Teach your child BADMINTON

Jake Downey National Coach and International Coach to the England UBER Cup Team 1975
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The author and his children
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Foreword

The usual approach in a book on how to play Badminton is for the author to describe each stroke in detail. The reader then has to translate the instructions into action. This is often difficult to do for it is not easy to write clear and precise instructions on how to perform a stroke. In addition, even if the instructions are clearly written, they do not allow for individual styles of play. The reader is usually obliged to follow instructions which describe one way only of performing a stroke.

Jake Downey offers a different approach to the game and so avoids these difficulties. In this book he has attempted to make clear what strokes are involved by drawing attention to the function of each stroke. How the player performs the stroke is a matter for individual interpretation and the stress on individuality, is one of the main features of the book. The child is taken through easy stages from simple to complex situations. As the parent follows the lessons he will see that each lesson is connected in such a way that it becomes easy for the child to learn the strokes and become more skilful at the game. Coaching is deliberately kept to a minimum and each lesson involves very little instruction and a great deal of play, which should make it easier to retain the child’s interest.

I have known Jake Downey for a number of years both as a fellow competitor and as Coach to the English Uber Cup team. I am pleased to recommend his ideas to any parent who wants to teach his child to play the game. I am sure that parents will obtain a large measure of self satisfaction in seeing the progress made by their children in the game as a result of their tuition.

R.J. Lockwood,
Chairman of the England Selection Committee 1973-75.
To Natasha and Sean

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The parent as teacher and coach

Introduction

The response of many parents to the suggestion `teach your child badminton' might well be that to do so is not possible. Reasons that may be given could be that the child will not listen to the parent or that he wants to play in his own way. For this reason most parents will settle for playing badminton with the child, but not for teaching badminton to the child. This attitude indicates a limited view of teaching, for in a sense, a parent teaches the child simply by playing badminton with him. To hit shuttles over the net, to play simple rallies and perhaps a simplified version of the game is within the scope of young children. Children of seven years of age and above can do this much and so learn to play badminton. For in playing the child has to perform certain movements to hit the shuttle from various positions to various spaces on the other side of the net. He does this by copying his parents' movements, or by trying one way and correcting and modifying his movements according to the degree of success he attains in his efforts.

The child can learn by having a go and playing rallies and games. The ability to keep the shuttle in play and to maintain a rally with the child and to encourage the child, and stimulate some enthusiasm for the game is sufficient for any teacher to begin with. In this sense any parent, player or non-player can teach the child to play badminton. Obviously this is not sufficient if a parent wants to help his child to master the skills of the game and to improve. This is where this sort of book can be of practical use. This book will make clear what is involved in playing the game from the point of view of both the teacher and the learner. The teacher will be taken gradually through the stages in the development of the player. He will be informed about the psychological and moral considerations in teaching. That is to say how a child acquires skill in badminton, and how best to teach the skills. In addition what is important is the sort of attitude that a child should adopt towards the game. For this reason how the parent teaches the child is important. Very often a child's enjoyment of the game and his interest in it can be spoiled by bad teaching. The relationship between the parent and the child is very important particularly if the child is to develop his interest in the game. If the child can see the value in the game as an enjoyable activity and worthy of his attention, he is more likely to become committed to it and be keen to improve. I believe that this is the most important feature of any games play, and so, throughout the book, what the game has to offer in terms of interest and enjoyment will determine what sort of teaching goes on.

Teaching the child to play the game is only one aspect of teaching the child badminton. There is much enjoyment to be derived from watching the game as a spectator. It is a dynamic game, for it involves a range of movements of both an explosive and a gentle sort. It involves a conflict between two adversaries both trying to overcome the other. The cut
and thrust, cat and mouse aspects of the game can be very dramatic, enthralling and absorbing for the spectator. In addition to the conflict, the battle on the court, are the grace and skill of the players' movements, and tactics used to overcome the opponent and win the contest.

However such appreciation presupposes an evaluation of the game as good or poor, interesting or uninteresting, skilful etc. This in turn presupposes some understanding of the standards in the game and is therefore an important feature in teaching your child badminton. Furthermore, much learning occurs from observation of good players and copying their movements, strokes, tactical moves etc. The child can only learn from watching good players if he can judge what is worth copying and hence what is of value. He should be able to appreciate the finer points of the game. To teach your child badminton is to get him inside the game. That is so that he can both play the game and appreciate the game.

The aim of this book is to assist you to teach your child badminton in this way. Its value lies in the extent to which it achieves this aim.

**What is badminton?**

It is a hitting game. It is claimed that it originated at the estate of the Duke of Beaufort in Gloucestershire. Guests amused themselves by playing a hitting game with rackets and shuttlecocks. As the estate was called Badminton, the game was given the same name.

The game spread and was played in various forms in different countries. Inevitably as it became more popular and the players became more skilful, the game became more complex. Accordingly rules had to be devised to define what a player could or could not do and to stipulate how the game was to be played. The first set of rules was formulated at Karachi in 1877. As the game developed throughout the countries of the world it became necessary that a standard set of rules be established.

In England, in 1893, a standard set of `Laws for the Game' was devised. In 1934 the International Badminton Federation was formed and the Badminton Association became known as the Badminton Association of England. The Federation comprises the associations of most of the countries which play Badminton.

Naturally games between countries result from association. Though many countries play friendly international matches, the main contests occur during the Thomas Cup and the Uber Cup matches. The Thomas cup is the trophy presented to the winners of the men's team championship. The competition occurs every three years. The Uber Cup is the trophy presented to the winners of the ladies' team championship and this competition also occurs every three years.

England ranks very highly in world badminton. They are at present the strongest country in Europe and as a combined team of men and women have won the European
Team Championship in 1972 and 1974. The men rank amongst the strongest doubles pairs in the world though as yet lacking the same position in singles play. In the ladies game the English players are among the strongest in the world both at singles and doubles. Since 1973 English women have contested every major championship in world badminton. They are now competing for the 1975 Uber cup trophy.

The game is rapidly expanding and is extremely popular. It is seen more frequently on T.V. and, with colour T.V., some of the appeal of the game is captured on the screen. There are many tournaments held throughout the U.K. particularly in England. There is a strong county association within the B.A. of E. and county matches in various divisions take place regularly throughout the season. The season extends officially from September until April, yet as with all expanding sports the game is now played by many clubs throughout the year. There are lots of opportunities to show the child good badminton for the leading players compete at many of the tournaments. Apart from the learning the child gains from seeing top class play, there is also much entertainment value. Badminton is a fast dynamic game and very exciting to watch. If interest and enjoyment are central to the child’s development in the game, then to both play and to watch the game is important in providing such interest and enjoyment of the game.

**Why play badminton?**

Badminton offers enjoyment and interest for the child. There are a number of reasons for this.
1. It offers the opportunity to perform a large range of movements i.e., running, jumping, lunging, bending, stretching and hitting movements which are performed sometimes quickly, slowly, gently or with power. It is the sheer pleasure of the variety of movement which has appeal for the players.
2. There is immediate satisfaction. The design of the shuttlecock causes it to slow down in the air and allows ease of hitting. One can play a game from the start.
3. It is recreational. The speed and the range of physical movements requires full use of the body and demands much effort. The game provides the opportunity to exercise the body and gives the feeling of well-being so essential for good health.
4. It involves a challenge. To perform the movements properly requires attention and practice. Skill is learned and so requires much physical work and thought from the player. There is also a challenge in the sense that one has to defeat another player to win the game. Players can test their skill out against each other. The game involves a battle of wits. In this lies the interest value, for how one outwits the opponent sometimes raises difficulties and presents problems to the player which he must work out during the game.
5. Above all it is enjoyable because, being only a game, the result does not really matter.
Though a player may take the game seriously and put his best efforts into it, since otherwise it would be hardly worth playing, the result is not a serious issue. What is important, is that a player has a good game. If he plays well the result does not matter as much as does the fact that he played well. The result is simply an indication that the game is concluded and that one player is the winner according to the rules. Now comes a further challenge and a feature that makes the game interesting. A player can go away, think about how he lost and do something about it. He can train harder, or practise his strokes, work out different tactics and then play again and try to reverse the result.

6. It is a good game to play because most play occurs in the context of badminton clubs. There are numerous people who play and as a recreational game it offers the opportunity to meet many people and develop new friendships arising from the common interest of badminton.

7. Finally it is a good game to play because should one excel at it and enjoy serious competition, the game offers this, for at a formal level it is highly organised. There are usually leagues and clubs in every town, and tournaments at a local and a national level. For any player who wants to make it his number one sport there is always the chance to play at a higher level. The challenge in the game provides interest and enjoyment at every level.

At what age can you begin to play?

It is not possible to state any specific age to begin the game. One reads about young children who grow up with a racket in the hand. However these are rare and there is no guarantee that starting very young gives any advantage over a person beginning at a later stage. There are numerous factors which may determine when a child begins to play badminton. These involve age, ability, interest and attitude etc.

Some parents think it is necessary to begin at a very early age hoping to develop their children into highly skilful competitors. However many top class players did not start playing until their teens.

The best advice is to hit shuttles to your child for fun and to let him get the idea of the activity and the feel for it. With the emphasis on enjoyment it is likely that the interest will develop. If the child is too young and not really interested it is better not to force the interest. Leave the game, the hitting of shuttlecocks, for a time and try again at a later period. Commonsense should prevail. Simple advice is to introduce your child to hitting shuttlecocks, judge the response, and go from there.

What do you need to play the game?

There are several basic requirements prior to playing the game.
1. The equipment; a space in which to play; another player; a certain degree of competence in hitting the shuttlecock.
2. Some knowledge of the game and the rules.

Equipment

Racket. It is often difficult to know what racket to select for a child. A badminton racket is very light. It weighs between 4 ozs and 5'/s ozs. Rackets are balanced; they are evenly balanced with an equal distribution of weight between the racket head and the handle; or more weight or less weight in the head in relation to the handle. The grip size varies between small and large, and the grip itself is made of various materials, i.e., leather, plastic, or towelling. The prices of rackets range between very cheap and very expensive.

How does a parent select a racket for a child? The most important feature of a racket is the 'feel' of the racket. A racket may 'feel' clumsy and awkward to handle during play. The 'feel' is a personal matter but is determined by the size of the grip, the balance of the racket and the stringing. A racket may feel heavy or light in the head in relation to the handle. I think that in choosing a racket, the cheaper price racket should be excluded from choice. They do not give a quality performance. Choice should be restricted to the medium or top price range. Buy a racket that feels comfortable to the child. A handle that feels easy to grip and allows control over the head of the racket. He can test this by swishing it about. Select one which is evenly balanced or slightly lighter in the head. This will give the child more control over the racket head in stroke production. The stringing of the racket needs some consideration. Good synthetic strings are excellent for many club players and should be ideal for the beginner.

Care of rackets Because the racket is so light it can easily be damaged by ill-treatment. Look after the racket and you will receive good service from it.

Shuttlecocks. The shuttlecock is the object used in play. It is referred to as the 'shuttle' or the 'bird' or the 'feather'. It is of a very delicate construction. A shuttlecock weighs only a fraction of an ounce. The weight varies between 73 grains and 85 grains. The weight affects the flight. A shuttle varies in speed of flight from slow (73 grains) to fast (85 grains). There are two types e.g. feathered and plastic. The
feathered shuttlecock is constructed of 14 or 16 goose feathers inserted into a cork base. The base is covered by kid leather. These are the sort usually used in competition. However they are expensive and the feathers are easily damaged. Damaged feathers affect the flight of the shuttle and spoil the enjoyment of the game. The shuttlecock must be carefully looked after and the feathers smoothed out if disturbed during play. Plastic shuttlecocks are much cheaper and are able to withstand rough treatment and so last longer. They maintain an even flight in the air and are extremely suitable for the beginner. They are made in three speeds, slow, medium and fast. The speed of flight of a shuttlecock is affected by the temperature. A shuttle travels slowly in a cold hall and quickly in a warm hall. For this reason select a shuttlecock according to weight (if feathered) and to speed (if plastic) for use in the appropriate temperature.

Dress. The laws of badminton stipulate that white clothing should be worn on the court. This rule is rigidly upheld in many clubs and certainly in match and tournament play. To see players dressed in white adds to the spectacle of the game and increases the enjoyment of it. It is aesthetically pleasing to see players in clean white clothing playing this vigorous game. Also, for the player it provides a sense of purpose, and is perhaps a measure of how much he values the game that he wants to conform to the standards in it. NOTE: This was written in 1976 – the rules on clothing have now changed.

A parent doesn’t want to spend a lot of money on expensive clothing for a growing child who may not want to take up the game. In the early stages some compromise is essential, unless of course the child wants to wear the proper clothing from the start. If the child is learning in his parent’s club he may have no option but to wear the correct clothing. However I assume that many parents begin to teach their child in the garden or a sports hall, where there are no club rules to comply with. As badminton is a fast energetic game requiring a wide range of physical movement dress should be worn for comfort and freedom of movement. Below is listed the sort of clothing considered necessary to play the game, with suggestions for a possible compromise.

Footwear. The correct footwear is essential. Shoes receive a considerable amount of wear during play. Also the quick changes of direction involved requires shoes which enable a player to get a grip on the floor. Cheap smooth soled shoes are inadequate. Buy good quality shoes and thick socks to prevent blistering of the feet.

Clothing. Ideally white shorts and a shirt are required. Boys can always wear football shorts and a white T-shirt. Girls can wear the same or a skirt and a T-shirt.

Additional clothing. It is usually a sound policy to wear a warm pullover or slipover prior to playing and for wear after the game. This helps the body to warm up quickly and prevents it becoming cold after the game. Most children these days seem to possess a track suit as a multi-purpose
sports garment. Certainly it is useful for keeping one warm, and for the beginner it is ideal for play. As the child develops his interest he should be encouraged to wear the appropriate white clothing.

**Where do you purchase the equipment?**

There are numerous sports shops which stock the complete range of sports equipment. You should now be able to go into a sports shop with a good idea of what sort of badminton equipment is appropriate. It is only a matter of examining the equipment; testing out the racket; trying on the shoes for comfort and examining the sole for the sort of grip that they will provide. Think carefully about your child’s needs and use your commonsense in choosing.

**2. A knowledge of the game**

**A description of the game**
The game is played on a rectangular court, divided into halves by a net. The game is played by opposing players. Two players make a singles game. Four players make a doubles game. The players occupy opposite halves of the court. They use rackets to hit the shuttlecock over the net so that it hits the floor on the opponents side of the court. The doubles court is wider than the singles court.

A contest consists of the best of three games. All games are played up to 21 or 15 points except for ladies singles, which are played up to 11 points. At the conclusion of the game, the players change ends. The Laws of the Game at the end of the book will give more details of the procedure during play.

**Beginning the game**
To begin a contest the players toss. The word `side' describes the player or pair of players. The side which wins the toss has the chance of:
(a) serving first
(b) not serving first
(c) choosing ends
The side which serves the shuttle is known as the Serving Side. The side which receives the serve is known as the Receiving Side.

**Scoring in the game**
Only the serving side can add points to the score. Each side tries to win the service. Having won the service, the side in possession has the opportunity to add points to the score. A point is won during play if a player hits the shuttle to the ground on the opponent's half of the court; or if the opponent is unable to return the shuttle into play. Though a point is won in the way described it is only added to the score if won by the serving side. If the receiving side wins
the point, the score remains the same but the receiving side have now won the service. They become the Serving Side and have their opportunity to serve and add points to their score. In Doubles play, the receiving side would have to win two rallies before they gained possession of the service.

1. A. serves from his right service court diagonally opposite to B.
2. A. wins the first point. The score becomes 1-0 to A.
3. A. moves to his left service court to serve diagonally opposite to B. The receiver must always stand diagonally to the server.
4. A. wins the point. The score becomes 2-0. A. moves once again to his right service court to serve diagonally opposite to B.
5. B. wins the next point and wins the service. The score remains the same.
6. B. now serves from his right service court diagonally opposite to A.
7. B. wins the point. The score becomes 1-2. The score of the server is stated first. It follows that the players stand in the service court related to the score. If the server's score is an even number the players stand on the right service court. If the server's score is an odd number the players stand on the left service court. The doubles game

This is slightly more complicated but the principle of changing the service court as a point is won remains the same. At the beginning of the game only one player of the serving side is allowed to serve. He continues to serve until he loses the service to the other side. From then on both players on each side have a turn to serve when their side is
1. A. serves diagonally opposite to C. The serving side win the point. The score becomes 1-0.
2. A. moves to his left court and serves diagonally opposite to D. He continues to move and serve to each player in turn until that serve is lost.
3. If A. was serving to D. before he lost the service, he must remain in that court to receive service until his side gains possession of the service and a point is won.
4. Whatever the state of the score, only the serving side may change from one court to the other in order to serve to each player of the opposing side. The receiving side must remain in the court that they occupied before they lost the service.

This is a simple explanation. A more detailed account of the order of serving may be referred to in the Laws of the Game (see p. 87).

The above explanation is rather a formal description of the game, which makes clear the actual procedure in a game. With the child it is not always necessary to comply with this formal procedure in the early stages. The lessons which follow may for this reason contain games with rules which appear to vary slightly from the established rules which determine this formal procedure.