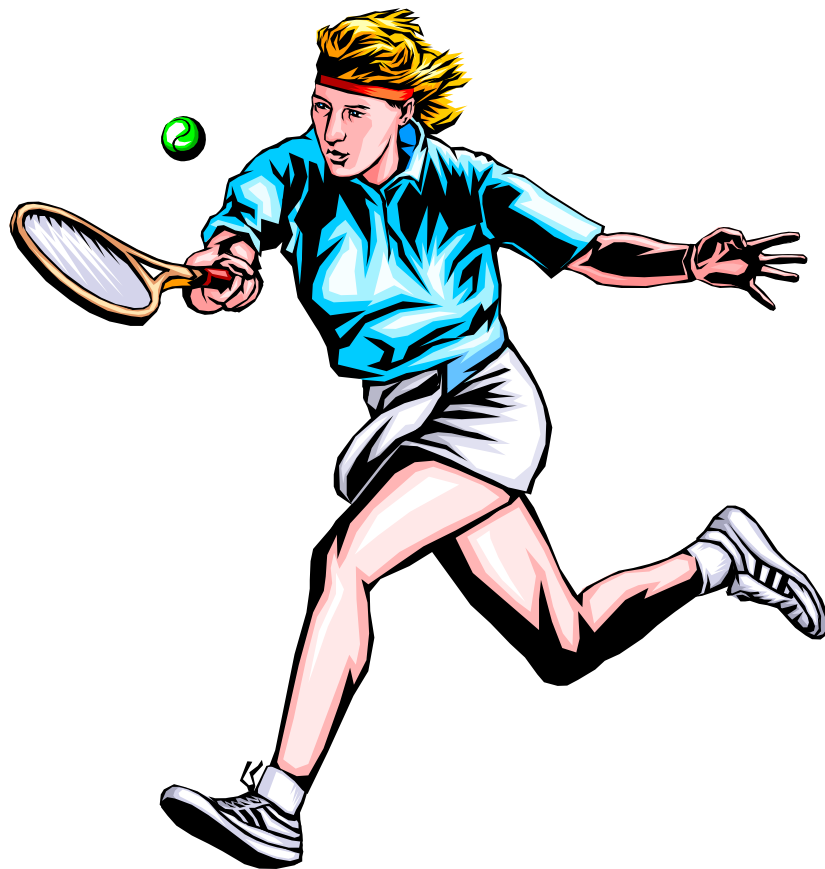


USPTA specialty course  
**Competitive Doubles Patterns**  
Bob Love USPTA (Master Professional)  
Course Director



**UNITED STATES PROFESSIONAL TENNIS ASSOCIATION, INC.**  
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Revised 10/05

**Competitive Doubles Patterns**  
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## Course outline

### I. Introduction: objectives and overview

#### A. Levels of pressure (Create PROBLEMS!)

1. Ball in play
2. Create movement (lateral and frontal)
3. Vary spin, power, or pace
4. Attack weakness
5. Create offensive opportunities
6. Doubles: Create confusion!

#### B. Objectives: In a positive, growth environment, give our students tools and teach them how to use them

#### C. Overview

### II. Pattern production: the tool box

Patterns: Combinations of strokes and/or movements in a specific order

#### A. Depth placement: Vary height of stroke

#### B. Angular placement:

1. Early – ball goes across the body
2. Square – ball goes straight ahead
3. Late – ball goes away from the body

**(Exhibit I: 13 drills for angular placement)**

#### C. Mid-court angular placement **(Exhibit II: 8 drills)**

D. Volleying angular placement (**Exhibit II: 8 drills**)

E. Progressions with foam, soft, and regular balls

F. Placement patterns

1. 2-1 pattern
2. 1-2 pattern
3. Double 1-1 pattern
4. 3-0 pattern

G. Naming Patterns

H. Sequences: Combinations of patterns

I. (**Exhibit III: Patterns and sequences 5 drills**)

J. Advanced tennis: building expectations!

### **III. Sport science foundation: How people learn**

Learning: Relatively permanent improvement in performance arising from practice.

A. Three stages of learning

1. Mental stage (processing)
2. Practice stage (makes permanent!)
3. Automatic stage

B. Verbalization to enhance tennis learning

C. Internalizing learning (versus external prompts)

D. Four types of information abstracted from movements:

1. The condition of the environment and the position from which performance is initiated
2. The demands of the movement being performed, such as speed, direction force and intensity
3. The consequence as perceived by the senses during and after the movement
4. Feedback: A comparison of the actual outcome with the intended outcome

E. Base teaching/coaching techniques on the desired outcome

1. Teach student to learn (focus is on the “how to’s,” stroke fundamentals and skill acquisition).
2. Coach student to perform (focus is on problems associated with performing a skill you know how to do, but are not doing).
3. Competitive feedback: Our key to success!

## **Doubles philosophies, tactics, and styles**

F. What is your philosophy?

1. Offensive
2. Defensive
3. Whatever works!

G. Achieving goals on the court pertaining to your philosophy

1. Player ("setter" or "spiker")
2. Doubles team (team identity)
3. Coach (less is better)

H. Understanding the styles and tactics necessary to achieve the goals.

1. Strong man – Weak man
2. Weak man – Strong man
3. Balanced attack
4. "T" ATTACK

### **IV. Job description of doubles players**

A. Team job 1: Communication! (Verbal cueing)

B. What is your job description as pertaining to your partner?

1. "We" not "me"
2. How comfortable is your partner on the court?

C. Team job 2: create pressure!

D. Job description of each position

1. Receiver's partner
2. Server's partner
3. Receiver
4. Server

E. Job description at net

F. Job description when back

G. Team job 3: create confusion!

### **Match play drills (see Exhibits III-VII)**

H. Movement pattern drills

1. Flowing doubles
2. Rotation
3. Shifts (poach and "power shift")

I. Styles of play (applied 2-1 pattern)

1. MAD: Middle Age Doubles (one up—one back)
2. Serve and volley
3. Chip and charge

J. Variety

1. Reversals (high-backhand attacks)
2. COP: Change-Of-Pace plays

3. Counter-smash shifts

4. The two-way tandem

## **V. Developing sound lesson progressions**

A. Start with your C players (grow the game!)

1. Some of your C players will become your A players

2. Are your B players going up or down?

B. Are your teams or students champions or in transition?

Does performance match self-image and goals?

C. Can you see your picture of what your teams can become?

1. Physical

2. Mental

3. Self-fulfilling prophesy

D. Keys to success

1. Fun!

2. A sense of accomplishment!

## **VI. Review**

A. Match flow – controlling momentum. Feedback based (five possibilities).

1. You hit a winner

2. You make an error

3. Opponent hits a winner
4. Opponent makes an error
5. Long dragged-out point
6. Flow charting (**Exhibit 2: FLOW CHARTING**)

B. Game score guidelines (three possible situations)

1. You are behind
2. You are ahead
3. You are even
4. Risk taking

C. Emotional checkpoints (fuel) – energy motion. The link between the emotional and the physical is breathing.

D. Where are you on the pressure curve? Performance is linked directly to the amount of pressure on a player.

E. How are you responding to your errors? The ideal response to an error is a neutral or no response. The ideal response to a winning move is a neutral or slightly positive response.

F. Three ingredients for winning doubles

1. Plan your work and work your plan!
2. Practice, practice, practice to improve!
3. Higher order thinking to select patterns and styles---not just shots!







## **Exhibits**

# Competitive Doubles Patterns -- USPTA Specialty Course

## Exhibit I Angular Placement

### Teaching demonstration:

1. Three balls with front toe opposite middle ball.
2. Using normal stroke, drop ball to establish timing.
  - a. EARLY—ball goes ACROSS the body
  - b. SQUARE—ball goes STRAIGHT AHEAD
  - c. LATE—ball goes AWAY FROM the body

### Function demonstration:

1. Demonstrate SENSE OF TIMING on service returns.
2. Demonstrate why shots are MISSED.
3. Demonstrate why shots are MADE.

### Developing a sense of timing (coach feeds ball)

Drill 1: Coach calls timing

Drill 2: Player calls timing

### RUN-ACROSS DRILLS (2 balls) starting from corner

Drill 3: Forehand SQUARE—SQUARE

Drill 4: Forehand SQUARE—EARLY

Drill 5: Forehand LATE—SQUARE

Drill 6: Forehand LATE—EARLY

Drill 7: Backhand SQUARE—SQUARE

Drill 8: Backhand SQUARE—EARLY

Drill 9: Backhand LATE—SQUARE

Drill 10: Backhand LATE—EARLY

### START AT CENTER MARK (2 balls)

Drill 11: Forehand SQUARE, Backhand SQUARE

Drill 12: Forehand EARLY, Backhand SQUARE

Drill 13: Backhand EARLY, Forehand SQUARE

### Special Notes:

1. Have players SHOUT out timing BEFORE the ball hits the court on their side.

(Verbalization to enhance learning.)

2. Make CERTAIN that strokers LOOK THROUGH the contact zone and not at their target while hitting.

(Internalize learning and stroking.)

# Competitive Doubles Patterns -- USPTA Specialty Course

## Exhibit II Angular Placement (Rallying Drills)

### MID-COURT DRILLS: (Service line to service line)

Level C: Foam balls Level B: Soft-pressure balls

Level A: Use Regular balls

Drill STARTING positions:

“OUTSIDE”: Rallyers start in outside corners of service boxes.

“INSIDE”: Rallyers start in corners next to center service line.

Placement notation:

CROSS-COURT = “X”      DOWN-THE-LINE = “D”

<u>Drill</u>	<u>Team AB</u>	<u>Placement</u>	<u>Team CD</u>	<u>Placement</u>
1	Outside	X	Outside	D
2	Outside	D	Outside	X
3	Inside	X	Inside	D
4	Inside	D	Inside	X
(Players switch places on their own side of the net.)				
5	Outside	X	Outside	D
6	Outside	D	Outside	X
7	Inside	X	Inside	D
8	Inside	D	Inside	X

---

### THOUGHTS ON VOLLEYING:

1. LET THE STRINGS DO THE WORK!
2. LOOK “THROUGH” THE VOLLEY
3. Return quickly to a position of “DYNAMIC BALANCE”
4. BODY VOLLEY: RAISE ELBOW, step, and let strings do work!

---

### FRONT-COURT VOLLEYING DRILLS

<u>Drill</u>	<u>Team AB</u>	<u>Placement</u>	<u>Team CD</u>	<u>Placement</u>
1	Outside	X	Outside	D
2	Outside	D	Outside	X
3	Inside	X	Inside	D
4	Inside	D	Inside	X
(Players switch places on their own side of the net.)				
5	Outside	X	Outside	D
6	Outside	D	Outside	X
7	Inside	X	Inside	D
8	Inside	D	Inside	X

## Competitive Doubles Patterns -- USPTA Specialty Course

### EXHIBIT III PATTERNS and SEQUENCES

**PATTERNS:** Combination of strokes and/or movements in a **SPECIFIC ORDER.**

**DEPTH PATTERNS:** Vary height of stroke. Stroke **HIGH** to get depth.

Example: 2 HIGH (DEEP), 1 LOW (SHORT)

**DRAW SERIES:** Bring to net and attack!

---

**ANGULAR PLACEMENT PATTERNS:** Hit in **NUMBERED** order.

2-1: 2 to one target and 1 to another target

"21 DEEP BACKHAND": 2 to deep FG and 1 to deep BG.

"21 SHORT BACKHAND": 2 to deep FG and 1 to short BG.

"21 DEEP FOREHAND": 2 to deep BG, and 1 to deep FG.

"21 SHORT FOREHAND": 2 to deep BG, and 1 to short FG.

1-2: 1 to one target and 2 to another target

"12 DEEP BACKHAND": 1 to deep FG, and 2 to deep BG.

"12 DEEP FOREHAND": 1 to deep BG, and 2 to deep FG.

3-0: 3 to one target, 0 to the target you name

"30 DEEP BACKHAND": 3 to deep FG

---

**SEQUENCES:** Combinations of patterns

1-1: 1 to one target and 1 to another target

"DOUBLE 11 DEEP FOREHAND": 1 to deep BG, 1 to deep FG, REPEAT

"DOUBLE 11 DEEP BACKHAND": 1 to deep FG, 1 to deep BG, REPEAT

Drill 1: Coach feeds and calls pattern.

Drill 2: Coach feeds, player calls pattern.

Drill 3: Coach feeds and calls sequence.

Drill 4: Coach feeds, player calls sequence.

Drill 5: Players rally and execute patterns and sequences.

---

### Coaches Notes

1. Level C: Use patterns to keep ball in play and move opponents.
2. Level B: Use patterns/sequences to attack weakness.  
(SCOUT OPPONENT and make game plan with patterns.)
3. Level A: BUILD EXPECTATIONS to CREATE OFFENSIVE OPPORTUNITIES. Example: 2-1 then 3-0 DEEP FG.

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### EXHIBIT IV MOVEMENT PATTERNS

#### COUNTERLOBBING

**Drill 1:** Players start at service line and hit controlled volleys while moving towards each other. The player who hits the 10<sup>th</sup> volley will place it over his partner (preferably over the non-racket-holding hand) and back up towards the service line to cover the response.

**Level C:** The "lobber" will move quickly back, let the ball drop, and hit a groundstroke back to his/her partner and continue the drill.

**Level B:** The "lobber" will move back quickly and meet the ball above the shoulder and hit a very forcing response at his partner and continue the drill.

**Level A:** The "lobber" moves quickly and returns the lob with a volley or even a controlled smash to keep the rally going.

---

#### **Drill 2:** THE FIVE-COUNT DRILL

**NOTE 1:** This drill should only be done after the basic skills in Drill 1 are acquired.

**NOTE 2:** Walk the players through the drill first so they can learn the protocol and, very important, to avoid injuries.

#### **PROTOCOL:**

1. Players line up at one end of the net with two players side by side near the center strap with their rackets resting on the net.
2. The feeder has a hopper of balls about six feet from the net on the center service line. Two balls are lobbed over the heads of the players.
3. The players move back quickly, let the ball drop and stroke them back over the net.
4. They then run back to touch the net with their rackets before the feeder counts to "5".
5. As they return to net they shift to their right to allow another player to go to the center position. The "odd" player will cross back to the original line when the next pair goes back.

---

**NOTE:** The DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY is determined by the feeder who should count SLOWLY for novices. This is also a SUPERB CONDITIONING DRILL for Level A players.

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## EXHIBIT V BASIC PRINCIPLES

### GOLDEN PRINCIPLE:

**CONTROL ----- > CONFIDENCE ----- > SUCCESS!**

- 1: The THREE P's of play: Power, Placement, and Positioning  
Control what YOU can control—Positioning and Placement.
- 2: The TWO P's of winning doubles—Partnership and Passion!
- 3: ANYTIME YOU HIT TO AN ANGLE, YOU GIVE AN ANGLE!
- 4: The FIRST purpose of doubles positioning is to take away  
HIGH-PERCENTAGE shots.
- 5: TEAM JOB 1: COMMUNICATION (Verbal cueing)
- 6: TEAM JOB 2: CREATE PRESSURE!
- 7: TEAM JOB 3: CREATE a CRISIS (CONFUSION)!

---

### Job description of each position:

1. TEAM: Have a QUARTERBACK to call plays.
2. SERVER: Get the first serve into the desired target and carry out your team's plans.
3. SERVER'S PARTNER: Cover high-percentage response and carry out your team's plans.
4. RECEIVER'S PARTNER: DO NOT GET HIT BY THE SERVE and make an accurate line call and carry out your team's plans.  
(WATCH THE POSITIONING OF THE NETMAN. If he is "HUGGING" the net, call for a ZONE PRESS.)
5. RECEIVER: Make return and carry out your team's plans.

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### EXHIBIT VI MATCH PLAY DRILLS

**FLOWING DOUBLES**: Moving forward and back, plus sideways to take away high-percentage shots and maintain offensive positions.

**ROTATION**: Circular movement to cover lobs, **CONTAIN SHOTS**, and maintain offensive positions.

**SHIFTS**: **POACHING**

**"POWER SHIFT"—KEEP A HAMMER (forehand volley)  
IN THE MIDDLE!**

**"MAD" (Middle-Age Doubles)**: Groundstroke-dependent player paired with an excellent volleyer. Baseline hits down the line and sets up the net player.

**SERVE AND VOLLEY**: Use under-handed serving to develop concepts. Pressure the receiver **TWICE**, and then move the volley.

**CHIP AND CHARGE**: Use under-handed serving to develop concepts. Pressure the server **TWICE**, and then move the volley.

**REVERSALS**: Use **HIGH-BACKHAND** lobs to force your opponents away from the net, **AND YOUR TEAM GOES TO NET!**

**SPECIAL**: **"GRAND CANYON ATTACK"** Versus a right and left-handed players, lob over **"GRAND CANYON"** (the high backhand zone) to **CREATE CONFUSION** and **TAKE THE OFFENSIVE EDGE!**

**COUNTER-SMASH SHIFTS**: Shift to cover two of the three potential placement zones for smashes. **"RIGHT"** (with center), **"LEFT"** (with center), **"SPLIT"** (wide right and left). **STUDY YOUR OPPONENTS' TENDENCIES!**

**TWO-WAY TANDEM**:

**Defensive Tandem (DT)**: Takes away pressure shot.  
Net man stays fixed. Server may rush.

**Power Tandem (PT)**: Poaching and "scissors" create **CRISIS!**

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## EXHIBIT VII PLACEMENT and PLAYS

### PLACEMENT:

1. CONTAINMENT—hit all balls **INSIDE** the **SINGLES LINES**
2. **PRESSURE THE DEEP MAN TWICE**, and **THEN** attack the "T"
3. Volley **UP** at the **DEEP** man.
4. Volley **DOWN** at the "T" or **FEET** of opponents.
5. On a **WIDE SERVE**, return **DOWN THE LINE** with drive or lob.
6. Use the "**ZONE PRESS**" to create **CRISIS** (confusion).

---

### *DOUBLES BY THE "NUMBERS"*

<u>SERVING PLAYS</u>	<u>SERVER</u>	<u>PARTNER</u>
Number 1	STAYS BACK	STAYS PUT
" 2	RUSH	STAYS PUT
" 3	STAYS BACK AND COVERS	CROSSES
" 4	RUSH-"SCISSORS"	CROSSES
<u>FROM TANDEM FORMATION</u>		
Number 1T	STAYS BACK	STAYS PUT
" 2T	RUSH	STAYS PUT
" 3T	STAYS BACK AND COVERS	CROSSES
" 4T	RUSH-"SCISSORS"	CROSSES

---

<u>RECEIVING PLAYS</u>	<u>RECEIVER</u>	<u>PARTNER</u>
Number 1	STAYS BACK	STAYS BACK
" 2	RUSHES NET (SHOOTS)	STAYS BACK
" 3	STAYS BACK	SHOOTS
" 4 "BLITZ"	SHOOTS	SHOOTS
" 5 "ZONE PRESS" LOB DOWN LINE	SHOOTS	SHOOTS

NOTE: ONLY go "One UP—One BACK" if you have **TOTAL CONFIDENCE** in the return.

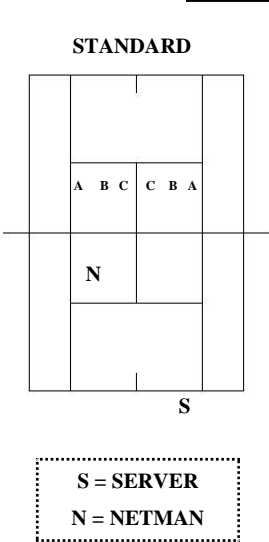
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### BEFORE AND AFTER POINTS:

1. **OBSERVE YOUR OPPONENTS' POSITIONING.**
2. **LOOK FOR TENDENCIES SUCH AS GETTING TOO CLOSE TO THE NET ("HUGGING" IT).**  
(A team with a "hugging" net man is inviting a **ZONE PRESS!**)

**LOVE That DOUBLES — SERVING TEAM Techniques**

SERVING TARGETS  
 A= AWAY from Center Line    B= At BODY    C= Down CENTER

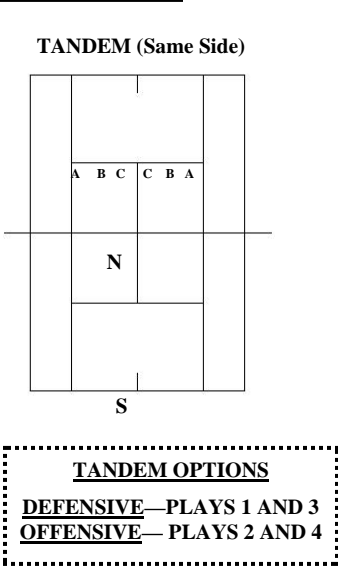


**POSITIONING PLAYS**

PLAY	SERVER	NETMAN
1	STAYS	STAYS
2	RUSHES	STAYS
3	CROSS BL	CROSS
4	RUSH "SCISSORS"	CROSS

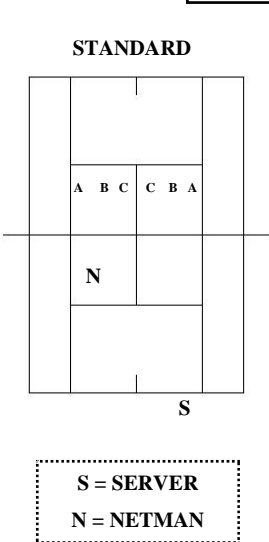
**PLACEMENT-POSITIONING PLAYS**

PLAY	PLACE	SERVER	NETMAN
1-A	AWAY	STAYS	STAYS
1-B	BODY	"	"
1-C	CENTER	"	"
2-A	AWAY	RUSHES	STAYS
2-B	BODY	"	"
2-C	CENTER	"	"
3-A	AWAY	CROSS	CROSS
3-B	BODY	"	"
3-C	CENTER	"	"
4-A	AWAY RUSH CROSS	CROSS	CROSS
4-B	BODY	"	"
4-C	CENTER	"	"



**LOVE That DOUBLES — SERVING TEAM Techniques**

SERVING TARGETS  
 A= AWAY from Center Line    B= At BODY    C= Down CENTER

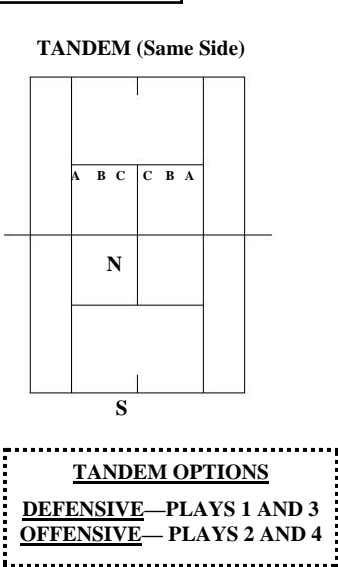


**POSITIONING PLAYS**

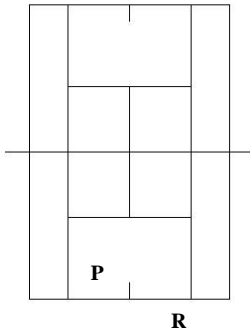
PLAY	SERVER	NETMAN
1	STAYS	STAYS
2	RUSHES	STAYS
3	CROSS BL	CROSS
4	RUSH "SCISSORS"	CROSS

**PLACEMENT-POSITIONING PLAYS**

PLAY	PLACE	SERVER	NETMAN
1-A	AWAY	STAYS	STAYS
1-B	BODY	"	"
1-C	CENTER	"	"
2-A	AWAY	RUSHES	STAYS
2-B	BODY	"	"
2-C	CENTER	"	"
3-A	AWAY	CROSS	CROSS
3-B	BODY	"	"
3-C	CENTER	"	"
4-A	AWAY RUSH CROSS	CROSS	CROSS
4-B	BODY	"	"
4-C	CENTER	"	"



**LOVE That DOUBLES — RECEIVING TEAM Techniques**



**“DOUBLE BACK” FORMATION**

**PARTNER (P):** Stand about 3 feet into the court.  
**BE READY TO RUSH THE NET.**  
*THINK “OFFENSE”!*

**RECEIVER (R):** Stand about 3 feet behind the baseline. **BE READY TO RUSH THE NET.**  
*THINK “OFFENSE”!*

**ONE UP + ONE BACK**

**PARTNER (P):**

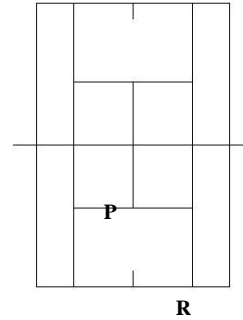
1. **COMMUNICATE WITH PARTNER**
2. **CALL SERVICE LINE**
3. **KEY ON NETMAN**
4. **GO WITH FLOW (OFFENSE!)**
5. **COMMUNICATE WITH PARTNER**

**“DOUBLE BACK” PLAYS**

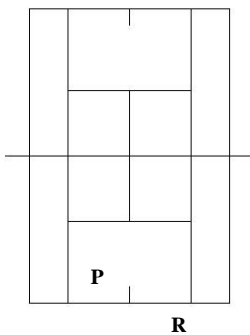
PLAY	PARTNER	RECEIVER
1	STAYS	STAYS
2	STAYS	RUSHES (SHOOTS)
3	“SHOOTS”	STAYS
4	“SHOOTS” (AKA “BLITZ”)	“SHOOTS”
5	“SHOOTS”	LOBS DOWN LINE (AKA “ZONE PRESS”)

**PLACEMENT IDEAS**

- 1) Pressure the deep player TWICE, and THEN move the ball.
- 2) CONTAINMENT: Keep the balls INSIDE the SINGLES lines.
- 3) ATTACK THE HIGH BACK-HANDS with “CLEARS” or LOBS..
- 4) SMASH AT THE “T” whenever possible. .



**LOVE That DOUBLES — RECEIVING TEAM Techniques**



**“DOUBLE BACK” FORMATION**

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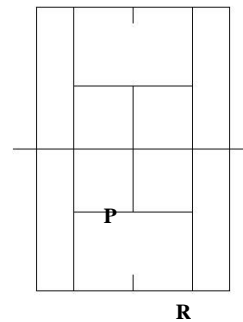
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**“DOUBLE BACK” PLAYS**

PLAY	PARTNER	RECEIVER
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**PLACEMENT IDEAS**

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- 4) SMASH AT THE “T” whenever possible. .



## EXHIBIT 2: A GUIDE TO FLOW CHARTING

By Bob Love USPTA (Master Professional)

*All tennis competition flows, and the player who controls flow the best will be victorious!* That is the main lesson I have learned from charting several thousand sets over the last three decades. Tennis is a unique sport in which points are played one at a time, yet players who fail to connect points into streaks and manage play properly will usually lose. On the other hand, players who take an aggressive approach to acquiring momentum management skills will greatly enhance their probability of winning. A valuable key to improving these skills is flow charting which demonstrates the flow and momentum shifts in a match, is easy to learn, and costs next to nothing!

**Equipment needed:** 4 lines per inch 8 ½ x 11 graph paper (usually economically sold in 80-sheet packs as "scheduling paper"), a straight edge (ruler), and a pen (preferably a soft point). A clip board or stiff backing is also recommended.

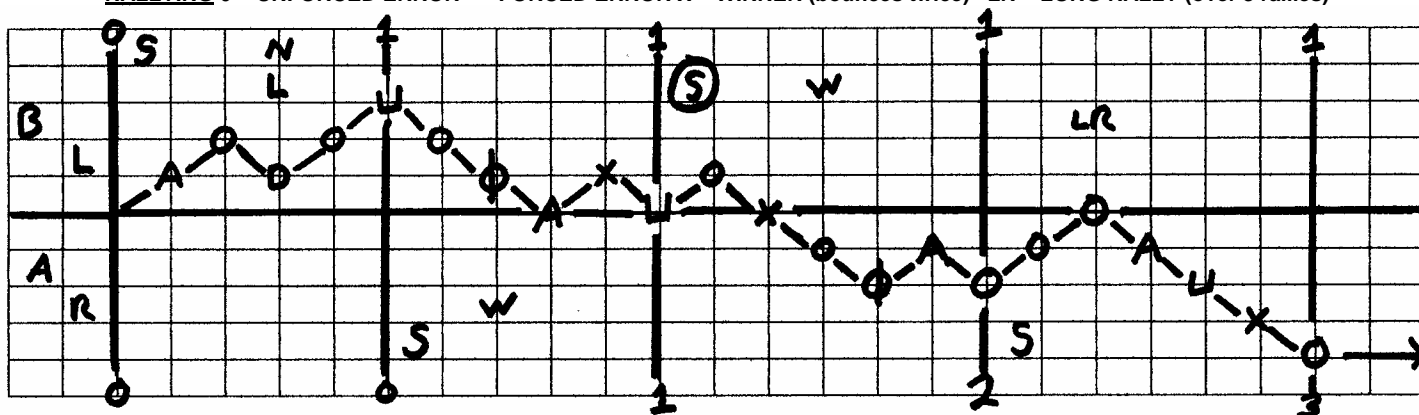
### How to start: (See the sample sheet below)

1. About three inches from the top of the graph paper draw a line, "axis," across the paper and put a vertical, "starting" line about one inch from the left.
2. Write one player's name (A) above the line and the other's (B) below.
3. Write "0" above and below the line to show the starting score.
4. Write an "S" to indicate the server and CIRCLE the S if the serve is broken.
5. Whenever A wins a point, a mark will be made going UP from the starting axis. If B wins the point the mark will go DOWN. By connecting these marks, a player or coach can easily observe match flow.
6. At the end of a game, put another vertical line, write the score above and below it, and shift the "S" for server for the next game.

### FLOW CHART (Bob Love System)

**The KEY:** SERVING A= ACE (UNTOUCHED) U = UNRETURNABLE N = NET W = WIDE L = LONG  
D = DOUBLE FAULT - = LET S = SERVER S (circled) = BROKEN SERVICE

RALLYING 0 = UNFORCED ERROR \* = FORCED ERROR X = WINNER (bounces twice) LR = LONG RALLY (over 3 rallies)



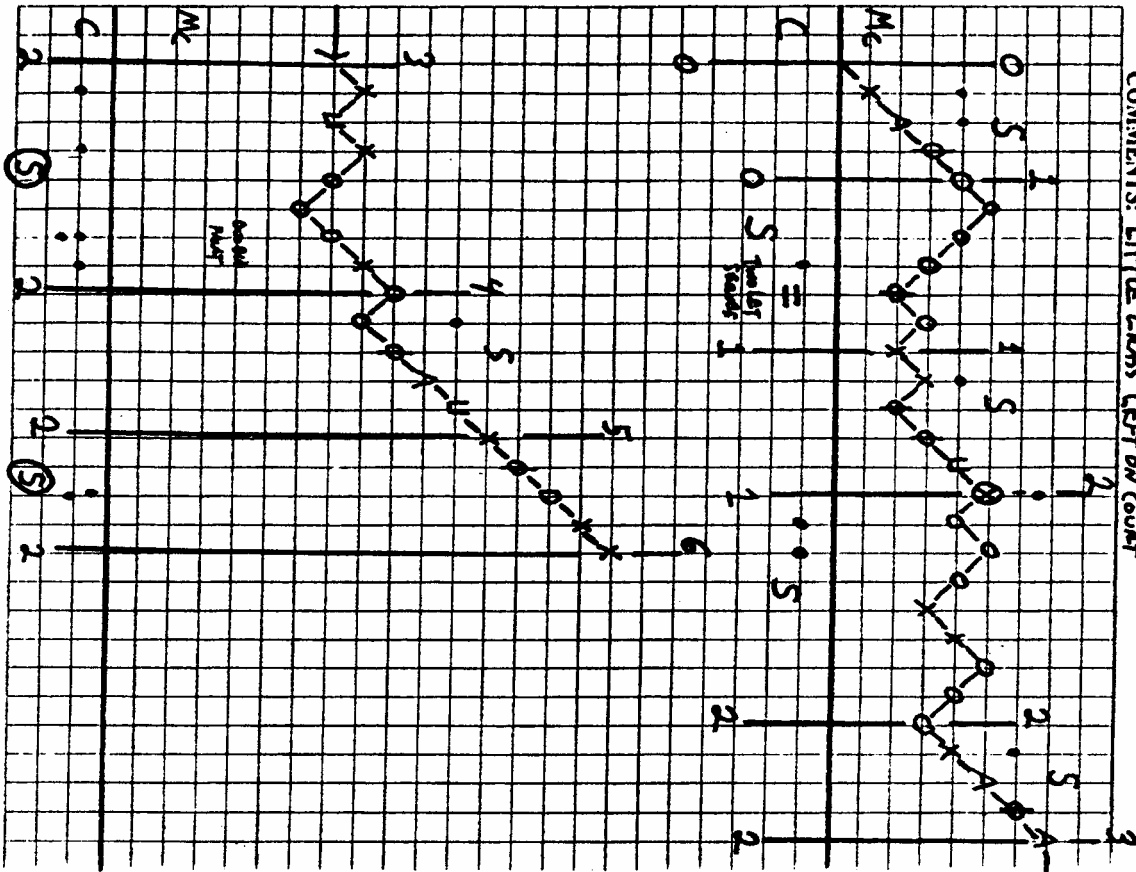
**SAMPLES:** On the back of this sheet, the Connors-Lendl set shows simplified point marking which I taught 8 and 9 year olds. The McEnroe-Connors set shows the more complete system. **PLEASE NOTE:** I also write comments on key points to refresh the player's memory when we do post-match analysis.

**Additional momentum information:** Chuck Kriese, longtime and very successful Clemson coach, pioneered many of the applied coaching techniques for momentum management His books are excellent sources for information on risk taking and competition awareness.

TENNIS FLOW CHARTING (Bob Love System)

INFO: McEnroe vs Connors DATE July, 1984  
 EVENT Wimbledon Mens ROUND Final SITE England  
 KEY: SERVICE A-ACE (UNTOUCHED) U-UNRETURNABLE N-NET W-WIDE L-LOW  
 D-DOUBLE FAULT --LFT S-SERVER SIDE-HD-BROKEN SERVICE ● FAULT  
 BALLING ○-UNFORCED ERROR ●-FORCED ERROR X-WINNER (shows when) LR-LONG BALL (over 3 miles)

COMMENTS: LITTLE CARS LEFT ON COURT



1983 US OPEN MENS SINGLES FINALS - SET 3  
 CONNORS WON FIRST SET 6-3 // LENDL WON SECOND SET 7-6 (7-2)

