

Speedminton: Using the Tactical Games Model in Secondary Physical Education

By Hyun-Ju Oh, Susan Bullard and Rhonda Hovatter

Teaching and learning of sport and sports-related games dominates the curriculum in most secondary physical education programs in America (Metzler, 2005). Many of these programs are providing more variety and choices, but continue to teach classes in a traditional manner: performing skill drills, attempting to master basic skills, and playing the full game. Buck and Harrison (1990) found that using this method of teaching, students gained or improved skills when they were involved in practice drills, but had fewer chances to actually touch the ball or improve skills when they played the game. Therefore, success rates were reduced and students' skills regressed during gameplay. Additionally, many students struggle with transitioning between drills into

gameplay because performing the skills in a game situation is different than performing the skill in a practice drill. Furthermore, the idea of failing to successfully perform in front of peers can lead to embarrassment and a breakdown of self-confidence, which can lead to disinterest and self-imposed alienation (Carlson, 1995).

Playing the game is the pinnacle of learning sports, but the question must be asked: "Can we teach sports and games in a way that allows students to become more proficient in skill acquisition so that using those skills in more realistic game situations becomes easy for the majority of students?" If, as Mitchell, Oslin, and Griffin (2006) state, two-thirds of physical education curriculum is dedicated to teaching games, physi-

cal educators must explore and test new teaching models so students can experience a greater level of success and enjoyment.

For many secondary school students, playing games can be exciting and lead to a lifetime of participation in sport-related activities. Using the Tactical Games Model (TGM) (Mitchell et al., 2006) to teach the new racquet game of Speedminton is a great way to deliver sport-related content that incorporates standard 1 (motor competencies), 2 (tactics, strategies and movement patterns), 3 (regular physical activity participation), 4 (health enhanced-fitness level), and 6 (value for challenges enjoyment and social interaction), from the National Standards for Physical Education (NASPE, 2004).

Besides having students go out into the community in search of resources for physical activity, the community can be invited into the school as well. For example, physical activity leaders in the community can be invited to discuss different opportunities available for students, staff, and parents. Alternatively, community physical activity leaders can set up wellness fairs or physical activity fairs in schools to showcase different types of physical activities and the health benefits of regularly engaging in physical activity (Lambdin & Erwin, 2007).

Parents are an important resource in the community. Physical educators and classroom teachers can give homework projects that involve the parents. For example, students can be given an assignment to chart their physical activity pattern with a family member for the week. Students are more inclined to engage in physical activity if they see their parents participating. Parents who exhibit regular participation in physical activity serve as role models to their children in valuing the importance of physical activity.

Conclusion

A holistic approach to promote physical activity should become a high priority if society is to overcome the dramatic increase in physical inactivity and hypokinetic diseases associated with it. In order to achieve this goal, a collective effort is urgently needed if we are serious in combating this unhealthy and dangerous trend.

Schools as a whole can offer more opportunities for students to engage in active and healthy behaviors. Administrators, physical educators, classroom teachers, as well as food service personnel can play a pivotal role in the promotion of physical activity and healthy lifestyle among students. The community is an important resource as well. The lack of physical activity is a public health issue and community involvement is crucial to the success of promoting a healthy lifestyle. Parents, physical activity leaders, and organizations that promote physical activity in the community need to work in tandem with the school community to combat the obesity epidemic that has plagued our schools.

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According to Mitchell et al., (2006), the primary goal of the tactical games approach is improvement in game performance. They argue that it is through improvement in performance that students begin to experience an increase in enjoyment, interest, and perceived competence in their gameplay: "These motivational outcomes increase the likelihood that students will play games later in life" (p. 495).

The TGM has been used to introduce and teach other racquet/striking sports such as tennis, badminton, and softball. Using the TGM to teach Speedminton can improve students' ability to apply tactical and strategic concepts of gameplay because they practice in that format. Although Speedminton is not a net and wall game as defined by Mitchell et al., (2006), it fits perfectly into the category because the tactical knowledge and skills needed to play are similar to those needed in tennis, badminton, and racquetball. Still, teachers may be hesitant to develop tactical units or apply concepts of the tactical games approach simply because they lack experience in the subject. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to introduce the non-traditional sport of Speedminton using a tactical games approach.

A New Racquet Sport: Speedminton

Speedminton was first developed in Germany and introduced in America 2004 (Landis, 2008). Speedminton combines elements of badminton, tennis, and racquetball into an exciting game for secondary school youth and is an excellent choice for physical educators who seek new sports for their physical education program. Other than a couple potential barriers (i.e., costs around \$300-350, having the space to play), implementing Speedminton into physical education provides multiple benefits for students (e.g., continuous movement, easy rules, fun game, etc.). In addition, Speedminton can be played at anytime and almost anywhere regardless of surface type. One tennis court

Figure 1.
Dimensions of a Speedminton Court

2 courts (18 x 18 feet) and 42 feet apart

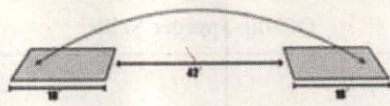


Table 1.
Useful Speedminton Websites

Speedminton Resources

www.speedminton.com
www.speedmintonusa.com

Speedminton Leagues

www.speedmintoncentral.com

can be used for two or four Speedminton courts depending on how the teacher plans. Speedminton does not require a net which makes the court easy and quick to set up.

Equipment

Speedminton does not require much equipment to implement in a physical education setting. Physical educators will need: racquets, birdies/speeders, courts, cones, chalk, and colored tape. Similar to badminton, Speedminton requires birdies, but they are known as speeders. Speeders differ from badminton birdies in terms of weight, color, and material make up. There are three types of speeders: Fun Speeder, Match Speeder, and Night Speeder. Fun Speeder is more appropriate for those who are less-skilled and have low fitness levels because it weighs less and stays in the air longer. By contrast, Match Speeder is ideal for those who would like to play in competitive settings, because the speeder is heavier and stays in the air for a shorter period of time. A Night Speeder allows those who seek additional game experience and opportunities to play at night because it glows in the dark.

Rules

The nature of Speedminton rules and number of players can be varied and modified if needed or desired. Modifications to the game can be made, but

should be based on students' understanding, fitness level, space availability, and class size. Physical educators will need two courts, requiring two boxes (18 x 18 feet) and 42 feet apart (see Figure 1). Similar to badminton and tennis, Speedminton can be played as either singles or doubles. Unlike badminton and tennis, there is no net involved with Speedminton.

Scoring

In order to score, one must hit the speeder into the opponent's court so that the defender fails to return it. Additionally, a point is earned each time a student fails to deliver a service into the opponent's court or fails to return the speeder. Play continues as long as the speeder is returned and a rally is ongoing. A match consists of three games played to 16 points. A game ends at 16 points when one player has a two-point advantage. The game continues if a score is tied at 15 points until one player has a two-point advantage. Students change courts after each game. These same rules apply to doubles.

Service

Players alternate serving every three points. A service can be delivered from anywhere on the court; however, an overhand serve is only allowed from behind the backline. Similar to tennis, the server serves from the right side of the court to the right side of the opponent's court.

Table 1 provides more resources for more detailed information regarding the basic skills, equipment, and rules of Speedminton.

Getting Started

The traditional means of introducing racquet sports may allow students fewer opportunities to improve skills or control the object of interest (i.e., the speeder). However, the TGM provides physical educators with an alternative to traditional sports and games teaching. The tactical approach emphasizes students' natural interest in gameplay in order to "promote the skill development and tacti-

Table 2. Tactical Problems, Movements, and Skills in Speedminton

GOAL = Each player stands in and defends their square. Hitting back and forth they try to get the speeder on the ground in the opposite square.

Tactical Problems	Off-the-Speeder Skills	On-the-Speeder Skills
<p>Scoring (Offensive) Setting up to attack by creating space in opponent's square</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overhead Clear • Forehand • Backhand • Underhand Serve • Hitting Long-High Shots at back corners of opponent's square • Alternate Shots (fast-low; long-high)
Winning the point	Recovers to ready position between shots Footwork - Split Step	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overhead Smash • Overhead Serve • Hitting Fast-Low Shots at front edges of opponent's court
Attacking as a pair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Side-to-Side Offense 	
<p>Preventing Scoring (Defensive) Defending space in own square</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic Position • Footwork – Split Step • Footwork – Recover to Center Square 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underhand Low Serve • Underhand Lob • Returning Overhead Clear • Lunge Step
Defending against the attack		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Returning Serve • Returning Overhead Smash
Defending as a pair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Side-to-Side Defense 	

Developed from Mitchell et al. (2006).

cal knowledge needed for competent game performance” (Metzler 2005, p. 403). The critical element of tactical games is to capture students’ interest by playing simple competitive games that incorporate one or two basic skills with a lead-up game that may have simple limitations (e.g., one rule to guide the gameplay), but focuses on a tactical problem.

Following are suggested steps to consider when implementing Speedminton into the physical education program.

Step 1

Physical educators must first identify the tactical problems related to

the sport, and then consider the complexity level of each tactical problem. Tables 2 and 3 are intended to define the tactical problems and appropriate levels of complexity for each problem. Physical educators can use the tactical problems identified to develop lessons that allow students to learn how to score and prevent scoring in the game of Speedminton. In this step, students are placed to play in modified and/or small-sided games. The physical educators must assess students’ beginning play and strategies in order to establish strategic game questions. The answers will help the teacher create tactical scenarios in advance.

Step 2

After a brief time at play, the teacher draws the students together and poses questions about the game just played. Questions may incorporate how students were successful or how they were successful. For example: “Why did you make one hit to the backcourt then one hit to the frontcourt?” “How did you get the speeder up in the air?” “How did you hold your racket?” “Where did you direct the speeder to make it difficult for your opponent?” Other questions may seek answers to what strategies were used to place the speeder in a corner. The questioning may help students identify weaknesses, and

Table 3. Levels of Complexity: Speedminton

GOAL = Each player stands in and defends their square. Hitting back and forth they try to get the speeder on the ground in the opposite square.

Tactical Problems	Level I	Level II	Level III
Scoring (Offensive) Setting up to attack by creating space in opponent's square	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forehand/Backhand • Overhead Clears (forehand) • Underhand Serve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overhand Clear (Backhand) • Lob • Long-High Shots @ back corners • Alternating Shots 	
Winning the point		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overhead Serve • Smash 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jump Serve
Attacking as a pair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Front – Back Offense 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Low Serve – Attack the Return 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Alternate F/B –S/S Formations
Preventing Scoring (Defensive) Defending space in own square	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic Position • Recovery to Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Split Step • Lunge Step • Low/Flat Serve • Returning Overhead Clear 	
Defending against the attack		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Returning Serve • Underhand Lob 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Returning Smash
Defending as a pair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Side-to-Side Defense 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Receive Serve – Low return 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Alternate F/B –S/S Formations

Developed from Mitchell et al. (2006).

lead to drills to improve the questionable skill. This type of critical thinking allows students to understand gameplay in a way that is different from game performance.

Step 3

After Step 2, students return to the game for a brief time focusing on the skills they just practiced and attempt to execute them in the game. A new game follows that challenges a different skill or new aspect of the tactical problems. This allows students to continue to advance their knowledge and experiences. It is important to note that these small-sided and/or brief games are designed to allow students to get maximum contact of the speeder in order to help them improve skills, as opposed to a full game where he/she may not make a single contact. Additionally, the practices imitate game-like situations;

Table 4. A Sample Assessment for the Game of Speedminton

Test Date: _____ Evaluator: _____

Examples of Assessment Criteria:

1. Base (e.g., quickly return to a set-up position after executing skills)
2. Decision Making: make an appropriate options for skills (e.g., hit selection and placement)
3. Skill execution: Demonstrating proficient skills with sufficient power and accuracy (e.g., hit speeder to the corner or close to the baseline)

Students Name Base Decision Making Skill execution

Scores after observing students in a game situation about several minutes:

- 1 = Never demonstrates this
- 2 = Rarely demonstrates this
- 3 = Sometimes demonstrates this
- 4 = Usually demonstrates this
- 5 = Always demonstrates this

Note. This assessment is modified to assess students' ability to play in game formats (Mitchell et al., 2006).

they are not just static drills. The questions also help students improve by identifying which skills need further improvement. Each game session and each guided questioning session leads to the next advancement of skill level and decision making.

Step 4

Assessing students' tactical knowledge and skills will help physical educators know students' ability to make tactical decisions and execute skills in real games. A sample assessment introduced in this article can be used to assess students' game competency relating to three components (see Table 4): base (to quickly return to a set-up position in the court between shot attempts), decision-making (knowing what to do with speeder during a game), and skill-execution (ability to demonstrate the selected skills during a game situation). When using this assessment, physical educators monitor and evaluate students for several minutes in a game situation. The authors suggest that the as-

essment be used by the student, their peers, and the physical educators for a more complete picture of each student's ability.

Conclusion

Physical education teaches students skills and the concepts of physical activity that can help them be active later in life. The benefits of including Speedminton in the classroom using the tactical games approach include: a) increasing physical activity opportunities and improving fitness; b) improving students' ability to apply tactical and strategic concepts of gameplay; c) providing the opportunity to enjoy a new game; and d) learn new ways to be physically active throughout a lifetime.

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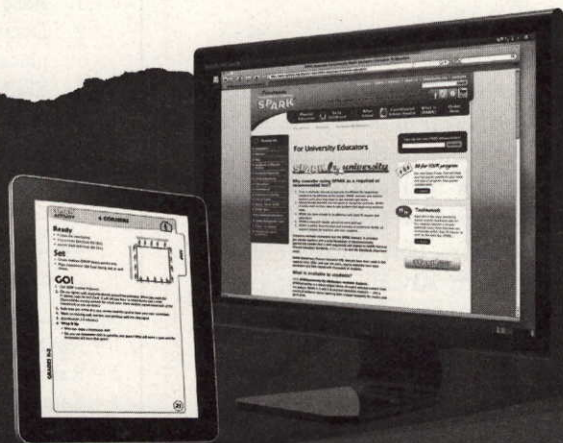
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