

FRENCH FEDERATION AND PROGRESSIVE TENNIS

Overall presentation

The use of slower balls started with the mini-tennis program in 1994. Five thousands clubs then received a mini-tennis kit including small rackets, slower balls and many accessories likely to help coaches make tennis easy and fun. Coaches were educated to teach mini-tennis.

Many coaches then realized that slower balls, smaller rackets, smaller courts and lower nets were to be used not only for 5-6 years old kids as in the FFT mini-tennis program, but also for all levels until players are able to play a match in traditional conditions.

The FFT then launched other programs introducing the different steps to learn tennis easier, with more fun. Foam balls, soft balls and then intermediate balls were proposed at the different stages of learning.

We also realized a few years ago that progressive tennis was effective, not only for beginners to rally from the first lesson, but also for top young players to learn better technique and better tactics.

All these programs only focused on training sessions, and we had to complete them with evaluation and competition. That was done with the 3 following concepts:

- Awards to children able to achieve 3 tests related to the 3 formats of tennis: 12m, 18m and 24m. The FFT took advantage of these new tests to switch our traditional white, yellow, orange, green and red colours to red, orange and green.
- "A chacun son match" = "a match for everyone" allowing people to play matches not only according to age category, but also to their level of play.
- Official competition, played with orange ball on an 18-meter court for 8-year-old children, and with green ball on a normal court for 9 and 10 years old children.

Specific programs for adults

As in many countries, statistics are pretty bad: 70% loss of new FFT clubs members within the first 3 years. This peak of the first 3 years of membership has to be passed to win the loyalty of newcomers.

What solutions did clubs offer to new players?

- Group lessons, because to learn the game is the best way to love it.
- Sport activities, as it is a way to bring and keep people inside the club.
- Find partners to allow free game.

Tools have been provided to coaches and volunteers:

« Programme tennis adultes », offering different possibilities:

- a. Discovery → beginners
Use slower balls to discover the fun of rallying from the first lesson
- b. Fitness → beginners or club players, conditioning, health, well being
Use slower balls within tennis games to improve physical condition
- c. Performance → competitive players
Use slower balls to train players for specific shots

« Raquettes FFT » since 1999

- Ladies only
- Level: no ranking or 30/4 only
- Green ball since 2005
- Club teams

TENNIS EVOLUTIF

Bernard Pestre & William Bothorel (FFT)



- 2 singles / 1 double
- 1 set, tie-break 6/6
- Club selection
- Local (district or county) stage
- Regional stage
- National stage
- 11 000 players / year

« Rendez-vous tennis » since 2005

- Regularly gather club members: conviviality, friendly exchanges, doing sport together...
- Take care of new players
- Full program of activities

The great majority of coaches and club volunteers today strongly believe that the use of progressive tennis is necessary to the health of their clubs. The FFT is working hard to help clubs and coaches through pedagogical materials, and also through grants given to the clubs implementing these programs.