

How To...

PRACTICE

Most people play tennis because...they love to play tennis. That is, games, sets and matches. We love the challenge of trying our best to win the match having lost the first set. Not much gets our adrenalin flowing the way it flows at 4-5 in the third... And that is as it should be, since all our coaching and practice sessions are designed to lead to only one thing – making us better match players.

But that doesn't mean that the best practice for matchplay is always matchplay itself. Why? Because there are some shots and tactics that don't crop up enough in matches to allow us to improve or perfect the movements involved. I'm thinking here of parts of the game like the smash, the drop volley, the down the line drive serve return in doubles – the list is long.

Within five minutes of stepping on to the court, most players are involved in games, sets and matches. They never give themselves the opportunity to really master the finer points of tennis. Better to select a particular aspect of the game, and spend 20 minutes working on it intensively. Then play your set. You'll feel the benefit the next time that short, high lob is descending slowly towards your racquet...

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