

INTERNATIONAL BLIND SPORTS FEDERATION

SHOWDOWN SPORT COMMITTEE

COACH MANUAL



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INTRODUCTION

We're writing this manual to spread the principles and the techniques of showdown, in order to give some guidelines to future coaches of the discipline.

The showdown coach, as in all other sports, has the duty not only to teach, coach and technically train the athletes for competitions, but also to educate them to the sporting culture in order to promote and spread the concept of sport made of respect and healthy competition.

This manual is the summary of the field experiences made during several years of activity both in national and international tournaments. We would like to thank the Italian coaches and players who provided their precious collaboration and opinions.

For a general overview on showdown and its international rules, please refer to these links:

- <http://www.ibsasport.org/sports/showdown/rules/>
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Showdown_\(sport\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Showdown_(sport))

PSYCHOLOGY

Sport Education

As all sports, showdown aims to build an healthy personality, facilitate creativity, develop responsibility and educate to the respect of rules. It encourages fair play and commitment in order to reach an objective.

From a recreational point of view, this discipline gives the chance to have fun playing individually or in a team, without the need of a big economic effort and particular facilities.

Individual Psychology

There are several studies about the common characteristic of athletes performing the same sport. These common features are both physical and psychological. From a mental point of view it's easy to understand the difference between the tranquility of a long distance runner and the aggressive forcefulness of a 100m runner. Moreover, the psychological attitude of an athlete depends also on the kind of sport performed. There are performance sports (swimming, athletic etc...) and motor intelligence sports (tennis, martial arts etc...). In the first case the athlete is the only responsible of his/her own performance, which has to be deprived of mistakes in the technical execution; in the second case the athlete faces opponents and adversaries, who are inventive and unpredictable, and this requests from the executants specific behaviors according to different conditions.

Based on this analysis, normally the features of a Showdown player are an aggressive forcefulness and a marked motor intelligence.

However every athlete has his/her personality which is closely connected to his/her own psychic and emotional inner world. The coach can have a profound impact on athlete satisfaction, regardless of the level of sport involvement .

Responsibility of a Coach

The athlete/coach relationship is a privileged one. Coaches play a critical role in the personal as well as athletic development of their athletes.

Coaches must also recognize that they are conduits through which the values and goals of a sport organization are channeled. Thus how an athlete regards his/her sport is often dependent on the behavior of the coach.

Management Ability

The coach has to keep his/her emotion for him/herself, be objective and give clear advice to the player.

He/she must be able to balance the player's emotional feelings; calm him/her if he/she is upset and encourage him/her if he/she is unmotivated.

The coach needs to be authoritative but not authoritarian and also have some psychological knowledge in order to let him/her work individually and in team with the players.

Moreover, the coach has to have communicative skills which will allow him/her to handle the group and solve possible critical situations and contrasts.

The coach has to know the rules of the game, its terminology and should assure that his/her player knows these as well.

Coach and players need also to find an efficient way of communication between each other, developing a shared and common training terminology.

Furthermore, the coach has to check that the attire and the equipment of the player respect the standards set in the rules.

The coach has to be able to practice his/her function: taking decisions for which he/she is responsible for and comply with his/her duties.

The coach's behavior has always to be respectful and appropriate, taking care of his/her own appearance and attire.

Tournament Management

At the beginning of every tournament, the Organization convenes a meeting with all the team leaders. In this meeting, rules and details about the tournament are explained (tables' location, players' waiting room, meeting point etc...). The coach has to inform his/her players about the contents of this meeting.

His/her ability to transmit this information will be better as he/she will be able to take into account the perceptual references of a blind person and not of a sighted one.

PRACTICE

To get the most out of a training session, the coach must be prepared: thinking and writing are linked together, therefore a coach should write a session plan for each training session whether it is a technical session or a pretournament training.

First of all, a coach should have in mind what is the goal each player has to achieve during a sport season. It is necessary to plan one (or maximum two) activity per session, and after each one, evaluate them. In preparing the sessions, the coach has to consider the current level of ability of each player.

Writing a session plan gives the players a challenging training and pushes them to improve their way of playing.

As in every training, it is fundamental the programming and the evaluation tests to recalibrate the preparation during the season.

Before each training session, the coach has to dedicate at least 20/30 minutes to calisthenics (or floor exercises) and to stretching, in order to let the players warm up the upper part of the body. At the end of each session, 10 minutes have to be dedicate to cooling down exercises.

During the sports season, it will be useful to add some exercises with dumbbell and elastic bands to improve strength and speed.

TRAINING THE BASIS

A coach has to guide new players to know the table in the best way possible. The knowledge of the table (the reference points, the space between them etc...) allows the player to perform the right shot following the wanted direction or to defend in a proper way avoiding the opponent to score.

To build and train the athlete to this mental image, the coach has to guide the player around the table, letting him/her touch it and understand the position and distance between several elements. This procedure will be more effective dividing the table into zones.

After that, the coach has to train the hearing of the player to teach him/her to calculate the distances and the trajectories for the shots.

The athlete has to stay in his/her playing position, the coach will knock on the sidewall in correspondence to one point (curve, end-wall, under the centerboard etc...) and ask the player to shot there; then the coach will guide the athlete to the point he/she shot to let him/her understand the trajectory of the ball.

Once this mental image is built, the player has to start to make confidence with the ball and the bat, through ball control exercises both in front of the goal area and from one side to the other. It will be useful to do ball control exercises at the beginning of each training session until the player will show enough confidence, an increase of speed and is able to perform ball control during a match as well.

It is necessary to repeatedly exercise on the same situations so that the player gets confident and he/she will naturally deal with them during the game.

Defense

Basic defense exercises

The player protects his/her goal pocket by moving the bat along the outer part of the semicircle of the goal area. The bat has to be held in an horizontal position with the blade slightly reclined towards the centerboard.

The movement to protect the goal area could be near the goal area semicircle or at the curves, depending on the opponent's shot, but both have to be semicircular movement. On

the gloves side, the player has to lift the elbow in order to get as close as possible to the end of the table. To defend the bat side, on the contrary, the elbow needs to remain in the same position, while the point of bat closes the space between the end of the table and the goal area.

These movements are preparatory for the blocking, which allows the player to stop the ball against one of the sidewalls and prepare for attack.

Basic Position

In order to play showdown in the best way both in defense and in attack, it is necessary that the player stands in the correct position to give power and quickness to his/her movements:

- central position in order to defend the goal area
- left or right foot slightly forward (depending on which foot will the player put forward when simulating a fall) to facilitate the shot;
- slightly open, flexed and flexible legs to give power to the shot;
- slightly tilted forward chest;
- relaxed but responsive body.

After each shot the player has to come back to the basic position, in order to be ready for the response.

Grip on the bat

In order to achieve power and flexibility in the shot, it is important to have a comfortable, not excessively tight or soft grip on the bat.

Based on every athlete's shot technique, it is possible to grip the whole handle or just a part of it.

Shots

In Showdown the basic shots are: forehand, backhand and top spin. They can be performed using the arm/shoulder power or with a wrist movement. The shots can be performed both guiding the ball on the bat surface and hitting the ball on a predetermined

spot on the bat.

Forehand

The forehand is done with the blade of the bat pointed towards right (left if the player is left-handed).

Backhand

The backhand is done with the blade of the bat pointed towards left (right if the player is left-handed).

Top Spin

The top spin is the kind of shot that allows the ball to rotate forward as its moving. A topspin shot can be generated by hitting the ball with an up-and-forward swing, with the racquet facing below the direction it is moving.

Trajectories

Straight shot

The straight shot is performed by giving the ball a direction perpendicular to the opponent's end-wall without touching the sidewalls.

Diagonal Shot

The diagonal shot is performed by giving the ball a diagonal trajectory (from one curve to the opposite one, or to the opposite angle) without touching the sidewalls. The shot will hit the curve if the ball glides on the bat surface, while, in order to hit the corner, the ball needs to be near the handle.

It could also be done from the centre, giving the shot the wanted direction. Ball control could be performed before shooting in order to catch the opponent unprepared.

Single bounce Shot

In this kind of shot the ball hits the sidewall (left or right) once. In order to be the most effective after the bounce the ball has to move towards the opponent's goal area or curves.

Double or Multiple Bounces Shot

In these kinds of shots the ball hits first one sidewall then the other one, in a series. In order to be the most effective, the ball has to move towards the opponent's goal area or curves after the bounces.

The shot can be performed by hitting the sidewalls twice or more times.

Alongside Shot

The alongside shot is performed by making the ball slip all along the sidewall up to reach the opposite curve.

Serve

The serve is the shot that starts the play and therefore a shot that has to be performed with precision. It can be done from every corner of the table and from whatever trajectory the player chooses.

It is very important that beginners start to take some reference points on the table in order to perform the serve in the best way possible.

TRAINING WITH SKILLED PLAYERS

Attack

Skilled players already know the basis for the shots described previously, therefore the technical training needs to be focused on improving the precision, the power and the speed of the shots. Coaches have to plan the exercises and dedicate as much time as possible to this kind of training.

Players have to perform a single kind of shots several times using two different techniques:

- putting marks on the sidewalls, dividing the table in portion in order to ask the player to hit them, performing different kind of shots;
- using a designed defender.

Defense

The best way to train defense with skilled players is to do some matches versus the coach who can hit the weakest points of the player and, whether he/she moves too much to follow the ball's movement, perform shorter double or multiple bounce shots that go to the centre of the goal area.

Another useful exercise can be done with the designed defender that simulates the opponent's response if the player's shot isn't precise to train for quick ball returns.

TOURNAMENTS

Lucidity

During a showdown match it could happen to lose lucidity due to a lack of experience and physical training.

A good fitness level and self awareness can help to detect this kind of situation; recognizing it the player can adapt his/her way of playing to that particular moment and find the best tactic to face and pass it.

When playing important matches, focus is the key point.

Arm/legs Synergy

The one who makes good use of the legs will take advantage of it.

The coach has to help experienced players improving this aspect in order to enhance their performance.

The synergy between arm and legs is very important in showdown because it allows to add more power and efficacy to the shots.

Matches

When starting playing showdown the game's speed will be very slow and the use of the bat clumsy. The beginner will use tournaments to become more comfortable both in performing the shots and in focusing on the game. Tournaments are also a very good way to gain experience and learn some strategies both by playing and speaking with other players.

The coach has to guide these players in achieving confidence and improve the approach they have to the match.

Particular attention has to be paid to communication:

- agree on how to address in the technical parts;
- follow the player's psychology and body language in order to build a feeling.

Skilled players already have the amount of experience to approach a match with the right focus and a developed hearing that helps them to correct the tactics even without the coach's help.

This doesn't mean that that coaches become useless. They still have to focus on the player's body language and stop him/her when needed. They also have to help by telling the players whether the opponent moves too much, has an incorrect bat grip or lowers the attention during particular shots.