

Preparing for your first heart-pumping sessions

by Jorge Andrew, USPTA Master Professional

Most of your work for Cardio Tennis will take place *before* you run your first official program. When I started my program I did a lot of planning. I also asked a lot of questions. I realized that although I have run a lot of cardio-type drills in the past, I had never run a Cardio Tennis program. There is a difference. Students in normal drills are looking to sharpen their skills and get a good workout. But, with Cardio Tennis, the students demand a *great* workout first and foremost. So, what planning should you do?

1. **Anticipate your target market(s)** – Beginners, existing players, women, couples – there are so many opportunities with Cardio Tennis. Each market may require a slightly different curriculum. I attacked the existing player market first (to get them to play more often). Therefore, I lined up a series of drills they would enjoy. Define your market and line up your strategies and curriculum accordingly.
2. **Pick the right pro and hours for the program** – Since I was dealing with existing players, I ran my initial program during normal business hours and also on weekends. When I started to market to nonplayers, I realized I needed an early-morning session, which is when many fitness participants worked out. Most importantly, I staffed this session with the pro who is a great feeder and great with group lessons. Your Cardio Tennis professional needs to be a motivator.
3. **Develop the right curriculum for the target market and the pro** – I studied all the drills I could use. I set time sequences for each drill. Knowing I had one class of 3.5 to 4.5 level players, I decided on a mix of drill-based and game-based approaches for the cardio segment. In another class, I had more beginners. I made sure I used transition balls and foam balls here. You have to find out what works best for your target market and for your particular style.
4. **Promote!** – Don't just put up a banner and expect people to show up. I am using all the tools the TIA offers: brochures, counter cards, posters and, especially, the fliers. I sent fliers to all my members and got a great response. Now, I am starting to use those same tools outside of my club. This will take a little investment but I am sure the return will be worth it.
5. **Train your staff** – This is a big one. We had a staff meeting and went over the program. I also had everyone view the cardio Tennis DVD and then go to the Partners.CardioTennis.com Web site. Make sure everyone at the club understands Cardio Tennis.
6. **Hold a trial run with staff** – Play test your program before it is delivered to the market. I got all my staff together to go through my curriculum for Cardio Tennis. After the session, we discussed what worked best and what needed refinement. Also, this gave the staff a real-life experience with Cardio Tennis. They are believers because they experienced it themselves.



7. **Understand music and heart rate monitors** – I was a little skeptical at first about music but it really works. And, I found the music offered by PowerMusic.com to be perfect for Cardio Tennis. They are the No. 1 supplier of music for the fitness industry and have music with 128-150 beats per minute. This music really keeps everybody moving. Also, heart rate monitors add a new dimension to our sport and make it easy for participants to check their own heart rates. Now, I am considering offering a free heart rate monitor whenever someone signs up for a package of 10 Cardio Tennis sessions.
8. **Have players sign a waiver or release** – Before your first sessions, have your participants sign a waiver or release form. This is a normal procedure that occurs whenever someone signs up for a fitness program.
9. **Tell players to show up 10 minutes early for the first session** – You want to take a little time in your first session to explain the program. Explain target heart rates, how to measure them and when to “keep moving” or “slow down.” If you are using heart rate monitors, take a little extra time to explain how they work.
10. **Get ready to have fun!** – Remember, this is a *fun* fitness activity. You have to be ready to deliver an exciting program.
11. **Have your evaluations ready** – This is key. After the first session, have all your students fill out a quick questionnaire on the session. Ask them what they liked or didn't like. It is a great way to learn.

Finally, always check out the latest ideas, recommendations and drills on the Partners.CardioTennis.com Web site. In fact, there are more planning steps in the “Curriculum” section of the site. This planning is well worth it. My program is thriving. I have learned a lot and you will too. Cardio Tennis has helped my business and is a new, fun activity all of us should be introducing at our facilities. ∞