

## **Leaving Tennis Habits on the Tennis Court**

In 1995 Gary Horvath, the author, was an instructor at the R.J. Reilly Platform Tennis camp for a group of players that included Rich Kruzynski. About a week after conducting the camp “The Cruiser” requested a summary of a discussion held at camp about the differences between the tennis and platform tennis. The Cruiser was sent a copy and a later update was included in the USA PPTA manual.

### **Overall**

The major differences lie in the following areas:

- Platform tennis is played with a 17 inch composite paddle with holes in it and grit to produce spin vs. a 28-29 inch strung 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 in platform tennis. They are also played as good services in men's collegiate tennis.
- 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**

Key differences in serving follow:

- 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 (for righties).
- 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 even more positive mindset than tennis, since only one serve is allowed.

### **First Volley**

A discussion of the first volley follows:

- The first volley in tennis is often hit for a winner or with an offensive intent, while in platform tennis the first volley is hit with depth the middle of the court.

- 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. This usually means it is easier for the server to return the first 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 deeper 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.
- The net player is positioned 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**

The differences in the service return are:

- Since the platform tennis court is smaller it is more difficult to hit an effective angled service return.
- In platform tennis, the service return is most likely the first opportunity to hit an offensive shot. 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 service returns hit between waist height and shoulder height in platform tennis.
- In platform tennis, there are more service returns hit with a forehand than in tennis.

### **Lobs**

Major differences lie in the following areas:

- In tennis the point usually ends when a short lob is hit. A short lob in platform tennis usually does not result in an immediate loss of the point.
- In platform tennis a premium is placed on the proper height of the lob. On a sunny day the proper height is to that the ball stays in the sun. Under more normal condition, the lob should be high enough so that the ball will move the person off the net three steps. If the net player let the ball bounce it would land in the middle of the backcourt.
- An effective lob may make the net player move in two directions to hit the ball (back and to the left or back and to the right.)
- 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**

Key differences are:

- 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 is 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.
- There are a variety of platform tennis overheads such as the waterfall, slash, pillow, push, and dink.

### **Social**

The key differences are:

- Platform tennis began as a social sport and it remains a social sport today.
- 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.