

Dear Glen,

I have noticed that many of the world class pros hit forehands with topspin and a hint of sidespin. Is this something that I should try? I'm a 4.0 player and would like to have more consistency on my down the line shot.

Jeff

This is a good observation on your part. Most of the players on the tour do have this shot, but this is a shot that all lefthanders use. It's very hard to play with a lefthander that have this shot because the ball doesn't give a very easy contact point to strike. In this era, it's is difficult to go down the line due to the speed and reflection of the ball. Hitting with a certain amount of side/topspin will tend to influence the ball back into the court. Practice this shot on a ball machine to see the effect of the ball.

Dear Glen,

There seems to be a lot of emphasis on fitness when trying to improve your tennis level. I know that a personal trainer would be beneficial, but I need a more economical alternative. Any suggestions?

Dear Player,

Our very own Russ Stromberg has a board with "fitness tips" back in the Forestmeadows weight room. There are articles as well as concepts to improve your fitness level on the announcement board. In speaking to Russ, he believes that it is very important to vary your workout to maximize your workouts and to keep it fresh. My emphasis has been endurance training through running and low weights with high repetitions for strength endurance. This is what works for me and it must be understood that all players need to find the best way to enhance their playing skills.

Dear Glen,

How do you improve your speed when moving to a ball? I run 15-20 miles per week and endurance is not a problem, but my quickness is deteriorating. What would you recommend?

Marilee

Dear Marilee,

The key is an explosive first step. Working out with short sprints and agility drills would be the ticket. Training the habit will make the body more responsive when you need it the most. One consideration is to always be aware of the weight that you are carrying. Five or ten extra pounds can really slow your movement. Remember that they handicap to 2,000 pound horse with a 10 pound weight. Take off a couple of extra pounds and I believe your speed will return.

Dear Glen,

My buddy and I were playing singles last week and we lost track of the score. When we were recounting the points, we couldn't remember the fourth point. What should we do?

Pat

Dear Pat,

According to USTA Rule 5.4., you and your friend should replay the point on the side that the point

occurred. At that point, the two of you would continue your game. It could be helpful if the score is called before each point is played to avoid any discrepancy.

Dear Glen,

I was watching the WTA this weekend on TV and noticed that some of the younger top players hit return of serves. Even though you have mentioned this to me before, it hasn't seemed as though it is an acceptable warmup practice of players. What do you think?

Lindsey

Dear Lindsey,

I have always been an advocate of practicing return of serves. It is strange that even though it is the second most important shot in the game, it doesn't get practiced very much. My college coach used to tell us that during the warm up, let your opponent know that the ball will be returned. It's part of ritual and many feel it is against the rules or etiquette on the court. Nothing could be further from the truth. Hitting your opponents serve back will give a hint of what the timing will be on your return.

Dear Glen,

I know that in all performance based games, practice using repetition is of the utmost importance. How much repetition are we talking about?

Dear Player,

This depends on the level of expertise that you would like to achieve. Do you remember the quote of how many hours it takes to perfect a skill? Ten years or 10,000 hours. The best players I have ever seen have hit tirelessly for hour after hour. Remembering back to a past experience in the Middle States area, Michael Chang would hit a solid 6-7 hours per day from the baseline. Years later I observed his same dedication in practicing and improving his serve. One last thing to remember is that the stroke needs to be hit properly. Perfect practice makes perfect.

Dear Glen,

What do you think about the game Pickleball? My brother and I have played many times in the Villages and have found it to be quite fun and competitive. Any thoughts of Pickleball in the City?

Tom

Dear Tom,

This is a great question. I have played Pickleball for a number of years and really enjoy the game. Having been solidly beaten by a couple of 70+ year old players, experience tells me that age has little to do with the outcome.

We will be retrofitting the two mini courts at the hitting wall for Pickleball. The game is one of our featured games in the upcoming 2011 Senior games in Tallahassee. It will be our intent to have an introduction to our tennis players of Pickleball. This will take place sometime in January to see what everyone thinks.

Dear Glen,

What is the best footwork used for a two-handed backhand?

Rob

Dear Rob,

There is more than one footwork that works for all two handed backhand possibilities. The best case scenario is that a step forward as the racquet comes forward would create a good response on the backhand. Another concept that the "Spanish Method" creates is to hit off the back foot when an opponent has put you in a defensive position. This will tend to create a good balance foundation and help produce a ball that is hit higher over the net. The last foot work is for the wide two hander. It is important to get behind the ball and this can be achieved by using an open stance on this shot. This not only creates good balance, but allows flexibility in directional intent.

Dear Glen,

During a doubles match, the ball that was struck, hit the net post and went in our opponents court.

What is the call?

Kelvin

Dear Kelvin,

According to USTA comment 13.3, the net post is considered part of the net in doubles play. It would be the point of the team that struck the ball.

Dear Glen,

I have been working really hard at learning to play the game better. How do I create more control on my hits?

Dear Player,

The key to all "ball" sports is to hit with spin. Basketball, football, baseball and many others use spin to control the outcome of the ball. Tennis uses topspin, backspin, and sidespin to keep the ball in the court as well as creating problems for their opponents. Watch world-class players to observe their use of spins. In most cases, it allows these players to hit the ball as hard as they want.

Dear Glen,

Question: I have a 2 1/2 year old son, whom I would like to play tennis. I don't much about the game but I have followed it for many years. I would like to know at what age he should enroll in tennis classes, private, or clinics. Also i have an 8 year who loves tennis a lot, he always talks and wants to play the game...he says he wants to be like Nadal when he gets older. Should i have him trained like how the Spain trains their kids?

Sparkle

Dear Sparkle,

The City of Tallahassee uses QuickStart in its younger players in our tennis program. I started my granddaughter at 18 months with a ping pong paddle and QuickStart foam ball at home. We only played

a maximum of 10-15 minutes due to the attention span. We then graduated at 3 years old to hitting back in forth in the driveway over a mini tennis net.

As far as your eight year old, we have the possibility of clinics and private tennis lessons. Might I recommend a half hour tennis lesson to see how he responds in a one to one situation? If he is motivated, he will do great. As far as training him like the Spanish method, it will work well if he is willing to dedicate himself solely to tennis. Emilio Sanchez teaches the Spanish Method in South Florida and may be worth looking into.

Dear Glen,

How do I hit balls that are at shoulder height? The balls tend to spray all over the place.

Thomas

Dear Thomas,

The simple answer is that there is a need to practice hitting balls that are shoulder high. Second the ball needs to be taken on the rise so that the ball doesn't impose itself on the striker. Moving forward at the time of the hit can create more force on the ball. As with the question earlier, the main ingredient would be to add topspin to control the hit. Increasing your angular swing on the ball will give a better margin of error.

One last thought is to run-around the backhand on those high hits. In most cases, hitting a forehand is the easier of the two groundstrokes.

Dear Glen,

What would you do if your opponent (friend) showed up late for your court time? The court times needs to be paid for and I would like to get my monies worth.

Dear Player,

I don't have enough information on whether this is a league, tournament, or social match. If it is a league or tournament, the rules take care of that situation by imposing penalties or default. By the friend implication, I am interpreting that this is social. There are three things that I would try. First, talk to him and let him know how you feel. Second, tell your friend a time thirty minutes prior to the actual playing time. And lastly, either except it or get another tennis playing friend.

Dear Glen,

I have noticed that the USTA has mentioned that tennis growth in America is up over thirty million players. It has been my observation in Tallahassee that fewer players are playing the game. What do you think?

Lois

Dear Lois,

In an isolated market, the number of tennis players doesn't really change a lot. One of the initiatives that the USTA is perusing is to have tennis players to play more times. The USTA has recognized that frequent players are more frequent consumers. A frequent player is defined as someone who plays 21

or more times per year. It is my belief that frequent players are on the up rise in our community due to the efforts of local organizers, TTA, USTA, and the City of Tallahassee.

Dear Glen,

I am a doubles player age 70 and am having trouble with my mobility. The game has been my passion for the better part of my life, but it isn't a lot of fun when I can't get to the ball. Am I destined to only watch good tennis?

Dear Player,

Mobility can be improved through training in many cases. I would do some research online or get a personal trainer to improve your mobility.

Dear Glen,

Can a receiver's partner stand in the service box when his partner is returning the ball?

Cher

Dear Cher,

This is a great question. I am going to rely on Paul Dirks for this response. He is the Head USTA Referee in the Tallahassee area.

Paul says,

It's funny; this exact question just came up during the Women's Intercollegiate event held at FSU last weekend. The rule is different between ITA and USTA and since your answers are more directed to the latter, here's a reference I think is appropriate:

In FAC 2010: page 18 (Rules of Tennis) Case 5:

"The server's partner AND the receiver's partner may take any position on their own side of the net, inside or outside the court. However, if a player is creating a hindrance to the opponent(s), the hindrance rule should be used".

In ITA, (page 247) "The receiver's partner shall not stand in the receiver's service box before or during the serve. If a player does so, he shall be warned that if he does so again he is subject to being penalized under the ITA Point Penalty System."

Dear Glen,

What is the best follow-through to be used on a forehand? My pro tells me to follow-through over my shoulder, but I don't always get the result I would like. Any suggestions?

Dear Player,

One follow-through does not take care of all the different forehands that you will encounter. The follow-through over the shoulder tends to be defensive in nature and creates a movement of the body moving backwards. Second, the wrap-around follow-through tends to create more horizontal force and angular speed on the incoming ball. This is used for creating an aggressive strike. Thirdly, little or no follow-through is the result of a fast hit ball. And lastly, a finish behind the back is good for a topspin lob or short angle. This is a lot of information, but it is pertinent to creating specific effects.

Watch your players on TV and you will probably be surprised at how many different swings are hit in a single rally. These can be mastered by hitting the right shot at the right time.

Dear Glen,

I am a very avid tennis player that seems to be getting burned out. What is the most I should play in a week's time? Sometimes I play as much as six or seven times a week.

Josie

Playing a lot of tennis is a very good thing, but it is important to realize that too much of a good thing can be detrimental. Every week, a couple of days should be taken off to allow the body to recover. This is not only important to avoid injuries; the mind needs to have some down time to feel refreshed. I would recommend doing some cross-training and maybe doing a google search on Periodized Training. This will give you a training guideline to maintain optimum performance.

Dear Glen,

My opponent/friend has a very bad toss and catches his toss numerous times per point. Is this a fault?
Jackie

Dear Jackie,

According to USTA rule 19, case 1: A player, who tosses the ball and then decides not to hit it, is allowed to catch the ball with the hand or the racquet, or to let the ball bounce. This can be very irritating and ruin the tennis experience. I have had difficulty knowing which toss is going to be hit with some of my past opponents. The only issue that may be a factor is that it is stated in the rules that "Play shall be continuous".

Dear Glen,

What racquet is Novak Djokovic using? I really like the way he hits the ball and would be interested in trying the same racquet.

Dear Player,

It is a Head Youtek Speed 18x20. Head Racquet Sports has gone to a line of midsize "white" racquets. The Head line of racquets all look very similar but the weight, swing-speed, and balance points are very different. It took Djokovic several years to get used to his new racquets when he switched manufacturers. Forestmeadows carries demo frames for these models in our tennis pro shop.