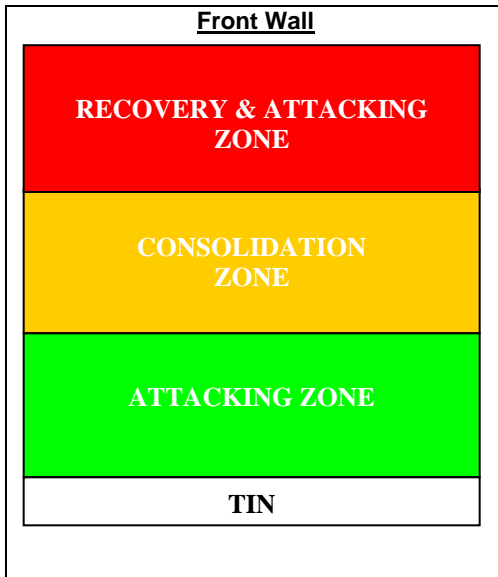


Traffic Light System

By
Mike Harris

In my first article I wrote about the Game Plan and the importance of hitting a good length from the back of the court. I mentioned that I practiced hitting straight or cross court, either hard and low or high and soft to get the ball past my opponent. This taught me to use every inch of the front wall.

So, when I became a coach, I introduced an idea called the Traffic Light System. Not only do players practice individual shots into these areas, it became part of a tactical system to help players develop and improve shot selection, using a variety of height and pace when in certain positions during a rally.

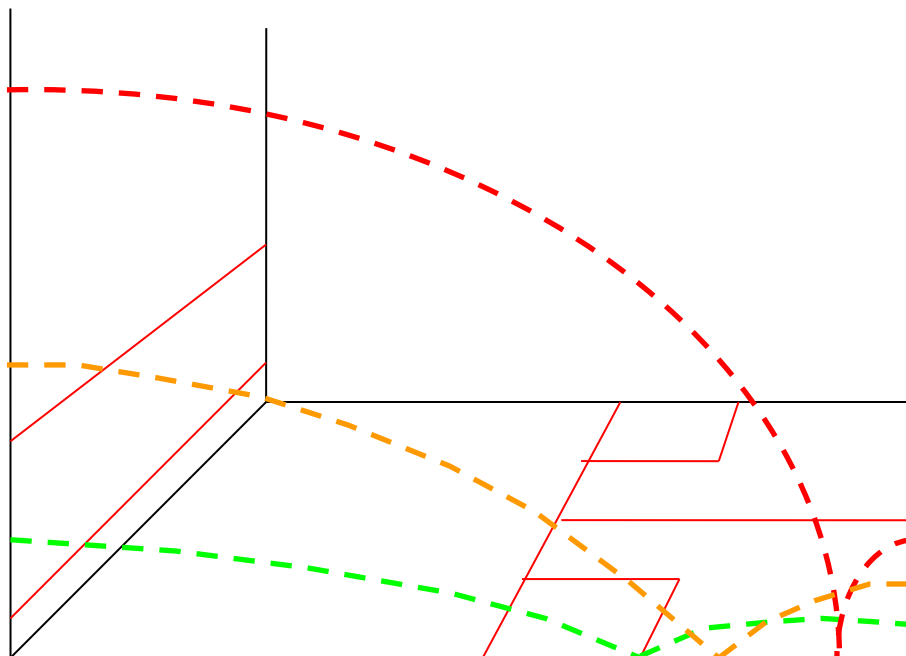


The Recovery and Attacking (Red) Zone – Playing a lob gives you time when you’re under pressure to slow the game down and will give you time to recover back to the T-Zone. The lob can also turn a defensive situation in to an attacking opportunity by moving your opponent away from the T-Zone, giving you the opportunity to regain control of the middle of the court (T-Zone) and look to attack your opponents return. The types of shots you would hit into the red zone: Serve, Straight or Cross Court Lobs and Volley Lobs.

The (Amber) Zone – I’ve always described this area as the consolidation area, you’re neither attacking nor defending (except for the lob from the front of the court). You could for example be using this area to potentially slow the rally down by hitting a tight chipped ball along the sidewall to length but beware hitting a loose shot as the ball is at the right for your opponent to volley.

The Attacking (Green) Zone – The green zone is used when you are primarily looking to attack your opponent and exert pressure. The types of shots you would hit into the green zone; attacking length, mid court drives, volley kills, drops, volley drops and attacking boasts etc.

Example of a Length using the Traffic Light



One of my favourite shots is the lob, a shot that if played well, gives you time to recover when you're under pressure. If you can play a good lob, it can turn defensive situation in to attacking opportunity, add in the movement back to the T-Zone, you're now back in control of the middle of the court. You've now swung the pendulum back into your favour.

An example of this was in the 2020 Windy City Final between Nour El-Sherbini v Raneem El-Welily the score was 2-2 games all and 10-9 match ball to Nour El-Sherbini.

Raneem was exerting huge pressure on to her opponent trying to get back to 10-10, El-Sherbini was on the wrong end of the rally and was being moved all over the court. El-Welily, was attacking her with low drives and volley drives, drops and volley drops (Green Zone) when out of nowhere, El-Sherbini hits an incredible cross court lob (Red Zone) in to the back backhand corner, El-Welily was forced to boast and El-Sherbini hits a perfect forehand drop to win the match. She had turned a defensive situation in to an attacking opportunity.

Raneem had done nothing wrong during this particular rally, she was in total control and when you get an opportunity to attack (Green Zone), you should be doing the same, because the majority of the time you're going to be winning the rally.

The best players over the years have an incredible weight of shot and the ability to vary the pace during the rally. They find ways to move the ball and their opponents around the court using every inch of the front wall, they might start the rally fast and if the rally isn't quite happening, change the pace mid rally to break their opponents rhythm, they might begin the rally slowly, cautiously and then up the pace when the opportunity arises.

This is an incredible skill to have, and below are some of my favourite practices to help develop a variety of pace (Using the Traffic Light).

Traffic Light Solo Practices

- a. **90secs - continuous shots into red zone** (Point for every shot that hits the red zone then lands behind the service box and inside service box width)
- b. **90secs - continuous shots into amber zone** (Point for every shot that hits the amber zone then lands at the back of the service box and inside service box width)
- c. **90secs - continuous shots into green zone** (Point for every shot that hits the green zone then lands behind the short line and Inside service box width)
- d. **90secs - alternate green zone and red zone** (Count how many shots in row that land in the targets, as set above)
- e. **90secs - 2 green zone and 1 red zone** (Count how many shots in row that land in the targets, as set above)
- f. **90secs - 2 red zone and 1 green zone** (Count how many shots in row that land in the targets, as set above)

The length and width targets will depend on your ability, for example if you find the width targets above to difficult use the whole back quarter, vice versa if the width target is to easy use half the service box width or even 4 floorboards. (Keep a record of your score and try to beat it each time you practice)

Pairs/Group Traffic Light Practice

Pairs/Group Practices:
(Targets hit in timed challenge or set number to achieve, vary size of targets depending on ability in each practice)

- a) Straight Length Rally, both players hit Red Zone only
- b) Straight Length Rally, both players hit Amber Zone only
- c) Straight Length Rally, both players hit Green Zone only
- d) Straight Length Rally, player A hits red zone only, player B hits green zone only
- e) Straight Length Rally, player A hits red zone only, player B can use the whole front wall
- f) Straight Length Rally, player A hits amber zone only, player B can use the whole front wall

- g) Straight Length Rally, player A hits green zone only, player B can use the whole front wall

Open Skilled Traffic Light Conditioned Games

Open Skilled Conditioned Games:

*(Play PAR Scoring to 11)
Two clear points at 10 all)*

- a) Length Game – Straight or cross courts.
- b) Player A plays length only and above the service line (red & amber zone only) with one attacking shot per rally (green zone), player B hits below the service line (green zone) with one shot above the service line (red and amber zone)
- c) Player A plays length only and above the service line (red & amber zone only) with one attacking shot per rally (green zone), player B can play normal game.
- d) Player A hits below the service line (green zone) with one shot above the service line (red zone, player B can play normal game.
- e) Player A plays cross court lobs and straight drops, or volley drops only, player B can play normal game.
- f) Player A plays any straight shot only; player B can play normal game.
- g) Player A plays any cross court and boasts only, player B can play normal game.
- h) Player A plays back left quarter and front right quarter only; player B can play normal game.
- i) Player A plays back right quarter and front left quarter only; player B can play normal game.
- j) Player A hits only below the service line (green zone), player B plays normal game.