

## **Cornering:- Coaching in between games**

1. Know your player:
  - There's no point in telling an attacker to defend!
  - How does the player respond to advice?
  - Is the player a fighter?
  - What would they want to hear?
2. Discuss their plan before they start the game:
  - It must be realistic
  - It must be achievable
  - It must be based on their style of play
3. Discuss the method that you will use in between breaks:
  - Leave their bat on the table
  - Take deep breaths as they approach the barrier
  - Have a drink
  - Reflect on the past game briefly
  - Use the praiseburger
4. During the game, things for you to look for in the opponent:
  - Strongest wing
  - Footwork, is it good, fast, balanced
  - Strengths wide and in the middle of the table
  - Strengths against topspin, sidespin and backspin
  - A pattern of point winning
  - Grip? Forehand, neutral or backhand
  - Favoured tactic
  - A X court player?
  - Return of service?
5. During the game, things to look for in your player:
  - Are they sticking to the plan?
  - Where are they winning points?
  - Where are they losing points?
  - Footwork?
  - Are they playing to their own strengths?
  - Return of service?
6. Formula:  
Calm Encourage Plan Focus React (ITTF Manual)  
Concise Precise Positive \* You've only got a minute!
7. Winning? \*
  - Do you know what you are doing right?
  - What might they do to counteract your winning way?
  - What to do to counteract the counteraction?
  - Keep it simple

8. Losing? \*
- Ensure attitude remains positive
  - Ensure the player is ready to 'fight' for the game
  - Give tactic(s) based on your observations (see below)
  - Try to highlight one key way to win points (or not lose points)
  - Keep it simple
9. For both winning and losing, your player must: \*
- Reinforce / change tactic
  - Change / vary rhythm to their benefit
  - Look for weaknesses and exploit them (encourages focus on opponent)
  - Maintain a positive attitude
10. After the match: \*
- Win: be positive, regardless; never diminish a win
  - Lose: Make comments when heads are 'cool', give player time to recuperate; be objective about defeat and point out possible goals to work towards. Any positives MUST be mentioned.

There can be situations where you cannot be positive; namely games where the player did not show any fighting spirit and gave the match to the opponent. Let them know how you feel about that type of behaviour. This should be a rare occurrence. In the main:- \*

### **Remember: Positive coaches motivate athletes. \***

Tactics:-

- A well rehearsed third ball attack
- One of the seven basic tactics:
  1. All to forehand
  2. All to backhand
  3. All to crossover
  4. Straight back down the table – shortest route to the end
  5. Forehand then crossover
  6. Backhand then crossover
  7. Forehand then backhand.
- Return of long service to be attacked at crossover
- Return of short service to be aimed wide or deep at crossover
- Heavy backspin, sidespin or topspin services
- Short service then long third ball

The list is endless!

If an opponent has poor footwork, they are normally strong on the wings so they need to be made to move and the crossover is a good place to start.

If an opponent has a forehand grip, they will cope less well to heavy topspin at the backhand and vice versa for the backhand grip. Experience is the most valuable thing in cornering in identifying the opponent's weaknesses and encouraging your player to play to their own strengths. Interpersonal skills are imperative and compassion, empathy and sympathy are important aspects of communication with your player.

**At the end of the day, you need to communicate with your player in 'their' language.**

One ex-international player was once heard to say three words of encouragement to his aspiring young player.

**"Just twat it."**

Roughly translated, the advice was to attack the ball more firmly than he was doing in order to put the opponent under pressure. Remarkably, the player went on to win the game.

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2005 World Cup: Final. Chapter 7/9 from 4-8 down. Boll beats Hao 11-8. Why?

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