

Level 2 Tennis

The Level 2 Tennis training is designed for Special Olympics Minnesota coaches who would like to become a Level 2 Tennis coach and/or for volunteers who would like information about Special Olympics Minnesota tennis. This training counts as Level 2 certification and/or recertification for three years from the date this training is completed.

This training will cover Special Olympics Minnesota's tennis events, rules, competitions, the divisioning process, registration and tennis resources.

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Coaching Special Olympics Athletes

Coaching Special Olympics Athletes prepares Special Olympics coaches to use their sport-specific knowledge in coaching athletes with intellectual disabilities. This course meets the Special Olympics standards and competencies for coach certification. For veteran Special Olympics coaches, this course serves as a reminder of the essentials sometimes forgotten after years of coaching. For new Special Olympics coaches, this course will help prepare you for your first role in coaching Special Olympics athletes.

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Coaching Special Olympics Athletes

*The better the **coach** ...
the better the **experiences** ...
the better the **athlete!***



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Course Overview

This course will cover specific topics related to:

1 - The Athlete

3 - Preparing for
& Coaching During
Competition



2 - Teaching &
Training

4 - Managing the Program



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Unit 1 - The Athlete

Important Considerations concerning Special Olympics Athletes

Psychological Issues (*Learning*)

Medical
Issues



Social
Issues

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Unit 1 - Psychological Considerations

Motivation – helping athletes maintain interest

- May have shorter attention span; harder to keep independently “on task”.
- May be motivated more by short-term rather than long-term goals.
- May learn better with more frequent positive reinforcement.

Perception – helping athletes understand the sport in which they are participating

- May have impairments in sight or hearing.
- May have difficulty focusing attention on the appropriate object or task.



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Unit 1 - Psychological Considerations

Comprehension – helping athletes remember and perform the skill they have learned
(*Understanding*)

- May find it difficult to understand purely verbal explanations of new skills. Often find it easier to learn through visual demonstrations and physical prompts.
- May have difficulty in understanding complex, multi-part actions or explanations.
- Often take a longer time between learning one piece of information and the next (learning plateau)
- Less able to generalize skills learned in one situation to a different situation.

Memory

- May need frequent repetition and reminders in order to remember concept or skill

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Unit 1 - Psychological Challenges

Each psychological item has it's challenge and action:

Psychological Item	Challenge	Action
Perception	Easily distracted by noise	Control surroundings
Motivation	History of neglect & negative reinforcement, feeling of failure	Focus on positive, appropriate reinforcement, catch the athlete doing well
Memory	Difficulty applying skills in different environments	Practice in different settings
Comprehension	Difficulty learning through verbal explanation only	Add demonstrations and/or physical manipulation

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Unit 1 - Medical Considerations

Down Syndrome

- Approximately 10% of individuals with Down Syndrome have a condition called atlanto-axial instability, which is a mal-alignment of the cervical vertebrae C-1 and C-2 in the neck. This condition may cause possible injury if they participate in activities that hyper-extend or radically flex the neck or upper spine.
- Prohibited sports – equestrian, gymnastics, diving, pentathlon, butterfly and dive starts in aquatics, high jump, alpine/snowboarding, squat lift and soccer.

Medications

- Understand the physical side effects of an athlete's medication
- Very important to know the medications athletes are taking



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Unit 1 - Medical Considerations

Seizures

- Incidence tends to be higher with Special Olympics athletes
- Athlete safety to minimize the adverse effects of a seizure



Physical Disabilities

- Some athletes also have physical disabilities which may affect the sports they can participate in or the methods of teaching a coach must use. Special Olympics has events for individuals who use wheelchairs, walkers or other assistance.
- Muscle strength may be needed for particular sports and some athletes may not have the strength for those sports. This is often due to lack of use rather than a permanent disability.

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Unit 1 - Medical Considerations

Autism

- 20% of athletes exhibit one or more of the autism spectrum disorders
- Over arousal

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

- These athletes consistently function better on performance tasks compared with verbal tasks. The more concrete the task, the better the performance.
- Tend to have poor verbal comprehension skills, despite being comfortable and chatty around people. These athletes will also tend to have attention and memory deficits and often display poor judgment in distinguishing right from wrong.



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Unit 1 – Medical Consideration for Each Action

Action	See the challenge that correlates with the appropriate action.
1 Down Syndrome	Ensure the athlete is screened for atlanto-axial instability
2 Seizures	Be prepared to protect the athlete and minimize adverse affects
3 Autism spectrum disorders	Control and/or block self-stimulatory behavior and set up a behavior support plan
4 Attention deficit/hyperactivity	Shorten drills and provide one-to-one assistance when needed
5 Fetal alcohol syndrome	Provide concrete performance tasks

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Unit 1 - Social Considerations

Social Skills

- May lack basic social/adaptive skills due to a lack of opportunity or training
- Lacking communication and positive interaction with others

Recreation at Home

- Lack of physical activity
- Lack of encouragement

Economic Status

- May lack financial means
- May not have access to independent transportation



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Unit 1 - Social Considerations

All of the following social consideration(s) may impact an athlete's participation in Special Olympics:

- Inappropriate responses to social situations
- Physical inactivity being modeled
- Lack of endurance
- Lack of access to transportation

Our challenge as coaches is to develop a full understanding of our athletes and the strengths and weaknesses they bring with them to a Special Olympics program. By doing so we can begin to develop a training and competition program that they will benefit from and enjoy.

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Unit 2 – Teaching & Training the Athlete



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Unit 2 - Teaching & Training the Athlete

There are many ways to organize a training session for Special Olympics athletes. Because of some of the things previously identified concerning comprehension and memory, there is considerable value in developing a consistent training routine that provides familiarity, stability, and comfort.

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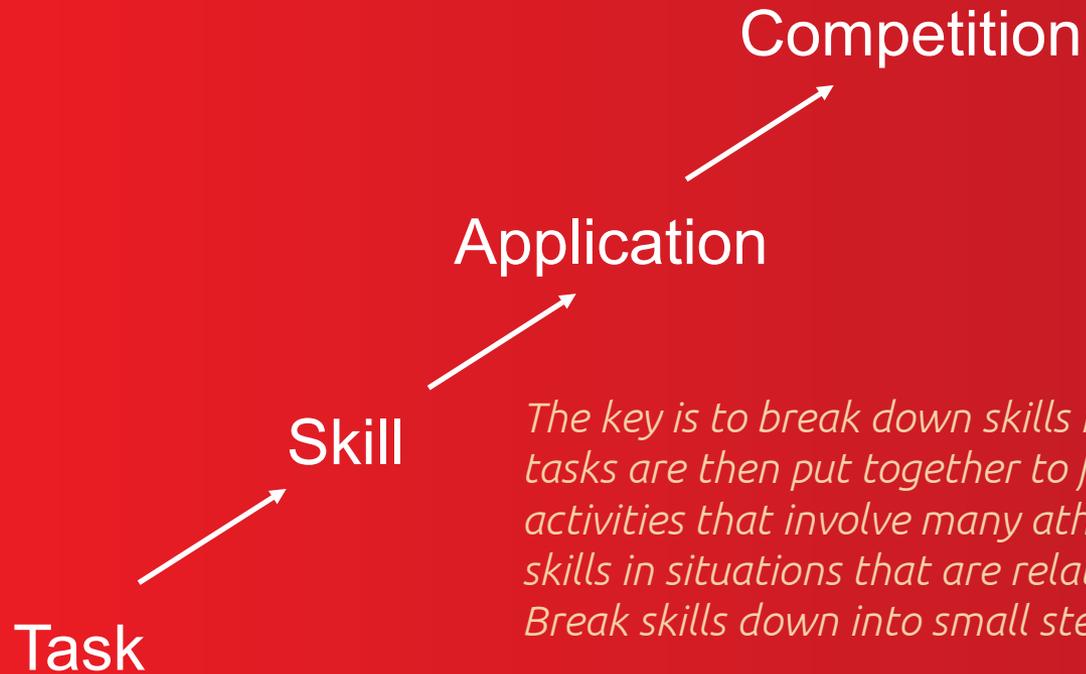
Unit 2 - Organizing a Training Session

Component and Details	Layout of Drill or Activity
Warm-Up & Stretching	Specific to the sport, repetitive and involve athletes in leading activity
Skills Instruction	Break skills into smaller tasks, involve many athletes at a time and practice skills related to event situations
Competition Experience	Scrimmage, simulate event/game situations and work towards what the competition will look like
Cool-Down, Stretch, & Reward	Playing a game related to that sport and ending each training with a cool down activity and stretch

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Unit 2 - Training Sequence



The key is to break down skills into small tasks or steps; tasks are then put together to form skills. Use drills and activities that involve many athletes at all times. Practice skills in situations that are related to the game or event. Break skills down into small steps.



Unit 2 - Training Sequence

What's the challenge and how to fix it?

Training Sequence Element	Challenge	Action
Application	Acquire ability to repeatedly demonstrate sport competencies in different situations & environments	Provide gamelike drills or situations
Skills	Acquire ability to perform series of sport competencies effectively and necessary to perform a sport	Work on essential sport competencies to perform the sport
Competition	Acquire ability to put essential sport competencies into practice	Provide scrimmage opportunities in practice
Tasks	Acquire ability to perform essential sport competencies	Break essential sport competencies down into individual parts

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Unit 2 - Communication

Communication is key to immediately reinforcing desired behavior; there are several key words that begin with a "C", which address what a coach should say.

- Clear
- Concrete
- Concise
- Consistent
- Command-oriented



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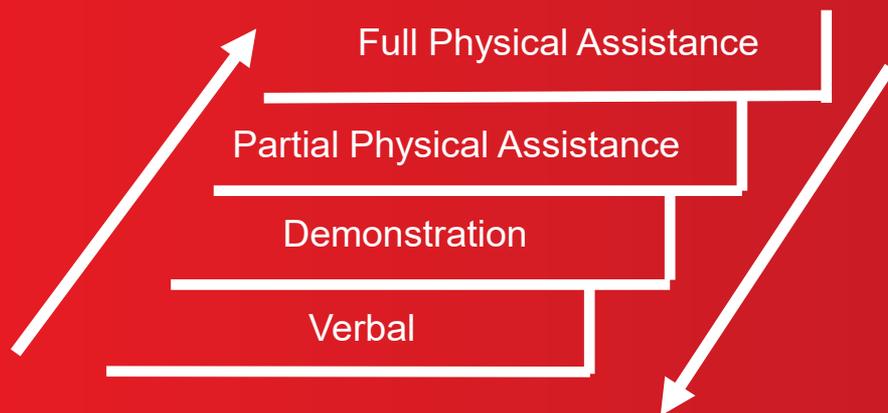
Unit 2 - Communication

Communication Criteria	Description	Sport Example
Concise	Use a few key words that cue a desired action	"Go to the free throw line" Showing an athlete where to stand on defense
Consistent	Use the same word or phrase for the same action	Coach constantly say "Breathe" – teaching an athlete when to take a breath in aquatics
Clear	Use easy to understand words that have one meaning	"Swing the bat" teaching how/when to swing.
Command-Oriented	Use words that elicit or reinforce a desired action	"On your mark. Set. Go." Using this phrase for starts in athletics.
Concrete	Connect words to something defined or tangible	"Jump forward" when coaching an athlete in the long jump.

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Unit 2 - Levels of Assistance



Each athlete needs to be met where he or she is and with what each individual is ready to do. It is important to use the appropriate level of instruction and assistance.

- The lower the ability athlete, the more assistance may be required
- Verbal should always be accompanied by demonstration
- Partial physical assistance may be needed to help the athlete get positioned properly
- When all else fails, take the athlete through the complete motion

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Unit 2 - Level of Instruction or Assistance

Level of Instruction or Assistance	Description	Sport Example
Full Physical Assistance	Help the athlete through the entire motion of the skill	Volleyball: coach makes an adjustment to the athlete's arm swing by moving the athlete's arm through the entire spiking movement
Verbal	Tell the athlete what to do	Footwork: "run forward to the line; then return, running backward"
Demonstration	Show the athlete the proper technique	Soccer: one athlete shoots on goal while another watches
Partial Physical Assistance	Place the athlete's hands in the proper position	Golf: coach physically adjusts the athlete's hands on the golf club with the correct grip

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Unit 2 - Managing Athlete Behavior

The goal is for coaches to meet each athlete where he/she is and treat him/her accordingly. However, a coach may often have certain expectations of an athlete that may not be realistic ... not because the coach does not care, but because the coach does not understand or appreciate the differences that may exist.

When an athlete exhibits what is generally perceived as inappropriate behavior, the inappropriate behavior may not be defiance, acting out or silliness. These behaviors may simply be a reflection or part of the person and/or what is operating in the moment.

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Unit 2 - Managing Athlete Behavior

Athlete Behavior Characteristics	Strategies to Improve Learning
Swimmer has a short attention span	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Dwell on a stroke or activity for short periods of time; provide numerous activities focusing on same task2. Provide different opportunities for repetition and review, which is the key to gaining new skill.3. Work one-on-one to gain full attention.
Basketball athlete yells if he/she misses a shot	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Emphasize the other aspects of the game besides shooting2. Work on shooting drills without a hoop3. Begin to shoot at a hoop but in a non-game setting with a one-on-one coach
Bowler doesn't wait their turn	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Have a coach at the lane help with the order of bowlers, explain whose turn it is2. Have the bowler wait with a coach behind the bowling area until their turn is up3. Emphasize the order and that the bowler will always follow the same individual



Unit 3 - Preparing & Coaching for Competition

- A key goal of Special Olympics is to provide an opportunity for all athletes to experience success in competitions.
- A Special Olympics athlete can benefit from many aspects of a competition (including meeting new people, participating in the festivities of Opening Ceremonies and other social events, the excitement of traveling to new places and staying away from home, etc.). None of these things, however, should be as important to the coach as the focus on the participation in the competition itself.

This section highlights ways to improve the quality of an athlete's competition experience.

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Unit 3 - Preparing for Competition

Registration

- Provide accurate entry and team roster information, qualifying times, and skills assessment scores.
- Help the Competition Committee prepare a successful competition for your athletes by meeting their registration deadlines.

Official competition rules

- A good Competition Committee will instruct its officials/referees to enforce the Official Special Olympics Rules. Make sure you know them.
- Teach your athletes the rules and, during training, phase out your verbal reminders about rules. At competition, coaches may have little or no opportunity to assist athletes when they are not following the rules.
(A coach cannot be on the track with them!)



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Unit 3 - Preparing for Competition

Supervision

- Discuss the challenges associated with participating in competition away from home, and why adequate, non-coaching support personnel are needed.
 - Transportation
 - Lodging (need for same-sex supervision)
 - Social activities
 - Coaches meetings (who will supervise athletes during these?)
 - Multiple events to supervise, awards ceremonies, etc.
- Design a supervision worksheet with the essential elements covered.



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Unit 3 - Preparing for Competition

Travel and Overnight

- Discuss overnight concerns with parents or group-home supervisors.
- Write up a simple checklist of items to bring and distribute to athletes and parents
- Make sure that all special medication needs are understood. Coaches may have to assist with handling medications. Have all medical forms and information readily available at all times.
- Work out the most effective rooming arrangements, taking into account athlete choice, behavioral and personality clashes, etc.

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Unit 3 - Competition-Day Coaching

Guidelines for success:

Teach responsibility & independence

- Assist athletes in dressing appropriately, understanding what is happening at the competition site, maintaining a focused attitude and appropriate behavior.

Arrive early

- Allow time for putting on uniforms, warm-up and stretching routine and focusing on the competition.

Encourage maximum effort in divisioning & competition

- Applying the “honest-effort” rule from the Special Olympics Rule book

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Unit 3 - Competition-Day Coaching

Guidelines for success:

Let athletes compete without direct supervision

- Not running down the side of the track shouting instructions, allowing the competition officials to conduct the competition and allowing athletes to make mistakes and helping them learn from their mistakes.

Make any official protests calmly

- If you think there is a valid reason to protest the outcome, do so in a calm manner, following the competition guidelines and not involving athletes in disputes with officials.

Help athletes learn from winning & losing

- Deal graciously and realistically with winning and losing. Focus on effort made, recognize accomplishments and new skills that were performed and taking something positive away from the experience.

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Unit 3 - Competition-Day Coaching

The coach can be the key person who makes any competition experience a good one.

Taking time to adequately prepare for competition and plan for on-site supervision and that coaching is time well spent.

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Unit 4 – Managing the Program

The successful Special Olympics coach:

Is sports and coaching knowledgeable

- Special Olympics is a sport organization
- Technical knowledge of the sport and how to teach it is essential if coaches are to effectively help athletes improve their sport skills and truly benefit from Special Olympics.
- Successful coaches are constantly looking for opportunities to learn more about the sport.

Is Special Olympics knowledgeable

- Special Olympics has a clearly defined mission, philosophy, and rules that have been developed through years of worldwide experience with athletes with intellectual disabilities.
- A better understanding of these will benefit your athletes.

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Unit 4 – Managing the Program

The successful Special Olympics coach:

Recruits and trains assistant coaches

- Individualized coach-athlete teaching is key to successful training in Special Olympics.
- Assistant coaches can be recruited to help provide individualized attention.
- Assistant coaches are useful only if they are trained and coordinated at practice.

Recruits and trains athletes

- A coach is also a promoter and recruiter; always tries to expand participation

Assists with appropriate sport selection

- Age appropriate, is the athlete able to participate safely and successfully and does the athlete have a choice of participating in a different sport or event.

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Unit 4 – the Successful Special Olympics coach:

Offers activities for all abilities

- In order to accommodate a range of abilities

Puts a priority on safety

- This is the coach's number one priority

Conducts high-quality training and competition

- Appropriate training, activities such as training days or camps, helps develop pride in being an athlete and organizes competition opportunities if none exist

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Unit 4 – the Successful Special Olympics coach:

Involves families

- Educates families and group-home providers about the benefits of Special Olympics, appropriate nutrition and food choices and training at home.

Assists with community inclusion

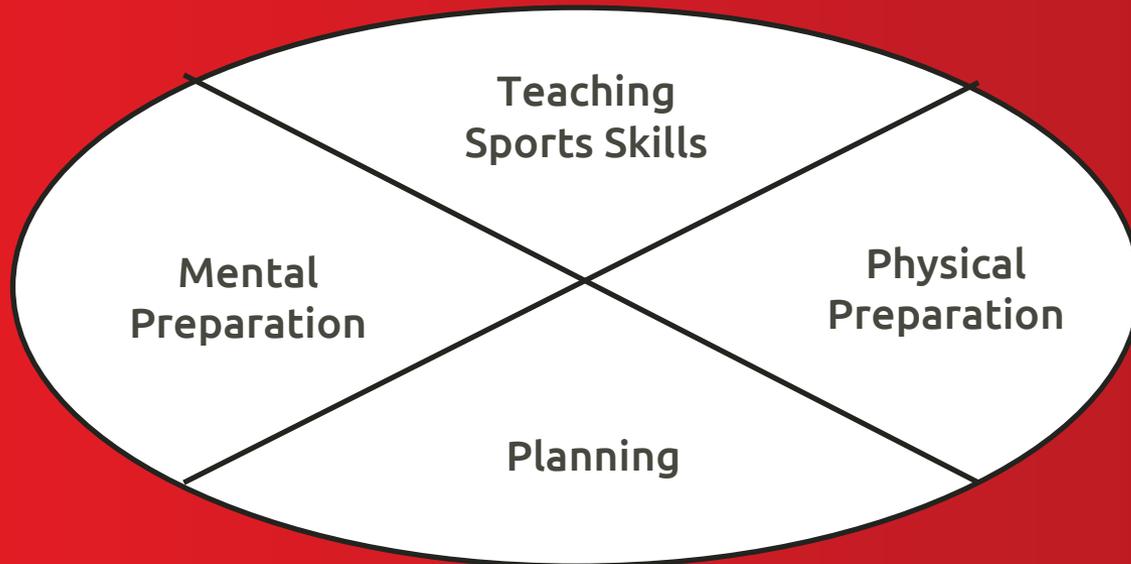
- Improves social and communication skills, opportunities to talk about Special Olympics at civic functions and assistance in joining non-Special Olympics sports opportunities

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Unit 4 – Area of Focus

Athlete Safety



Coaching Philosophy

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Unit 4 – Preparation

Assessment



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Improved Performance & Well-Being

- TRAINING ⇒ the key
- COMPETITION ⇒ the means
- OUTCOMES ⇒ skill, confidence, courage, & joy
- GOAL ⇒ better preparation for life
- RESULTS ⇒ lifelong skills, acceptance & increased independence



Let's Get After It and Get It Done!

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SOMN Health Programs

SOMN offers health programs to integrate into your sports season to enhance your athletes performance, health, nutritional knowledge and overall wellbeing.

- SOFit- unified approach to improving and protecting health and wellness for people with and without intellectual disabilities. Comprehensive, 360 degree look at wellness and human spirit.
 - 8 weeks, unified pairs
 - Coaches lead educational topics including: cooking, healthy grocery shopping, importance of varying workouts, healthy beverage choices.
 - Customizable to groups interest
 - Four pillars of wellness: physical, nutrition, emotional and social.
 - Coaches Manual includes all lessons and activities. Athlete Playbook allows athletes to track lessons and activities.

Questions? Want materials?

Contact Kelsey Sparks | Health Programs Coordinator Kelsey.sparks@somn.org

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SOMN Health Programs

SOMN offers health programs to integrate into your sports season to enhance your athletes performance, health, nutritional knowledge and overall well being.

- Fit5
 - Plan for physical activity, nutrition and hydration
 - Recommending 5 days of physical activity, 5 fruits and vegetables and 5 bottles of water
 - Fitness cards offer exercises to challenge abilities. These can be done at practice, the gym and home.
 - Build your practice using fitness cards to focus on endurance, flexibility, and strength
 - Athlete handbook to track progress and follow program at home

[Start now! Fit5 Guide and Training Cards](#)

Questions? Want materials?

Contact Kelsey Sparks | Health Programs Coordinator Kelsey.sparks@somn.org

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Level 2 Tennis

Coach ratio per athlete:

Athletes Level II			Athletes Level I		
Athletes	Level II	Level I	Athletes	Level II	Level I
1-4	1	0	33-36	3	6
5-8	1	1	37-40	3	7
9-12	1	2	41-44	3	8
13-16	1	3	45-48	3	9
17-20	2	3	49-52	4	9
21-24	2	4	53-56	4	10
25-28	2	5	57-60	4	11
29-32	2	6	61-64	4	12



All Coaches and Unified Partners must complete the Level 1 certification prior to their participation with a team. Level 1 certification requires a Volunteer Application and Level 1 online training and both items are found [here](#).

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SOMN Tennis Events

- *Athletes may compete in Individual Skills or Singles, and one Doubles Event.*
- *All Athletes & Unified Partners must submit an Individual Skills score from practice when registering for a competition; even if they are not competing in Skills at a competition. The Skills score is used for divisioning.*

Individual Skills – Level 1, 2 or 3 (court size and ball compression change in each level)

Singles – Level 2, 3, 4 or 5 (court size and ball compression change in each level)

Doubles – Level 3, 4 or 5 (court size and ball compression change in each level)

Unified Doubles – Level 3, 4 or 5 (court size and ball compression change in each level).* *Each Unified team shall determine it's own order of service and selection of courts (ad or deuce)*

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Individual Skills

Individual Skills

Level 1

- Short court 42' x 27'
- Red Ball – low compression 25%



Level 2

- 60' x 27' court
- Orange Ball – low compression 50%



Level 3

- 78' x 27' court
- Traditional Yellow Ball



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Individual Skills Scoring

The skill stations are the same in each level. An athlete gets scored in each station and scores are totaled for a final score. The skill stations are as follows:

- Forehand Volley
- Backhand Volley
- Forehand Groundstroke
- Backhand Groundstroke
- Serve – Deuce Court
- Serve – Advantage Court

How to run and score individual skill stations?

[Individual Skills Scoresheet](#)

[Individual Skills Stations \(SOI Rulebook\)](#)

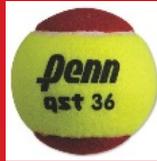
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Singles Events

Level 2

- Short court 42' x 27'
- Red Ball – low compression 25%



Level 3

- 60' x 27' court
- Orange Ball – low compression 50%



Level 4

- 78' x 27' court
- Green Ball – low compression 75%



Level 5

- 78' x 27' court
- Traditional Yellow Ball



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Traditional Doubles & Unified Doubles Events

Level 3

- 60' x 27' court
- Orange Ball – low compression 50%



Level 4

- 78' x 27' court
- Green Ball – low compression 75%



Level 5

- 78' x 27' court
- Traditional Yellow Ball



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Match Play Rules

Competition will be governed by the Rules of Tennis from the official code of the ITF. Please note items of particular interest below.

Serving - The serving motion may be underhand or overhand. Coaches should work with their athletes to avoid bouncing the ball prior to a serve. See "Short Court Modification" for rule change.

Scoring – One six-game, no-ad set will be used, with a set tiebreak, first to seven points by a margin of two, at six games all. Traditional scoring of love, 15, 30, 40, etc. or simplified scoring of 1, 2, 3, 4 may be used. At deuce (or 3–3), the server serves into the side of the court chosen by the receiver.

Continuous Play – Court Monitors allow 20 seconds between points and 90 seconds on changeovers. There is no break after the first game.

Coaching – Since there is no break after the first game, coaching should not be allowed until the player changes ends at the end of every odd game and during the three-minute rest period prior to the deciding tie break.

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Match Play Rules (continued)

Court Monitors – Are used on each court to ensure each match runs fairly and in good faith. Applications of the ITF Rules of Tennis will be made based on the level/ability of the athlete. Court monitors will assist with the management of the match including line calls, scoring and placement of the players.

Medical Timeouts – A medical timeout for each new medical condition, or aggravation of a pre-existing condition, may be taken during the warm-up or match for a treatable medical condition. Treatable medical conditions include, but are not limited to, injury, illness, and heat-related conditions and cramps. Once the court monitor is notified and the trainer, medical personnel or person treating the athlete has reached the court and made a diagnosis that the condition is treatable, the three-minute treatment time begins.

Bathroom Breaks– A player may request one or more bathroom breaks during the match. Coaching is not allowed during medical time outs or bathroom breaks. Players will be escorted during toilet breaks.

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Short Court Modifications

The short court competition is done on a 42 ft. court (service line to service line). Athletes competing in a short court competition must register in advance.

Short Court Level 2 (Red Ball) athletes are allowed to legally return a ball after it has bounced twice.

Short Court Skills

The full backcourt will count as 10 points in red and orange ball division scoring.

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Divisioning and Registration

Registration

Registration is done [online](#) by Heads of Delegation or Head Coaches. In order to register online the coach must have a username and password. If you need help with registration, please contact sports@somn.org

When a coach registers a team they must submit the following:

- Individual skills score for each athlete and Unified partner
- Coaches on each team
- Athletes and Unified partners must have appropriate paperwork submitted in order to register
If an athlete is attending the State tournament, they must attend their Area tournament first if one is offered.

Divisioning

1. Submit an individual skills score (if competing in Unified doubles, Unified Partners must also submit a score)
2. Divisions are determined by age and event level that is being registered for.

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Practice, Skill Development & Resources

Special Olympics Minnesota wants to make sure that you have confidence in your knowledge of tennis rules, skills and practice ideas. Listed below are Special Olympics tennis resources that can help with the training and skill development for athletes.

[Special Olympics, Inc Tennis Resources](#)

[Special Olympics Minnesota Tennis Resources](#)

For any questions regarding Special Olympics Minnesota tennis please contact Devin Kaasa, Senior Manager – Sports & Education
devin.kaasa@somn.org

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Coach Recognition Item

Each coach that becomes Level 2 certified or recertified in a sport is able to order one coach item per calendar year. Information can be found [HERE](#).

Please note that if you have not completed a Level 2 training or recertification course, or you have already received an item for the year, you will not be shipped an item.

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Level 2 Tennis Quiz

Level 2 certification is not processed until you have completed the Level 2 quiz.

To take the Level 2 Tennis quiz please click [here](#)

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