

Lesson Theme: How to Beat Bangers

Objectives: Learning to Defend Against Hard Hitters

Skill Level: 3.0 / 3.5

Duration: 90 minutes

Equipment Needed: Balls and Cones/Markers



Mins	Activity	Details	Teaching Points	Comments
5	Meet & Greet	Welcome, names, housekeeping		
7	Technical Warm Up	Select activities from the WARM-UP MENU.		Warm-up should include volleys, groundstrokes, serve and return.
10	Play & Observe	Real Game with a special rule: third shot must be a drive		This rule ensures you'll have many opportunities to observe how players handle speed. Circulate and encourage but no teaching yet.
3	Collect Balls & H2O			Make it quick!
2	Debrief / Observations	Praise effort and focus. Explain that your particular interest was how players handled hard-hit balls.	When people hit hard it is to challenge us by reducing our time to react. We need to ensure we can handle this challenge.	Give specific examples of the kinds of mistakes that get made when receiving fast balls: pop-ups; out of bounds; net, etc.
3	Dink and Flick	The focus at this point is on receiving fast balls when both you and opponents are near the NVZ in a dinking rally. A pair of players has a cooperative dinking rally down the line. Every few shots, one player hits a flick at the body of the other player. The goal is to be able to handle the speed-up.		Give players a chance to try this (and struggle) before offering the teaching points.
2	Direct Instruction	We struggled to control the ball when it came fast from close. We popped up balls, had them go past us and even got hit sometimes.	It is vital that the fast ball never surprises you – you should always expect it. In addition, an athletic look is key to being ready for action.	

2	Dink and Flick (continued)	Have players do activity again, but with the genuine expectation each ball will be fast. This should also be done with an athletic look.		
2	Direct Instruction	Learning about paddle position in this setting.	If the paddle is in a neutral position, it will always have to move to play a FH or BH. This takes time, which is in short supply. Instead, try having the paddle tilted slightly toward the backhand, so it can act as a shield.	While having a backhand-oriented preparation is helpful, it does come at a cost: more vulnerability on the forehand. This is the “price of admission” for this kind of set up.
5	Dink and Flick (continued)	Continue the activity, but with the new psychological (expecting each ball to be fast); physical (athletic look) and technical (paddle tilted to backhand) changes in action.	Reinforce all three: - Expect fast ball - Athletic look - Paddle tilt	
5	Play Real Points	Play Real Points and see if players can defend against hard shots from near the net.	Reinforce key points.	Encourage players to attempt third shot <i>drops</i> so that dinking rallies are more likely. While these are competitive points, the focus should still be on handling flicks/speed-ups from near the net.
2	Debrief & H2O			
2	Introduce New Game: Real Points (with third shot drives)	We also need to be able to handle hard hitters when we are at NVL and opponents are near the back court (e.g. 3rd shot drive). Players play real points but must attempt third shot drives.		
5	Group Activity: Real Points (with third shot drives)	Players must attempt a third shot drive during these real points.		Use this as a chance to observe players handling power from opponents near the baseline.

4	Direct Instruction	When driving their third shots, opponents are hoping for us to miss altogether or hit a pop-up. The goal, therefore, is to put the ball in the court and to keep it low.	<p>Height of the volley is controlled by paddle angle and swing path.</p> <p>We want to keep the ball low over the net (no more than 1.5 paddle heights) so opponents have to hit up on the next shot.</p> <p>A neutral paddle preparation makes sense: it doesn't limit the forehand and in this scenario players have more time to react to the oncoming ball compared to when hit from NVZ.</p>	<p>Note that controlling height is more important than the depth of the volley.</p> <p>Any ball hit high over the net is vulnerable to further attack.</p> <p>Keeping the ball low is the antidote to hard hitters.</p>
7	Group Activity: Drive and Low Volley	Player A is at baseline and Player B is at NVL. Player A bounces the ball and then drives it at Player B. Player B tries to return the drive with a low volley. Player A stops the ball and repeats. Switch after 5 attempts.	Reinforce controlling paddle angle and swing path in order to keep the volley low over the net.	Drives can be made easier or harder by hitting slower or faster, and/or from closer or farther from the net player.
2	Debrief & H2O			
10	Play Modified Real Points	Encourage players to try to "act a little bit as bangers" so that everyone can work on playing against that game style.	Reinforce focusing on keeping the ball low when opponents are attacking with speed.	
2	Debrief			
5	Play Real Points	End the lesson playing real points with no restrictions. Players try to use what they learned in real game play.	No new teaching points.	Praise and encourage effort and ability to respond to fast balls.
5	Wrap Up	Summarize key points	The main thing to do against hard hitters is to try to keep the ball low. By controlling the paddle angle and path, we can prevent giving them what they want – another high ball to pounce on.	Use this wrap up to identify improvement, encourage practice, and promote future lessons or events.

Instructor Notes: