

3.5 Skills and Drills - Table of Contents

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Court Tactics -Thinking Points/Reminders

1. Hold racquet in non-playing hand during non-play and transfer to playing hand at time of point initiation.
2. Get to the NVZ line as quickly as possible. Strategy:
 - a. Receiving team: either drive, float or lob your return, and always move forward.
 - b. Want extra time to come to NVZ when returning serve? Try a lob return.
3. Serving team - 3d shot drop and move forward. Aim for backhand side of one of the players at the net.
4. As the serving team, if return comes to you lands in back 1/3 of your court, do a third shot drop. If in front of this line go with the drive return.
5. If any returner remains close to the back line, return deep to them and move to the kitchen line. Aim at their feet if slow to move up. Set your position before each return.
6. Keep players back while you dominate the net. If opponents are far back, consider dinking, but realize it brings them to the net.
7. As a server, if there is not enough time to get to the net on return, stay back for the return, and either do a 5th shot drop, or a split-step mid-court volley and continue to net.
8. Play dinks to the same player several times over. Pick on them.
9. In a dinking challenge when all 4 are at the net, consider a short lob over your opponent's heads. This is called an offensive lob.
10. Don't over-dink. Take advantage of any put away shots..
11. Don't dink from over your head.
12. Move together, up and back. Avoid leaving a diagonal gap between you and your partner.
13. Change up the game. Switch to a soft game to change pace. This is called a reset.
14. Call balls for your partner, such as "out", "let it bounce", "mine", "yours", "you", "me".
15. Shoulder/head high, let it fly: for balls hit with a bit of speed.
16. As the net partner on the receiving team, during the serve, turn body enough to see where serve lands to help make the call and to see what type of return shot your partner is about to do.

Ball Touch Warmups

PURPOSE: Develop “soft hands” in the dinking game.

PLAYERS: 2 or 4 players on court, 2 per side.

1. **Bouncing.** As a hand/eye warmup, bounce a ball on your paddle, flipping paddle each time. If too easy, bounce the ball on the paddle’s edge .
2. **Single Player** - Hit the ball up over your head and catch it without a bounce as it descends.
3. **Tap and Catch.** Team up with a partner and hit a ball to each other trying to catch the ball on the face of your paddle without it bouncing. Stand 5 ft apart for this volley exercise.
4. **Tap and Bounce.** Team up and tap/bump the ball to each other. Bounce it twice (flip paddle) and tap/bump back. Stand 5 ft apart for this exercise.
5. **Dink, Catch, Dink.** Team up with a partner and dink the ball to your partner opposite who attempts to catch the ball with their paddle. They, in turn, toss up and dink the ball back.
 - **VARIATION:** Instead of catching the ball, the receiving player **BOUNCES THE BALL** on their paddle once, then dinks it back to the first player who then catches or bounces the ball and returns with a dink.

GOAL: Continue for 5 minutes.

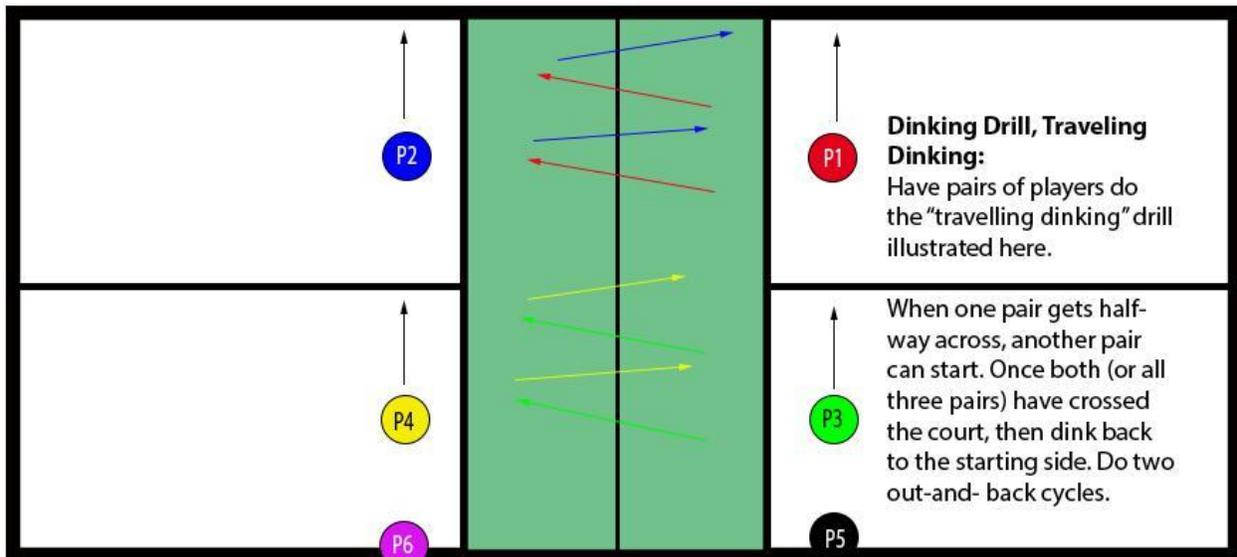
Dinking Drill #1 — Traveling Dinks

PURPOSE: Leading your partner, control your dinks, one step at a time from one side of the court to the opposite side. Control is the purpose of this exercise.

PLAYERS: 4-6 players on court as shown.

EXERCISE: Partners start on one side of the court and dink across to partner, leading partner across the court. The 2nd & 3rd partner groups begin once there is room. The 1st team goes off court till the 2nd/3rd team crosses, then the 3rd/2nd team comes back, followed by the 2nd/1st team.

GOAL: Develop control with dinking.



Dinking Drill #2 — Windshield Wiper

PURPOSE: Warm up the legs and develop the ability to place dink shots anywhere in the opponent's court.

PLAYERS: 2 players at a time.

EXERCISE: Windshield Wiper Drill

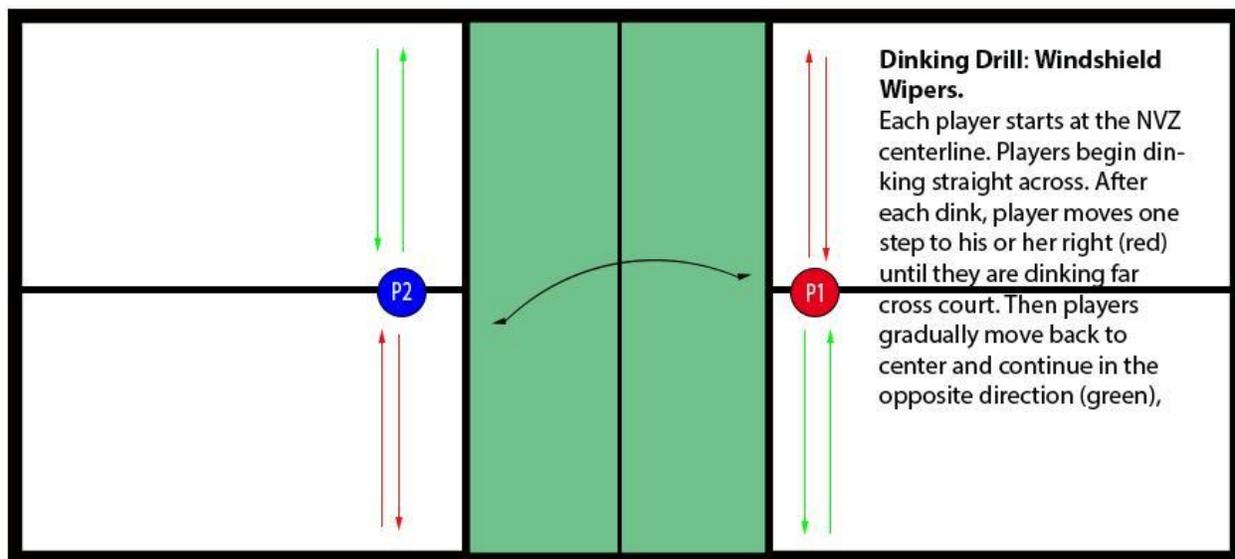
Starting at the center line, each player begins dinking and moving in opposite directions, one step at a time for each dink until they are dinking far cross-court. Then each player moves from their respective sideline back across the centerline to the opposite sideline again resulting in far crosscourt dinking. Continue dinking and movement back to center and to the other sideline.

GOAL: Count the number of dinks, stop at 30 (15 each), rotate players

Note: Every time the ball is hit out of the NVZ, start counting where left off.

REPEAT: Rotate P1 and P2 out, P3 and P4 in.

CHALLENGE: Try applying topspin to your dinks, primarily with FH. Concentrate on stroking the ball with the paddle almost straight up.

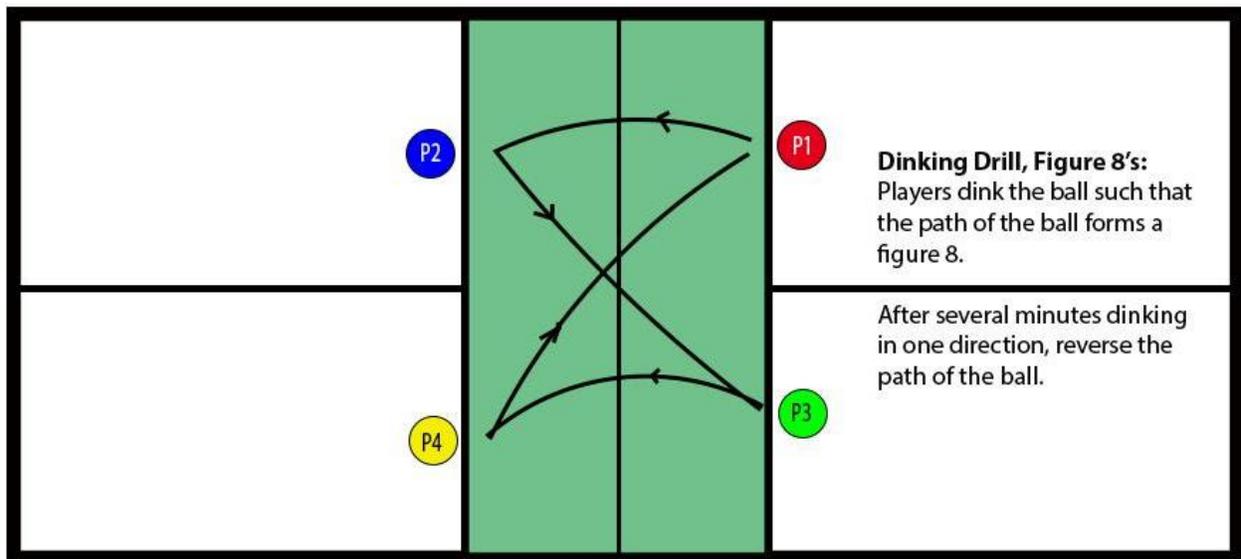


Dinking Drill #3 — Figure 8's

PLAYERS: 4 players on court, 2 per side.

EXERCISE: One player (P1) dinks the ball from the NVZ to P2 who then dinks the ball cross-court to (P3), who, in turn, dinks down the line to P4. P4 then dinks the ball cross court to P1 and the rotation continues.

GOAL: Continue for 8 cycles around the figure 8, then reverse direction. Pay attention to court movement. Each team should move as if a string is connected between you and your partner.



Dinking Drill #4 — The Dinking Game

PURPOSE: Improve your dinking skills. Sharpen one's ability to keep dinks in or close to the opponent's NVZ

PLAYERS: 4 players on court, 2 per side. See variation

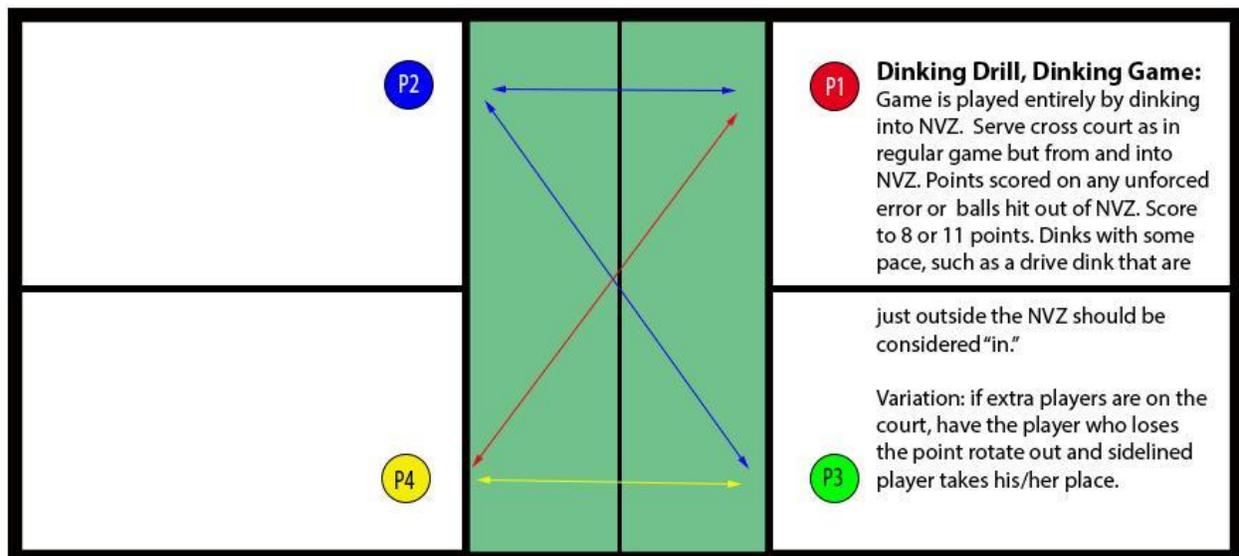
EXERCISE: Play out the entire game with dinks in the NVZ. Put-aways are not allowed.

Score and rotate servers as if in a normal game. NVZ line becomes the service line.

GOAL: Score to 8 or 11 points (coach's choice). Win by 2 points. Move with a partner as if you have a string connecting you. Points scored on any unforced error or balls hit out of NVZ.

NOTE: Drive dinks landing outside but very close to NVZ count. Put-away volley returns do not.

Variation: Extra players wait just off the court. When one of the on-court players makes an error, he/she is rotated out and the next player waiting off-court replaces him/her. This is done at the end of each point scored.



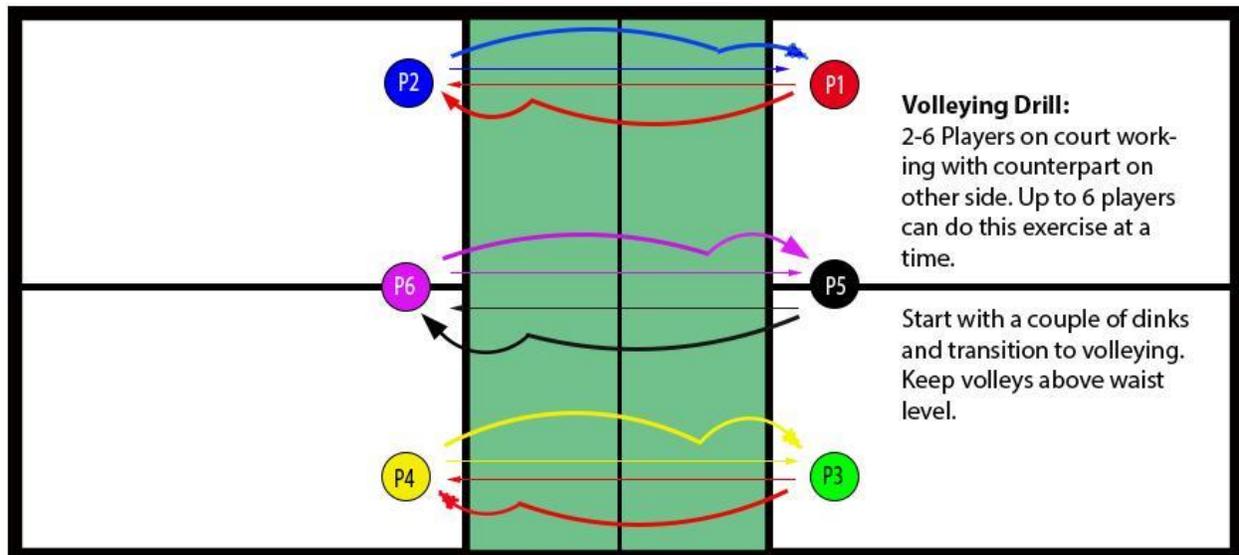
Volleying Drill #1 — NVZ Volleying

PURPOSE: Work on hand and eye reaction

PLAYERS: 2-6 Players on court drilling with their counterpart on the other side. Up to 6 players can do this exercise at a time

EXERCISE: Start with a couple of dinks and transition to volleying.

GOAL: Develops reaction time. Try to keep volleys at waist high, not at feet.



Volleying Drill #2 — NVZ Volleying for quicker hands

PURPOSE: Develop volleying skills

PLAYERS: 1 vs.1, either 2 or 4 on court

EXERCISE 1: Stand in the kitchen with heels on the kitchen line. Volley against each other. Go faster as talent allows. Emphasize body stability. Keep the ball at waist level as much as possible.

After 5 minutes, step back to the proper kitchen position and continue to volley for another 5 minutes.

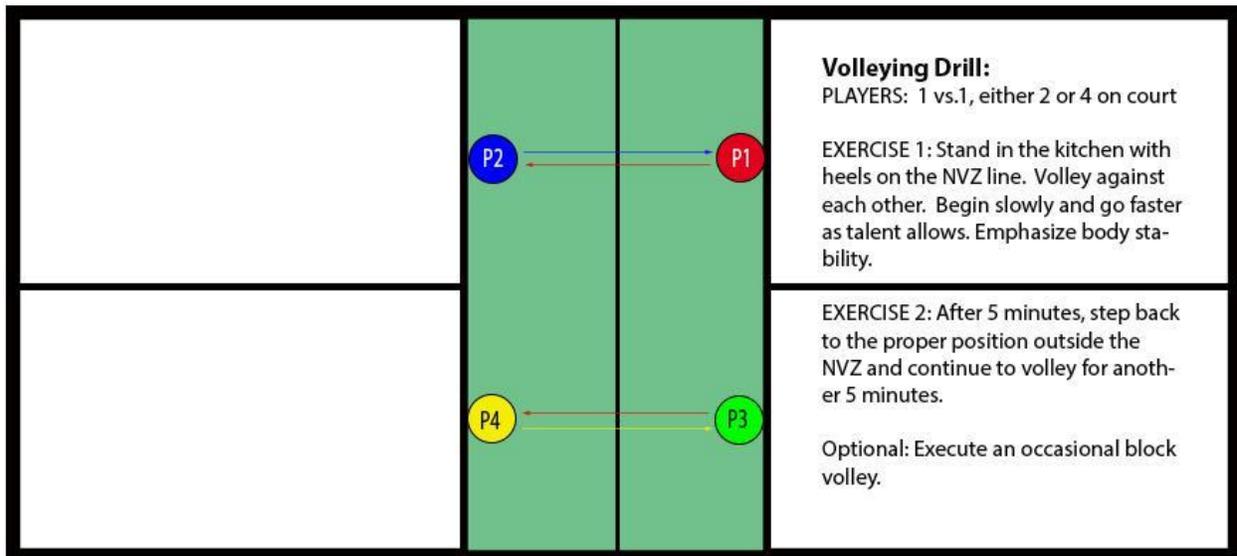
EXERCISE 2: Body stability

Balance something soft like a wristband on your head.

From a proper kitchen position, volley with your opponent and keep a balanced object on your head. This is to emphasize body stability. Try to minimize body movement. Keep paddle out in front.

OPTION: Instead of both always volleying, try to combine with defensive blocks for dinks.

GOAL: We are aiming for stability and balance



Volleying Drill #3 — with Ball Machine

Return of Serve, Then Punch And Block Volleys

PURPOSE: With repetition of a ball machine, learn consistent returns from baseline, then moving to the kitchen line, hit punch volleys and block volleys

PLAYERS: 4-6 Players on court with a ball machine. 2 players retrieve balls and remaining players take turns hitting. Then rotate positions

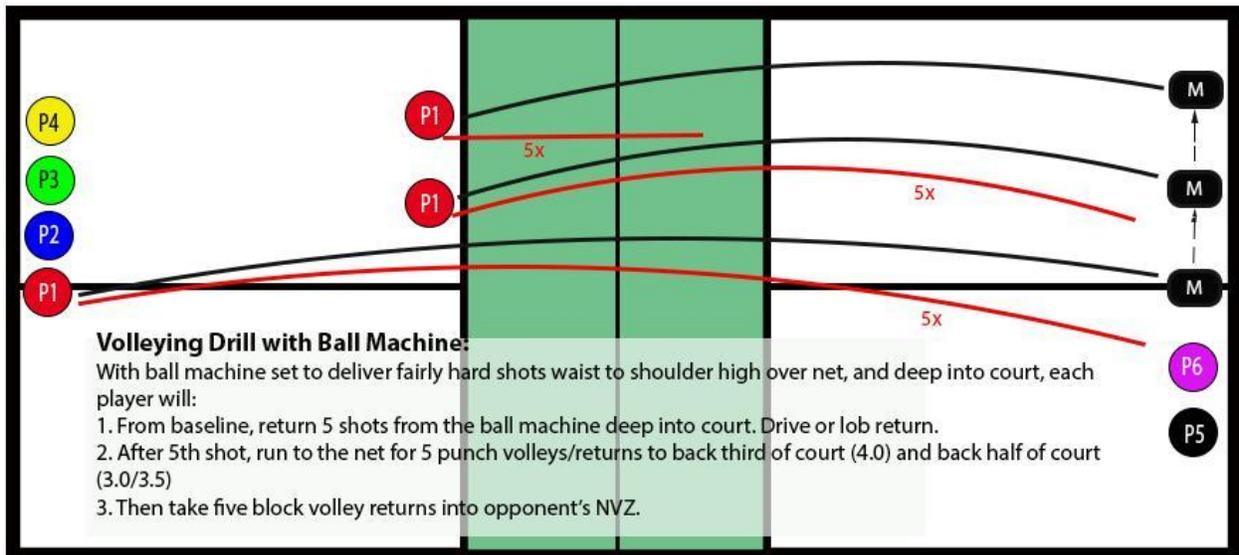
Exercise: With a ball machine set to deliver fairly hard shots waist to shoulder high over net, and deeper to court, each player will:

1. From baseline, return 5 shots from the ball machine deep into court. Drive or lob return deep to the back third of the court.
2. After 5 shots, run to the net for 5 punch volleys/returns to back third of court (4.0) and back half of court (3.0/3.5)
3. Then execute five block volley returns into the opponent's NVZ.

GOAL: Have returns and punch volleys land in back third of the court for 4.0 and back half for 3.0 and 3.5

GOAL: Have block volleys land in the opponent's NVZ. Lighten grip to cause the ball to drop.

Variation: Stop midcourt when approaching NVZ and execute a block volley reset hit into opponent's NVZ



Volleying Drill #4 — Punch Volleys w/o A Ball Machine

PURPOSE: With repetition, learn consistent deep punch returns from the NVZ line

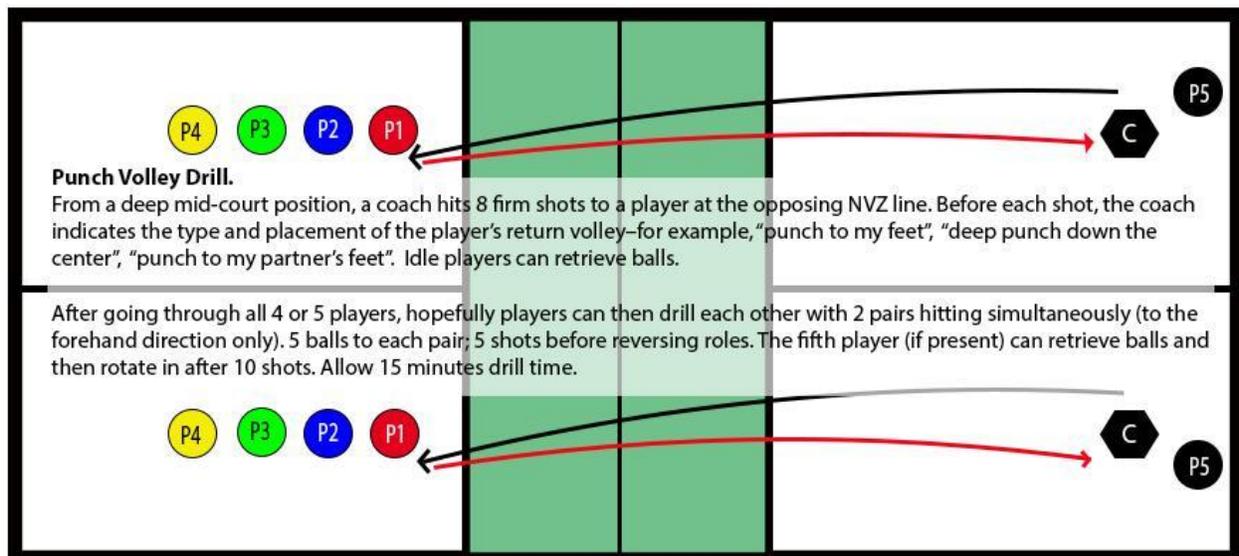
PLAYERS: 4 or more players on the court, taking turns with one player at the NVZ, one ready to be next and the other two retrieving balls.

EXERCISE: A coach or mentor or one of the players drives the ball from the back third of the court at or close to the player at the NVZ who in turn punch volleys the ball to the back third of the court.

Each player takes 5 punch volleys on their FH, then 5 punch volleys with their BH.

3.5 GOAL: Hit to back half of the court

4.0 GOAL: Hit to back third of court



Volleying Drill #5 — Block Volleys w/o A Ball Machine

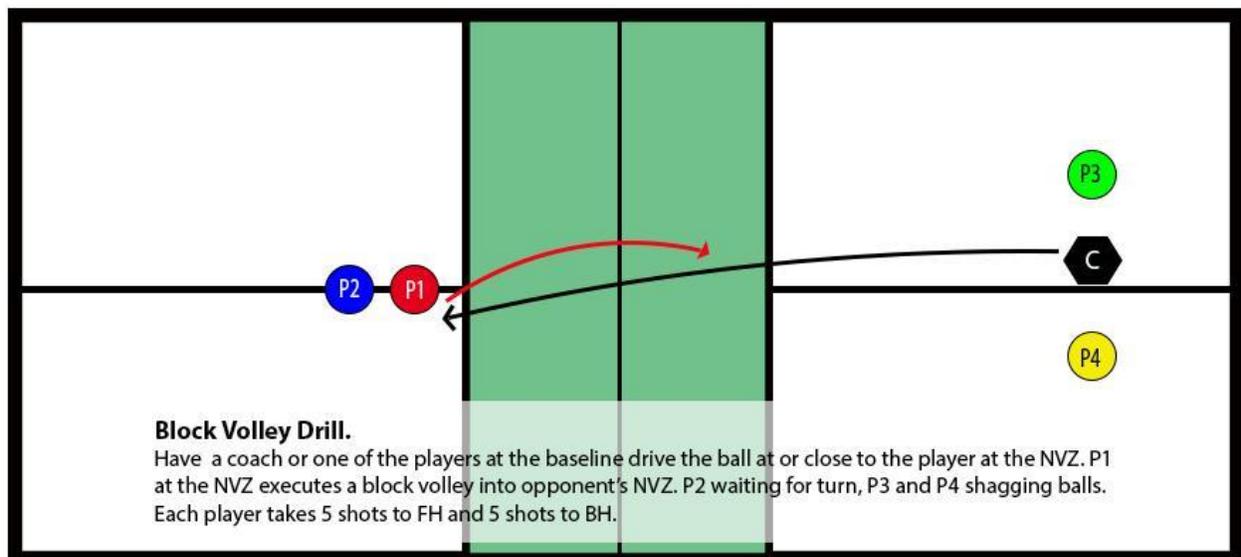
PURPOSE: With repetition, learn consistent block volley returns from NVZ line

PLAYERS: 4 or more players on the court, taking turns with one player at the NVZ, one ready to be next and other two retrieving balls

EXERCISE: Have a mentor or one of the players at the baseline drive the ball at or close to the player at the NVZ. Player at the NVZ executes a block volley into the opponent's NVZ.

Player takes 5 shots to FH and 5 shots to BH.

GOAL: Successfully block the ball into the opponent's NVZ. Loosening grip to effect the drop.



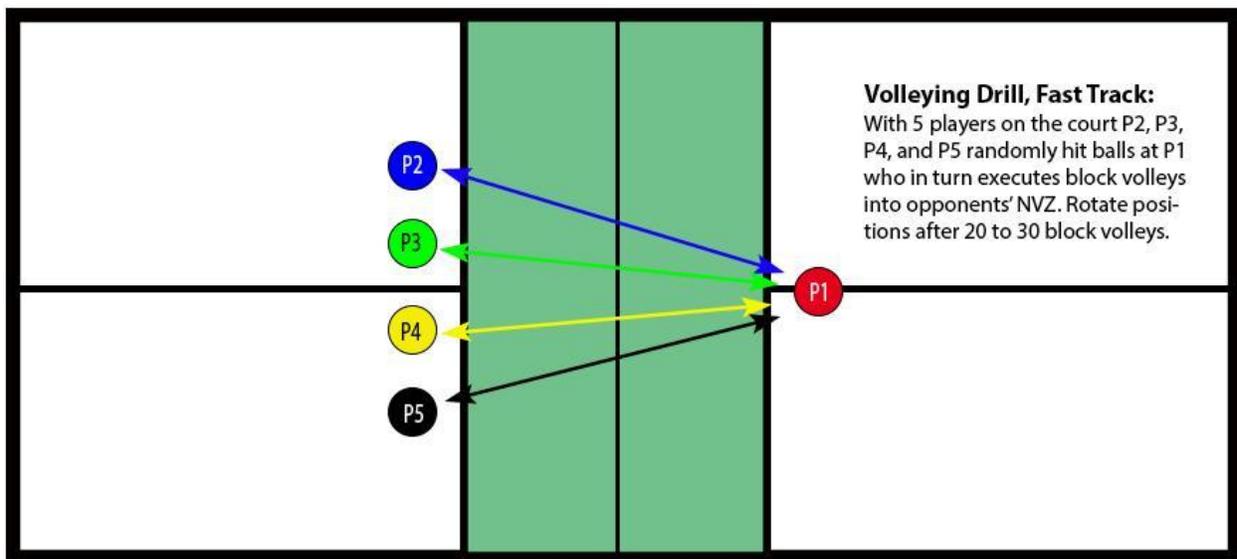
Volleying Drill #6 — Fast Track

PURPOSE: With repetition and quick reaction, learn consistent block volley returns from NVZ line.

PLAYERS: 5 players on the court, 4 players on one side at NVZ line and 1 player centered on opposite sides of the NVZ line.

EXERCISE: P2, P3, P4, P5 randomly hit balls towards P1 who in turn executes a block volley into the opponent's NVZ. Rotate positions after 20-30 block volleys

GOAL: Successfully block the ball into the opponent's NVZ. Loosen the grip to effect the drop.



Fast Track: With 5 players on court as shown, P2, P3, P4, and P5 randomly hit balls towards P1, who in turn executes block volleys into opponents to NVZ. Rotate positions after 20-30 block volleys

Dink/Volleying Drill — win Point

PURPOSE: Develop control and patience for an opportunity to put away a point

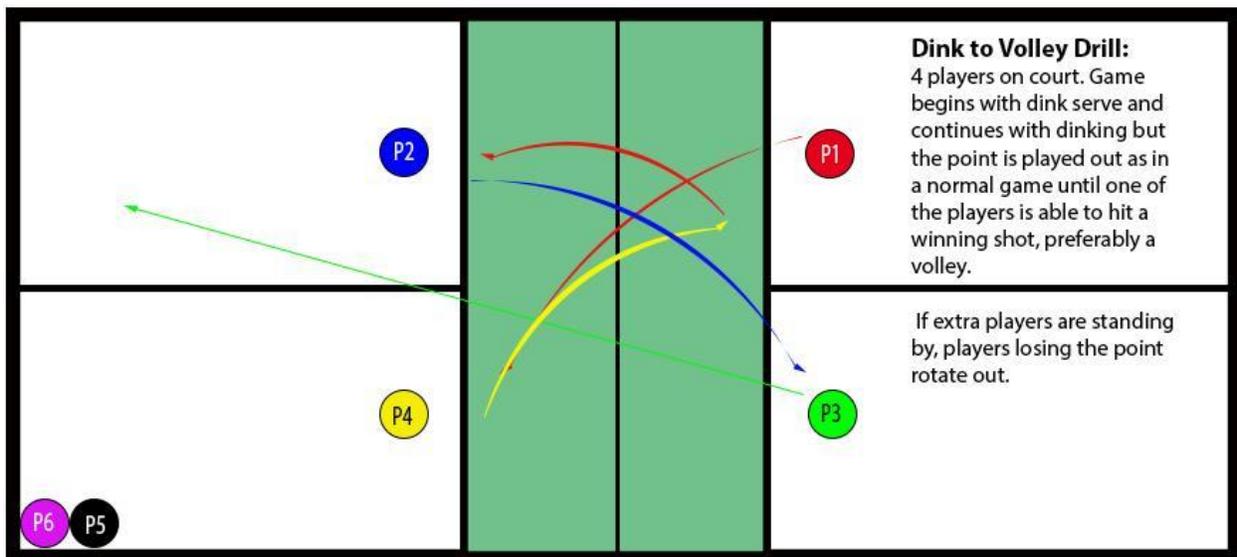
PLAYERS: 4-6 PLAYERS ON COURT

EXERCISE: 4 Players, 2 on each side at NVZ. Other players standing by at either end of the net.

Play begins with all players at the NVZ line. Any player can start play with a dink serve and play continues until a volley develops. No scoring is kept. Have a minimum of 2 dinks before any put away shot is attempted.

GOAL: Win the point especially with an offensive shot when given the opportunity.

ROTATE: Person losing the point rotates out of the game. One of the standby players rotates in. If a clean winner is hit, both players on the losing side rotate out.



Drop Shot Drill #1 — Down The Line/Cross Court Drop Shots and 3d Shot Drops

PURPOSE: To develop and practice drop shots from the transition area and from the serving line

PLAYERS: 4 Players on court, 2 per side.

EXERCISE: Players work with their opposite player. Standing at the kitchen line P1, hits or tosses the ball to an area in no-man's land (transition area), 5 to 8 feet inside baseline.

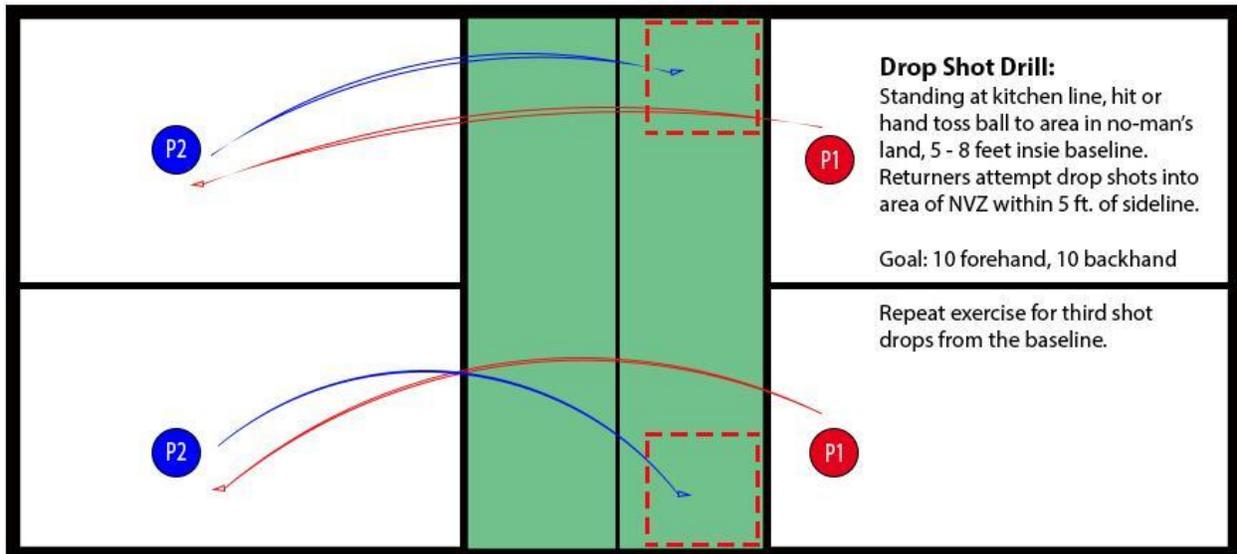
P2 hits drop shots, consciously working FH and BH shots.

- 10 straight line forehands.
- 10 straight backhands.
- 10 forehand cross courts.
- 10 backhand cross courts.

Switch P1 and P2.

GOAL: Have them aim for specific target areas (5 ft side lane in NVZ).

REPEAT: Repeat above exercise but from baseline for 3d shot drops



Drop Shot Drill #2 — Progressive Drop Shots

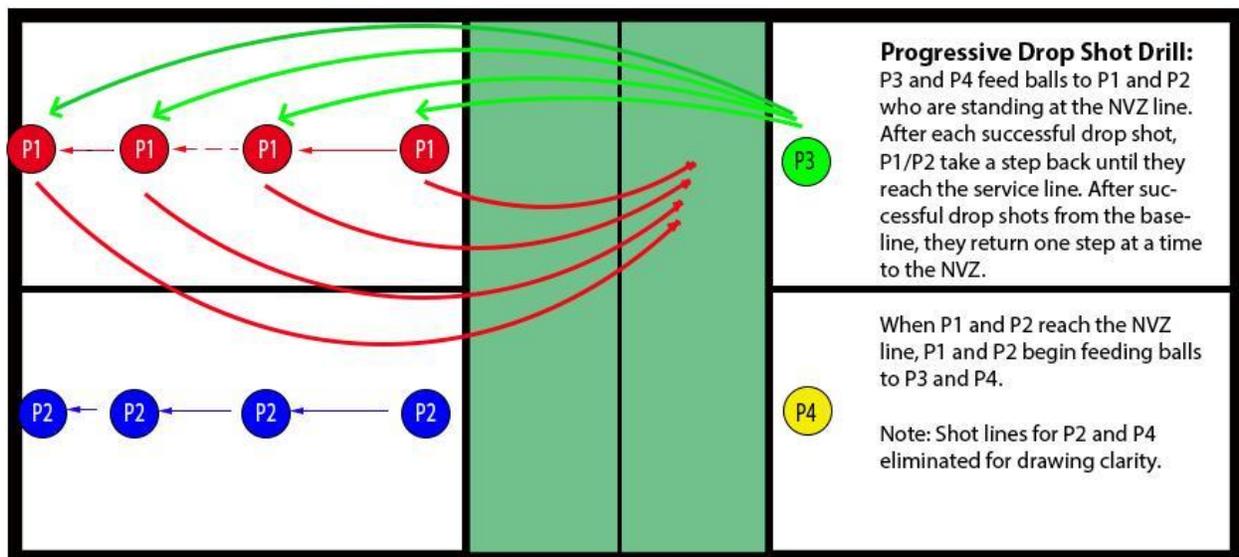
PURPOSE: To develop a drop shot at various distances on the court

PLAYERS: 4 Players on court, 2 per side.

EXERCISE: Players work with their opposite player. All players start at the NVZ line dinking. After a few successful dinks, P1 and P2 begin to back up, continuing to drop the ball into their partner's NVZ. P3 and P4 remain at the NVZ line and feed, by tossing or hitting the balls to P1 and P2. After each successful drop into the NVZ, P1 and P2 take a step back and attempt another drop shot from there. This continues until they reach the service line, then return to NVZ one step at a time.

GOAL: Develop a “feel” for executing a successful drop shot from various locations on the court.

REPEAT: Once complete, reverse roles and have P1 and P2 feed balls from their NVZ as P3 and P4 move back after each successful drop shot.



Drop Shot Drill #3 — Drop shots with a Ball Machine

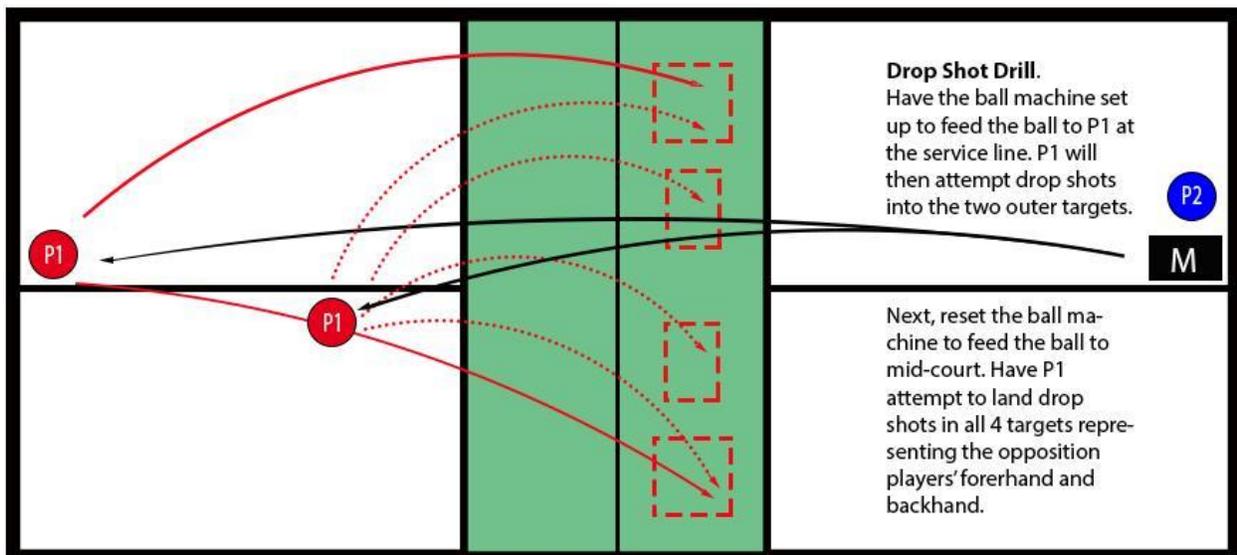
PURPOSE: To develop and practice drop shots from the transition area and from the serving line

PLAYERS: Minimum of 2 players on court, P1 receiving and P2 running ball machine and retrieving balls..

EXERCISE: Adjust the ball machine to shoot balls so they bounce fairly deep into P1's court. P1 executes 10 forehand drop shots and 10 backhand drops. Players switch so P2 is the receiver. Then adjust the ball machine so the bounce is shorter into the court transition area. Each player in turn takes 10 forehand drops and 10 backhand drops.

Switch P1 and P2 after machine depth adjustments.

GOAL: Aim for specific target areas such as within 2-3 ft of the side lanes in the NVZ.



Drop Shot Drill #4 — Drop shots w/o a Ball Machine

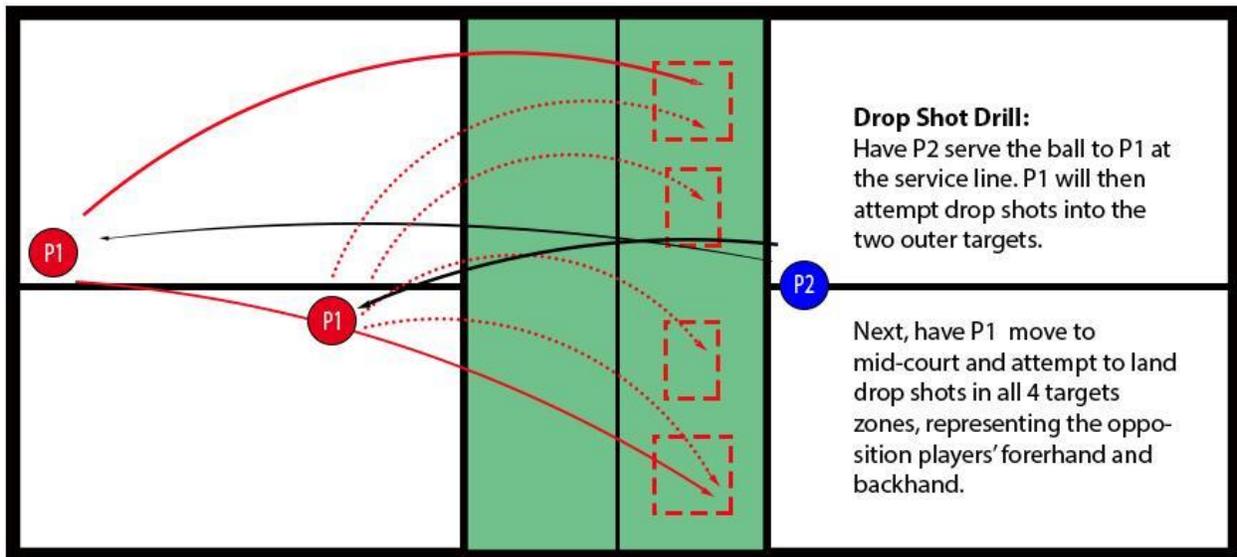
PURPOSE: To develop and practice drop shots from the transition area and from the serving line

PLAYERS: Minimum of 2 players on court, P1 receiving and P2 serving or feeding balls.

EXERCISE: P2 serve balls so they bounce fairly deep into P1's court. P1 executes 10 forehand drop shots and 10 backhand drops. P1 then moves to mid-court and P2 feeds balls into the court transition area. P1 again takes 10 forehand drops and 10 backhand drops.

Switch P1 and P2.

GOAL: Aim for specific target areas such as within 2-3 ft of the side lanes in the NVZ.

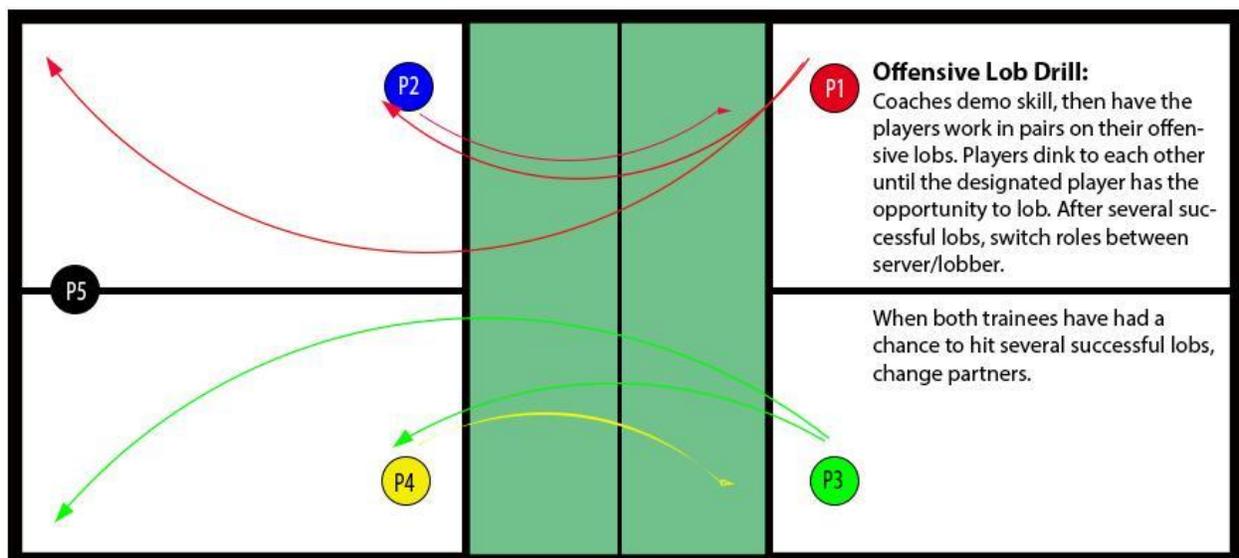


Offensive Lob Drill #1 — Dinks to an Offensive Lob

PLAYERS: 4 players on court at NVZ.

EXERCISE: Each pair of players dinks back and forth. One player is designated as the “lob attempter.” After several dinks and at the appropriate time, the designated lobber initiates an offensive lob.

GOAL: Lob clears the counterpart’s raised paddle head and lands inbounds.



Note: This drill is for just the “lobber”. Server/receiver is not to exact a return

Offensive Lob #2 — Dink, Dink, Lob and Return

PLAYERS: ONE VS ONE, both at the NVZ

EXERCISE: Each pair of players dinks back and forth. One player is the “lobber.” After several dinks and at the appropriate time, the lobber initiates an offensive lob.

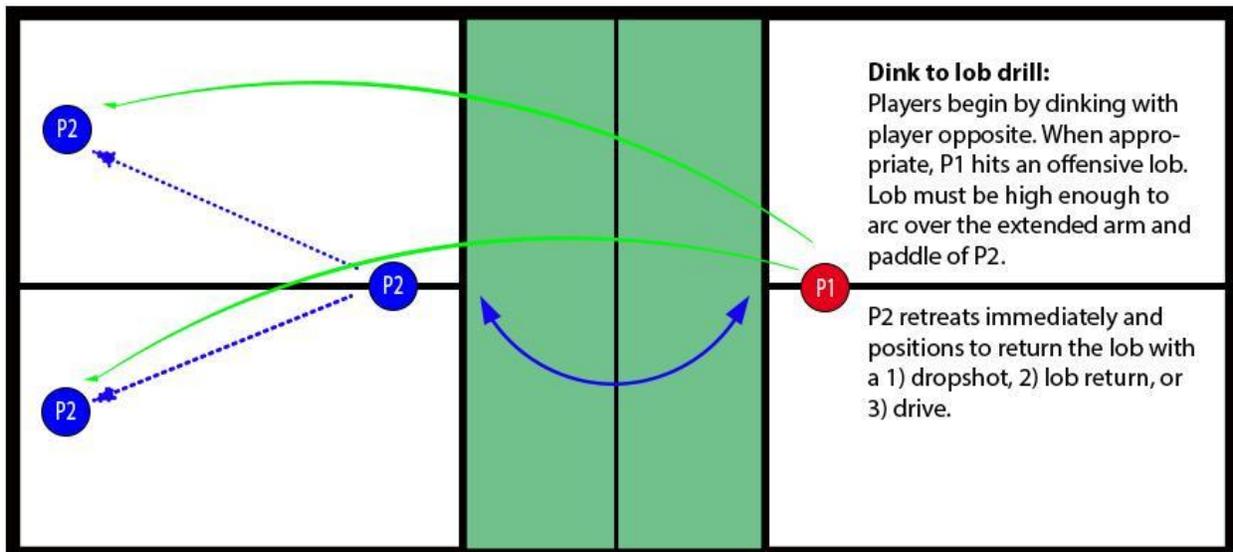
EXERCISE: As soon as lob is hit against you, assess whether it is an easy overhead return. If not, immediately pivot to the side of the lob and run back to return.

NOTE 1: Do not run directly to where the ball will bounce. Rather, allow space for return.

NOTE 2: Don't hit the ball at the high point of its bounce. Rather, allow it to drop a bit to buy extra time for positioning and to do a drop or lob return

GOAL: Successfully return an offensive lob against you preferably in the following order:

- Drop shot
- Lob return
- Drive



Overheads Drill

PURPOSE: Practice proper movement and swing stroke on court to return a lob with an overhead stroke

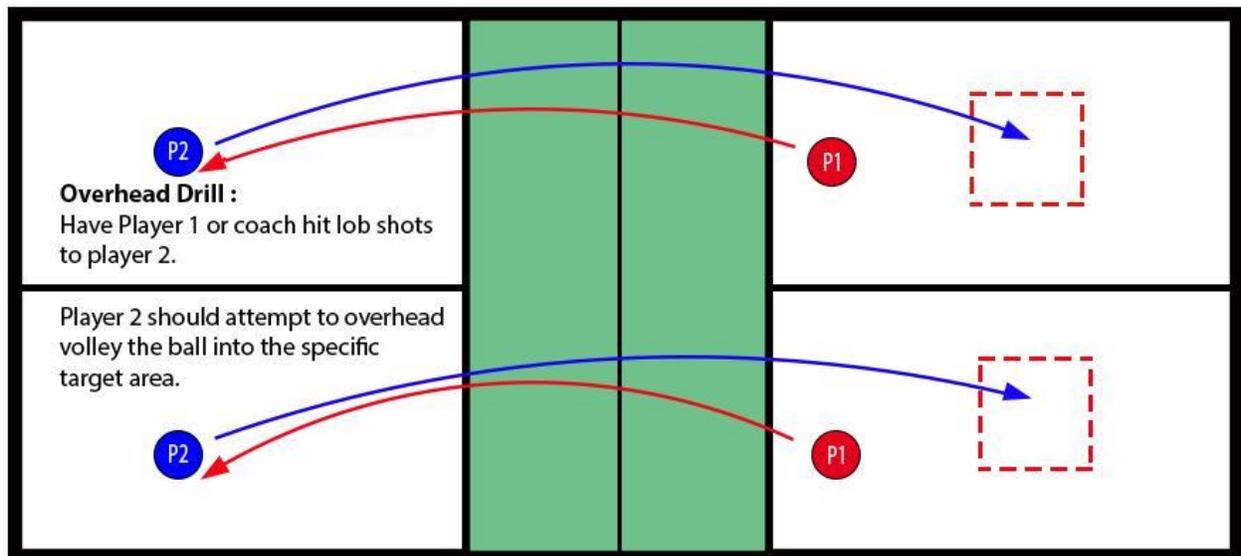
PLAYERS: 2-4 players on court.

EXERCISE: Have mentor or P1 serve up overheads to P2 for overhead practice.

GOAL: Return a lob with control and aim with emphasis on the flip of wrist on high shots.

Returns in or near target area which is in back half of court

REPEAT: Hit 5-8 returns, then P2 feeds P1.



- Feeding the ball is a difficult skill. Only do this drill if a “good” feeder is available

Deep Serve/Return, 3d Shot Drop Drill

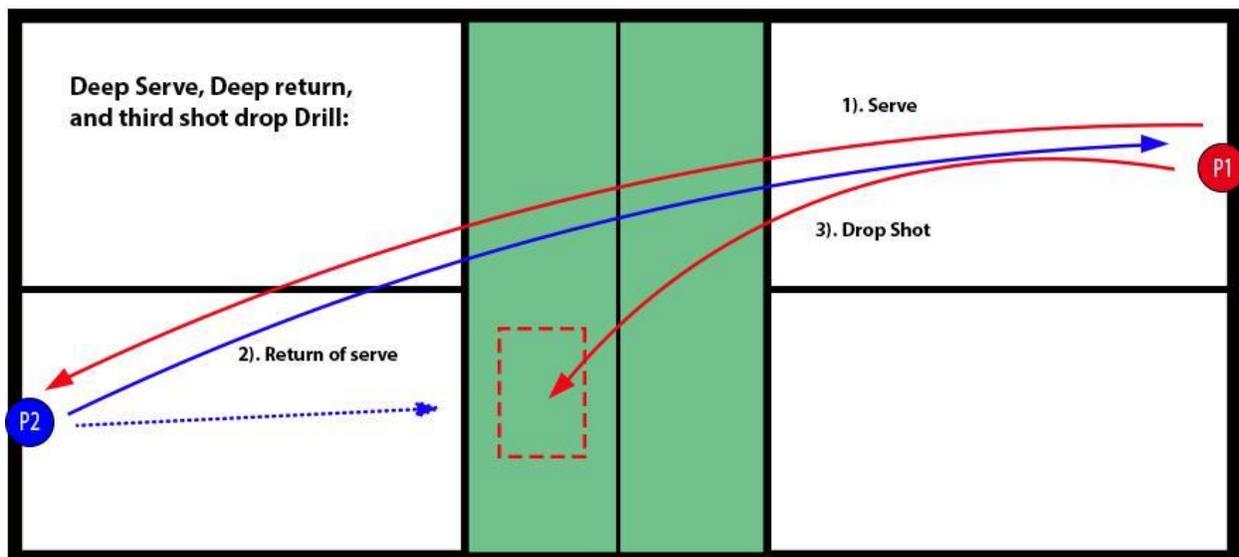
PLAYERS: 2 players on court

EXERCISE: Taking turns with crosscourt counterpart, P1 will execute a deep serve: P2 executes a deep return and moves to net. Server attempts a third shot drop and play continues to point.

GOAL: Execute a deep serve; counterpart executes a deep return. Successfully serve and return are defined as in the back ½ of the court for 3.5 and back 1/3 for 4.0

ROTATE: Each player should attempt 5 serves and 5 returns on both the deuce court and the add court.

Scoring: None



Skinny Singles Play

DRILL: "SKINNY SINGLES"

PURPOSE: Develop skills for entire game play within a confined area

PLAYERS: 2 or 4 players on court.

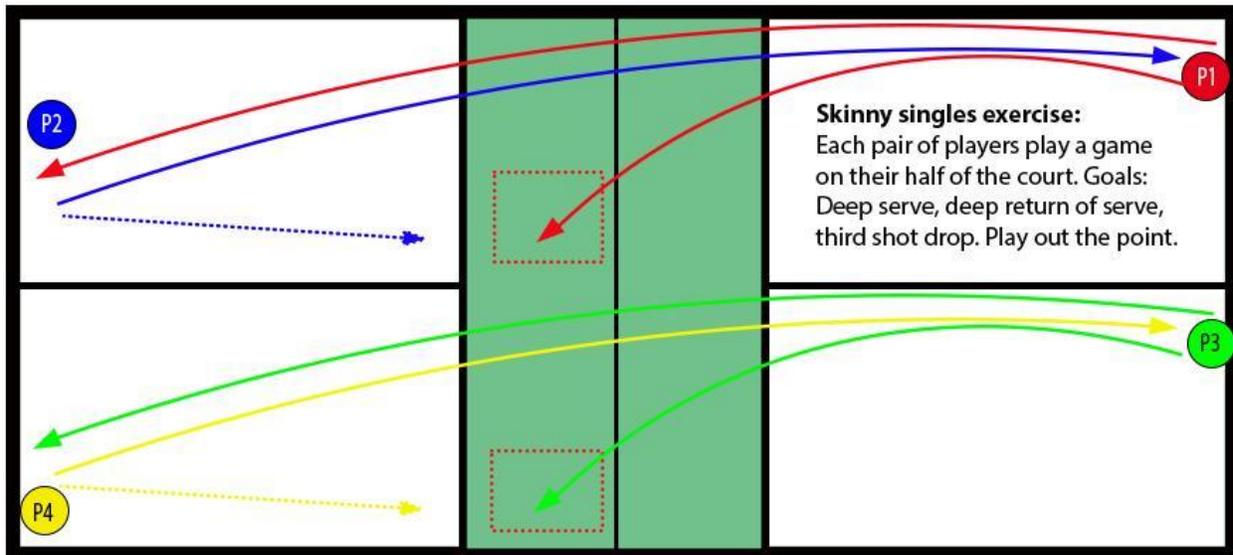
EXERCISE: P1 and P2 play on one side of the court. P3 and P4 on the other side.

GOAL: Each side taking turns, P1 will execute a deep serve: P2 executes a deep return and moves to net. P1 attempts a third shot drop and play continues to point.

Caution: Both sides do not play at the same time! After P1 and P2 play out the point, they pause while P3 and P4 play out their point. Play rotates from side to side.

ROTATE: At the end of each point, serve rotates to the other pair of players.

Scoring: Use either normal or rally scoring to 11 (8 if others are waiting to rotate in).



Ghost Doubles

DRILL: "Ghost Doubles"

PURPOSE: Develop skills for entire game play within a confined area

PLAYERS: 2 players on court.

EXERCISE: P1 and P2 play with their positions determined by their respective scores. With an even score, players play on their even court and with an odd score, they play on the odd court.

Scoring: Score to 11 or 8. Rally (every played point counts) or normal scoring.

