

## Know how to plan and promote private-club Cardio Tennis

by David Robinson, USPTA

The three most significant factors in successfully implementing Cardio Tennis at a private facility are **preparation** of promotional sessions, the **quality** of these clinics, and the subsequent **follow-up** procedures.

Unless your private facility already has enough members lined up and waiting for Cardio Tennis clinics to begin, complimentary clinics are the best method to quick-start the program. Try to avoid the term “free,” as private club members tend to think of their dues as having already paid for many promotional events.



Try incorporating a single 20-minute segment of Cardio Tennis into existing clinics and team practices.

### Preparation tactics

**Get the word out.** While e-mail blasts, “snail mailings,” posters and fliers are essential, word-of-mouth is the make or break mechanism influencing successful implementation in a closed environment.

- Have each staff member talk up the Cardio Tennis events, particularly at ladies clinics, team practices and any socials, including men’s and mixed events.
- Make a list of the best candidates to telephone. All of the teaching professionals and other key personnel should be asked to write down any members who might be receptive to Cardio Tennis. The best candidates are also thought of as pied pipers, such as team captains.
- Print and hand out invitations to the promotional clinics. Each staff member should have invitations to give to club members. They are more likely to attend and spread the word when they have been personally invited.

**Sample minisessions:** Try incorporating a single 20-minute segment of Cardio Tennis into existing clinics and team practices within a week or two of the scheduled promotional events.

- Use the addition of simple footwork ladder exercises as part of a drill, especially to replace waiting in line or shadowing situations without reducing the volume of hitting. Allow players to have the option to try this; forcing an exercise may not appeal to everyone.
- Play to the sound of music to enhance fast-paced drills and game-based hitting. Once again, don’t force this. Identify the participants who would like to try playing to music and group them onto a court away from the others, but still visible. This entices, without pressuring, any skeptics into sampling Cardio Tennis.
- If you have Polar heart rate monitors, use them! These HRMs really make a difference, even if you don’t play to music or incorporate the ladder exercises. If you don’t have HRMs, check into borrowing or renting them from a colleague in your area.

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## The promotional clinics

**Make it a double:** The two-serves (pair of clinics) approach can make a huge difference.

- The first clinic brings the ready and willing members, while the second clinic attracts those on the fence and the weekend market.
- Example: My initial Monday and following Saturday promotional clinics had 18 sign-ups before the first session. Three days after this first session, 34 more members signed up for the Saturday event as a result of member-to-member word-of-mouth, and we immediately sold five Polar HRMs!
- Make a friends-and-family event of the following weekend session. Our initial Monday session allowed all the regular ladies (a known initial target market) to have their event. Then, on the first weekend morning, many of them brought their friends and family. This can include teenagers and be promoted as a special parent/child opportunity.
- The weekend event attracts more men, to set the stage for weekday early-bird and evening Cardio Tennis clinics for those who work regular hours.

**Make it work!** A successful session is what ensures positive word-of-mouth response.

**Pull out all the stops.** This is a loss leader and not a time to cut costs. While you don't need to give away the house or want to spoil the members into thinking they will receive tons of extras in the paid sessions to follow, it is essential to make a big splash.

- Make it fun! Enthusiasm is huge; put on your happy face and make it contagious. The formal adage I use on all written material is: "Cardio Tennis (logo) – The FUN way to get fit."
- Be organized. Have all the HRMs ready to go and any other starting essentials, such as the attendance/HRM sign-out sheets, etc.
- Make a strong first impression. Set up all the bells and whistles in your inventory, even if you won't be using them in that session. I placed all the friendly (nonintimidating) sideline exercise equipment we owned in visible locations and let the participants know that they would only be trying a few introductory exercises that particular day.
- Have extra staff available to ensure the clinic gets a strong, prompt start. The staff should be pre-trained with a mini-Cardio Tennis workshop, even if they have participated in one of the official full-length Cardio Tennis workshops. Pros who have not taken one of these major workshops should, as they are not only informative, but one of the best tennis instructor training sessions available.
- The staff should be well rehearsed in programming the HRMs and knowledgeable about Cardio Tennis in general. It takes 10 minutes to pre-train the staff in HRM programming procedures. Noninstructional staff can be used to expedite large groups.



*Enthusiasm is huge; put on your happy face and make it contagious.*

- It is absolutely critical not to get bogged down in the HRM programming segment. The staff should quickly program all the HRMs for the members, demonstrating how easy it will be. In the later sessions for pay, the members will be taught to self-program their loaner HRMs and download the files.
- Choose and demonstrate simple learning curve sideline exercises. Briefly explain how each person may elevate or lower his or her heart rate to stay in his personalized zone. This could include having both a low and high-intensity sideline exercise available, but the real key is in the feeder's ability to control the activity.
- Make sure that each pro understands how to individually differentiate the intensity of the selected play or drill-based activities.
- Keep 'em moving! Minimize instruction or make sure it doesn't slow or stall the action.
- Having plenty of balls avoids any extra ball pickup requirements. Also, a full basket makes rapid feeding techniques easier. Equipment such as a ball mower can offer a "quicker picker upper."
- Wrap it up nice and neat: Once the pros have reacquired and downloaded HRM files efficiently, members will be thrilled to see how many calories they have burned, as well as their average heart rate, time in zone and other cool data.
- Sign 'em up: Be ready to sign up members for any planned sessions for pay. If you are still trying to determine the best days and times to offer the paid clinics, have a survey form ready to hand out or take this information as the members return their HRMs.

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## Internetter Ad

## USPTA seeks nominations for national board

The national Nominating Committee is accepting applications from members who are willing and available to serve on the national USPTA Board of Directors for 2007-2009. Applicants must submit a resume and a 250- to 500-word essay outlining their opinions on the goals and directions of USPTA. These materials should be postmarked no later than August 10 and sent to:



**Chuck Gill**  
**Ibis Golf and Country Club**  
**8100 Ibis Blvd.**  
**West Palm Beach, FL 33437**

### cardio

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### The follow-through

**Make phone calls and get feedback.** It is critical to not allow the promotional clinics to be over and done with.

- This is the opportunity to sign up more members for the ongoing Cardio Tennis clinics.
- Put out any fires: For whatever reason, not everyone will have had as positive an experience as others. Phone calls or in-person conversations are a chance to persuade the members who might be on the fence to sign up and increase the possibility of upbeat word-of-mouth.
- Keep talking up and selling the program. Have package discounts and/or a Cardio Tennis Club. These Cardio Club members might receive discounts on Polar products, a free Cardio Tennis hat, visor or T-shirt and be given a monthly free guest pass to offer a friend or family member.
- Be creative and insightful. What works great at one private club may not be as successful at another. Understand your membership, staff and logistics to ensure proper adaptation toward long-term success.
- Finally, remember the kids. Cardio Tennis 4 Kids is being planned and structured. Keep checking the [www.partners.cardiotennis.com](http://www.partners.cardiotennis.com) Web site for updates.

### Be a hero of happy and healthy hitting! ☺

*David Robinson, USPTA, is a certified fitness instructor and a member of the American College of Sports Medicine, National Strength Professionals Association, and the American Council on Exercise.*