

KidZone Tennis

Unleashing the Potential of QuickStart



It is a fact that today tennis players begin at a younger age than in the past. QuickStart Tennis and similar systems around the world have contributed to this trend, but I don't believe they are solely the cause. The motivation to groom the next Roger Federer or Maria Sharapova is extremely high, and reaching that level requires specialization and intense training at a much earlier age. Take a look at YouTube and you will find that people are training their 4 year olds like they are training pro players. Fathers and mothers are asking kids to grow up faster than their chronological age in pursuit of the slim chance that they will become the proud parents of the next tennis sensation.

QuickStart Tennis has the potential in the US to mainstream tennis to kids of a much younger age. As an immediate consequence, the tennis industry sees an incredible business opportunity in marketing tennis to a brand new clientele. This new clientele, full of dreams, are prime candidates for taking tennis lessons, filling tennis programs and buying merchandise. It seems that the tennis industry has found a goose that will lay golden eggs for many years to come.

This concept is not new. France was probably the first to develop Mini Tennis, and many other European countries followed. In the mid 1980s, I was coaching for my good friend and mentor Louis Cayer in Quebec, Canada, where we used foam SpeedBalls imported from Europe in our Mini Tennis program. In early 2000, we were still using SpeedBalls to introduce tennis to our beginner level on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. Since then, my wife and I have designed many programs using adapted equipment to teach kids tennis. Through trial and error, and perfecting our techniques, we developed KidZone Tennis. KidZone Tennis is three sequential and progressive programs that enable kids to learn tennis *successfully*. We start with KidZone Fitness that develops athleticism, then on to KidZone/QuickStart Tennis to develop fundamental tennis skills, and evolve finally to KidZone Compete that develops healthy competitive behaviors. Since implementing KidZone Tennis we have seen our business growing consistently.

by Yves Boulais

With 29 years of tennis coaching experience, Yves' teaching skills and technical knowledge have put him at the top of his field. For a decade, Yves coached WTA players, including his wife, PTR Professional Patricia Hy, who, under his tutelage, climbed from a world ranking of 296 to 28. Yves represented Canada in both the Barcelona and Atlanta Olympics, and coached Canadian Fed Cup for 10 years, serving two years as Captain. Yves and Patricia created KidZone Tennis, a sequence of programs that provides a measurable progressive method that facilitates learning basic motor skills, then adapted tennis skills, and progresses successfully to real tennis and competition.

KidZone Fitness ages 3 to 5



KidZone Fitness is the first and the most important step of KidZone Tennis. This is the only recruiting system that brings *everybody* to tennis, not just the leftovers from other sports.

Think about this scenario - you go to a pre-school and gather 100 parents of toddlers age 3 to 5 and ask them, "Who wants their kids to play tennis?" At most, 15 to 20 parents raise their hands. Now you say to them, "We have a new program called QuickStart Tennis. It is revolutionary, because with adapted equipment, kids can have fun right away, play tennis much earlier and it works great. The program starts next week, who would like to sign up?" Let's assume that 15 parents register their children.

Your newly hired pro is excited about beginning his career. He will get these kids who, for most part, never considered tennis and are forced to come see him. Out of the 15 who show up, some will be very excited and love it, and some will be apathetic. For most of these kids, this will be their first experience in a disciplined environment. Some will never have had any real exercise before and will find it strenuous, and some won't be able to focus at all. Can your new pro handle that?

Even though it is true that QuickStart Tennis makes learning tennis easier and faster, for some it will still be difficult. Our approach with KidZone Fitness is totally different. The question we ask is, "How many of you parents would like your kids to be physically active?" Phrased that way, usually 100% of the parents say yes. Then we tell them, "We have a great program called KidZone Fitness where all kids learn coordination, throwing, catching, dodging etc., and it can be a great stepping stone to any sport or future activity, like dancing. Who would like to sign up their children?" Not every parent registers their kids right away, but most do eventually.

Promotion of good health habits is prevalent, because in this generation of computer and video games, kids are getting fat and sick from inactivity. This helps our cause dearly. Our objectives with these kids is to get them used to doing physical activity every week, and to teach them the motor and social skills that will make it easy for them to learn tennis. We teach them to be cooperative and learn in a group. Kids enjoy doing what they are good at, so we make sure that they will be good at learning tennis before they even start. For KidZone Fitness, we hire people who are extremely talented with young children and we train them to teach what we want the kids to learn. Very soon, like magic, most kids and parents will start asking, "When will they start to play tennis?" KidZone Fitness is the rock solid foundation of KidZone Tennis, and if we are serious about attracting better athletes to tennis, KidZone Fitness or a similar program, should be at the heart of any early childhood grassroots tennis program.

KidZone/QuickStart Tennis ages 5 to 10



After a few years of KidZone Fitness, or when we feel that they are ready, we introduce the children to the next component of KidZone Tennis - the KidZone/QuickStart Tennis program. KidZone/QuickStart is the second component of KidZone Tennis. We package KidZone/QuickStart Tennis into a three stage process with four progressions per stage. Please note that we include the addition of the green ball transition. We found that to go directly from a nonpressurized ball to a regulation ball is too difficult for kids. Using a 75% pressurized (green) ball ensures the transition to regulation balls will be smoother and easier.



KidZone/QuickStart Tennis is designed to take a complete beginner to a full technically developed tennis player. Tennis can be a difficult sport in terms of techniques and tactics. At early stages, we have a golden opportunity to teach great fundamentals with adapted equipment. Regardless of your coaching philosophy, good fundamentals are essential and easier to teach before kids have been exposed to much competition. Therefore, we carefully created tasks that motivate kids and provide guidelines for coaches to follow in a fun and efficient manner.

At KidZone/QuickStart, each student is given a progression card. On the card are all the tasks they will have to perform to pass to the next progression. The coach stamps the performed task on the card until all the tasks are completed. The successful student will be rewarded with a graduation T-shirt for every progression achieved. This system has been a great source of motivation for kids and parents to focus on the things that will make a big difference in terms of learning. It also provides us with a framework that ensures a consistent teaching approach from our coaches.

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KidZone Compete ages 10 to 14



This part of the program enables pre-teens and teens to go one step further in acquiring skills through training and competition. We believe it is imperative to have some basic competition skills and learn to start to train specifically for tennis. Time spent on the court and intensity increases as children progress technically and tactically. We begin to develop higher skill levels associated with more powerful strokes and advanced tactics. Movement and footwork become an integral part of technique and tactics. A specific

conditioning program is put in place for each athlete.

Conclusion

As you can see, the program is designed to attract all kids early with fun fitness, and through successes and rewards, get them to enjoy and stay with tennis.

Some of you may be asking, "Why you are sharing this? It must have taken years of trial and error before you got all this working together. Why would you just give it away?"

Knowledge is not static. To stay current, we all need to share what we know. This article provides only a brief overview of KidZone Tennis. There is so much more in the application that it would probably take a book to convey it all. As a teaching professional, you can see the direction we are taking and work similar steps into your children's program.

The tennis community is trying to attract younger and more motivated athletes to the sport. If it succeeds, we all succeed. Also, I see a tremendous opportunity in creating a program that works.

QuickStart is an excellent program that is attracting a new clientele. This is a new type of clientele that cannot be approached the same old way. QuickStart has the potential to explode if we do it right.

In order to succeed, coaches need to be trained to work with young children. Seasoned teaching pros have to adjust their methods for this group. At KidZone, we often look for someone with a background in early childhood education and train them to teach fitness. Of course, when children progress beyond the earliest stages, experienced tennis teaching professionals whom we have trained to work with children take over.

We believe KidZone is best overall tennis development system for kids ages 3 to 14. Initiating fitness and basic skills early on and progressing to KidZone/QuickStart and then to competition, kids learn to love and stay in the game. Keeping kids in the game will cultivate the next generation of tennis players and grow our sport. For more information visit www.kzt.net