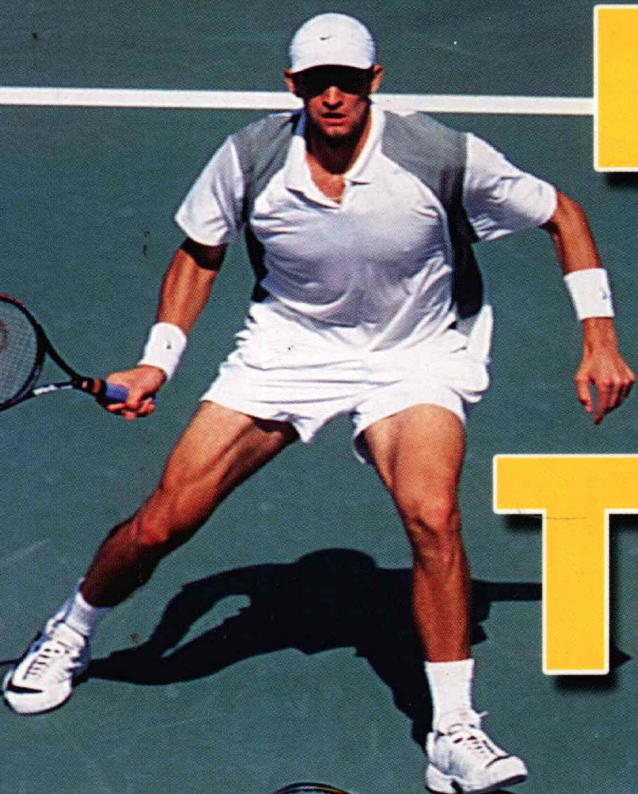


103 winning patterns and drills

Doubles Tennis Tactics



Louis Cayer
International Tennis Federation

Doubles Tennis Tactics

Louis Cayer

**International Tennis
Federation**



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—Louis Cayer

A number of people have worked very hard over the past three years to make this book on advanced doubles a reality. Of course the book could not have been produced without the efforts of Louis Cayer, former Canadian National Coach/Davis Cup captain and coach of the gold-medal-winning men's doubles team at the 2000 Olympics in Sydney. Louis was the main author and led the editing of the book.

Dave Miley, ITF executive director of development, was instrumental in initiating the book and supported the project throughout. Miguel Crespo, ITF research officer, assisted and contributed at each step of the project, while Machar Reid in Valencia, Spain spent countless hours organizing the material before publication. It is also important to acknowledge Victoria Billington and Clare Gale, at the ITF office in London, for the vast amount of work they both put into the preparation of this book.

Our thanks also to the ITF Coaches Commission members, the ITF development officers, and the other ITF development department staff who have assisted and advised in the preparation of this book.

We are sure that players and coaches throughout the world will enjoy *Doubles Tennis Tactics* and find it useful in their efforts to develop an advanced doubles game wherever that might be.

—International Tennis Federation

PREFACE

Whereas singles play may attract the most commercial interest and media coverage at the professional level of tennis, doubles is typically the heart of tennis at the club, recreational, and amateur levels of the game. Doubles is a great team sport for players of all ages and all levels. Furthermore, doubles combines the positioning, movement, and shot selection patterns of one doubles team with that of the opposing team, offering players tactical possibilities over and above those that commonly characterize singles play.

The presence of players at the net when serving and returning reduces most of the rallying that occurs in singles. Therefore doubles becomes ever more exciting, because attacking and counterattacking or defending patterns of play interact with many net play situations.

Because this book is geared toward advanced doubles performance, we have structured the information with the assumption that both the serving and receiving teams want to take the initiative on the point from the outset (i.e., from the first two shots). In order to gain this edge, it is critical to maximize teamwork with respect to proper positioning and movement. If the two partners coordinate their positioning and movement well, they force their opponents to execute increasingly difficult shots (such as a difficult return for the receiver or a difficult first volley for the server).

Finally, even if television coverage often neglects doubles, important advantages accrue from mastering doubles play:

At the professional level,

- it is an Olympic sport and as such commands a great interest in tennis in general in many countries;
- if a player loses in the early singles rounds on the pro tour, participation in doubles can provide additional match play, hospitality, and prize money; and
- during international team events like the Davis Cup and Federation Cup, the doubles match often determines the victorious team.

At the competitive level,

- you can compete in many doubles tournaments and leagues—club, interclub, intercity, and interschool—that offer great fun; and
- doubles offers a team aspect of tennis for those who prefer team sports to individual sports.

At the recreational level,

- it is the perfect game for having fun and finding new friends, since every club offers round-robins, parties, and social events where doubles is predominantly played; and
- besides the normal men's, women's, and mixed doubles categories, many fun pairings can be made—such as pro-am, parent-child, age combining over 100 years, and so forth.

For player development,

- competing in doubles complements singles play since it provides players, especially juniors, a great opportunity to develop an all-around game. Indeed, because players have only half of the court to cover, they often approach and play at the net with greater confidence. This focus allows for more extensive and specific practicing of serves, all types of volleys, lobs, smashes, and angled passing shots.

If you are involved in tennis, you have played and will surely continue to play doubles. By implementing the different patterns in this book, you will improve your game and be in regular demand as a doubles partner.

Along with this book you may want to order the video, the International Tennis Federation's *Doubles Tennis Tactics*, which is available from Human Kinetics. The video demonstrates how you can improve your doubles game through using patterns outlined in this book. In footage taken during Davis Cup and Federation Cup matches, the patterns are demonstrated by world class tennis teams such as Sébastien Lareau and Daniel Nestor (2000 Olympic gold) and former number one teams like Leander Paes and Mahesh Bhupathi, Paul Haarhuis and Jacco Eltingh, Mark Woodforde and Sandon Stolle, Venus and Serena Williams, Pete Sampras and Alex O'Brien, Tim Henman and Greg Rusedski, and Boris Becker and Michael Stich.

INTRODUCTION

Great doubles teams have the ability to cover the court effectively with proper positioning, movement, and poaching actions. They also execute shot selections appropriate to various playing situations when serving or receiving.

In *Doubles Tennis Tactics*, the International Tennis Federation (ITF) addresses three important elements for successful doubles: court coverage, shot selection, and teamwork. You will enjoy the practical format of the book because the ITF selected the most frequent patterns of play encountered in playing doubles.

■ **Court coverage.** The real art of doubles resides in effective positioning, movement, and poaching. In this manual you will learn the exact areas you have to cover as the server, server's partner, receiver, and receiver's partner and what areas you must cover as a team. Diagrams that show you where to stand and where to move illustrate these coverage areas. As for poaching, everyone agrees it is important but very few players do it frequently or successfully. Therefore, we have written a special chapter at the beginning of the book (chapter 2) that systematically addresses what you need to know about effective poaching. You will learn the different types of poaches (reaction, anticipation, command or signal, I formation, and Australian formation) that are necessary when serving or receiving.

■ **Shot selection.** Chapters 3, 4, 6, and 7 present each of the four positions you play (server, server's partner, receiver, and receiver's partner) and cover the different shot selections each position requires when you play matches. For example, in chapter 3 you will see that the server's first volley has to be different according to six different receiving team positions or movements after the return. If you train only a general deep crosscourt first volley, you may find yourself stressed when receiving teams come in or poach after the returns. Therefore, not only the techniques but also the tactical decisions have to become automatic when encountering different situations. These skills are best trained through the tactical patterns of this manual.

■ **Teamwork.** Chapters 5 and 8 present specific team patterns for you to discuss and practice with your partner. Chapter 5, for instance, will help you to successfully implement the different types of poaching covered in chapter 2, to become a wall when both of you are at the net, to decide who takes the middle and who covers the lob, and so forth.







■ **Planning and charting patterns.** Since there are many patterns to train and different types of opponents to play against, we have added chapter 9 for planning and chapter 10 for charting and anticipating opponents' tactical patterns. This material should prove very useful both for coaches and for all competitive players.

To help you to practice these patterns, the book presents drills based on a systematic 3-step model using basket feeds, live feeds, or cooperative play. (You will find the model of this 3-step progression in chapter 3; thereafter, generally only one of the three drill options illustrates a pattern.) **Basket feeds** develop skills with maximal repetition, as the coach controls the feeds and introduces the ball to train the specific skill. Basket feeds could initiate a learning drill having all the players on the same side, or it could set-up a specific playing situation. **Live feeds** use the skill in a more realistic situation as the ball is actually played to the athlete practicing the skill. **Cooperative play** simulates game situations, but to ensure enough repetition of the skills being trained, the players are requested to cooperate by initiating the point in a certain way before playing it out.

All of these drills can be performed by male and female players with or without a coach. Advanced players can do all of the patterns provided in this book simply by doing the cooperative game situations. It is important to note that tactical training requires decision making, therefore most of the drills are structured so that the players will have to choose between at least two options while perfecting their skills.

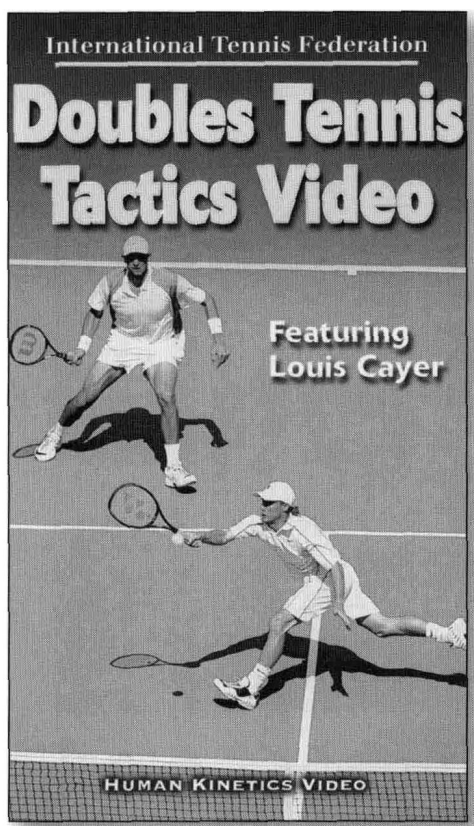
One final piece of advice for all readers to remember is to choose the best partner available. This recommendation remains as true today as it was in yesteryear, and we hope that by reading and implementing the patterns outlined in this book, you become that very player!

KEY TO DIAGRAMS

S	Server
SP	Server's partner
R	Receiver
RP	Receiver's partner
T1, T2, T3	Target
TM, M1, M2, M3	Territory markers
P1, P2, P3	Player position
	Path of ball
	Path of player
	Lob
	Rope or line of markers
	Territory to cover
	Object (e.g., chair)

Note: Pattern and drill diagram descriptions assume right-handed players and although the examples are provided on one side of the court only (deuce or ad side), the same logic applies to the other side. Also, most diagrams are conceived for serve-and-volleyers but the drills can be easily adapted for a server who prefers to stay back.

See the book's instruction on live-action video!



30-minute video
ISBN 0-7360-4005-6
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Developed in conjunction with the International Tennis Federation and one of the world's top doubles coaches, the *Doubles Tennis Tactics Video* presents a proven system for developing and mastering doubles play.

Featuring footage of Davis and Federation Cup play, top international pros demonstrate the patterns and drills shown in the *Doubles Tennis Tactics* book to help you practice and reinforce the correct patterns. You will learn the most effective patterns for team strategy, serving, receiving, poaching, movement, and positioning. This book-video package provides all the tools necessary to build a winning team on the court!

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PART I

DOUBLES FOUNDATION

We open this manual on doubles tactics by discussing two important issues that are fundamental to doubles tactical training. These issues are the different game styles in doubles (chapter 1) and the importance of poaching for effective doubles play (chapter 2).

■ **Doubles game styles**—Most people think that there is only one way of playing doubles, and they implement tactics that do not necessarily fit their own strengths or styles of play. Therefore in the first chapter we outline different game styles, including their characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses. This material is also important for coaches who want to individualize their objectives or team up their players effectively.

■ **Poaching**—Everyone agrees on the importance of poaching, but very few players poach frequently when serving or receiving. Therefore we provide an extensive chapter specifically on poaching. You will learn the differences between poaching per reaction, anticipation, command or signal, the I formation, and the Australian formation. This information can both motivate you to try out at least one type of poaching and help you to perform it successfully.