



**LOCAL LTA SUPPORT**  
The Tennis Development  
Manager [in your area](#) can  
advise on accessing  
Sportivate funding

## DAVENANT SECONDARY SCHOOL, ESSEX – CARDIO TENNIS AS A PE OPTION FOR TEENAGE GIRLS

Matt Smith – LTA AEGON Coach of the Year heads up the programme at Epping Tennis Club, a long-established, friendly and family orientated club in Essex. He decided to introduce Cardio Tennis to the club programme in April 2011, as he recognised that Cardio would not only be a good fit for existing members, but it was also a tool that could be used to attract a wider audience.

Non tennis players, people looking to return to the game after a long break and those that lacked confidence in a traditional group coaching or social session would see Cardio as a stepping stone into the game and of course the club. Offering an activity that has all the appeal of a group exercise class; social, fun, calorie burning and affordable, has opened tennis to a wider market and in turn supported ETC in their plan to gain more members. Of those taking part in the beginner Cardio session, the majority would not have considered joining a tennis club or getting involved in the game.

### Why did he introduce Cardio Tennis into a school environment?

Following on from a recent workshop around ‘engaging women and girls’ and to build on the success of adding Cardio to his club programme, his next idea was to use it at a local secondary school as a way to enthuse teenage girls and get them enjoying tennis in an informal manner. In order to kick start the work, he successfully gained some Sportivate funding, which allowed him to offer some free taster sessions. The take up was fantastic and the demand is now there to make it a regular after school Cardio Club, with girls paying £3.00 a session, making it an affordable and sustainable activity.

As well as involving the girls, the boys taking GCSE PE were also helping within each session, practising their feeding and assisting skills. As a result of the increasing interest, Matt has also started promoting other playing and volunteering opportunities for the boys and girls, which helps grow his existing club programme and provides exit routes for those keen to do more.

### How has the school benefitted?

*‘What a marvel Cardio Tennis has become at Davenant Foundation School in Loughton. When I was approached by Matthew Smith to introduce this ‘new way’ of teaching tennis I jumped at the chance to offer the girls at Davenant the opportunity to play. Getting funding from Sportivate has provided an excellent opportunity for us to give tennis a go! It has worked particularly well with girls who normally say they ‘cant’ play tennis because it goes over the fence or they cant hit the ball in court – they have loved the opportunity of hitting a tennis ball without having to worry where it lands or where it goes.*

*The girls playing in cold, even freezing January weather were outside in just skirts and t-shirts because they were kept on the move all the time. The action is non stop, with jumping over rackets, tapping their feet on a ball, running to touch the net post, stepping through ladders or performing shadow backhands and forehands while not playing a shot – all of which also kept them warm.*

*The motivation that comes from both the music played and the upbeat nature of the coach is an inspired way to keep girls playing tennis for years to come. From my experience, one of the main reasons why girls drop off from playing sport after the age of 14 is because it is no longer fun, but these sessions have been oversubscribed with enthusiastic girls wanting to play more tennis for exactly that reason – FUN!*

**Yippee for Cardio Tennis – let’s get all PE teachers delivering this in schools!’ says Lorraine Brazier, PE Teacher at Davenant School.** The Tennis Foundation is currently working with the LTA Programmes Team to develop a Cardio Tennis Workshop for teachers, which they hope will be available later on in the year.

