





Dear parents and carers,

I am thrilled to present to you a handbook that embodies our shared commitment to elevating the standards of tennis coaching within our esteemed community. As we delve into the pages of this handbook, it is essential to recognise the pivotal role that coaching plays in nurturing talent, fostering growth, and shaping the future of our tennis enthusiasts.

This handbook is rooted in a firm belief in the power of effective coaching to inspire, motivate, and guide players towards realising their full potential on and off the court. With a focus on honing coaching techniques, optimising player development strategies, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement, we aim to create an environment that not only nurtures exceptional athletes but also cultivates individuals of character and resilience.

I invite you to explore this handbook with a sense of anticipation, recognising that the outcomes of our endeavours will extend far beyond the tennis court. By investing in the expertise and development of our coaching team, we are investing in the growth and success of every player we guide.

Your insights, feedback, and support are invaluable as we collectively embark on this journey to elevate our tennis coaching standards. Together, we can shape a future where excellence is not only achieved but exceeded, and where each player's journey is marked by achievement, personal growth, and an enduring love for the game.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and unwavering commitment to the advancement of our tennis community.

Warm regards,  
Sergio Rojas Tessel  
Highlands Tennis Director and Team Leader



## **Highlands Tennis - Developmental Pathway**

### **Inspiring the Future:**

Embarking on the journey of tennis player development is about nurturing not just skills, but also passion and potential. The path we're about to tread, will shape not only exceptional players but also remarkable individuals.

Each stage of this journey is carefully designed to harness the fundamentals for learning tennis: balance, contact area, and the use of the non-dominant hand, while cultivating awareness of the ball, court, and opponents.

Let's begin our quest to honour the heritage of tennis, foster vibrant growth, and inspire the future stars of the game.

### **Fundamentals - Blue Stages (Preschoolers) ages 3 to 5 years old and above:**

#### **Developmental Concept: Playful Introduction (Balance and Ball Awareness)**

- Introduce tennis through creative games and stories to spark interest.
- Develop basic motor skills and hand-eye coordination in a playful manner.
- Encourage foundational coordination through engaging games.
- Focus on developing basic ball contact skills.
- Introduce court lines to lay the groundwork for court awareness.

#### **Serve and Return:**

- Introduction to basic serving motion (underarm, overhead throws and catapults) and returning skills using simple exercises.

#### **Tactical:**

- Teach simple concepts (like hitting the ball over the net and into a designated area).
- Help them understand court boundaries and basic positioning.

#### **Technical:**

- Introduce players to the basics of holding a racquet and making contact with the ball.
- Use large, soft balls and small racquets to build confidence in striking.



**Movement:**

- Develop agility and flexibility through imaginative games and activities.
- Introduce balance by practicing yoga poses.

**Physical:**

- Focus on fundamental movements like running, jumping, and balance.
- Engage in fun activities that develop hand-eye coordination and basic motor skills.

**Mental:**

- Introduction to focus and basic spatial understanding.

**Social:**

- Foster a welcoming and inclusive environment for young players.
- Emphasise teamwork and cooperation through group activities.
- Encourage cooperation and sharing among players.

**Key End Game:**

- By the end of the stage, players should confidently engage with the ball, exhibit basic court awareness, and demonstrate understanding of rudimentary game elements.
- Key End Games at this stage will look like a rolling rally, or a catch and throw game of tennis with a large ball.



### **Fundamentals - Red Stages ages 5 to 8 years old and above:**

Now, we help them build a versatile arsenal of skills. The foundation they build here will support their journey ahead. They'll return the ball with eager smiles, making their mark on the court with the very first strokes. Their steps on the court will become surer, and their coordination will flourish like a vibrant bloom. As the stage concludes, our young players will stride confidently, striking the ball with newfound grace and navigating the court with a sense of adventure.

#### **Developmental Concept: Skill Foundation**

- Lay a strong foundation by learning basic techniques and stroke mechanics.
- Cultivate fundamental strokes while emphasising correct contact areas.
- Introduce the ready position, unit turns and other strategies to always be well balanced.
- Introduce the use of the non-dominant hand for improved contact.
- Enhance ball awareness through targeted drills.
- Introduce court awareness by explaining simple positioning concepts.
- Introduce opponent awareness by teaching basic positioning for both singles and doubles.
- Foster a love for the game through exciting and dynamic training sessions.

#### **Serve and Return:**

- Introduce basic serve technique, focusing on balance, ball toss and contact. Teach basic return techniques using simplified rally scenarios.

#### **Tactical:**

- Introduce the idea of tactical outcomes and its correlation to technical execution.
- Introduce basic singles and doubles positioning and court coverage.
- Begin teaching players when to approach the net or stay back.

#### **Technical:**

- Use of the non dominant hand to change/ adjust grips and basic strokes such as forehand and backhand.
- Start working on controlled ball placement and topspin.



**Movement:**

- Enhance footwork and court movement skills.
- Incorporate agility drills to improve lateral movement.

**Physical:**

- Introduce basic fitness routines like stretching and light jogging.

**Mental:**

- Introduction to focused attention, basic decision-making, and basic strategic thinking.

**Social:**

- Encourage communication and teamwork among peers.
- Foster a sense of belonging within the tennis community.

**Key End Game:**

- At the end of the stage, players should be able to serve, rally and score.
- They should be able to engage in basic rallies, demonstrate improved control over strokes, and have a rudimentary understanding of positioning on the court.
- Key End games at this stage will look like round robin galas of fast 4 matches in singles and doubles.



### **Junior Development - Orange Stages ages 8 to 10 years old and above:**

Building upon the budding passion, we dive into refining technique. They will learn how to serve with spin and power, and their returns will find purpose, as they mark their presence on the court with every swing. As the stage concludes, our players will wield refined strokes, maneuver with strategic awareness, and carry the potential for thrilling exchanges on the court.

#### **Developmental Concept: Building Versatility**

- Foster ball awareness by enhancing the understanding of ball trajectory.
- Develop a well-rounded versatile skill set by introducing advanced shots and tactics.
- Encourage healthy competition and sportsmanship in both practice and play.

#### **Serve and Return:**

- Refine serve mechanics, focusing on consistent ball toss, contact area, continental grip and body rotation. Teach return strategies by incorporating basic positioning.

#### **Tactical:**

- Teach players to recognize opponents' weaknesses and adapt their game accordingly.
- Introduce basic match strategies and shot selection.

#### **Technical:**

- Refine strokes and introduce approach shots, volleys and overheads.
- Begin working on under spin control, height over the net and variations.

#### **Movement:**

- Enhance court coverage and teach players to recover quickly after shots.
- Incorporate more complex footwork patterns.



**Physical:**

- Focus on building strength and flexibility.
- Introduce more advanced fitness routines tailored to young players.

**Mental:**

- Introduction to understanding opponent tendencies and basic shot selection.

**Social:**

- Foster healthy competition and sportsmanship.
- Encourage players to support and respect their peers.

**Key End Game:**

- By the end of the stage, players should display improved consistency in strokes, understand basic singles and doubles strategies, and confidently execute different shot variations.
- Key End games at this stage would involve participation in Regional Match Play Series.



### **Junior Development - Green Stages ages 10 and above:**

The stage is set for our players to become tacticians, infusing their strokes with strategy. As they perfect their moves, the court's dimensions will become an arena of opportunity, and each opponent a puzzle to decipher. Their serves will be much more consistent, and their returns will reflect the tactical mindset they're cultivating. Their court coverage will be a testament to their increased speed and endurance. They'll discover the art of positioning, learning to be at the right place at the right time. With the year's end, our players will unveil a mastery of balance during shots and use physics to their advantage, an understanding of court positioning, and the potential to weave a tapestry of tactics on the court.

#### **Developmental Concept: Tactical Acumen**

- Emphasise the role of balance in executing effective shots.
- Enhance ball and opponent awareness to predict shot spins and trajectories.
- Introduce advanced tactical thinking and decision-making.
- Refine physical conditioning and mental resilience to prepare players for higher-level competition.
- Deepen court awareness by teaching advanced positioning strategies.

#### **Serve and Return:**

- Refine both serve and return techniques for accuracy and consistency. Introduce strategic serving patterns and return placement.

#### **Tactical:**

- Teach players to develop and execute a well-rounded game plan.
- Introduce strategies for adapting to different opponents.

#### **Technical:**

- Fine-tune strokes and introduce advanced shot variations.
- Emphasise consistency and precision in shot execution.



**Movement:**

- Enhance agility and court coverage through advanced drills.
- Incorporate agility ladder drills and reaction training.

**Physical:**

- Implement comprehensive fitness routines including strength, speed, and endurance training.
- Focus on injury prevention through proper warm-up and cool-down routines.

**Social:**

- Encourage players to take leadership roles and mentor younger players.
- Foster a sense of responsibility within the tennis community.

**Mental:**

- Introduction to tactical planning, anticipation of opponents' moves, and maintaining composure.

**Key End Game:**

- At the end of the stage, players should demonstrate a solid understanding of match strategies, confidently execute advanced shots, and showcase improved court movement and positioning.



## **Junior Development - Yellow Stages ages 10 and above:**

### **Developmental Concept: Mastery**

- Master advanced stroke techniques for targeted shot execution.
- Adapt techniques for various game situations and playing surfaces.
- Elevate ball awareness to predict opponents' shots accurately.
- Strengthen opponent awareness through in-depth analysis of rivals' playing styles.

### **Serve and Return:**

- Perfect serve and return techniques to suit individual styles. Develop advanced placement strategies and return patterns.
- Cement their understanding and execution of all different serves: flat, slice and topspin (kick serve) and each of their integral parts.

### **Tactical:**

- Teach players to construct points and games strategically.
- Analyse opponents' playing styles and adjust tactics accordingly.

### **Technical:**

- Perfect all strokes with a strong emphasis on consistency and power.

### **Movement:**

- Continue refining court movement and develop an intuitive sense of positioning.
- Work on anticipation and positioning based on opponent's shot selection.

### **Physical:**

- Maintain a rigorous fitness regimen tailored to individual player needs.
- Advanced conditioning, refined speed, and increased power.
- Focus on periodisation and recovery strategies.

### **Social:**

- Cultivate a sense of unity among players and encourage them to contribute to the tennis community.
- Foster mentorship and role modelling within the group.

**Mental:**

- Introduction to comprehensive match strategy, mental resilience, and adapting tactics during matches.

**Key End Game:**

- By stage-end, players should showcase mastery in strokes, exhibit advanced opponent awareness, demonstrate adaptive gameplay, and effectively exploit opponents' weaknesses.

**Junior Performance - Yellow Stages ages 12 and above and UTR 3 to 5:****Developmental Concept: Performance Excellence**

- Elevate performance through consistent, high-quality training.
- Enhance court awareness by developing effective court coverage strategies.
- Deepen opponent awareness through in-depth analysis of opponents' strengths and weaknesses.

**Serve and Return:**

- Perfect advanced serve techniques, focusing on power and placement. Develop return strategies tailored to different service styles.

**Tactical:**

- Teach advanced match strategies and focus on mental resilience.
- Develop strategies for both singles and doubles play.
- Develop advanced skills such as drop shots and topspin volleys.

**Technical:**

- Focus on developing a versatile and adaptive playing style.
- Fine-tune shot placement, depth, and control under pressure.

**Movement:**

- Elevate court movement to professional standards.
- Incorporate agility and reaction training specific to match situations.

**Physical:**

- Tailor fitness routines to individual performance goals.
- Incorporate sport-specific conditioning to enhance endurance and explosiveness, speed and increased strength

**Social:**

- Inspire players to be ambassadors of the sport and contribute positively to the tennis heritage.
- Promote a culture of sportsmanship, respect, and fair play.

**Mental:**

- Introduction to advanced match strategy, mental resilience under pressure, and tactical adjustment during matches.

**Key End Game:**

- By stage-end, players should demonstrate advanced serve and return skills, excellent court coverage, a profound understanding of opponent tendencies, and the ability to implement effective strategies during high-pressure matches.
- Key End Games at this stage would involve participation in UTR competitions and UTR performance camps particularly pre- season and trips to compete in different parts of Australia and neighbouring countries.

**Junior High Performance - Yellow Stages ages 12 and above and UTR 5+:****Developmental Concept: Elite Competence**

- Fine-tune all aspects of play to achieve elite levels of performance.
- Cultivate leadership skills and a commitment to giving back to the tennis community.

**Tactical:**

- Foster a deep understanding of match dynamics and player psychology.
- Train players to adjust tactics on the fly based on changing match situations.

**Technical:**

- Continuously refine and innovate strokes to exploit opponents' weaknesses.
- Develop a wide array of serves and returns.

**Movement:**

- Achieve exceptional court coverage and speed.
- Develop advanced movement patterns to dictate play.



**Physical:**

- Implement high-intensity training for peak performance.
- Focus on injury prevention and recovery strategies.

**Social:**

- Encourage community engagement and philanthropy.
- Encourage players to be role models and mentors within the tennis community.
- Promote sportsmanship, fair play, and lifelong love for the game.

**Key End Game:**

- By the end of the stage, players should showcase exceptional skill in all strokes, possess a deep understanding of opponents' games, and demonstrate strong sportsmanship and community involvement.



**High Performance (Juniors and Adults): UTR 7 and above (must be at least 16 years old):**

**Developmental Concept: Elite Excellence**

- Strive for elite-level performance through comprehensive training and mental conditioning.
- Inspire players to contribute positively to the tennis community and mentorship.

**Tactical:**

- Foster a deep understanding of match dynamics and strategic thinking.
- Train players to develop adaptable game plans based on different opponents.

**Technical:**

- Continuously refine and adapt strokes to exploit opponents' weaknesses.
- Develop a full range of offensive and defensive shot options.

**Movement:**

- Achieve exceptional court coverage, speed, and agility.
- Incorporate high-level movement and anticipation drills.

**Physical:**

- Maintain a rigorous and personalised training regimen.
- Focus on maximising physical attributes while minimising the risk of injuries.

**Social:**

- Encourage players to be role models and mentors within the tennis community.
- Encourage players to give back to the tennis community through coaching or mentoring.
- Promote sportsmanship, fair play, and lifelong love for the game.

**Key End Game:**

- Players should showcase exceptional skill mastery, tactical prowess, mental resilience, and a strong commitment to community engagement, embodying the pinnacle of high-performance tennis.



**Nurturing, Vibrant, Welcoming:**

- Throughout each stage, create a nurturing environment that supports players' physical, technical, tactical, and social development.
- Keep the training vibrant by introducing engaging drills, activities, and competitions to maintain enthusiasm.
- Embrace the heritage of the sport by instilling a sense of respect for its history, values, and traditions.

Each player's journey is unique. Flexibility in the development plan is crucial to accommodate individual strengths, areas for improvement, and personal goals. Continuously monitor progress, provide constructive feedback, and celebrate achievements to ensure a well-rounded and fulfilling tennis journey for all players.