

## GET ON COURT

# PUMP UP THE VOLUME

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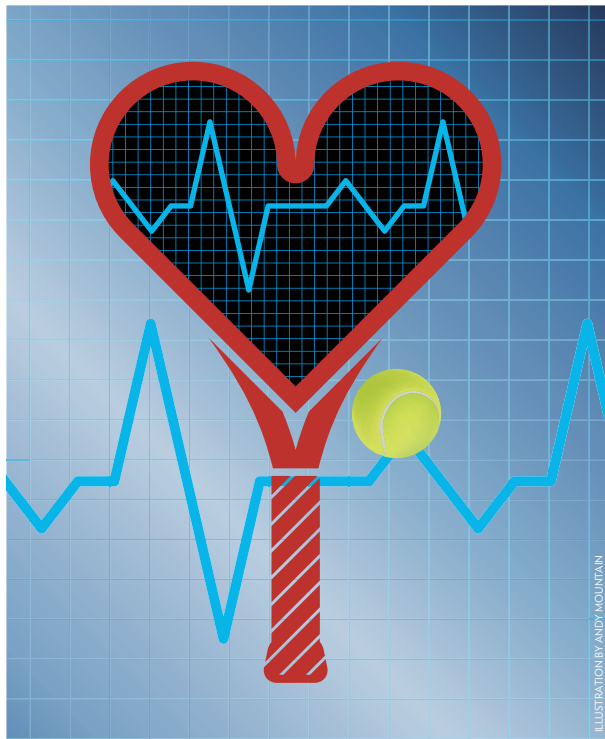
Fancy a spot of tennis to a soundtrack of big, booming basslines? Cardio Tennis could be what you're looking for...

**'H**eat Pumping Fitness' is the tagline of Cardio Tennis, one of the newest work-out crazes sweeping the UK's tennis centres. If you love racket sports and enjoy working out then this tennis-fitness hybrid could be right up your doubles alley.

The essence of Cardio Tennis is to get a healthy cardio work out while charging about hitting a few balls. It doesn't promise to improve your technique but hitting a lot of balls is always useful for sharpening your game, especially while executing drills at high speed. Mental focus is a prerequisite too, simply to avoid colliding with fellow players.

Most sessions last around an hour and consist of a group of between six and 12 players. The session takes place on court and is led by a coach. The structure is a 5-10 minute warm up, a 30-50 minute burst of cardio work, which can be drill or play-based, and a 5-10 minute cool down.

Sam Richardson, the LTA's Coach Support Manager responsible for the growth of Cardio Tennis in the UK, says anyone who loves sport should give it a go. "Cardio Tennis is essentially a fitness class that takes place on a tennis court so it's not necessarily for tennis players but for anyone who wants a workout - it's like spinning for cycling, boxercise for boxing or water aerobics for swimming."



## » A session explained

After a routine warm-up featuring stretching and movement, it's time to get your heart working. The cardio section of the session consists of either drills or play. All members

of the group take turns to hit high intensity basket feeds from the coach.

A drill could be a two-shot sequence such as an approach and volley or could involve a bit more movement to the ball, for example

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wide groundstrokes hit crosscourt. It's up to the coach to decide on a routine that's appropriate for the level of players in the group as well as making it fun and high energy.

The only 'rest' a player gets is while other players on court are hitting, although there's plenty of movement involved as you sprint round the court and get back in line for your next sequence. Some drills will focus on consistency, but whatever you're asked to do it will keep your heart working at an optimum rate during the aerobic workout.

A maximum heart rate is calculated by subtracting a player's age from 220. A player's desired working heart rate is between 65-85% of that number. Cardio Tennis aims to elevate a player's heart rate into their ideal heart rate range and keep it there for the duration of the session.

## RECOMMENDED HEART RATE RANGE

AGE	65%	85%
20	130	170
30	124	162
40	117	153
50	111	145
60	104	136

## » Cool down

Every session features a short cool down period when players take part in one of a few fun drills or team games such as tennis volleyball.

## » Benefits

As well as the pure enjoyment of running around and hitting lots of balls, this is a great way to get fit and lose a bit of weight. There are no end of testimonials from American players who say they've shed a few pounds thanks to Cardio Tennis.

The regime has been in Britain for a couple of years and there are around 400 coaches who are trained to deliver the programmes at David Lloyd and Esporta centres. There are also some coaches at individual clubs who lead sessions.

"Cardio tennis is aimed at anyone who is interested in exercising regardless of your age, level of fitness or standard of tennis," Richardson emphasises. "It compliments regular tennis so if you already play then it's a good way to top up your current programme but if you haven't played for a few years then it's a great way of getting back into the game."

## » Give it a go

Find out where you can try Cardio Tennis by visiting [www.tennishead.net/cardiotennis](http://www.tennishead.net/cardiotennis). If you're new to tennis try to find a class aimed at beginners, while regular players should look for classes that feature programmes and drills designed for their level of the game. ■

## BLOOD, SWEAT & BACKHANDS



We're not the types to dodge a challenge. So when the LTA invited us to try Cardio Tennis for ourselves - at half past seven one Friday morning - we promptly forwarded the email to the youngest member of the team. Michael Beattie loved to tell the tale...

» WHEN THE CHANCE FOR ME to swing a racket in anger came up in the office, I jumped at it - and immediately regretted my split-second enthusiasm. It soon dawned on me that, despite working for a tennis magazine, I hadn't hit a ball in nearly a year - and what if, after all those excuses about my dodgy shoulder and opting for a kick-about instead, I couldn't play any more?

Not only that, but I'd hardly describe myself as at the peak of physical fitness. As exhilarating as the grass-court season was, I'd effectively spent a month sitting down - either at a desk, courtside, or in a press conference - and any notion of regular exercise had gone out of the window. Still, Carpe diem and all that - I dug my trusty Prestige out from the back of the closet and headed bleary-eyed to the National Tennis Centre for a 7.30am Cardio Tennis session with Sam Richardson.

You hear a Cardio Tennis session before you see one. Only gym bunnies can justify blaring dance music that early in the morning. "It's one of the key ingredients of Cardio Tennis," Sam tells me later. "It's the first thing you'd hear if you walked into a gym - it sets

hitting another ball, then another...

The drills themselves are very simple - think my-first-tennis-lesson-style basket feeding - but the pace keeps it challenging, and it's not long before the first few beads of sweat form on my brow.

It has no pretensions towards being a tennis lesson. "It's not about forehands and backhands," says Sam. "It doesn't matter if you hit the back fence, it doesn't matter if the ball goes in the net." That being said, the footwork exercises will transfer to your game.

After getting us to run laps of the court while playing champion-challenger, Sam switches to a lob-chasing drill, which has us sprinting corner-to-corner across the court. Next we're sidestepping past our doubles partners after each shot, before skipping backwards from the net to the baseline between rallies, all the time being stretched by the low bounce of the Mini Tennis balls.

The movement element is what has kept Mark coming since the sessions started two years ago. He openly admits that, despite working at the state-of-the-art tennis complex, he has no desire to take up the sport. "I don't want to take up tennis as a full-time

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the scene, it gets you motivated. We play music that's about 120-130 beats per minute, a similar beats per minute to your cardio-zone." Reaching and staying in your cardio-zone is critical to a successful session. The entire hour is geared towards keeping your heart pumping at roughly 65-85% of its maximum for as long as possible, which is typically 45 minutes. So after a thorough warm-up and some dynamic stretching, it's down to drills.

Here goes then, my first ball in a year... scrambled back. I hadn't noticed before, but the hopper is full of low-bouncing Mini Tennis balls, which had me completely flummoxed at first. No time to dwell on that, however - almost as soon as I've rejoined the queue I'm

hobby," he explains. "I don't have the game, but that's the great thing about Cardio - if you haven't got the game, it doesn't really matter."

For Caroline, who certainly looks more comfortable with a racket in hand than Mark, the appeal is even simpler. "It's fun, plain and simple," she says of her own two years' experience of Cardio Tennis. And she is right.

Cardio Tennis is, as Sam puts it, "tennis with all the boring bits taken out. You're rarely picking up balls, you're moving around the whole time, and you're hitting lots of balls. It's high energy, it's high tempo - and just a lot more fun." It could be just what you're looking for - it was for me, and that dodgy shoulder seems to have healed too. Must be magic...