

Dear Glen,

I have noticed that there have been a lot of questions concerning the volley shot as of late. Even though the backhand volley seems to be the weakest shot among beginners and intermediates, advanced players have more difficulties with the forehand. Can you share your observations?

Inga

Dear Inga,

You are correct in your observations. The backhand volley is a natural shot for many players with a slight chopping motion that resembles the backhand underspin shot. This shot tends to be easier to hit consistently in front of the body.

On the other hand, the forehand has numerous complications for the advanced player. There is a tendency to take too big a backswing and this tends to spray the ball for several reasons. Many good players tend to over hit this shot and struggle with consistency because of this. Another problem is that as the ball approaches the forehand volley, there can be a habit to step back and let the ball get too close. By keeping the racquet head above the wrist and seeing the backside of the strings, many forehand volley problems can be eliminated.

Dear Glen,

Do you have any suggestions for playing in the wind? It seems as though it is not an exact science, but I would like some suggestions on this horrendous part of my game.

Dear Player,

My first suggestion would be if you have any injuries, don't play in windy conditions. This tends to cause further injuries due to the inconsistency of the ball. Try not to hit the ball too good and stay well within your limits. On windy days, I draw a three-foot line inside the tennis court to help eliminate errors. Players that hit with a lot of spin tend to do very well because they control the ball. The last piece of advice is to keep the feet moving so that the ball is being hit in the best strike zone.

Dear Glen,

I will be taking my first tennis lesson next week after playing the game for nearly thirty years. What would you suggest that I work on?

Dear Student,

It would be my suggestion that the teaching pro should observe your game and make some suggestions. Remember, you are the consumer and it is ultimately up to you what will be worked on. Ask many questions of the teaching professional to get the most insight for your game. You may want to start with a video lesson so that it is possible to see what you are doing and then make some corrections.

Dear Glen,

Many of my friends are using hybrid sets of strings in their racquet. Is this something that I should try?

Dear Player,

Yes, many manufacturers sell string in half sets because of the popularity of the hybrid stringing. A hybrid stringing is two different strings used in the mains and crosses. This tends to give you the best of both worlds as far as power and control. These combinations can be more forgiving on the elbow and shoulder as well as a better hitting racquet.

Dear Glen,

I have been working on my serve for better than twenty years. It still has issues due to a bad toss. Do you have any suggestions on improving this aspect of my serve?

Dear Player,

This is an age-old problem of almost all tennis players. The toss is one of the easiest processes to understand, but one of the hardest concepts to create consistency. One of the starting points for improvement is to have the serve videotaped. Many times the toss is inconsistent due to excessive movements or jerkiness of the release or body. If simplicity is not created, the motion only becomes more embellished during a competitive situation.

Many times by changing the toss to a release, a more relaxed action will take place. The ball should be held with your fingertips and the fingers should open up at eye level. This will tend to produce a toss that is out in front of the body, thus a better serve.

Dear Glen,

I am a big guy and play a big game. My serve has been clocked over 100mph. My problem is when I have to play a slow hitter or what would be called a pusher; I get very frustrated and make a lot of mistakes. Is there anything that I can do to overcome these pesky players?

Dear Basher,

I am one of those slow hitters that drive the "bashers" crazy. Even though I know the big hitter will hit numerous winners, he will also make a lot of errors. Many big hitters love pace and don't tend to move well to the ball. My suggestion is to work on adding additional spin to your game to create more control. This will give the ability to not only hit the ball hard, but also keep more balls in play. It would also be suggested that improvement of footwork take place to hit more balls in your hitting zone. I personally wouldn't change your love for hitting the ball hard; it only needs to be tempered for more consistency.

Dear Glen,

Thank you for your information on the benefit of restringing my racquet on a regular basis. It has made a tremendous difference. My question is, should the tension in my racquet be different for the changing season and temperatures?

Signed...all strung out

Dear All Strung Out,

With the temperature changes of the season, I would recommend an increase in tension during the summer. The tension should also be reduced during the winter. As the temperature becomes colder, the strings in your racquet will become tighter. On the other hand, when conditions become warmer, strings tend to become softer or more resilient. In my personal racquets, I change as much as 5-7 lbs. in the different seasons. Give it a try for better seasonal results.

Dear Glen,

I constantly have trouble seeing the ball when volleying at the net. My tennis pro tells me to "watch the ball" but it doesn't seem to help. I especially have trouble on the low volleys. Is there anything I can do to improve seeing the ball when contacting volleys?
Glenn

Dear Glenn,

Here are a couple of quick tips that could help your volley. Try to keep your racquet head above your wrist. This will create more stability. The next item of concern would be to keep the eyes on the same level as the racquet face. If the ball is low, the eyes need to go down with the racquet face. Think of a "sharp shooter". The eyes stay on the same level of the barrel site. Only Rambo can hit a target without sighting his target.

Dear Glen,

Here is that strange situation I asked you about Saturday. You wanted it for "Ask Glen".

My friend was serving in a doubles game. His first serve clipped the net and hit his opponent in the ad service box. How should that have been played? If the server hits his opponent with his serve before the ball hits the ground, the server wins the point. However, if the server's serve hits the net it is Let. We have argued and argued this point and no one has a good answer.

Faithful Doubles Player

Dear Doubles Player,

I know that in my college playing years, you could not touch the ball till after it landed. The rule has changed. According to Rule 22a, the service is a 'Let' if: after it touches the net, strap, or band; it touches the receiver or receiver's partner. This includes anything they wear of carry before the ball hits the ground.

Dear Glen,

I would like to attend the USTA Recreational Workshop in October. How do I sign up?
Mike

Dear Mike,

We didn't have enough individuals sign up for the program, so we set another date for March 20th, 2010. This will be a 6 hour on court program that will give you the latest progression of tennis teaching, large group teaching, effective team practices, and much more. I have found that I usually hire instructors from the applicants that attend the program. Feel free to contact me directly if you have additional questions.

Dear Glen,

They have been showing a new technique on Tennis Channel called the X system. They showed several illustrations of players hitting the tennis ball. Is this the direction that tennis strokes are heading?

Dear Player,

There has been a lot of emphasizes on this "new" trend. Standing at the baseline T, if you move one of the four directions of the X, this is the foundation of the teaching. Nadal has done this for some time and has been adopted by many Spanish Academies including Snachez / Casal Academy.

If the player moves to the two forward branches of the X, an aggressive semi-closed or closed stance response takes place. If the ball makes a player go backwards to the hit, an open stance with the weight on the back-foot shot takes place. This shot is defensive in nature and is hit higher over the net to buy time.

This works very well on clay and changes the path of swing of the racquet to be more over the head. With practice, this technique tends to get the player in the best position to strike the ball.

Dear Glen,

I am an avid doubles player and have been working to attack the net. My only problem is that my opponent is making me hit low volleys that I keep dumping in the net. Do you have any suggestions for improvement of this shot or should I just stay back and play baseline doubles?

Frustrated volleyer

Dear Volleyer,

The simple answer is to practice low volleys. If you consider that most of your volley warm-up is above the net, how can we expect it to ever get better. Start your positioning from the service line and tell your partner to hit your feet. Through a small change in your practice routine, I believe you will see fairly quick results. The last piece of advice is to be more selective when you come to the net. Only come to the net when you have your opponent in a defensive posture.