

Part 2

10/1/09

MODIFIED IS THE GO! Size matters, one don't fit all

Let's begin by taking a deep breath, relaxing and imagining you are off to the local Tennis court for a hit. It's a sunny fine day with just a hint of breeze and the temperature is a pleasant 22 degrees.

Have you got that in your minds eye? A perfect picture, yes... Wait a minute, guess again. You start hitting, but your racquet is as long as your leg and heavy! Your wrist already throbbing with pain trying to get the racquet moving you strike a ball that is a big hard rock on contact. The jarring goes up your arm as the grip twists in your hand. "This can't be right? The rock melon ball is bouncing over my head!" Looking up... "Stuff this," you suggest "the net's up to my chest!"

Oh dear, the dream turns to a nightmare under such ridiculous conditions yet this is what young beginners to our game have put up with in the past. Not to mention their natural lack of co-ordination, strength and balance. Tennis is challenging enough.

Ok, yes many of us coped with standard Tennis gear – Mum's racquet or Dad's old balls – to develop our ability and love for the game. But I assure you in the 2000s not too many kids are going to persevere "old school" style when there are more attractive, faster & easier ways to achieve a fun fix.

How to get some early success with fun and start their well rounded development?

At last, thank goodness, the answer is simple... **MODIFIED TENNIS!**

It means modified to suit. **Modified:**

Racquets – correct grip size, light weight & short in length

Balls – Lighter, Softer, lower bounce and slower through the air. Attractive too – Colour!

Court & net – Size is relative to their size AND ability

Environment – Comfortable, positive, engaging, inspiring, etc...

Activity – Structured, inclusive & energetic with closed skills incorporated into fun games.

To suit the age, ability, level, wants and needs of the players.

Yes this practise has been around since the 90's at least – with programs such as Wilson's Mr Pee Wee Tennis - but nationally at a coaching level it's been inconsistent and patch in application. Only now are the majority of coaches convinced and using modified programs for all their 4-7 age groups.

In fact Tennis Australia, to it's credit, are in the course of nationalizing the approach to a number of important structures in the game, not least of which is Coaching method & standards.

Sure enough, with the Hotshots launch and the current roll out of modified tournaments for under 12 competitors, TA has now taken the lead in this area. Bravo I say & let the young ones play!

The basic goal is to allow & provide by all means a positive Fun Learning Environment for all our juniors, especially the amazing pre & early primary kids. Less Computer, more Fun active games, playing & just doing. Real dreams, real life and loving it too.

Any questions? Comments. Let me have it!