

High School Coach FAQs

Why is my child not playing in more matches?

- At this time your child needs to improve in certain areas (your coach can be specific on the areas) of his/her game in order to move into the lineup on a more consistent basis.
- Your child is young and lacks the playing experience of the older teammates. So I am purposely inserting your child in certain matches for him/her to gain match experience and match confidence this year.
- Many coaches use a challenge ladder to determine the lineup for matches, and players are encouraged to challenge teammates in a higher position throughout the season.
- At times, players not in the lineup may be able to play an exhibition match depending on court availability and the opponent's number of players.

Should my child be taking tennis lessons?

- Yes. In order to improve on certain technical and tactical aspects of his/her game, one-on-one tennis lessons can be extremely productive.
- Yes. Our team practices do not allow individual instruction as we have many athletes at practice and only one coach presiding. So I would suggest arranging private lessons in addition to team practices in order to work on your son/daughter's individual needs.
- You should confirm that the player wants to participate in lessons and that these lessons do not conflict with high school practice times.

What can I do to help my child improve?

- Your child needs to work with a certified tennis professional once a week for an individual tennis lesson focusing on the areas in his/her game that need improvement.
- Keeping your child in tennis during our off-season through private lessons and group clinics.
- Finding local or district tournaments during the off-season for your child to compete in.
- Enrolling your child in a summer tennis camp. Many colleges and universities offer these in the summer months.
- Extra hitting before or after practice, along with parent/player on-court activities may be beneficial.

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Why do players play high school tennis?

- To be involved in a team sport that they enjoy and to represent their school.
- To develop friendships and learn to support each other through athletic challenges.
- To work toward a common goal with a group of friends and peers.
- To develop discipline and time management skills.
- To learn to encourage others and develop empathy.
- To add to their resume for college admittance.

What should players do in the off-season to get better?

- Players should work with a certified tennis professional in the off-season to improve their game.
- Players can attend group tennis clinics two to three afternoons a week after school.
- Players can enter local or state USTA tennis tournaments to improve their match toughness and competitive drive.
- Players can attend summer tennis camps.
- Players can do off-court conditioning to improve their stamina, agility, power and speed.

What are some good team building exercises?

- “Get to Know Me” exercise where you give each team member the same list of 3-5 questions about themselves or their family. Allow time to have each team member answer them in front of their teammates. Coaches should participate. Questions are encouraged as well.
- Group dinners or any gatherings off the court are productive for the team to promote bonding.
- Community service activities are excellent! Allows the team to work together to serve a cause greater than themselves.
- Ropes courses are always fun and interactive and the cost is minimal.
- If the season is in the fall, the team can carve pumpkins together.
- Coach can google team building activities that are easily administered and throw in one every week or before a BIG match to lighten up the spirits.
- Varsity players work with the jr. varsity players 15-20 minutes before practice.
- Take the team to a college tennis match.

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Should the team consider a community service project?

- Yes. This is a great way to develop team chemistry.
- Yes. This is an excellent way for the kids to see a world bigger than themselves.
- Yes. Learning to give back and volunteer is a valuable characteristic to instill in young people.
- Yes. Give the team a list of different community service projects and let them choose the one they want to participate in. Let them have a voice; this will develop greater commitment.

How should a captain be chosen?

- Team vote.
- Coach chooses.
- Seniors are always captains.
- Productive to discuss what being a team captain means and what are the responsibilities of a team captain before one is chosen.

How should I run the challenge and ladder system?

- Use last year's lineup as a starting point and schedule the rotation of challenges.
- Play a round robin where everyone plays everyone then chart the results.
- Winning percentage is an excellent way to make a lineup after you have lots of results. You divide the number of sets won by the number of sets played to get the percentage. List the players in order from highest percentage to lowest. If two players are close or have the same percentage, as a coach you could choose the more experienced player to play higher or have them play each other for the position.
- Some coaches use a shortened format (play 8 games total with tie break at 4 all, 8 game pro set, etc) for the initial challenge ladder and then utilize a longer match format when players challenge each other throughout the season.

How do I get the parents involved?

- Set up a player/parent meeting before the season to discuss team rules, expectations and ways parents can assist.
- Have the parents be in charge of drinks and snacks at home and away matches.
- Have the parents host a team dinner.
- Have the parents help with any needed fundraising.
- Have the parents purchase school team t-shirts to wear at all matches.
- Parents with tennis experience may be asked to help feed balls during practice.

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How can players practice together when there is a large discrepancy of ability levels?

- Group players by ability levels for live ball drills, competition games and match play.
- Mix up the ability groups for dynamic warmup, fitness, serving practice and dead ball drills.
- Assistant coaches or volunteers may be useful by working with intermediate level players.

How do I keep the enthusiasm alive when the season finishes?

- Plan a fun dinner together after the season.
- Encourage input from the team on how to do this and see what they come up with.
- Plan a few get togethers once a month or an optional hit-around to create enthusiasm.
- Use technology to send group texts or tweets of encouraging and inspiring thoughts.
- Communicate with players about instructional articles or local tennis tournaments and encourage them to enter.
- Send them an off-season fitness packet eight weeks before season starts.
- Take them to a team tennis camp in early summer. (UGA offers one.)

How do you handle the situation of a top player who wants to play for the team but does not want to attend practices?

- If the team agrees to this situation and has no hard feelings, a coach could accept the situation.
- A coach could try to meet the player halfway and ask him/her to attend one practice per week.
- A coach may disagree totally with this situation and tell the player the only way she/he can play on the team is to attend practices like every other player.
- Meeting with players/parents about this topic is crucial to make sure that the team policy is clear.

What are key indicators to help me pair up my doubles combinations?

- Many times your top singles players will make up your doubles pairs but sometimes you will have a doubles specialist that you need to look out for. This player is usually aggressive, moves well, energetic, has good volleys and overhead but is not consistent enough to play singles.
- Mixing a steady player with an explosive player can be a good combination.
- Mixing a player that loves the net with a player that loves the baseline can be a successful combination.
- Positive chemistry and strong enthusiasm between the two players is important.

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How do I handle an inter-team personality conflict or group clicks?

- Addressing this issue early is key. Otherwise it will build and be a poison to your team.
- Face-to-face communication is vital. A coach might have to meet individually or with a small groups (captains/seniors) to address this situation.
- It's always important to "do what is best for the team" and instilling this concept into players that are exhibiting selfish actions or choices.
- Have the players answer the questions on what behavior is best for the team and what they can do to be a better team member.
- Setting a few team rules at the beginning of the season could benefit a coach if this situation arises later in the season. For instance, "Inappropriate behavior is not allowed on the team. This includes any behavior that is disrespectful, harmful or hurtful to any team member, opponent, official, coach, parent or spectator."
- If the situation becomes a poison after several attempts to correct it, then a coach can choose to dismiss players from the team. Written documentation should be kept at all times.