



Frequently Asked Questions – Unified Partners

Special Pops Tennis Unified Partner Training Video Link

<http://www.specialpopstennis.org/resources/video-library/>

Q- *When should I play at my own skill level?*

A- Only play at your own skill level when the skill level of your athlete and the opposing athlete is the equivalent or above your skill level. The goal is to never play above the level of the athlete.

Q- *Should I re-position my athlete on the court or offer corrective instruction to my athlete during a match?*

A- Absolutely. At any time you see your athlete needs to adjust her/his position, you should advise and encourage her/him to make such adjustment.

Q- *If my athlete tends to foot fault, should I help correct?*

A- Sure. As the partner, you are the only person (other than game umpires) that can help advise the athlete during the game action.

Q- *Is it okay to hit balls that are traveling out of bounds in order to sustain a rally?*

A- No. The best practice for teaching an athlete to play the game correctly is by being a role model. The practice of hitting balls that are traveling out of bounds may result in bad habits developed by the athletes.

Q- *How do I respond when the opposing athlete makes a great shot in my direction?*

A- A great shot is defined as a quality shot that is not normally hit by an athlete. For example, the athlete may finally get a serve in or hit a great down the line shot. When the opposing athlete makes such an exceptional shot to you as the unified partner, it is up to you to then make every effort to reward the athlete by hitting a non-winning return shot to the opposing unified partner or hitting a shot that falls out of bounds. The end result should be that the athlete hitting the exceptional shot wins the point. The unified partner must guard against making the failed return too obvious.



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Q- *How long should I sustain a rally with the opposing athlete?*

A- Extended rallies between the athlete and the unified partner tend to create a disengaged situation with the other athlete. Remember your role is to facilitate the match. Therefore after hitting 2-3 balls to the opposing athlete; hit the next ball to the opposing unified partner. The other unified partner can then hit the ball to your athlete to keep him/her engaged in the game.

Q- *When is lobbing allowed during a match?*

A- Depending on skill level, a unified partner should never hit a lob that takes the opposing athlete out of the point.

Q- *What do I do if the opposing Unified Partner is playing above my athletes level?*

A- If she/he is hitting return shots and serves **consistently** too hard for your athlete to return (keyword is consistently as anyone can make a mistake), then on change over, you may request the opposing unified partner to help you get your athlete more engaged in the match by taking a little off some shots. Be sure to thank them for the effort. If the opposing unified partner decides to not consider your athlete then the umpire should be informed. If the umpire is unsure of how to handle the situation the tournament director should be contacted.

Q- *What if I have difficulty serving the ball at a slow enough speed for the opposing athlete to successfully return?*

A- Continue to make every effort to shorten your serve motion until you have practiced it enough to be successful. Feel free to serve it underhand.

Q- *Should I run down lobs hit over my athlete's head?*

A- Yes, if hit by the opposing Unified Partner. If the opposing athlete is consistently hitting over your athlete's head, try to re-position your athlete and instruct her/him to hit an overhead (if level allows).