

Ball Control Basics

"Making the little round yellow fuzzy ball do what you want is what tennis is all about". Ball Control is the way a player solves problems on the court. For example, controlling the direction of a ball allows a player to hit away from an opponent. To master tennis, a player must learn to receive and send variations of the 5 Ball Controls (Height, Direction, Distance, Speed, and Spin)

SPEED ON GROUNDSTROKES

Sending different Speeds

In tennis, racquet speed equals power. There are 3 ways to manipulate speed (and control the power of your shots):

Add Speed: By accelerating the racquet through the impact, power is added to the shot. This challenges an opponent's timing or allows you to firmly hit the ball through an open court so fast that the opponent will have a hard time getting it.

Maintain Speed: By keeping the racquet speed constant through the impact, you can use the power of an opponent's shot without having to generate any of your own. (e.g. countering a fast serve).

Take Off Speed: By decelerating the racquet through the impact and 'absorbing' the speed, you can slow the opponent's shot down to create a more accurate placement and challenge the opponent's movement like on a drop shot).

Receiving different Speeds

These are the recommended responses for receiving different speeds:

Receiving a faster ball (like a strong 1st serve), prepare with the racquet near the impact point. This will simplify your timing.

Receiving a medium ball (like a rally shot), maintain a smooth acceleration through the impact. Over risking (adding too much speed) or under risking will produce inconsistency.

When receiving a slower ball (like a weak rally shot), prepare using a bigger swing to add power. A bigger swing means using more body parts and having them go through a larger range of motion.

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Henin-Hardenne prepares with a greater range of motion to add racquet speed (power) to a shot



Agassi prepares with the racquet closer to the ball to simplify timing when receiving a hard serve



Kinesthetic Key (Key feeling when doing it)

The biggest 'speed trap' in tennis is to think that it takes strength to add power to a shot. Trying to hit 'stronger' increases muscle tension, which slows down racquet speed. A feeling of loose, explosive, momentum is the goal. Feel the power transfer through your body from the ground up. Speed just from arm action makes a 'slap' and leads to inconsistency.

Court ~~Home work~~

Sending & receiving different Speeds: This drill is called, "Attack & Defend". Players can play the drill in singles or two against two (doubles). All players start on their respective baselines. The 'Defender' sends a weaker rally ball to the 'Attacker'. The ball should land about the serviceline and bounce up to the Attacker's shoulder height. The Attacker then practices increasing racquet speed and sending a faster ball. They can place the ball anywhere. The Defender practices maintaining racquet speed (or taking pace off the ball) and plays out the point. Play first to 5 points and switch roles.