennis than tennis.
- In platform tennis, there are more service returns hit with a forehand than in tennis.

## Lobs

- In platform tennis you are seldom penalized for a short lob.
- In platform tennis a premium is placed on the proper height of the lob - lobbing into the sun and lobbing high enough so that the ball will move the person off the net three steps, while landing in the middle of the backcourt.
- Topspin lobs are seldom hit in platform tennis.
- In platform tennis, appropriately placed lobs can be used to set the ball up to the partner's forehand.

## Overheads

- In platform tennis, power is seldom a premium as the opportunity seldom arises to close out the point on the overhead.
- In platform tennis, more spin is used on the overhead.
- In platform tennis, the ball is often hit lower in its trajectory so that it will bounce off the screens with a lower trajectory.
- The team at the net should try to achieve perfection on their overheads. It is common for the top teams to miss only one or two overheads per set.
- In platform tennis, there must be more communication between partners since the average length of a point must be greater. In men's professional tennis, the average length of a clay court point is 4-5 shots, while it is 5-6 shots for women. At the top level of play in platform tennis the average length of a point can often exceed 25-30 shots in both the men's and women's game.
- The overhead in platform tennis must be hit efficiently. Placement, spin, and accuracy are more of a premium in platform tennis than in tennis.

## Social

- Platform tennis is more social than tennis. It is easier to mix players at varying levels in platform tennis and have fun on the court.
- Because of the small size of the courts and the proximity of the players, there seem to be fewer disputed line calls in platform tennis than in tennis.
- Platform tennis is less expensive to play and easier to learn than tennis.

## Court Maintenance

*The following information has been provided as by the staff of R.J. Reilly, Jr. as part of their educational program to inform the public about all aspects of the sport. R.J. Reilly Jr., Inc. invented the aluminum platform tennis court and the methods used for maintaining it. They maintain the majority of the country's platform tennis courts.*

### Overview

With court maintenance, the first step is to schedule the work so it is done in plenty of time for the playing season. Ideally, you should request to have your court inspected in the winter or early spring. (R.J. Reilly provides free court inspections to almost all parts of the country, and begins inspections in February!) That allows time to get the proposals to you, so you in turn can go through the appropriate channels to get the work approved, contracted, and scheduled well before the start of the season. Furthermore, it is ideal if the resurfacing of aluminum courts in particular, are done during the summer months to avoid potential paint curing problems. The cooler and often wetter fall months are not as conducive to proper paint curing.

All new courts that are installed, and almost all courts in existence are now aluminum. There are many benefits to aluminum, not the least of which is its low maintenance needs. There are two primary maintenance areas with well-designed all-aluminum courts: the playing surface and the screens. We will spend the most time discussing the surface.

### Traction Surface

A properly applied painted traction surface normally needs to be resurfaced every four or five years if the courts get active use and a heating system is utilized for snow removal. Private court owners can expect as much as ten years. Resurfacing should only be done when the traction surface begins to wear down. The more use a court gets, the more often it will require resurfacing. If you do not have a heating system and rely solely on shoveling for snow removal, the surface will wear down more quickly. You should still expect (and insist on) a minimum of three years between resurfacings.

Along with the invention of the aluminum court, R.J. Reilly had to develop a successful process and appropriate components for the deck surface that would hold the aggregate, withstand play and weather, and effectively adhere to aluminum. With no known comparable products to offer guidance, many years of research and trials were required before the current system was developed. The type of required paint is very sensitive to a number of variables including temperature, moisture, and application technique. The aggregate used for traction also must be properly applied to get the appropriate results. Unfortunately, the penalty is high if the court is not properly surfaced or inappropriate materials are used. Serious peeling and cracking

(which can cost thousands of dollars to rectify), chalking, loss of aggregate, a shiny surface which reflects light into players' eyes can all result if not done properly. Therefore, resurfacing of your aluminum courts should only be done by well-qualified platform tennis court professionals.

Do not resurface your court before the traction has begun to wear down. Resurfacing too often can also be detrimental. Paint build-up is another cause of peeling paint. This in turn requires expensive stripping prior to resurfacing in order to stop the process. If in doubt, ask an expert you trust. R.J. Reilly periodically counsels customers not to resurface courts when it is not yet necessary, even when the customer requests it.

### Care of the Court Surface

The only thing you need to do to make sure your properly surfaced court lasts as long as it should, is to remember what not to do to it. Never put salt or chemicals on your court. At minimum this leaves a slippery residue. Much more importantly though, it will cause serious damage to the deck. Never use metal snow shovels, snow blowers, ice scrapers or any other mechanical means of removal besides plastic pushers. These can cause premature wear at the least, with potentially serious damage by scraping and damaging the painted surface. Snow should only be removed with plastic snow pushers or your heating system.

### Problem Surfaces

Not every court has been perfectly cared for or surfaced and there are courts with varying degrees of peeling, cracking and other adhesion problems. Sometimes the smaller problems can be rectified with skilled preparation of the problem areas, and some touch up. Keep in mind that the touch up color will look darker than the rest of the court until the sun's ultraviolet rays have time to blend it. It should eventually match if the same paint is used. Giving time for this ultraviolet process is another reason to schedule your maintenance work early.

In addition to the minor touch up concerns however; there are some court surfaces that have serious peeling, chipping or cracking due to paint build up, salt or chemical use, physical abuse, or poor initial adhesion. The only solution may be to strip the court to bare aluminum, properly prepare and prime the deck, and then resurface it anew. This is a very labor intensive and costly project. If not done, however, the court will continue to have problems which get progressively worse each year. Simply resurfacing over such problems will actually be a waste of money, as the conditions causing the problem will only adversely affect the new surface as well.

If you have a well designed court that has been properly cared for, you should have a surface that you rarely have to think about. If you plan to have it resurfaced every

three to five years, preferably by the same company who can provide expert recommendations, continuity and responsibility for their work, you can spend your time concentrating on the sport!

### The Screens

Since the screens are part of the playing surface, they are an important part of the court that needs to be maintained. Consistent tension, and a smooth plane (no dimples or “bellies”) are the goal.

The screens on well designed aluminum courts should require tightening no more than every year or even every other year with active play. Since each of the 30 screens is tightened separately, it is usually easiest to rely on your trusted platform tennis professional to do this relatively inexpensive work.

Occasionally a player will crash into the screens, leaving a large dent which cannot be tightened out. This will require replacement of the screen panel. If it happens in the middle of the season and affects play, you should be able to have your court professional replace the section. The more economical approach would be to wait until after the season and have it included in your normal annual maintenance.

On a normal aluminum court, new screens will typically last fifteen to twenty years before they start to lose their galvanization and begin to rust. At that time, you should consider replacing either all of the screens, or at least the ones along the end walls, and perhaps the first one up each side wall. The type of screens used are manufactured only in one place (not in the U.S.) and therefore only a select few platform tennis professionals even have them available. Proper tension, lacing, and ability to obtain square corners are all necessary when installing screens. Again, a well-trained and qualified platform tennis professional should be used.

### Other Maintenance Areas on Aluminum Courts

You should keep an eye on the following parts of the court. When a repair is needed for these items, you may choose to have the repairs performed by your platform tennis contractor, or in-house if your facility has qualified personnel.

- Gate latches: Be sure they allow the door to properly and easily open and stay closed
- Gates: Be sure they swing open and shut without scraping the court.
- Snowboards: Be sure they swing open and lock closed. They require staining about every five years to keep them looking attractive.
- Stairs: Be sure the steps and handrails are solid and safe.
- Lights: They occasionally burn out and require replacement bulbs.
- Skirting: Check to be sure panels are completely enclosing the court, and the access gate to the heaters works. Like the snowboards, skirting requires staining every five years or so to keep it looking attractive

## Other Court Designs

There are other maintenance concerns specific to other court designs. Bad ball bounces for example, could be an indication of broken welds or rotting wood in the undercarriage, depending on the type of court.

Wood courts, or courts with wood components such as the superstructure or undercarriage will require more extensive maintenance on a regular basis. The primary need is replacement of rotting wood members. Usually the only true solution is to convert these older designed courts to aluminum. Talk to your court professional about your specific situation and its options.

## Drills

For drills to be effective they must have an objective that is stated to the students prior to conducting the drill. These drills must simulate match play and be of benefit to all the participants. Quite often a drill may have a number of variations that will allow for learning in related areas.

Live ball drills, or drills fed by the students, are preferably to dead ball drills, or those drills fed by the instructor. This may require instructors to spend a few moments teaching their students how to feed the ball. When conducting drills in group settings, it is important to insure that students remain active at all times.

Drill #1:       Lobs Only Out Of The Screens

Objective:     To improve consistency and depth on screen shots and overheads, to gain an understanding of angles, to develop footwork, positioning and patience.

Drill:           The backcourt player will choose either the forehand or backhand corner and the person at the net will line up on the opposite side at the net. The person at the net will start each point with a side-back screen shot. The backcourt player must return that and all subsequent shots with a crosscourt lob. After the first shot the person at the net is allowed to hit back-side, side-back or one screen shots, the only requirement is that all shots be hit crosscourt. The person in the backcourt will remain in that position until they have made three errors. At that time the two players will switch roles. If you desire to keep score, the person in the backcourt should try for a record number of consecutive hits before one and three errors. The person at the net should strive for zero errors on the overheads.

Variation:     A variation on the scoring would have the person at the net counting consecutive overheads hit past the service line with the intent of practicing deep overheads. Whenever this person makes an error then the players would switch positions.

Tips:           •Hit consistent overheads (in the backcourt).  
•After consistency is achieved, the person at the net should learn how to subtly move the backcourt person in and out of the corner.  
•All lobs should be hit deep (in the backcourt).  
•The backcourt person should learn how to move the person at the net and anticipate the angle of return based on the position of the lob.  
•An effective lob makes a person move in two directions.  
•Lob over the backhand side.

Drill #2: Controlled Forehand Drive/Volley Drill

Objective: To hit a series of controlled drives with a compact swing, to "stay in" at the net when volleying a series of drives, to volley deep in the court.

Drill: One person plays in the backcourt behind the baseline while the other person is at the net. The backcourt player begins the point by hitting a controlled drive to the person at the net. The person at the net is required to volley the ball at the backcourt player or to his/her forehand side. The backcourt player continues hitting until missing, at which time the players trade positions. If a scoring situation is desired the backcourt player can count consecutive hits. The forehand drives should be at or near the person at the net - this drill is not designed as practice for passing shots.

Variation: This drill can be played on half a court in either the ad or deuce court.

Tips:

- A series of controlled drives is consistently more effective than a few hard drives.
- Volleys should be hit deep enough to keep the backcourt player behind the baseline.
- Compact swings and movement help you maintain position for the net shot.
- Most volleys will be hit as backhands.

Drill #3: Alternating Lobs/Drives Out of the Screens

Objective: To drive balls out of the screens and practice appropriate shot selections, to learn which screen shots can be realistically driven and how to drive consistently, improve consistency and depth on lobs, to put together a sequence of shots, to develop consistency and depth on volleys and overheads, to maintain movement on the court, to gain understanding of angles, to develop footwork, positioning and patience, to learn the size of the court, to learn which balls to play off the deck.

Drill: The drill is done the same as the Lobs Only Out of the Screens Drill with one exception. The backcourt player must alternate shots between lobs and controlled drives. The person at the net will be alternating hitting volleys and overheads.

Variation: The drill can be done where players can vary their shots hitting both drives and lobs.

- Tips:
- Hit the appropriate overheads and volleys deep (in the backcourt).
  - After consistency is achieved, the person at the net should learn how to subtly move the backcourt person in and out of the corner.
  - All lobs should be hit deep (in the backcourt).
  - All drives should be hit at a controlled pace and should keep the person at the net on the move (practice hitting to all parts of the court).
  - The backcourt person should learn how to move the person at the net and anticipate the angle of return based on the position of the lob or the drive.
  - An effective lob makes a person move in two directions.

Drill #4: Two-on-One Net/Screen Drills

Objective: To practice when there are only three players, to learn to put together a sequence of shots at the net and at the baseline, to develop patience, to create an opening and "close out" the point.

Drill: The backcourt person will choose either the forehand or backhand corner. The other two players will play at the net. The net players must play all shots to the corner chosen by the backcourt player, while the backcourt player can play the ball to the entire court. The point is begun by one of the players at the net with a back-side shot to the corner. If a scoring situation is desired, play until one side reaches three points. (This is a real challenge for the backcourt player). After three points is reached then players switch positions.

Variation: An advanced variation of this drill allows for practice on the serve and first volley. The point is started with a serve and the remainder of the point is played out in that corner.

- Tips:
- Use the time spent waiting for your fourth to arrive to sharpen your skills.
  - Volleys and overheads should be hit deep enough to keep the backcourt player behind the baseline.
  - Compact swings and movement help you maintain position for the net shot.
  - Patience is key for the backcourt player - openings are created by moving the players at the net then hitting a controlled shot at the opportune moment.

Drill #5: Volleys From the Service Line

Objective: To improve consistency and accuracy of volleys, to develop touch on volleys, to improve reflexes, to maintain position in a series of volleys, to hit volleys that make the other person hit up on the ball.

Drill: Both players stand at the service line in the middle of the court. One player begins the point by hitting a volley to the other player. Volleys are exchanged. Scoring can be on a cooperative or non-cooperative basis. Players can work together to achieve a certain number of consecutive hits or players can work together to see who can be the first to reach an established goal. All volleys must be hit within reach of the other player.

Tips:

- Most volleys will be hit as backhands.
- Stay low.
- Minimize your swing to maintain position for the next shot.
- Make your opponent hit up on the ball - change of pace or offspeed shots can be helpful in this regard.
- Subtly move your opponent.
- Learn to hit through your opponent - with control.
- If you develop the control to hit the ball to your opponent, then you will have ample control to hit to an opening.

Drill #6: Serve and Volley

Objective: To improve consistency, depth and placement on serve, to improve consistency and depth on first volley, to develop serve and volley as a unit, to understand angle of service return, to demonstrate the importance of unforced errors, to practice developing consistency on service returns.

Drill: The server will serve and follow it to the net for a volley. The returner will return the ball with a high percentage return (usually crosscourt). If scoring is desired, then points can be awarded to the server for each serve and volley or missed return. The server will serve until losing a point, which would be any time the server misses a serve or volley. A winner could be determined based on the player with the most consecutive points.

Variation: The drill would proceed as described above, with the exception that to receive a point the server would have to hit a serve and two volleys in bounds. The intent is to place emphasis on hitting the first volley deep in the court.

- Tips:
- Most volleys will be hit as backhands.
  - Placement of your serve will determine the placement of the return.
  - It is costly to miss serves, first volleys and service returns.
  - Volleys must be hit deep.

Drill #7: Service Practice

Objective: To improve consistency, placement, and confidence on serve (no partner needed), to practice serving from various parts of the court.

Drill: The person will serve and move to the net in preparation for a volley. Players should divide both courts into thirds to practice serving to the forehand, backhand and at the body of their opponent. Players should practice alternating between the deuce and ad courts to simulate match play. Scoring can be done on consecutive serves. Another method is to simulate match play with traditional scoring, as though you have an imaginary opponent, where you score a point for each in-bounds serves and your "imaginary" opponent scores a point for each out of bounds serve. If you can win a set playing this way, then handicap yourself by starting out at love-15, love-30 or love-40 each game.

- Tips:
- Your service toss should only be 17 inches above your tossing hand.
  - Think positive when you step up to the service line.
  - Develop a set of rituals for your serve.
  - Practice your serve from various parts of the court.

Drill #8: Service Return

Objective: To improve consistency, placement and shot selection on the service return, learning to hit serves that pressures the returner and returns that pressure the server.

Drill: The server will serve and come to the net for a volley. For the purposes of this drill, the returner must return the serve with a controlled drive. For scoring purposes the returner will receive a point for every missed serve or return hit into the court. When the returner misses a return then the players switch roles. The winner will be the person with the highest consecutive returns.

Variation: As this drill becomes easier, the returner should be required to hit the return and one controlled drive in. The intent is to hit a forcing return in hopes of producing a short first volley, which will put the serving team on the defensive.

- Tips:
- The serve must always go in.
  - To put pressure on your opponents you must move your serve and hit it deep.
  - Missed service returns are deadly - learn which service returns you must lob.
  - Most servers will hit defensive serves - learn to hit offensive returns.

Drill #9:                   The Controlled Roll on Short Balls

Objective:    To identify which balls can be attacked, to attack with control, to close out the point if the attacking shot does not win the point, to defend the net when a weak shot is hit.

Drill:         One player will play in either the forehand or backhand corner and the other player will be positioned at the net. Any time a volley or overhead lands inside the service line the backcourt player should try to return the ball off the deck from inside the court area. If possible the shot should be returned with a controlled drive (topspin) to the open part of the court. As with the other drills, the backcourt player will play in that position until missing a drive on a short ball. The winner will be the player accumulating the most consecutive controlled drives on short balls. (As your level increases it may be necessary for the player at the net to intentionally hit the ball short.)

Variation:    The same drill can be done working primarily out of the screens where the emphasis will be on playing short angle shots before they reach the screen.

- Tips:
- Avoid the tendency to over-hit on short balls.
  - Offense can most effectively be generated when hitting from within the playing boundaries.
  - Hit most volleys as backhands.
  - Buy time with defensive lobs when pulled way out of position.
  - Hit the high percentage shot.

Drill #10:       Role Playing

Objective:    To develop a more well-rounded game, to point out and improve your weaknesses and strengths, to help you understand your limitations and capabilities, to better comprehend various strategies, improve communications between team members, to comprehend roles of forehand and backhand players.

Drills:        These drills can be incorporated into your matches or when you have four players.

- When your team is receiving, lob every ball.
- When your team is receiving, hit a controlled drive on every ball.
- Have the forehand player "set up" the backhand player on every point.
- Have the backhand player "set up" the forehand player on every point.
- Alternate having players act as "talkers" or quarterbacks.
- Designate one player to hit the "third" shot as short as possible so you can practice getting out of trouble. (Both at the net and at the baseline.)
- As the backcourt team alternate your shots between lobs and drives.
- Hit every ball to a certain player or point on the court (Both at the net and at the baseline).
- Play a match where you automatically lose a game when you miss a serve or a return.
- Have each returner blitz at least once a game.

Tips:

- Communicate with your partner after each point (Look at them, talk to them, give them a high five).
- Have fun with your partner, laugh on the court.
- Find out how to communicate with your partner.
- Understand the role of the forehand and backhand courts.
- Appreciate consistency.
- Doubles is a team effort, work for the appropriate team style.
- If you and your partner are not compatible, find another partner.