

Thorpe, R. (1986). A demonstration of a different focus. In R. Thorpe, D. Bunker, & L. Almond (Eds.), *Rethinking games teaching* (pp. 17-24). Loughboroug: University of Technology.

*A Demonstration of a Different Focus* by Rod Thorpe deals with the problems commonly associated with traditional coaching techniques in tennis. The article is designed to provide an alternative teaching approach to tennis in order to facilitate a greater appreciation for the game among children.

Traditionally tennis has been taught with a technique based approach. This approach focuses on children developing their technical skills immediately with the onset of teaching. However as Rod Thorpe points out, despite three to four years of hard work, many children do not achieve a technical level of any significance. Mr. Thorpe goes on to say, "I think conventional approaches to the teaching of tennis have convinced at least 80% of children they cannot play the game". Thus Rod Thorpe wants to revolutionize how teachers instruct children about tennis. To facilitate this change Rod Thorpe has developed an entirely new lesson plan for kids from 9-12 years of age. Mr. Thorpe's lesson plan is based primarily around children having a good understanding of the game rather than focusing on technical skills. Mr. Thorpe points out that most children cannot achieve rallies on a full size court when first learning to play tennis, ergo Mr. Thorpe proposes that the court and equipment be adjusted to accommodate a child's skill level. If this is done, children begin to have rallies and must develop an understanding of how to win those rallies. As this understanding grows, so do the children's technical skills and as they progress the teacher can start removing the changes that they have implemented until the children are playing normal tennis. This process allows the children to develop a full understanding and appreciation for the game of tennis.

When taken into account that Mr. Thorpe's article does assume that most children between the ages of nine and twelve do poorly at tennis with a technical approach his argument provides a clear and logical path to follow in order to correct problems associated with a technical approach. Although this may not be a guide for instructing older children, I believe it to be an excellent guide for instructing young children with special consideration going to Rod Thorpe's ideas about changing court size and equipment. I can only hope that my peers will read and use this information to better their teaching skills so that their students can develop a good understanding and appreciation for the sport of tennis.