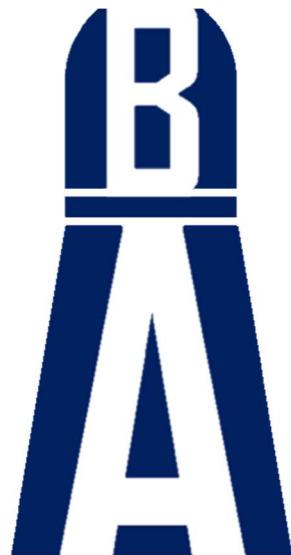# Rally Break development using Conditioned Games

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How do players develop and improve their use of rally breaks?

Using the time between rallies to help yourself is very important.   Too often this time is either not used or players allow negative thoughts to overwhelm them.

Players that make full use of Rally Breaks have an advantage.

These Conditioned Games will provide you with the base to start developing strategies to use in those gaps between rallies, the rally Break.

The games will provide different challenges and tasks. All are aimed at using the Rally Break to create a mindset at the start of the next rally.

The Games are split into 2 sections. The first part outlines the various purposes of each game, of which there may be several. There is also a list of typical player questions that will allow the coach and player to find varying starting points. Finally, the games, the variations and progressions are given for you to try.

The second section provides more detail, advice and questions.   The following sections are considered and graded by difficulty and ease of understanding

- Mentally challenging
- Physically challenging
- Game-likeness / restrictions
- Ease of understanding
- Applicable to what standard
- Discussion points for Players & Coaches

Not all games and the variations included here are suitable for all standards of players. Coaches should select and adapt games to suit the specific requirements of the players.

Warning
Just playing the games may enhance your Rally Break skills, but there will be an element of chance about this. Players, Coaches and Support Staff need to work together. It will be difficult to improve without an open mind, review and discussion.

Use the time between Rallies to your advantage

The Games

Rally Break Time	The time between the end of one point and the start of the next is artificially lengthened by various methods. Allows players to use ritualistic behaviours as part of their tactical and emotional control.
Serving and Receiving styles and rituals	Games plated with 5 serving rallies followed by 5 receiving rallies. Creates opportunities to develop ritualistic behaviors when serving or receiving.
Changing the shuttle	The shuttle is changed more frequently than players are used to. Challenges the players to maintain concentration during the longer rally beaks.
Self-Talk	Players use pre-defined self-talk phrases during the rally break. Applies to both verbal and physically affirmations of self-encouragement.
Thick Skin & Distraction	Players exposed to a variety of distractions to test their emotional and mental control. The coach will be required to design games that replicate these distractions

How to use the Conditioned Games breakdown

Each game is divided into the categories below with advice and points of interest for the coach and player. The various purposes of each game are stated, there may be several. There is a set of player questions that allows the coach and player to find varying starting points. Finally, the games, the variations and progressions are given for you to try.

A rating system of *, **, ***, has been included to provide a snapshot of difficulty and complexity within each category.

Mentally challenging	Each game will provide a different level of mental challenge. The amount will vary between different players. It will also vary as they become accustomed to the type of challenges posed. Note; this could increase as well as decrease. (* easy --> *** stressful & possibility upsetting)
Physically challenging	Some games require physical endurance and will test the players over long periods of time whilst others will require short fast-paced rallies and test alternative energy systems. (* as normal singles --> *** additional demands)
Game-likeness / restrictions	The games try to reflect real match play as closely as possible. Players should be encouraged to 'win' and to hit winners. Games should allow the casual observer watching the practice to believe that they are watching a real competition (* almost real --> *** very restrictive)
Ease of understanding	The games are designed to be simple to understand and carry out. However, some may require further explanation. (* easy ---> *** challenging)
Applicable to what standard	Not all games and the variations contain within them are suitable for all standards of players.
Discussion points	**The most crucial aspect of this document. Discussion is required to establish the level of understanding and development. Sample questions and prompts are given for coaches and players to use.**

1   Rally Breaks

The time between the end of one point and the start of the next is artificially lengthened to allow players to use ritualistic behaviours as part of their tactical and emotional control.

Purpose

➢ To become accustomed to the time between rallies

➢ To practice, rally break rituals

➢ To prepare players for multiple breaks within a match that are longer than they are used to.

➢ To challenge the ability to raise and lower self-arousal levels within a match.

➢ To develop & repeat rituals.

    - Rally break rituals

    - Serving rituals

    - Receiving rituals

Player questions and issues resolved

❖ How can I use the time between rallies to make me a better player?

❖ What should I be thinking during all the rally breaks?

❖ How can I control my nerves or excitement during the gaps in play?

❖ I want to not get frustrated and annoyed at all the changes of shuttles in my matches

❖ My mind wanders between rallies and I often start talking to myself - it's not always helpful.

Games - Variations and Progressions

1) Initially, coaches can time the average rally break for the players in their group. The rally break time is then extended to **5 – 8 – 15** seconds.

2) If the 'waiting' between rallies seems are 'artificial' then breaks can be developed by   a) taking a drink break   b) sweeping the court   c) changing the shuttle

3) Coaches to prepare examples of rituals and ritualistic behaviours   a) self-talk   b) breathing rituals   c) ritualistic movements   d) visualisations

1 Rally Breaks					
Mentally challenging	Physically challenging	Game-likeness / restrictions	Ease of understanding	Applicable to what standard	Discussion points
** Can be initially very difficult for some players. The frequent and extended rally breaks (more than normal for some players) may create player stress as they find the time between rallies 'uncomfortable' Players can use the condition to rehearse • rituals in breaks • serving • receiving.	* Rally length will not be affected. If players are agitated or highly stressed the rally length may vary and be shorter than normal.	** During the game and all tactics can be used The requirement to play within the break style may feel too restrictive to some players. It is important to discuss with players the possibility of this happening in matches.	* Simple to explain and easy to understand. Players should initially feel that the time between rallies is slightly longer than they are used to. Players should be introduced to methods that allow them to feel comfortable even during prolonged breaks.	Once players have become familiar with entering tournaments and have experienced extended rally breaks either though • Opponent forced breaks • Need to change the shuttle • Need to sweep the court If players have reacted mentally and lost focus, or reported that they felt 'cheated' or resented their opponents taking prolonged breaks.	Discuss with players how to create rituals based on • self-talk • breathing • repeated movements • visualisations Which rituals do you feel most comfortable with? At what parts of a match do you think the rituals will help you the most? How do you feel about prolonged rally breaks?

2   Serving and Receiving styles and rituals

5 serving rallies followed by 5 receiving rallies

Purpose

- ➤ To practice & repeat rituals at the start of the rally
  - Serving rituals
  - Receiving rituals
- ➤ To encourage the use of rituals as
  - Motivational tools
  - Emotional controls
  - Intervention techniques
- ➤ To develop a 'reflective' mindset and the ability to change tactics.
- ➤ Can be used as part of the low serve development.

Player questions and issues resolved

- ❖ Why do professional players prepare the same way before the start of a rally?
- ❖ How can I 'shake' myself out of the moods I find myself getting into when I am losing a series of points?
- ❖ What should I be thinking before a rally starts to stop my opponent from winning a series of rallies?
- ❖ I want to let my opponent know how mentally strong I am
- ❖ I sometimes forget what tactics I should be using and just play.

Games - Variations and Progressions

1) A singles game with each player serving for 5 rallies then receiving for 5 rallies. The scoring is as normal rules, but the service is delivered by the 'server' from the court in relation to their score, even if they did not win the last rally.

2) Coaches should introduce a variety of serving and receiving rituals based on mental, physical and tactical actions and thoughts. These ritual s need to be simple in action and Repeatable

3) Include behaviors such as   ▪ Centering / breathing   ▪ Focus & re focus   ▪ Ritualistic behavior   ▪ Self-talk   ▪ Visualisation

2 Serving and Receiving styles and rituals					
Mentally challenging	Physically challenging	Game-likeness / restrictions	Ease of understanding	Applicable to what standard	Discussion points
** Players can use the condition to rehearse the ritual of serving or receiving. Explain to players that the condition is similar to winning or losing 5 points in a row during a real match. Players can practice specific returns of service from each court	* Rally length will not be affected	** Initially unlike a real competition. However, rallies and scoring are not affected. The server always stands on the side appropriate to their score.	** Coaches may need to officiate from the off court for the first few games. Points are scored as normal, but the server does not change over until after 5 serves.	Applicable to players of all ages and abilities	What ritual did you think worked best for you? How did you use the repeated action of serving or receiving to help you prepare? Were you able to see how your opponent adapted to each of your 5 serves? Which aspect did you prefer: serving or receiving?

3   Changing the shuttle

The shuttle is changed more frequently than players are used to. Challenges the players to maintain concentration during the longer rally beaks.

Purpose

➢ To prepare the players for multiple breaks within a match.

➢ To challenge the ability to maintain concentration levels within a match.

➢ To develop & repeat rituals
  - Rally break rituals
  - Serving rituals
  - Receiving rituals

➢ To develop an understanding of why & when to change the shuttle

Player questions and issues resolved

❖ How can I get used to the frequent changes of the shuttle?

❖ What should I be thinking during all the rally breaks when the shuttle is changed?

❖ I want to not get frustrated and annoyed at all the changes of shuttles in my matches

❖ My mind wanders between rallies and I often start talking to myself ….. it's not always helpful!

Games - Variations and Progressions

1) Initially, the shuttle should be changed every 3 rallies.

2) Use 3 new shuttles at the start and rotate with every change in order to provide variation.

3) Challenges can include mixing part used shuttles with a new one.

4) Challenge the players to be aware of which shuttle is now being used and the differences in flights

3 Changing the shuttle					
Mentally challenging	Physically challenging	Game-likeness / restrictions	Ease of understanding	Applicable to what standard	Discussion points
** Can be initially very difficult for some players. The frequent rally breaks to change the shuttle (more than normal for some players) may create player stress as they find the time between rallies 'uncomfortable' Players can use the condition to rehearse • rituals in breaks • serving • receiving • shuttle awareness	* Rally length is not affected. If players are agitated or highly stressed the rally length may vary.	* During the game is open and all tactics can be used The requirement to play within the condition may feel too restrictive to some players.	* Simple to explain and easy to understand Younger players should be introduced to the concept of being aware of the characteristics of a 'new' shuttle - speeds may vary	Once players have become familiar with entering tournaments and have experienced multiple shuttle changes Observe if players have been affected by the frequent changing of shuttles	Have you experienced resentment against others who change the shuttle on a frequent basis? What are your thoughts now with regards to the increased shuttle changes? Do you now check the condition of the shuttle more often during matches? What do you now use the time between rallies for?

4   Self Talk

Players use pre-defined self-talk phrases during the game at specific times. This can apply to both verbal and physically affirmations of self-encouragement

Purpose

➢ To use pre-defined both verbal and physically affirmations of self-encouragement at specific times

➢ To develop & repeat self-talk rituals

➢ To develop an understanding of the influence of self-talk on performance

➢ To determine if verbal or physical affirmations work best for the player.

➢ To increase self-confidence

➢ To develop motivational and interventional self-talk scripts.

Games - Variations and Progressions

1) Players are encouraged to use self-talk or physical affirmations at the start or end of each rally

2) Off-court activities to encourage self-talk combined with challenges (often physical) will aid development

3) The link between increased effectiveness and self-talk must be demonstrated.

Player questions and issues resolved

❖ I know I talk to myself during the match. How can I make it positive?

❖ How can I use self-talk make me a better player, what will it do to me?

❖ What words do I need to say between rallies to make me a better player?

❖ Do I have to talk, are there other things I can do?

❖ How can I control my nerves or excitement during the gaps in play?

❖ My mind wanders between rallies and I often start talking to myself ….. it's not always helpful.

❖ How can I practice self-talk away from the court?

❖ Will self-talk help me in the gym, and in life?

4	Self Talk				
Mentally challenging	Physically challenging	Game-likeness / restrictions	Ease of understanding	Applicable to what standard	Discussion points
*** / ****** Discuss with the players the words & phrases they may use. The requirement may create player stress as they struggle to feel comfortable with self-talk or visual (physical) affirmations In practices, the words can be spoken 'softly' or 'mouthed' or spoken internally As confidence and use develops the challenge may reduce	***** Rally length will not be affected.	****** / ***** The requirement to be in the 'presence' may feel too restrictive to some players. Coaches need to be aware of signs of discomfort, embarrassment or lack of engagement. Do not initially expect rallies to be of a previous quality	******* / ****** Both verbal and physical affirmations should be personal to the player Coaches should discuss the aspect of self-talk or affirmations prior to the session. Coaches need to be aware that the introduction and initial practice can cause embarrassment and loss of self-confidence in players. The use of positive intent by the coach is vital to creating player confidence in the practice.	Applicable to players of all ages and abilities Younger players should be encouraged to use positive self-talk to replace negative/destructive phrases. Coaches can highlight the use of self-talk by using video examples of world-class players in tournament competition.	Tell me about which world-class players you see using 'self-talk'? Do you prefer talking loud or inwardly? Do you prefer showing physical signs or words? What is your favourite self-talk ritual? Tell me how different it makes you feel: good or bad

5   Thick Skin & Distractions

Players exposed to a variety of distractions to test their emotional and mental control

The coach will be required to design games that replicate these distractions

Purpose

➢ To challenge the ability to maintain concentration levels within a match

➢ To prepare players to play in 'hostile' environments

➢ To prepare players to cope with team expectations

➢ To develop an understanding of the influence of positive imagery & self-talk on performance

Player questions and issues resolved

❖ How can I stop getting easily distracted by the crowd?

❖ Where should I look between rallies?

❖ What should I be thinking to block out the crowd or my noisy opponent?

❖ I don't want to not be influenced by the things I hear and see around me.

Games - Variations and Progressions

1) Design distractions that replicate those found in real competitions

   ▪ Hostile crowds   ▪ Aggressive opponents   ▪ Noise   ▪ Supportive teammates who are very enthusiastic

2) Encourage the use of off-court visualisation in preparation

3) The coach will be required to design games that replicate these distractions

4) Increase the intensity of each condition once the players are aware of the coping mechanism that works best for them

5 Thick Skin & Distractions					
Mentally challenging	Physically challenging	Game-likeness / restrictions	Ease of understanding	Applicable to what standard	Discussion points
*** Coaches can introduce the challenge by using real-world examples The ability to remained focused on the match and block out / cope with the distractions will challenge the players Some players may choose not to engage in the game if they feel the conditions are unnecessarily false	* Rally length will not be affected.	** All tactics can be used Players can be encouraged to use the following coping mechanisms • 'thick skin' • 'what is the worst' • 'court bubble' • 'only the 2 of us' • 'routines & rituals	** Explain that it is a test of mental strength. Each 'distraction' and its environmental conditions will have been planned and thought through by the coach.	Applicable to players of all ages and abilities Caution must be taken when applying these games to younger players due to the emotional requirement required. **Ensure 'coach trust'** prior to carrying out these games	Describe your feelings during and after the game. What strategies worked best for you? Did the pre-game visualisation at home assist you? What is your view on these deliberate distractions? Are some distraction harder to cope with than others?