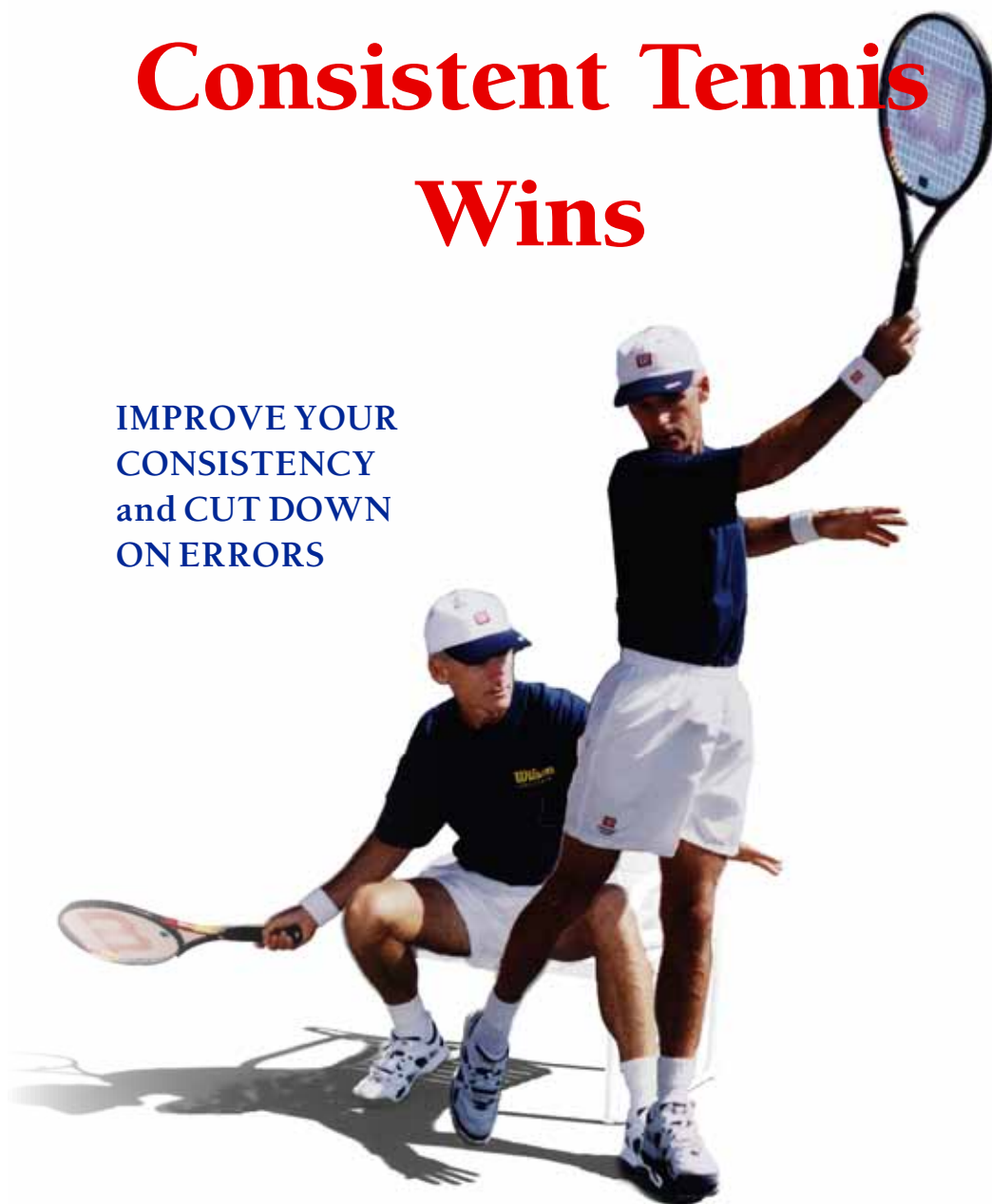


Consistent Tennis Wins

IMPROVE YOUR
CONSISTENCY
and CUT DOWN
ON ERRORS



Tom Avery

Consistent Tennis Wins

By Tom Avery

le Comte Publishing
Naples, Florida

to Jo Ann Avery

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INTRODUCTION



You're playing a match and your opponent hits an approach shot and comes to the net. You basically have four options, 1) hit down the line; 2) hit crosscourt; 3) lob; 4) hit right at your opponent. Your opponent knows your options, you know your options, the people on the sidelines know your options. There's no intricate strategy to figure out. But the question still remains: Can you consistently hit those four shots with power. What I'm trying to say is: many players put the cart before the horse. You cannot implement strategy without having the tools, you need the strokes first. So, if you're trying to get to the next level, work on your stroke production more than anything else.

If you can get to the point where you care more about improving your strokes than winning matches, the winning will take care of itself. Sometimes improving your strokes comes quickly and sometimes it takes time. Some suggestions in this book will give you quick results and some will take time. When trying to create new signals in the brain, go at half speed to begin with. Going at half speed helps you figure out the swing much quicker. Then gradually pick up the speed.

Remember, the ball doesn't know who's holding the racquet, whether it's Rod Laver or Joe Smith. The ball only knows how the racquet meets it at contact. This book will help you meet the ball correctly. 



HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS BOOK



It's been said "Inconsistency is the Achilles' heel of most tennis players." Inconsistency loses matches. In fact, if you can get the ball back in play just one more time than you're doing now you can win 33% more matches. Are you the type of player who's hitting well, then all of a sudden your next shot hits the back fence or the bottom of the net? You look at your racquet and wonder what happened on that one. If you've experienced this scenario, or would like to be a more consistent player, this book can help you. It will help you understand why inconsistencies occur and how to correct them.

If problems arise during practice or a match, take a moment, perhaps during the changeover and review the solution. It's also a good idea to review the solutions to some past problems experienced in matches before going out to play. As an example, let's say that in your last match you were having a problem with your forehand continually going beyond the baseline. Simply turn to forehand in the table of contents and you'll find "My Forehand Is Going Long." There may be listed various causes and their solutions. Most times, under the solution there will be two key points you must concentrate and focus on in order to correct the problem. Let these two thoughts go through your mind during your swing, always in the sequence they happen.

When you actively use your brain by telling your body what to do you are creating a new signal in the brain. You may have to hit 529 forehands, concentrating on the two key points before you've really grooved a new signal. Each person is different, it may be less, it could be more. The good news is that eventually it will be grooved and you won't have to think about it. Your swing will be on "automatic pilot."

When errors and old signals creep back into your game, simply recall the two key points and actively use your brain to reinforce the correct new signal.

Remember, above all: Rome wasn't built in a day. It takes time to program new signals in the brain when old signals that are causing your inconsistency keep coming back because they feel more comfortable. You may actually feel you're getting worse. As you try these new tips, many times this is the case: it gets worse before it gets better. But remember, it's usually the player who's willing to pay the price and stick with it who gets the greatest gain.

For this book to truly work for you, I think there are two traits common among champions that you will have to practice: Patience and Persistence.



I wish you the very best.

*Tom Avery
U.S.P.T.A.*

CHAPTER ONE



THE GRIP




It never ceases to amaze me what little attention is given to the grip. Players are striving to get the racquet back, step in, finish high and yet they never give their grip a second thought. Let me state right now that there are grips that make it easier to be vertical at contact and there are grips that make it difficult. Really, in my opinion, the number one thing that can help you play more consistently is a grip that makes it easier. The problem is that sometimes when a player is shown a grip that will make it easier in the long run, it feels terrible. This is where persistence and patience will really pay off. If you stick with the new grip, you'll soon realize the benefits. My encouragement to you is hang in there, stick to it, and eventually you'll get the results you want.



HOW TO FIND THE EASIER GRIP



All tennis racquet handles are octagonal or eight-sided. We're going to give these sides numbers, starting on top with panel #1, the two smaller bevels to the left and right from the top are panel #2, the two side panels are panel #3, the two smaller bevels to the right and left of the bottom are panel #4, and the bottom panel is panel #5.

Now, using the hitting hand, we're going to place an X on the inside knuckle of the index finger and an X on the heel of the hand. In order to find the easier grip, we're going to place both X marks on the correct panel. 

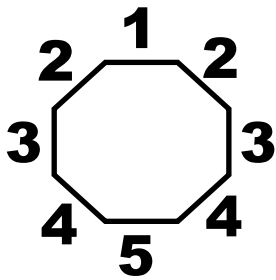


Fig. 1

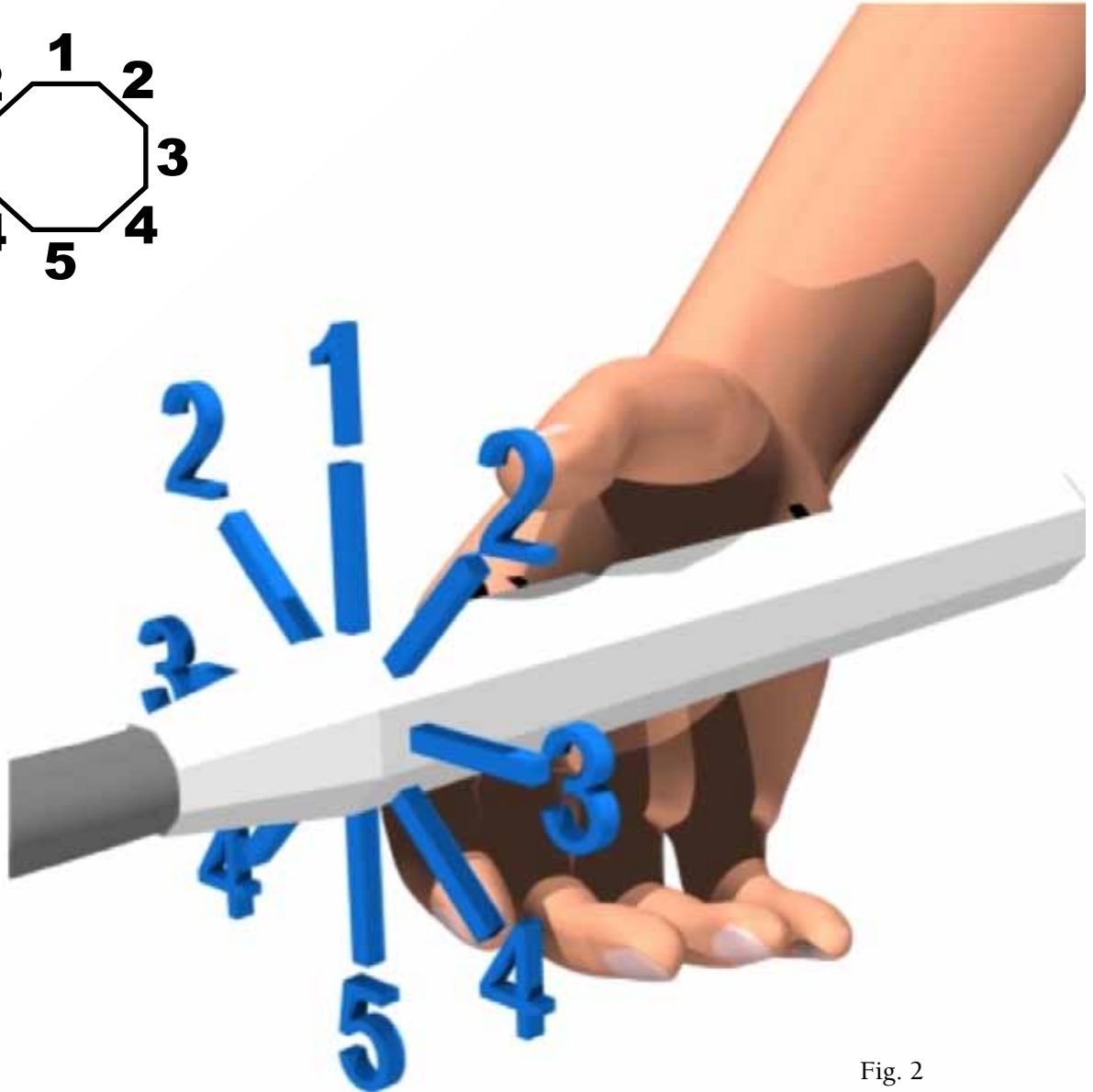


Fig. 2

RECOMMENDED GRIPS



Forehand - Drives & Topspin: Eastern (Xs on panel #3) or semi-Western (Xs on panel #4)

Backhand - Drives & Topspin: Eastern (Xs on panel #1) or semi-Western (Xs on panel #2)

For the semi-Western backhand make sure that you go to panel #2 that is on the left-handed side for a right-hander, and vice versa for a left-hander. This will close the racquet face. This grip works well for topspin.

Forehand - Slice: Eastern (Xs on panel #3) or Continental (Xs on panel #2)

Backhand - Slice: Eastern (Xs on panel #1) or Continental (Xs on panel #2)


Forehand - Volley: Eastern (Xs on panel #3) or Continental (Xs on panel #2)

Backhand - Volley: Eastern (Xs on panel #1) or Continental (Xs on panel #2)

Serve - Continental (Xs on panel #2)

Lobs - Eastern, semi-Western or Continental

Approach Shots - Eastern, semi-Western or Continental

Drop Shots - Eastern, semi-Western or Continental 

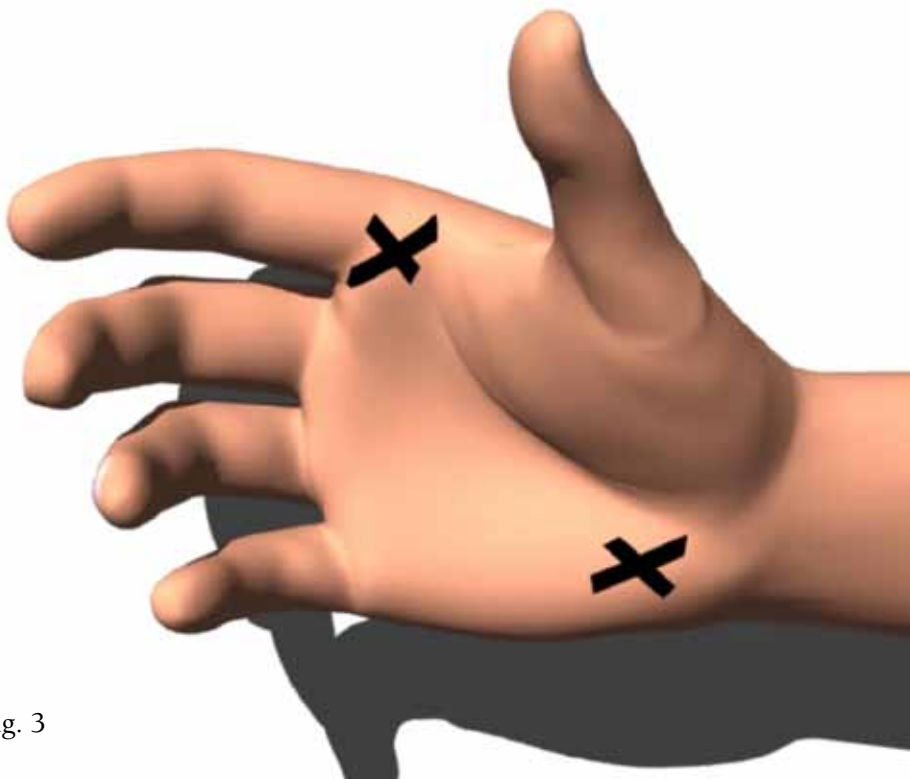


Fig. 3

CHAPTER TWO



THE BACKSWING



Next to the grip, the most important thing to consider for consistency is the backswing. Sometimes the backswing is misunderstood, it gets confused with the backhand. The backswing is what you do from the ready position to the racquet back position, whether you're hitting a forehand or a backhand.

Typically, in the ready position we're taught to stand with the racquet out in front in the vertical position (straight up and down). However, if you bring the racquet back vertically and the racquet remains vertical at the low point of the backswing, as you swing forward, the racquet will naturally be open or laid back at the contact point. The only way to get the racquet vertical at contact is by making adjustments with the forearm and wrist. This is very difficult to do on a consistent basis. Remember, this is a millisecond happening. It's risky business to rely on the wrist and forearm to consistently flick at the right millisecond to be vertical at contact.



Your forward swing is made easier by having a good backswing. Strive to get from the ready position with a closed face racquet to the low point of the backswing with a closed face racquet. From that point your swing is a piece of cake provided you don't get too wristy.

CLOSED FACE
MEANS THE SIDE
OF THE RACQUET
THAT YOU'LL HIT
THE BALL WITH
IS FACING DOWN.

IN THIS CASE
I'D BE HITTING A
FOREHAND

Fig. 4



*In **Fig. 4** notice that the racquet is up about eye level and the racquet face is closed. The racquet is now set to be vertical at contact.*

*In **Fig. 5** I've started my backswing. The racquet is coming straight back at eye level. Notice that the racquet face is still closed. Keeping it closed on the backswing will prevent your forehand from going long.*



Fig. 5

In **Fig. 6** the racquet is back pointing to the rear fence and the left hand is out in front for balance. From this point the racquet will drop down one foot below the contact point before swinging forward to ensure net clearance.


Fig. 7 At this point the racquet should be one foot below the contact point, notice the racquet face is still closed, you have now completed the backswing. From this point you'll swing forward and up to meet the ball. The only time during the backswing that the racquet would possibly pause is shown in **Fig. 6** everything else is a continual motion. 



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

CHAPTER THREE



THE FOREHAND



“My Forehand Is Going In The Net”

Cause # 1

Tennis pros are famous for saying “bend your knees.” If you don’t bend the knees adequately, the racquet will fail to drop at least one foot below the contact point before swinging forward and up to meet the ball. It’s this low-to-high swing that ensures your net clearance. When the ball comes straight or horizontally off your strings from the baseline, it doesn’t have a prayer. Gravity, which is such a strong force, will pull it down into the net. It’s simple physics: If the ball does not leave your strings ascending from the baseline, be prepared to walk up to the net to retrieve the ball.

Solution A: Tennis is much more of a leg game than an arm game. Even on a waist high ball, which most players do not consider low, you’ve really got to bend the knees to ensure net clearance, depth and power. Think about getting the rear end down like you’re sitting in a chair. This sitting in the chair will help you get the racquet one-foot below the contact point before swinging forward. Then, remember to get out of the chair as your racquet moves forward and up to meet the ball, this will keep the racquet and body in sync.

Two Key Points To Concentrate On During Your Swing

1. Sit in the chair
2. Get out of the chair

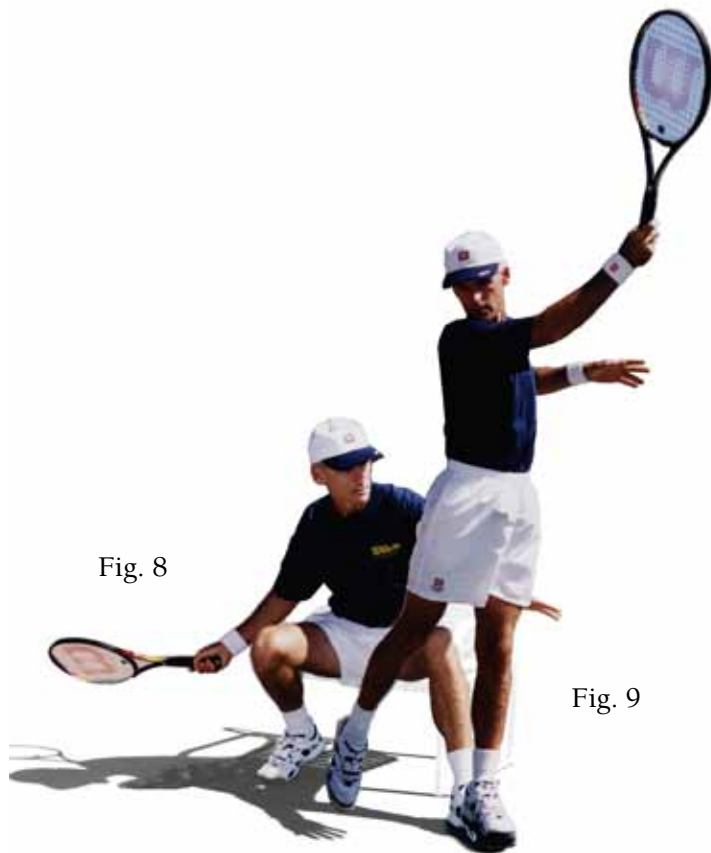
Solution B: Very simply, you may need to actively send the signal from the brain telling the body to get the racquet one foot below the contact point before swinging forward. Many players are not concentrating on the solution as they are performing it. In other words, think about it as it needs to be done. Eventually you will not need to think about it, but until a good low-to-high swing pattern is grooved into the brain, you do.

Notice in **Fig. 8** the knees are bent and the rear end is down, thinking about sitting in a chair will make you bend with the knees and stay balanced instead of bending at the waist.

In **Fig. 9** notice that the legs lift as the racquet swings forward and up, this lifting with the legs keeps the racquet and body in sync. Notice the front leg is straight, this is a good checkpoint for you on your finish, if the front leg is straight, you know you’re lifting.

Fig. 8

Fig. 9



Two Key Points To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. One foot below
2. Get out of the chair



Fig. 10 at this point when the racquet is pointing to the rear fence it must drop, as in the picture, one foot below the contact point before swinging forward to ensure net clearance. Tell yourself to get the racquet one foot below by using the brain to send signals to the muscles. This way you'll groove a new signal in the brain and very rarely hit the ball in the net

Cause # 2

You may be playing too tight. By gripping the racquet tight, say gripping it a ten (ten being the tightest on a scale of one to ten) it will give you tight muscles in your arm and shoulder which are not conducive to getting the racquet one foot

below before swinging forward. When your hitting arm and shoulder are tight the racquet tends to stay up and not drop down before swinging forward. And remember, if the racquet does not drop down at least one foot below the contact point before swinging forward, your shot is probably going in the net.

Solution A: You've got to make a conscious effort to relax the hitting arm and shoulder. On a scale of one to ten (ten being the tightest) try holding the racquet at a four, nice and relaxed. You also should concentrate on keeping the hitting shoulder loose and slightly lower than the non-hitting shoulder.



Two Key Points To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Relaxed Grip
2. Rear Shoulder Slightly Lower

Fig. 11 By gripping the racquet a four (on a scale of one to ten, ten being the tightest) your hitting arm and shoulder will stay loose and relaxed. A loose and relaxed hitting shoulder is a key factor in getting the racquet a foot below the contact point. Also, notice the hitting shoulder is slightly lower than the front shoulder, this is a good thing to think about in order to groove a low-to-high swing pattern.

Cause # 3

You may have the racquet face tilted down or closed at the point of impact. This simply sends the ball down into the net.

Solution A: Usually players who do this tend to have too much wrist and forearm movement during the swing. When there's too much wrist and forearm movement you're never quite sure what result you'll get. You may hit the back of the fence on one shot and the bottom of the net on the next. The reason for this is that players who use too much wrist and forearm are sometimes coming into the contact area with an open face racquet and are trying to close it or roll up and over to get the racquet vertical. Consequently, if they don't roll or close it on time, they hit the back fence. If they roll or close it too early, they hit the bottom of the net. This is risky business because the ball and strings only meet for a millisecond. To solve the problem you must learn to swing with the shoulder as the hinge, not the wrist and forearm. Make sure that the palm of the hitting hand is facing down at the low point of the backswing (which is one foot below the contact point), then keep the wrist and forearm steady as you swing low to high from the shoulder. This will guarantee you a vertical racquet face at contact. You can practice this against a fence, a wall or the net to make sure that your racquet is vertical at contact as you swing from the shoulder.

Two Key Points To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Wrist and forearm steady
2. Swing from the shoulder

Fig. 12 Notice the relation between the palm of the hand and the racquet face at contact. If the hand wasn't holding a racquet but was open, the palm would be facing in the same direction as the racquet. From this point there is no need to roll the wrist and forearm, the ball is only on the strings for a millisecond. Simply let the palm of the hand go towards the target and up using the shoulder as the hinge, this will impart topspin. **DO NOT** use the wrist and forearm as the hinge, that would kill your consistency.



Fig. 12

“My Forehand Is Going Long”

Cause #1

The culprit here is that the racquet is tilted or laid back at contact.

Solution A: Again, too much wrist and forearm movement is usually the problem. For the racquet to be consistently vertical at contact you must learn to swing with as little wrist and forearm movement as possible. Remember, if the racquet face is closed or tilted down at the low point of the backswing, it will naturally be vertical at contact IF the racquet does not wobble out of position. Any wobbling of the racquet is usually made with the wrist and forearm. So concentrate on a steady forearm and wrist as you swing from the shoulder. On the other hand, if the racquet is vertical at the low point of the backswing, the racquet will be tilted or laid back at the contact point.

**Two Key Points
To Concentrate On During Your Swing:**

1. Palm down
2. Swing from the shoulder

Fig. 13 Notice the racquet is closed and the palm of the hitting hand is facing down. The contact point from here should be one foot higher. As you swing low-to-high from this point, the racquet will naturally become vertical at contact. This is guaranteed IF you swing from the shoulder WITHOUT excessive wrist and forearm movement.



Fig. 13

Cause #2

You may not be generating enough topspin to pull the ball back down into the court.

Solution: Once a ball starts to spin forward it creates air pressure on top of the ball, pushing it down. This is the main reason topspin is so beneficial, you can clear the net by a safe margin and the ball is still pulled down before sailing long. To increase your topspin you must increase your rpm (the number of times the ball rotates per minute). This increase in spin creates more air pressure on top of the ball, thus pushing the ball down and in the court before it sails long. To increase your rpm, you must increase the angle of your swing. Let's say that you're swinging low to high with an upward angle of about 25° and your shots are going long. If you increase the upward angle to 45° even with the same racquet speed your shots should now be landing in play. When you try this, strive to finish with your shoulder under the chin to guarantee that you'll hit through and up at the same time. Sometimes players think "up" so much that they do not hit through and simply use too much arm.

Two Key Points To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Increase the angle
2. Shoulder to the chin

Fig. 14 The racquet represents the angle (approximately 25°) of a low-to-high swing which will impart topspin to the ball.

Fig. 15 The racquet represents the angle (approximately 45°) of a low-to-high swing which will impart more topspin to the ball. By increasing the angle of the swing you create more of a brushing up effect, which will spin the ball faster, creating more rpms (rotation per minute). This increase in rpms creates more air pressure on top of the ball, pushing it down before it sails long.

Fig. 16 By finishing with the shoulder under the chin you're more likely to hit through the ball instead of merely arming the ball.



Fig. 14



Fig. 15



Fig. 16

Cause # 3

You may be opening up the racquet face on the backswing.

Solution: Remember some of the Key Points mentioned under the Backswing section. That section mentioned starting in the ready position with a closed face racquet.

Starting in the ready position with a closed face racquet and keeping it closed to the low point of the backswing will prevent hitting long. Be meticulous about bringing your racquet back closed and having the palm down at the low point of the backswing. If the racquet opens up, there's a good chance you'll hit long. Do not get discouraged if when first implementing this technique some shots go in the net. You simply need to get your racquet lower before swinging forward, so bend those knees, especially with the rear leg.

Two Key Points To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Keep racquet face closed on backswing
2. Palm down

Fig. 17 Notice the racquet face is closed as I start to turn. **Fig. 18** Notice the racquet face is still closed as the backswing is about 75% complete. **Fig. 19** The racquet has reached the low point of the backswing, the face is still closed and the palm of the hitting hand is facing down. This would be a perfect backswing. From here simply swing forward and up (the contact point should be at least one foot higher than this point) and the racquet is guaranteed vertical at contact.



Fig. 17

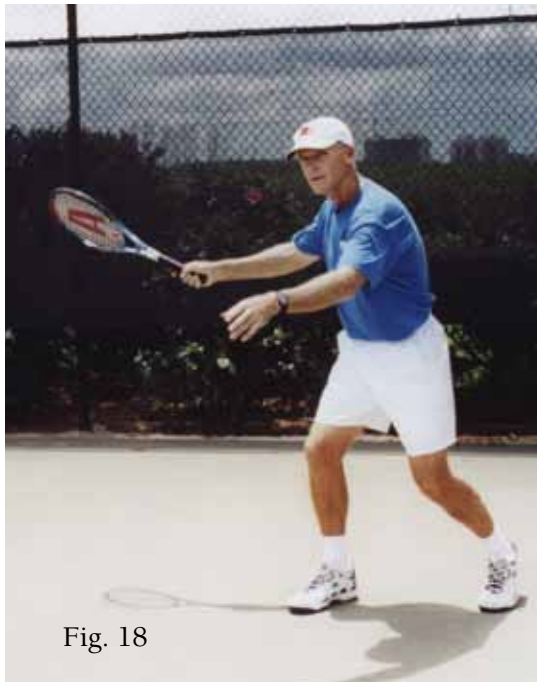


Fig. 18

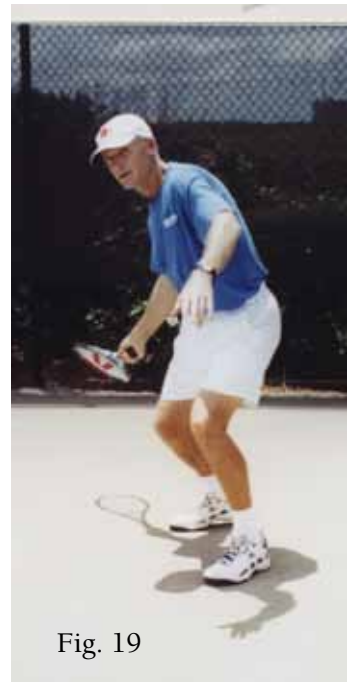



Fig. 19

“When My Opponent Comes To The Net, My Forehand Passing Shot Down The Line Is Usually Off Target”

Cause # 1

Your racquet is pulling around and across your body instead of out away from your body and towards the intended target. When you swing around across the body the racquet is facing the target for a split second only, and does not stay on line towards the intended target. This means your timing must be absolutely perfect to hit to your desired target.

Solution A: To hit a ball straight ahead you must be able to implement an inside out swing. The ability to hit a straight ball is important for down the line shots. Also, once you know your opponent's weakness, you'll want to hit it 'straight' to that weakness. It's very difficult to consistently hit the ball straight without this type of swing pattern. When you swing inside out the racquet stays on line longer giving you a much better chance of hitting towards the intended target.

To learn an inside out swing stand at the center of the baseline by the center mark. Turn sideways with your racquet back, ready to hit a forehand. Your hitting hand is now in the inside position. Now, let the hitting hand and racquet go out away from the body towards the right net post (for a right-hander) or towards the left net post (for a lefthander). As you let the hitting hand and racquet go towards the net post it will feel as though you're going to hit the ball onto the adjacent court. As you continue to swing out towards the net post however, you'll soon realize, that when you reach the contact point the racquet is facing in the direction you want, straight ahead. At the contact point, the palm of the hitting hand should be facing your target as well. Here's the key point: It's much easier now for the racquet and the hitting hand to stay on line and directed towards the target, that's because you're swinging inside out away from your body. Actually, the racquet and the palm of the hitting hand can stay on line towards the target for a foot (12 inches) to a foot and a half (18 inches) when you swing inside out. This gives you a good chance to hit the ball to your desired target. On the other hand, if you were pulling the racquet around and across your body, the racquet and palm of the hitting hand are facing the target for only a split second. When this happens the racquet and palm of the hand are on line for only that moment, meaning if your timing is not perfect the ball will not go to your intended target. For more instruction on the inside out swing see the videos Consistent Tennis Wins IV and V. 

THE INSIDE-OUT SWING

Two Key Points To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Swing inside out
2. Palm of the hand towards the target

Fig. 20 The hitting hand and racquet are now at the inside position. From this point swing out, away from your body towards the right net post. **Fig. 21** The hitting hand and racquet are now swinging out, away from the body. At this point it looks as though you'll hit the ball to an adjacent court. **Fig. 22** The racquet has now reached the contact point and notice, it's facing straight down the middle. By swinging inside out it's easier now to keep the racquet on line as if you're hitting four balls in a row as opposed to just one. **Fig. 23** The palm of the hand and the racquet face are closely related. To increase your accuracy, keep the palm of the hand on target as if you're hitting four balls.



Fig. 20



Fig. 21



Fig. 22



Fig. 23

THIS IS WHAT YOU NEED FOR PASSING SHOTS DOWN THE LINE AND HITTING STRAIGHT TO AN OPPONENT'S WEAKNESS.



“When I Try To Hit My Forehand With Topspin I Lose Control”

Cause #1

One common myth about topspin is that you must roll the racquet up and over the ball. This type of motion will make it very difficult to hit with consistency and control. Players who try to roll the racquet up and over most often are swinging forward with a racquet face that is tilted or laid back. This roll up and over motion is a motion that is facilitated by the forearm and wrist. Forearm and wrist movement is usually the biggest cause of inconsistency. Obviously, if you hit the ball with a laid back racquet you cannot impart topspin, and your shot may hit the back fence. That's why, this type of player is always trying to roll up and over to get the racquet in a vertical position (vertical is the correct position for topspin) at contact. Players who make this movement usually finish low.



Fig. 24

Fig. 24 Many players make the mistake of trying to roll the racquet up and over the ball, using the forearm and wrist. This type of movement is usually the biggest cause of inconsistency. Players who try to roll the racquet up and over often are finishing low as this photo shows. Strive to finish high with the shoulder under the chin as shown in **Fig. 26**.



Fig. 25



Fig. 26

Solution A: If this is your problem, you need to develop a swing pattern where there is not so much movement with the forearm and wrist. The main hinge (just as the hinge on a door enables the door to move) during your swing should be the shoulder not the forearm and wrist. To solve the problem, you need to realize that the racquet face should be tilted down at the low point of the backswing, with the palm of the hitting hand facing down at this point. Now, as you swing forward and up to meet the ball it will automatically become vertical at contact, provided that you do not have a lot of wrist and forearm movement and that the swing is low (one foot below the contact point) to high.

Two Key Points To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Palm down
2. Shoulder to the chin

Fig. 25 The racquet face is closed or tilted down at the low point of the backswing. The racquet is guaranteed to be vertical at contact if the swing is made from the shoulder. **Fig. 26** The finish is high as the shoulder touches the chin. By striving to finish high like this there is less of a chance that the wrist and forearm will roll over.



“Everybody’s Talking About Topspin, I’m Not Sure If I’m Getting Any Topspin”

Cause #1

Everybody’s talking about topspin because it allows you to clear the net by a safe margin and still pull the ball back down in the court. You don’t need to be a nuclear physicist to figure out what imparts topspin to a tennis ball. A clear understanding is all you need.

Solution A: First of all, what is topspin? Basically it’s a ball that spins forward after the strings strike it. What’s so great about a ball spinning forward? Once a ball starts to spin forward, it creates air pressure on top of the ball pushing it down. This is the main reason everyone likes topspin. They don’t have to be a Las Vegas type player who hits net skimmers, always flirting with danger. They can safely get the ball four to six feet over the net, with power and the ball is still pulled back down before sailing long. To make a tennis ball spin forward, the racquet must be moving from low to high at contact. The racquet should drop at least one foot below the contact point before swinging forward to meet the ball. This ensures a low to high swing. It’s this low to high motion that will cause a brushing up at contact that makes the ball spin forward. The racquet must be in a vertical position (straight up and down) when contact is made. If the racquet is tilted or laid back at contact you do not get this brushing effect. The strings should make contact at the equator of the ball, that imaginary line around the center of the ball. If you try to come up and over the top and hit above the equator, you’ll simply drive the ball into the net. This over the top theory is actually a common myth that will really hurt your ability to hit topspin consistently in the court.

Fig. 27 The racquet face is closed, the palm is down, the racquet is now set to be vertical at contact. **Fig. 28** The racquet is vertical at contact, striking the “equator” of the ball because the swing was from the shoulder without wrist and forearm rolling. **Fig. 29** This is a key photo, notice that the ball is gone and the racquet is still continuing on a low-to-high plane, remaining vertical. There has been no rolling over. But topspin has been imparted. **Fig. 30** The racquet continues on the low-to-high plane, finishing high, the shoulder has been used as the hinge throughout the swing.

HOW TO HIT WITH TOPSPIN AND CONTROL

Two Key Points To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Swing low to high
2. Keep the racquet vertical through the contact area

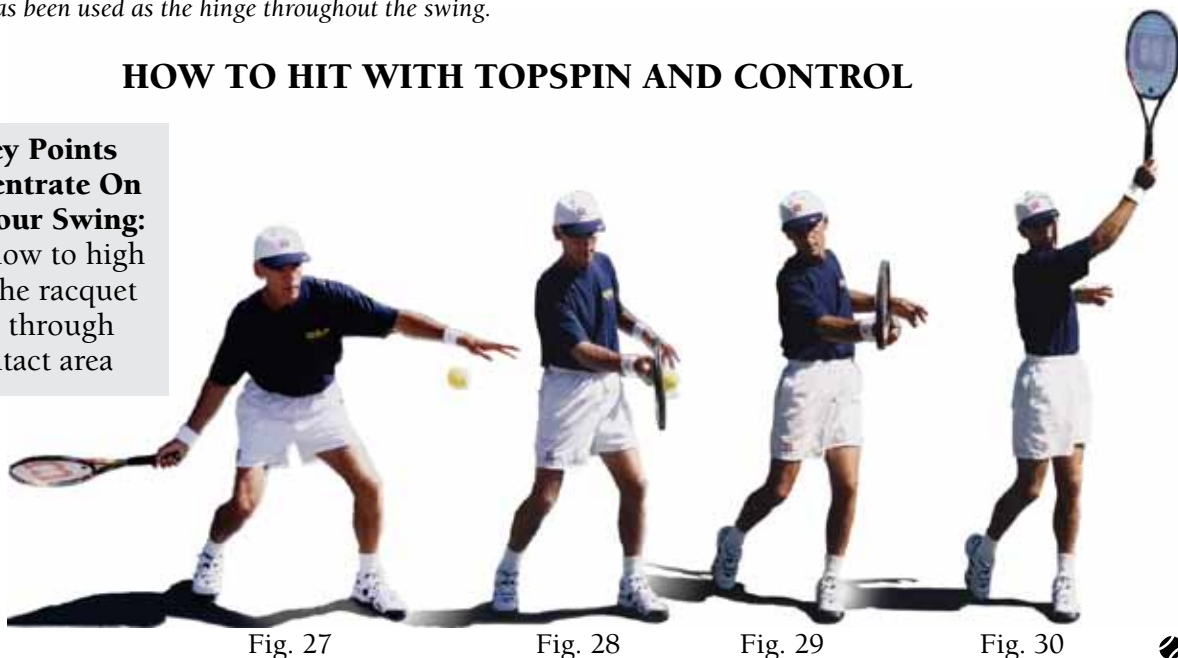


Fig. 27

Fig. 28

Fig. 29

Fig. 30



“I Can’t Seem To Generate Any Power With My Forehand”

Cause #1

You may be trying to generate all your power with the arm.

Solution A: Instead of trying to arm the ball, you’ve got to get your whole body involved in the stroke. The arm is just one segment of the body that should be uncoiling. Learn to coil, turn and rotate the body on the backswing, then uncoil, starting with the knees then the hips, trunk, shoulders and hitting arm. Your hitting arm and racquet will pick up speed as you uncoil, the faster the speed, the more power you will generate. However, remember the principle of deceleration-acceleration is working here. As the body uncoils each segment should stop (decelerate) as the next body segment accelerates.

COILING AND THEN UNCOILING PRODUCES A FAST RACQUET AT CONTACT, WHICH EQUALS POWER

Fig. 31 The shoulders and hips have coiled.

Fig. 32 The body has now started to uncoil, in this photo the front knee has stopped, from here the hips will now speed up.

Fig. 33 The hips are speeding up as the right hip turns into the shot.

Fig. 34 The hips have stopped, the trunk and the shoulders have also stopped as the hitting arm accelerates through the contact area.

Fig. 35 The legs have continued to lift, notice the front leg has straightened out. The racquet finishes high with the shoulder under the chin.



Two Key Points To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Coil the body on the backswing
2. Uncoil smoothly



Cause #2

You may be bringing the racquet straight to the low point of the backswing. This means that you lose the benefit of a loop swing. The loop is where the racquet falls, enabling it to pick up speed before contact.

Solution A: Remember, racquet speed at contact will determine how much power you have. So, instead of bringing the racquet straight back to the low point of the backswing, learn to bring the racquet back at about eye level. Once the racquet is back at eye level, the racquet can now fall, or loop down, to the low point of the backswing (one foot below the contact point) before swinging forward. Remember to keep the hitting shoulder loose so the racquet will fall and drop low enough. It's this looping or falling racquet that will give you about 10 to 20 mph more speed as the racquet reaches the low point of the backswing. But, when you bring the racquet straight back to the low point you have gained zero miles per hour.

Two Key Points To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Bring the racquet back at eye level
2. Keep the hitting shoulder loose and let the racquet fall or loop down before swinging forward

Fig. 36 In the ready position the racquet is up about eye level.

Fig. 37 As the shoulders turn, and the racquet comes back, it stays at eye level.

Fig. 38 The racquet is back, pointing to the rear fence and still around eye level. From this point, the racquet will now fall or loop down to the low point of the backswing before swinging forward. This racquet falling or looping down will enable your racquet to pick up speed which generates more power.



Fig. 36



Fig. 37



Fig. 38



CHAPTER FOUR



THE BACKHAND



Grip recommended: Eastern or semi-Western

“My Backhand Is Going In The Net”

Cause #1

The racquet is not dropping one foot below the contact point before swinging forward and up to meet the ball. If you swing horizontally or straight across and make contact with a vertical racquet, the ball does not have a prayer of clearing the net. Gravity is a strong force and will pull the ball into the net.

Solution A: You have to swing low (one foot below the contact point) to high in order to clear the net from the baseline, assuming you're driving the ball or hitting with topspin. I'm not talking about slice shots where the racquet face is laid back or slightly open at contact. When you swing low to high, the ball will leave your strings ascending. If the ball comes straight off your strings from the baseline, you might as well start walking to the net to retrieve your ball. To make sure you're bending adequately to get the racquet one foot below the contact point think about getting your rear end down like you're sitting in a chair. Also, use your non-hitting hand to help you get the racquet low enough. A good drill is to let the non-hitting hand, which is riding on the throat of the racquet, to drop and touch the back thigh. Now the non-hitting hand is being used not simply as an ornament but it's helping you get the racquet low enough. Once the non-hitting hand touches the thigh, the racquet swings forward and up. Remember, this is a smooth, continuous motion as you're swinging at the ball.

Two Key Points

To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Sit in the chair
2. Make the non-hitting hand touch the back thigh



Fig. 39

Fig. 39 Notice the non-hitting hand being used to get the racquet low enough. A good check-point is to make the non-hitting hand touch the rear thigh, as in this photo. From this point, be sure to keep the left hand back at the thigh. Do not swing the non-hitting arm forward.

Cause #2

The racquet face is turned down at contact.

Solution A: Usually there is too much wrist and forearm movement and a rolling over with the racquet in the hitting zone when this occurs. Just as a door has a hinge that makes it open and close, the hinge on your backhand swing should be the shoulder, not the wrist and forearm. When you concentrate on swinging from the shoulder with a high finish, there's less chance of wrist and forearm movement. To consistently be vertical at contact, remember that the racquet face should be closed with the non-hitting hand at the low point of the backswing. Here's the key point: Once the racquet face is closed at the low point of the backswing you are guaranteed vertical at contact as you swing forward and up. Remember though, this is guaranteed only if you use the shoulder as the hinge, if the wrist and forearm roll during the swing, it's not guaranteed.

Two Key Points

To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Racquet face closed at the low point of the backswing
2. Use the shoulder as the hinge

Fig. 40 In this photo, notice the non-hitting hand is making sure that the racquet face is closed. the non-hitting hand is not just an ornament, use it. When the racquet face is closed at the low point of the backswing, it will automatically become vertical at contact. Provided that the swing is from the shoulder without much wrist and forearm movement.



Fig. 40



“My Backhand Continually Goes Long”

Cause #1

The racquet face is turned up or open at the contact point.

Solution A: You may not be holding an Eastern or semi-Western grip. If you're holding a Continental grip (which can be used for slice shots, but is not well suited for drives or topspin) the racquet face will tend to be open at contact. Check The Grip section to make sure your hand is positioned correctly on the handle.

Solution B: Make sure to use your non-hitting hand to keep the racquet face steady and closed at the low point of the backswing. Remember, if the racquet face is closed at the low point of the backswing, it should be vertical at contact, provided you swing from the shoulder with a fixed forearm and wrist. On the other hand, if the racquet is vertical at the low point of the backswing it will tend to be open or tilted back at contact.

Two Key Points

To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Use the non-hitting hand to close the racquet face
2. Swing from the shoulder

Cause #2

You may be leaning back at contact which causes the racquet face to tilt back.

Solution A: As you go out to meet the ball, make sure you're stepping in and the hitting shoulder is leaning forward into the shot. This will prevent leaning back. On the finish, the hitting shoulder should be closer to the net than the lead foot, this will ensure you're leaning into the shot instead of leaning back, which will tilt the racquet back.

Two Key Points

To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Let the hitting shoulder lean forward into the shot
2. Hitting shoulder closer to the net than the lead foot on the finish

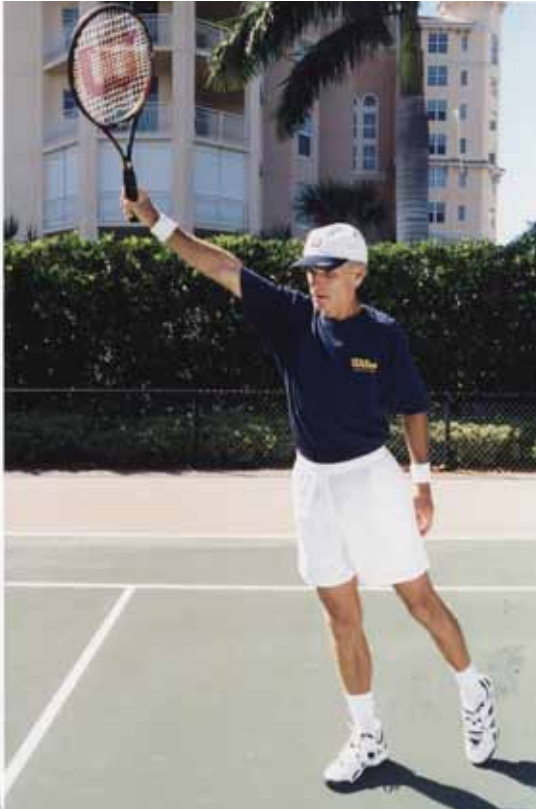


Fig. 41 Transferring the weight and leaning forward will prevent the racquet from opening up. Notice in this photo that the hitting shoulder is slightly ahead of the lead foot and the weight has transferred totally to the front leg.

Fig. 41



“I Can’t Seem To Hit Any Topspin With My Backhand”

Cause #1

You’re not swinging on a low to high plane.

Solution A: Remember, it’s impossible to impart topspin without a low to high swing. So remember to let the racquet fall (at least one foot below the contact point) before swinging forward. Bend the knees as if you’re sitting in a chair to make sure that the racquet is getting low enough. Also, use the non-hitting hand to help get the racquet down below the contact point before swinging forward.

Two Key Points

To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Sit in the chair
2. Use the non-hitting hand to get the racquet low enough

Cause #2

You may be rolling the wrist and forearm which gives you a swing that’s not dependable. One shot hits the bottom of the net, the next shot is in the court, and the next shot hits the back fence. The strings cannot brush up on the ball if the racquet face is open (tilted back) or closed (tilted down) at contact. When this occurs there’s no way for you to have confidence in your stroke because the racquet is rolling over in the contact area. Remember what topspin is all about. It’s a racquet moving low to high that stays vertical through the contact area and brushes up at the equator (the imaginary line around the center of the ball). To consistently have a vertical racquet through the contact area, you’ve got to learn to swing from the shoulder, with as little forearm and wrist movement as possible. Here’s a key point: To be vertical at contact, the racquet should be closed or tilted down at the low point of the backswing. Now, as you swing forward and up from the shoulder the racquet naturally becomes vertical.

Two Key Points

To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Closed face or tilted down at the low point of the backswing
2. Swing from the shoulder without wrist and forearm roll



“I Can’t Generate Any Power With My Backhand”

Cause #1

You’re thinking that the hitting arm is the source of power.

Solution: Learn to rotate the upper body as you bring your racquet back. This coiling of the upper body will allow you to uncoil with the knees, hips, trunk, shoulders, and hitting arm into the shot. Remember, as the body parts uncoil, each part should come to a stop as the next speeds up. For instance, when the knees stop, the hips speed up, when the hips stop, the trunk speeds up, when the trunk stops, the shoulders speed up, finally, when the shoulders stop all of this uncoiling is now transferred to the hitting arm. this uncoiling enables you to generate tremendous speed to the hitting arm and racquet, and racquet speed at contact will determine how powerful your shot is. To make sure you’re coiling adequately, rotate the shoulders on the backswing enough for your opponent to see your racquet come into view behind your back. Remember though, this is a continuous movement the racquet should never stop at this point, this would defeat your purpose of getting the racquet moving fast. Now, as you uncoil make sure to stop the trunk and hitting shoulder just before contact, this deceleration of the trunk and hitting shoulder allows the hitting arm to now accelerate into the shot. For more information on generating power on the backhand see the video Consistent Tennis Wins IV: The Backhand.

Two Key Points To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Show the racquet behind your back
2. Stop the trunk and hitting shoulder just before contact

Fig. 42 In this photo notice the shoulders have rotated enough so that my opponent could see my racquet come into view behind my back. This is the kind of coiling you’ll need to generate power. The racquet, however, would never stop at this point, it’s a continuous movement. **Fig. 43** At this moment (right before contact) the trunk and hitting shoulder stop. This deceleration of the trunk and hitting shoulder allows the hitting arm to now accelerate into the shot.



Fig. 42



Fig. 43



“My Backhand Passing Shots Are Usually Off Target”

Cause #1

Your racquet is not staying on line towards the target in the hitting zone. If you're pulling or swinging around with the upper body, the racquet will only be facing your target for a millisecond. This requires absolutely perfect timing to hit the desired target.

Solution: Like the forehand, the key here is the inside-out swing. An inside-out swing enables the racquet to stay on line. When the racquet stays on line, the timing can be slightly off (nobody's perfect) and you'll still hit to your desired direction. To understand an inside-out swing, stand at the center mark at the middle of the baseline. Turn sideways with your racquet back. When you're turned sideways and the racquet's back, the hitting hand and racquet are now in the inside position. As you start to swing forward let the hitting hand go out towards the left net post (for a right-hander). You're now starting to swing inside out. When you first try this, you'll feel like you're going to hit the ball to an adjacent court. But as you keep swinging out away from your body you'll soon realize that the racquet is facing straight ahead down the middle when you reach the contact area. Because you've swung inside out, it's much easier to keep the racquet on line as if you're hitting through four balls. When you reach the contact point, the knuckles on the hitting hand should be facing the target. Strive to keep the knuckles on target as if you're hitting four balls in a row about two feet long instead of one, this will help you keep the racquet on line and hit to your desired target. On the other hand, when you swing around or across, it's impossible to keep the racquet on line. The racquet is facing the target for only a millisecond and then goes off line.

Two Key Points To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Swing inside out
2. Knuckles to the target



THE INSIDE-OUT BACKHAND

Fig. 44 The hitting hand and racquet are now in the inside position. From here they will swing out away from the body in the direction of the arrow towards the left net post. **Fig. 45** The hitting hand and racquet are now swinging away from the body, towards the left net post. At this point it may feel as if you're going to hit the ball out of bounds. **Fig. 46** At the contact point, however, notice the racquet is facing straight down the middle. By swinging inside out in this manner it's easier now to keep the racquet on line which will increase your chances of hitting to your desired target. Imagine you're hitting four balls to keep the racquet on line as in this photo. **Fig. 47** The knuckles on the hitting hand should be facing the target at contact. Let the knuckles continue on target as if hitting four balls.

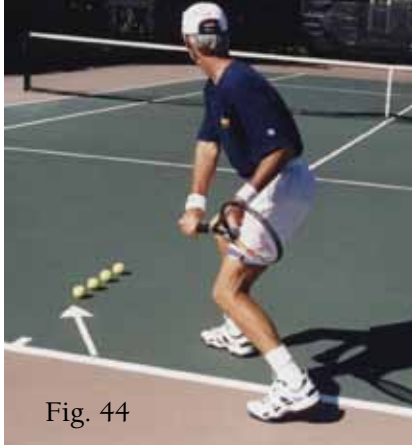


Fig. 44



Fig. 45

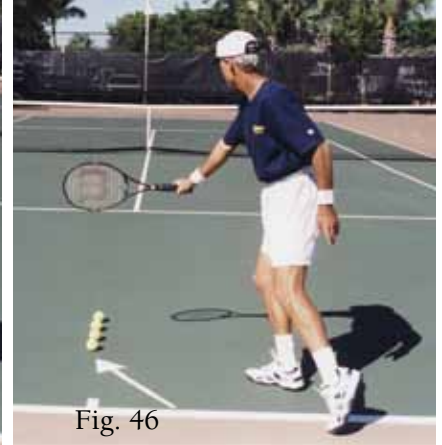


Fig. 46



Fig. 47



“My Two-handed Backhand Keeps Going Long”

Cause #1

The racquet face is tilted or laid back at contact.

Solution: To prevent the racquet from being laid back or open at contact, make sure that you’ve got an Eastern or semi-Western grip. In the ready position close the face of the racquet and make sure that the racquet stays closed as you turn the shoulders and bring the racquet back. When you drop the racquet to the low point of the backswing (one foot below the contact point), the palm of the left hand (for a right-hander) should be facing down. From this point simply swing forward and up and the racquet will naturally become vertical at contact, provided that you swing from the shoulders and do not get too wristy. On the other hand, if the racquet is vertical at the low point of the backswing, it will be open or laid back at contact unless you make adjustments. These adjustments with the wrist and forearm are difficult to do consistently. Remember, once the racquet and the palm of the left hand are facing down, swing from the shoulders and you are guaranteed vertical at contact.

Two Key Points

To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Palm of left hand (for right-handers) facing down
2. Swing from the shoulders

Fig. 48 In this photo the palm of the left hand (for a right-hander) is facing down. From this point, which should be one foot below the contact point, simply swing forward and up and the racquet will naturally become vertical at contact, provided that you swing from the shoulders and do not get too wristy.



Fig. 48



“My Two-handed Backhand Doesn’t Have Much Power”

Cause #1

You may not be realizing you’re actually hitting a left-handed forehand (for a right-hander).

Solution: Many times I’ll see players not using the left hand as the dominant hand. Sometimes they even let go at the moment of contact, and do not hit through with the left hand. This will really make your two-hander weak, because the right arm is really in a weak position at contact, slightly bent and not far enough out in front. At contact, make sure that the left hand (for a right-hander) is dominant and doing more work than the right hand. Now, hit through and finish high with the left shoulder touching the chin. Another aspect to consider is the coiling and uncoiling of the body during your swing. See the Forehand section on generating power. Remember, you’re really hitting a left-handed forehand (for right-handers).

Two Key Points

To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Left hand dominant at contact (for a right-hander)
2. Left shoulder to the chin

Fig. 49 *At the moment of contact make sure that the left hand (for a right-hander) is dominant and doing more work than the right hand. From this point, hit through and finish high with the left shoulder touching the chin. Do not let go with the left hand. You’re really hitting a left-handed forehand.*

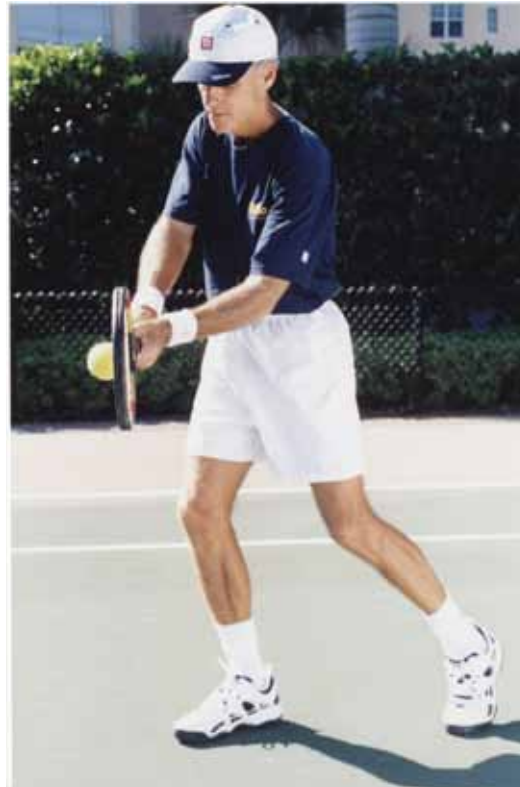


Fig.49



“My Slice Backhand Keeps Going In The Net”

Cause #1

Because underspin is imparted by a high-to-low motion, you may be chopping down too severely, which simply sends the ball down into the net.

Solution: To impart underspin, you must swing high to low, but when players chop down too severely and finish low, their shot hits the net. To prevent this, strive to finish somewhat high on the follow-through. Think of your swing as high to low to high. This high finish will prevent the severe chop which sends the ball down.

Two Key Points To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Don't chop down
2. Swing high to low to high

Fig. 50 Chopping down too severely simply sends the ball down into the net.

Fig. 51 At this point the racquet is in the high position above the contact point.

Fig. 52 The racquet has swung down to make contact and is at the low position.

Fig. 53 The racquet comes back up on the finish to prevent chopping down.



Fig. 50



Fig. 51



Fig. 52



Fig. 53



“My Slice Backhand Keeps Sailing Long”

Cause #1

You may be thinking on slice shots that the racquet face must be open and coming under the ball. However, your racquet is simply way too open or laid back which sends the ball up and floating.

Instead of such an open face racquet think of the racquet nearly vertical or tilted back a maximum of 10° to 20° .

Cause #2

Every degree that you lay the racquet back you must increase the angle at which you swing down to meet the ball. As an example, let's say that you make contact with the racquet open 20° (20° is a lot). You must start higher than a shot where the racquet is open only 10° . Remember, the more that the racquet is laid back at contact, the higher you must start.

Solution: To make sure that you get the racquet up high enough on the backswing, you've got to use the non-hitting hand and arm to help. Learn to raise the non-hitting elbow and hand on the backswing, this will ensure that your racquet is high enough. You can now increase the angle at which you swing down. As you make contact, hit through the ball and come back up on the finish somewhat high. Remember, every degree that you open the racquet face the more you must increase this angle at which you swing down.

Two Key Points

To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Use the non-hitting hand and arm to get the racquet up above the contact point to increase your angle
2. Hit through and finish high

Fig. 54 Many times players think of the racquet face laid back or open way too much as in this photo. This will simply send the ball up and floating. **Fig. 55** Notice the non-hitting elbow and hand are up high above the ball, this will enable you to increase the angle at which you swing down to meet the ball. **Fig. 56** At contact the racquet should be nearly vertical or tilted back a maximum of 10° - 20° as in this photo.



Fig. 54



Fig. 55



Fig. 56

CHAPTER FIVE



HOW TO BE CONSISTENTLY VERTICAL AT CONTACT



Practicing against a fence or a wall is an aid to being consistently vertical at contact

The methods described here are not secret. However, sometimes it seems that most players don't know how to be consistently vertical at contact. The methods that keep the ball in play are simple, but elusive until you uncover them for yourself. My goal is to help you discover how to be consistently vertical at contact. Until this point in the book, you haven't had a way to gauge your own swing or even practice accurately. I want to share with you one of the most powerful methods of keeping the racquet vertical at contact. You can practice this anywhere and always see how accurate your swing is. You can use this to teach yourself a new signal in the brain, I believe that you will surprise yourself at how simple this is and how well it works. This is your homework. Next time you are on the court you'll see what a dramatic difference doing your homework can make.

The forehand

Fig. 57 The racquet is now at the low point of the backswing. The racquet face is closed and the palm of the hand is facing down. Notice the lead foot is right up to the fence. From this point simply swing from the shoulder and the racquet should meet the X on the fence (representing the contact point) in a vertical position.

Fig. 58 The racquet is swinging forward and up, the legs are lifting and the swing is from the shoulder. Notice the racquet is still closed at this point.

Fig. 59 The racquet meets the contact point in a vertical position. This is guaranteed provided you swing from the shoulder. From this point there is no need to roll the wrist and forearm. The ball is gone, simply hit through and finish high letting the shoulder touch the chin.



The two-handed backhand

Fig. 60-62 Remember, for a right-handed player hitting a two-handed backhand is like hitting a left-handed forehand. Use the same key points as the forehand.



The one-handed backhand

Fig. 63 Notice the lead foot is approximately a foot to a foot-and-a-half away from the fence. This will give you the proper contact point for the one-handed backhand. The racquet face is closed using the non-hitting hand on the throat of the racquet to let you know it's in this position.

Fig. 64 The racquet is swinging forward and up from the shoulder. The legs are lifting. At this point the racquet is still closed.

Fig. 65 The racquet meets the contact point in a vertical position, this is guaranteed provided you swing from the shoulder. There is no need to roll the wrist and forearm at this point simply hit through and finish high.



CHAPTER SIX



THE VOLLEY



Recommended Grips – Continental or Eastern

Getting to the net and volleying can improve your chances of winning. Actually, when you get to the net in good volley position, you have a 66% chance of winning the point, assuming your overheads and volleys are powerful, accurate and consistent. One of the key factors to remember is that the swing, in most instances, is very short and compact. The reason for this is because your opponent is hitting the ball with pace, trying to pass you. You don't have time to wind up and take a big swing; the ball is moving too fast. On the other hand, if your opponent hits a slow shot, by all means wind up like Agassi and Williams, and take that swing volley. Most times, however, you need a very short swing to get the job done. Now, let's go through some common mistakes and their solutions.



“My Volleys Are Continually Going In The Net”

Cause #1

Because you're close to the net you may be thinking: “Man, this is a piece of cake, I'll hit down.” However, you're not giving the net enough respect. Even when you're positioned halfway between the net and the service line, you cannot hit down and safely clear the net.

Solution: To clear the net safely you've got to think of hitting out, not down, as if you're sliding your hitting hand across a table top.

Two Key Points To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Hit out, not down
2. Slide the hand across the table top

Notice in these 3 photos the hitting hand stays on the same level throughout the swing as if sliding across a table top.

Fig. 66 The shoulders and upper body have turned with a short backswing.

Fig. 67 The left foot has stepped in and the shoulders are sideways or perpendicular to the net, this is important, to stay sideways as you hit through, if you open up or turn the hitting shoulder in where your shoulders become parallel with net there's a good chance you'll hit down into the net.

Fig. 68 The finish is short and the hitting hand is sliding out across the table top. The same principles apply to the backhand volley as well.



Fig. 66



Fig. 67



Fig. 68

Cause #2

You may not be stepping in and getting sideways with the shoulders perpendicular to the net. When your shoulders fail to stay sideways and open up (or become parallel to the net) you tend to hit down. This is because the hitting arm can only go so far, then the racquet head starts to go down. This applies for the forehand as well as the backhand volley.



Fig. 69



Fig. 70

Fig. 69 On this forehand volley notice the left foot has not stepped in and the shoulders are pretty much parallel to the net. At this point the hitting arm is fully extended, it can't go any farther and the racquet head now starts to go down. This is probably the number one reason why volleys go in the net.

Fig. 70 On this backhand volley notice the right foot has not stepped in and the shoulders are not completely sideways. At this point the hitting arm is extended and can go no farther; the racquet head starts to go down.

Solution: When you're facing the net in your ready position you should always try to step with the foot which is farther away from the ball. For example, assuming you're right-handed, if the ball is coming to your forehand side, then the right foot is closer to the ball and the left foot is farther away. Therefore, you should step in with your left foot on a forehand volley. This will help you stay sideways as you hit out and through. When you're sideways as you make contact it's much easier to keep the racquet head up and hitting through. The racquet head does not tend to close and hit down at contact when you're sideways (shoulders perpendicular) to the net. On the other hand, when your shoulders are parallel (facing the net) the racquet head eventually will go down.

- Two Key Points**
To Concentrate On During Your Swing:
1. Step in with the foot farther away from the ball
2. Stay sideways as you hit through



Fig. 71



Fig. 72

Fig. 71 Forehand - At the moment of contact the left foot has stepped in and the shoulders are somewhat perpendicular (or sideways) to the net. Remember, it's much easier to keep the racquet head from hitting down when you're sideways.

Fig. 72 Backhand - At the moment of contact the right foot has stepped in and the shoulders are perpendicular (sideways) to the net.

Cause #3

You may be stopping as you volley. This tends to bring down the racquet face as well as the ball.

Solution: Remember, when you venture to the net your objective is to finish off the point. In order to finish off the point you should strive to get closer to the net and create more angles for put-aways. So, don't stop as you hit your first volley, keep moving forward. You'll not only gain a better volley position for the next shot (if needed), but you'll also prevent the racquet face from closing or facing down.

Cause #4

On balls hit below net level you may be failing to open the racquet face to ensure net clearance. If you hit a ball below net level with a vertical racquet you simply drive it into the net.

Solution A: When contacting a ball below net level, the racquet face must be open (or beveled slightly back) in order to clear the net. Strive to open the racquet face slightly by leading with the lower edge of the racquet as you contact the ball. This will prevent you from popping the ball up. The biggest mistake players make when learning to open the racquet face is that they open it too much. About 10° - 20° is all you'll ever need even on a very low contact point. The racquet head should stay above wrist level if possible, which will give you more control. The wrist should be firm at contact and the follow-through is short.

Two Key Points

To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Lead slightly with the lower edge of the racquet
2. Keep wrist firm

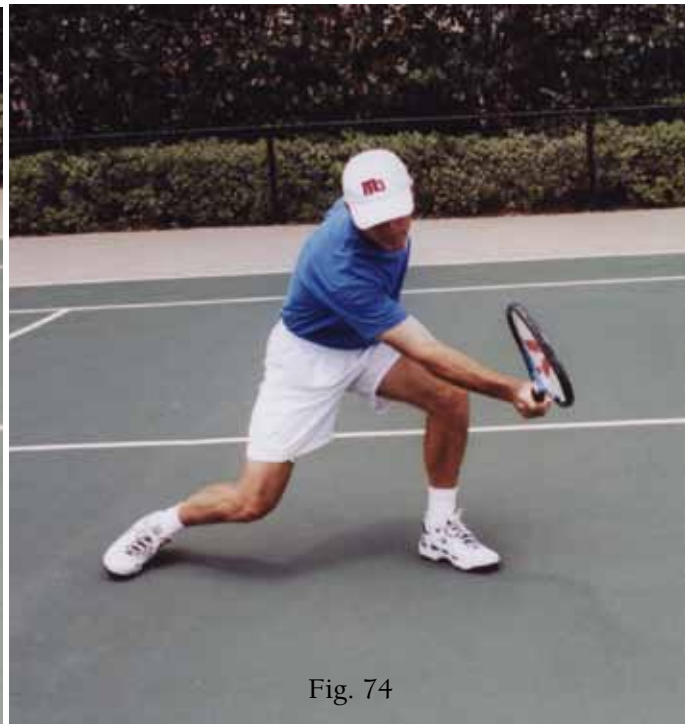
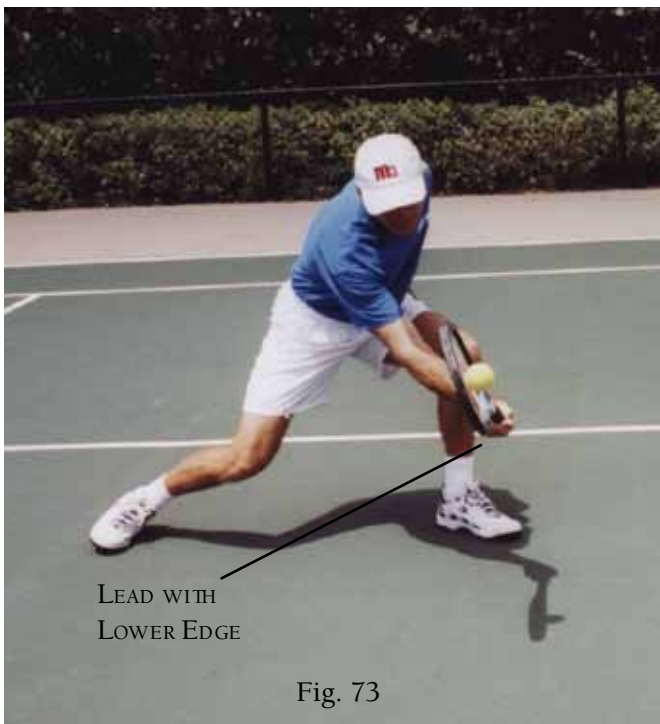




Fig. 75



Fig. 76

Fig. 73 Notice that even on a ball below knee level the racquet face is tilted back only $10^{\circ} - 20^{\circ}$. The racquet head is up above wrist level and the lower edge of the racquet is leading or closer to the net than the top edge of the racquet.

Fig. 74 The finish or follow-through is short as the swing has been made with a punching motion from the shoulder. The wrist has remained firm throughout.

Fig. 75 On the backhand volley the same principles apply: racquet head up above wrist level, keep a firm wrist, racquet tilted back a maximum of $10^{\circ} - 20^{\circ}$, lower edge leading.

Fig. 76 Follow-through is short, and the swing has been made from the shoulder. The racquet head is still up above wrist level and the wrist is kept firm.



“My Volleys Are Continually Going Long”

Cause #1

Usually, the racquet face is laid back or open at contact. Or, you're possibly swinging too much and hitting too hard. Nine times out of ten, though, the racquet is too open.

Solution A: The number one thing to concentrate on to prevent an open face racquet at contact is the backswing. To avoid confusion, let me explain. The backswing (taking the racquet back from the ready position) will either make the shot easy or complicate it. As you bring the racquet back (with a very short backswing) think about making a target for the oncoming ball with your racquet. If you take the racquet back too far, there's no longer a target for the ball. By making this short backswing and setting the racquet as a target, the racquet will not open up or lay back. Now, you simply have to step in and slide the hand across the table and the racquet will not be laid back or open.

Two Key Points

To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Take a short backswing (about two feet)
2. Make a target for the oncoming ball



Fig. 77



Fig. 78

Fig. 77 In this photo, notice the racquet has not made a nice target for the oncoming ball, the hitting elbow has dropped in close to the body and the racquet is laid back, from this point the timing will have to be absolutely perfect to keep the ball in play.

Fig. 78 In this photo the backswing has been completed. The distance from the ready position to this point is approximately two feet, that's a short backswing. Some players will swing less, maybe only one and a half feet. Less is better when trying to prevent an open face racquet. Notice, too, the racquet has made a nice target for the oncoming ball. From this point, the volley is a piece of cake: simply step in with the left foot and slide the hitting hand across the table with a short punching motion and a firm wrist.

Cause #2

As you're bringing the racquet back, your hitting elbow is dropping into the body, causing the racquet to open up.

Solution A: When bringing your racquet back for a forehand volley, strive to keep the hitting elbow away from the body and concentrate on taking a short backswing (one and-a-half to two feet). On the backhand volley strive to keep the non-hitting elbow up and away from the body and also concentrate on taking a short backswing (one and-a-half to two feet). When the elbows stay up and away from the body it's much easier to keep the racquet from tilting back or opening up. It is this tilting back or opening up that's sending your volleys long.

Two Key Points

To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Keep the elbow up and away from the body on the backswing
2. Take a short backswing (one and-a-half feet to two feet)

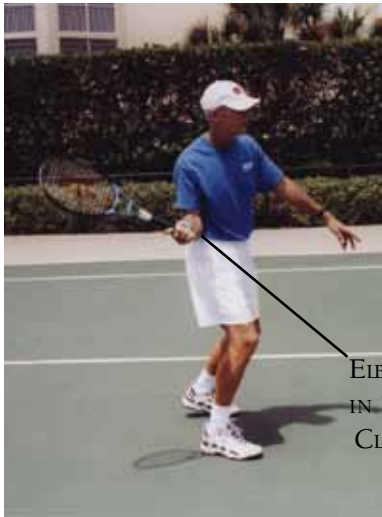


Fig. 79



Fig. 80



Fig. 81




Fig. 82

Fig. 79 Notice the hitting elbow has dropped in close to the body. This tends to tilt the racquet back and open it up. It's this type of backswing that most times sends volleys long because now the forward swing must close the racquet precisely at the right millisecond. This is risky business even for world class players.

Fig. 80 Notice on a backhand volley that the non-hitting elbow has dropped in close to the body, which tends to tilt the racquet face back and open.

Fig. 81 Notice the hitting elbow is up and away from the body. The backswing is short and the racquet is not tilted back or open. From here, simply step in and slide the hand across the tabletop. There is much less chance of a long volley with this type of backswing.

Fig. 82 Notice on this backhand volley the non-hitting elbow is up and away from the body. The backswing is short and the racquet is ready to meet the ball, it's not tilted back or open. From here, simply step in and slide the hand across the table top. Remember, your non-hitting hand and arm are not ornaments, use them. 

“I Can’t Seem To Hit Many Volleys For Winners”

Cause #1

Many players think about getting to the net as an achievement in itself. They fail to realize that you must keep moving forward which will create more angles and easier put-aways.

Solution: Yes, it’s true that you can win points more easily at the net, but only if you have the right attitude. When a player attacks and comes to the net, he’s really saying to his opponent “I’m going to end this point in one or two shots.” To do that, here are a couple of key points. Realizing the point is going to be over in one or two shots, be on your toes, ready to move or dive in either direction, if necessary (hopefully it’s on grass!). Also, as you hit the volley do not stop, keep moving through the volley to get closer to the net, this will enable you to get more angles and easier put-aways.

Two Key Points To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Stay on your toes
2. Keep moving forward



Fig. 83



Fig. 84

Fig. 83 Notice this volley is taken just inside the service line. If this volley were hit to my opponent’s right corner, notice the movement forward and towards the ball in the next photo.

Fig. 84 Notice the movement is always towards the ball, which in this case was to a right-handed opponent’s backhand corner. Notice how much further inside the service line the volleyer is now, this will enable you to cover the down the line passing shot. And, being closer to the net, you have an easier volley and more angles to put the ball away.



“When I Come To The Net I Inevitably Get Passed”

Cause #1

Again, you may be thinking that getting to the net is an achievement in itself. Once you get to the net, you may let out a sigh of relief and relax.

Solution: When you come to the net it's not a time to relax, the point is going to end in one or two shots. As you come in, split step as your opponent begins to strike the ball. The split step allows you to get balanced and “unweight” yourself so that you can now quickly move (or dive if necessary) in either direction. When doing the split step, make sure that you do not stop. Land on the balls of your feet; then, move to the ball. Many players get passed because they become too stationary at the net. Go with your gut instincts at the net. After the split step, move in the direction your instinct tells you to. You are picking up clues (mannerisms) from your opponent all the time (even if you don't realize it). These let you know in advance where he's going with his passing shot. So go with your instinct and move. If you don't, there's a good chance you'll get passed.

Two Key Points

To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Split step as opponent is striking the ball
2. Move with your gut instinct



Fig. 85



Fig. 86

Fig. 85 shows the split step, at this point the weight is forward on the balls of the feet. This split step should happen just as or before your opponent strikes the ball. This will enable you to be balanced so that you can move diagonally to the ball.

Fig. 86 Remember, when you come to the net it's no time to relax, you're committed to ending the point quickly, in one or two shots, so be ready to dive if necessary.



CHAPTER SEVEN



THE SERVE



Recommended Grip – Continental

“My Serves Are Continually Going In The Net”

Cause #1

You’re probably thinking that you’ve got to hit down on the ball to prevent long serves and get the ball in the service box.

Solution: You must realize that to hit down on a serve you need to be about 7’6” tall. So, if you’re a center in the NBA and 7’6” tall, you can hit down. If you’re a mere 6’10” you cannot hit down. The net is too high a barrier and gravity is pulling the ball down extremely fast. Remember, to keep your head and chest up as you make contact. Think vertical racquet head, not down. Learn to aim safely over the net (2-3 feet) and let gravity and spin pull the ball into the box.

Two Key Points To Concentrate On During Your Swing:

1. Head and chest up
2. Think vertical at contact



Fig. 87

Fig. 87 Notice that at the moment of contact the racquet is vertical not tilted down. The head and chest are also up. By keeping the head and chest up at contact the racquet has a much better chance of being vertical at contact, not tilted down.



“My Serves Are Continually Going Long”

Cause # 1

Your racquet face is tilted or laid back at contact. This usually happens because the toss is not out in front enough.

Solution: Learn to toss the ball out in front. This will enable the racquet to get vertical. One of the best ways to ensure that you're always tossing out in front is to learn a loop toss. A loop toss has been used successfully by many top professionals. Even though it's considered an advanced toss, 90% of my students (which range from 4 to 80 years old) are able to master it with some effort and practice.



Fig. 88

Fig. 88 Making contact with the racquet tilted back simply sends the ball long. This toss is not out in front. If the ball were to drop straight down from this point, it would land near my rear foot, well behind the baseline. However, when the toss is out in front as it should be, it would land out in front of the baseline.



The Loop Toss



Fig. 89



Fig. 90



Fig. 91

Fig. 89 The server is ready to serve, notice the arms are relaxed at the sides. The weight is on the front foot and the heel of the rear foot is off the ground.

Fig. 90 The server's first movement is to bring both hands back and transfer the weight to the rear foot. Notice the heel on the rear foot has dropped down and the ball of the left foot is coming up in the next photo.

Fig. 91 This is a key photo. At this point the toss arm is parallel with the baseline and the toss hand is just about in front of the belly button. This is where the loop occurs and is usually the toughest part to master. The toss hand and arm at this point will now loop forward (approximately on a 45 degree angle) and up.

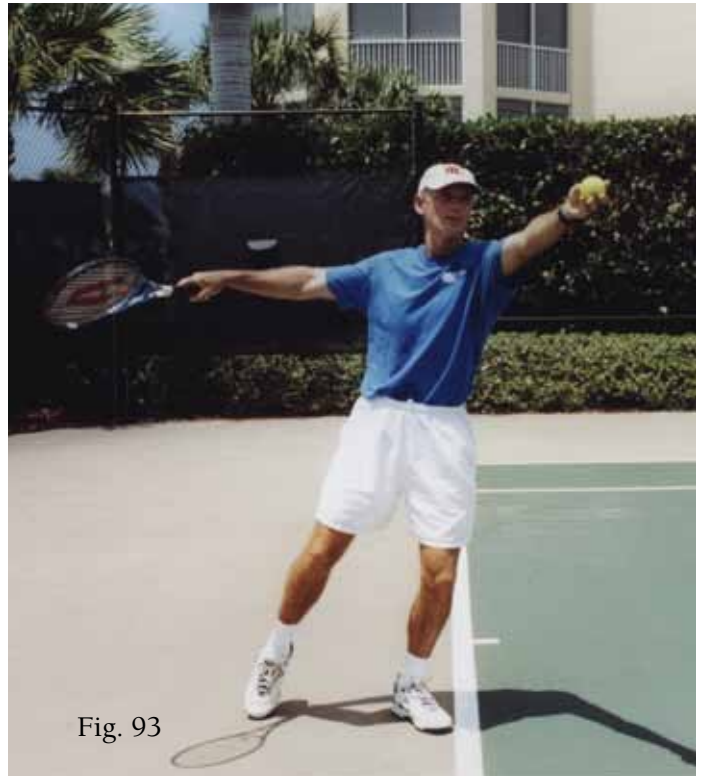
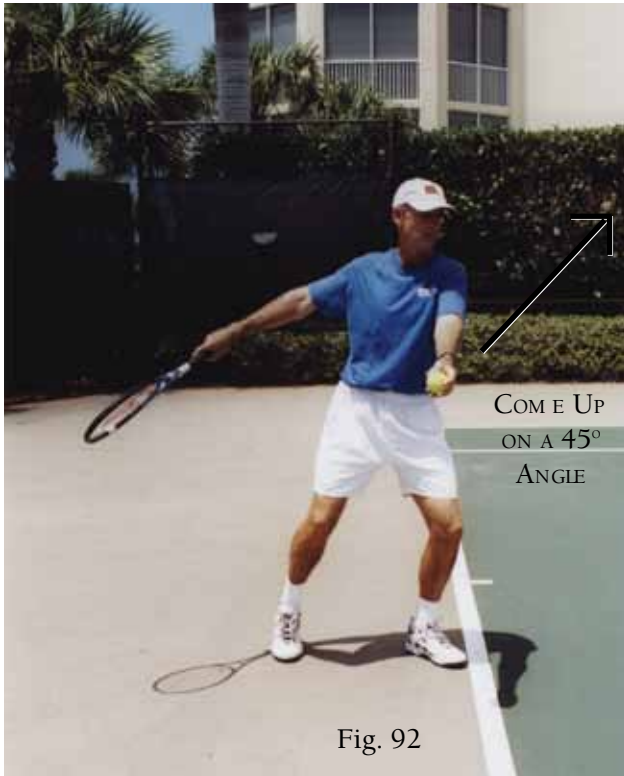
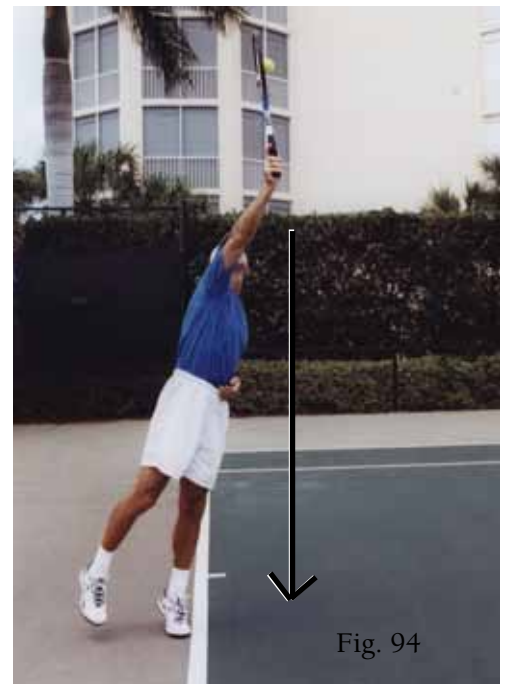


Fig. 92 Notice the lead foot has stepped down on the accelerator, so to speak, as the weight is now transferring forward. The toss hand has looped and is now coming up and forward (on the 45 degree angle), which will get the toss out in front.

Fig. 93 Notice the toss arm is angling out into the court and the weight is on the lead foot leaning forward. At this point (when the ball is about nose high) the ball is released.

Fig. 94 Notice at the contact point the racquet is vertical and the head and chest are up. If the ball were to drop straight down from this point, it would land well inside the court. Notice too, the lean well inside the court but the racquet is not facing down.



Cause #2

You may not be generating any topspin with your serve.

Solution: As mentioned earlier in this book, topspin is great to have in your repertoire. Why? Because it pushes the ball down before sailing beyond the baseline or, in this case, beyond the service line. When you make a ball spin forward it creates air pressure on top of the ball, pushing it down. The faster you make it spin forward, the more air pressure you create, pushing it down sooner. Therefore, if you're hitting your serve long, create more topspin which will push the ball down into the service box. However, a topspin serve is not one of the easiest strokes to master; it requires patience and a lot of practice. Typically, when players first try and hit a topspin serve they hit the ball with the edge of the frame. Don't get discouraged, that even happens to top pros once in a while.



The Topspin Serve

The main difference between a flat serve and a topspin serve is that the racquet brushes up toward the sky and forward at contact for the topspin serve; whereas for a flat serve the racquet is moving forward toward your target.

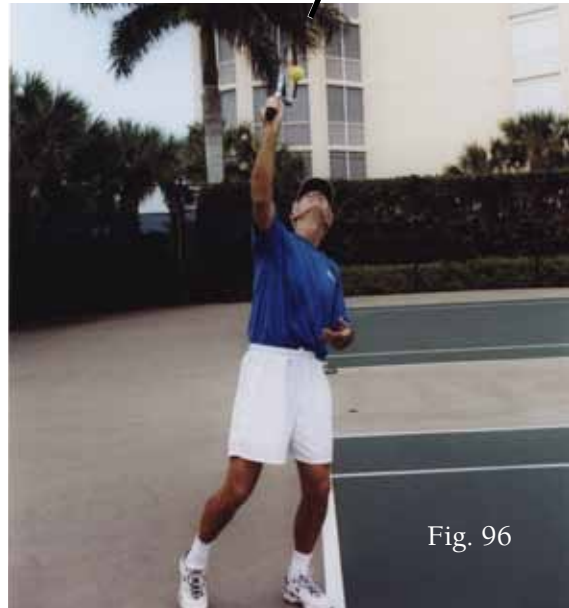


Fig. 95 Notice the forward direction the racquet would travel (as represented by the arrow) on a flat serve at the moment of contact.

Fig. 96 Notice the upward and forward direction the racquet would travel (as represented by the arrow) on a topspin serve at the moment of contact. **Fig. 97** When hitting a topspin serve the edge of the frame approaches the ball as in this photo. This is one reason that the topspin serve is tough to master. Occasionally, you'll even see a top pro frame the ball when attempting a topspin serve. This is the reason why: the edge of the frame must pass very close to the ball first, and then the strings make contact with an upward and forward brushing movement. **Fig. 98** Notice in this photo the edge or frame of the racquet has passed by the ball and now the strings make contact, the racquet is still rising at the moment of contact. At this point the wrist is snapping up towards the sky.

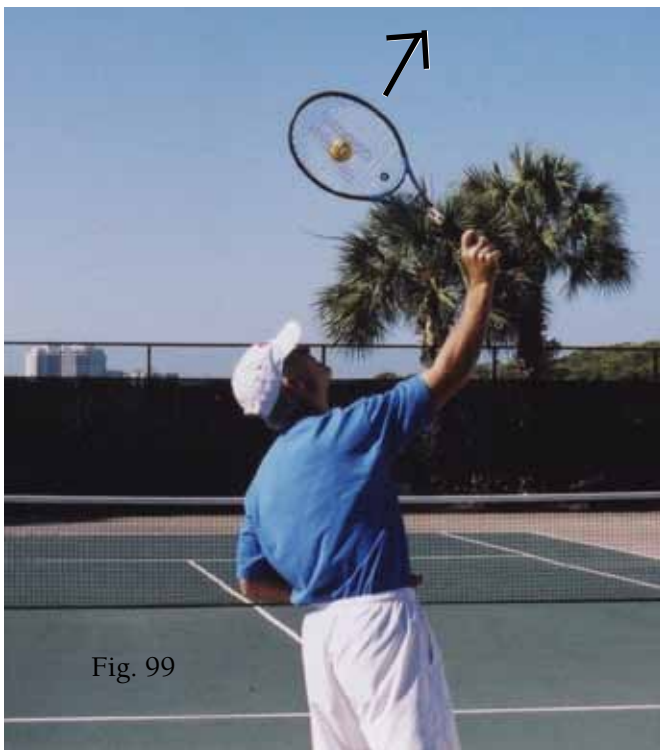


Fig. 99

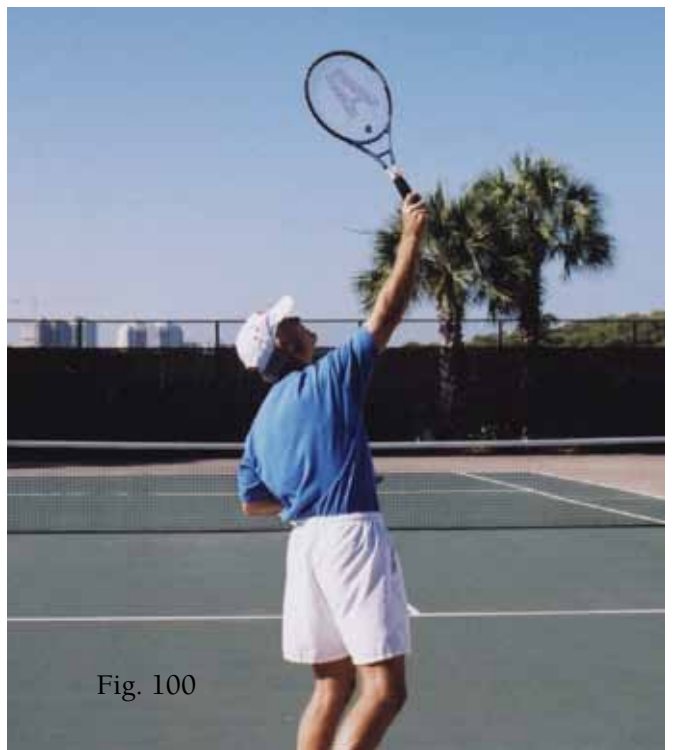


Fig. 100

Fig. 99 This is the same position as Fig. 98 except it is shown from the rear. At this point the wrist is snapping up towards the sky. If the ball were a clock then contact is made at seven o'clock and the racquet brushes towards one o'clock.

Fig. 100 At this point the ball is gone, notice the wrist is continuing to snap straight up towards the sky.

Fig. 101 At this point the ball is long gone as the wrist continues its upward snap.



Fig. 101

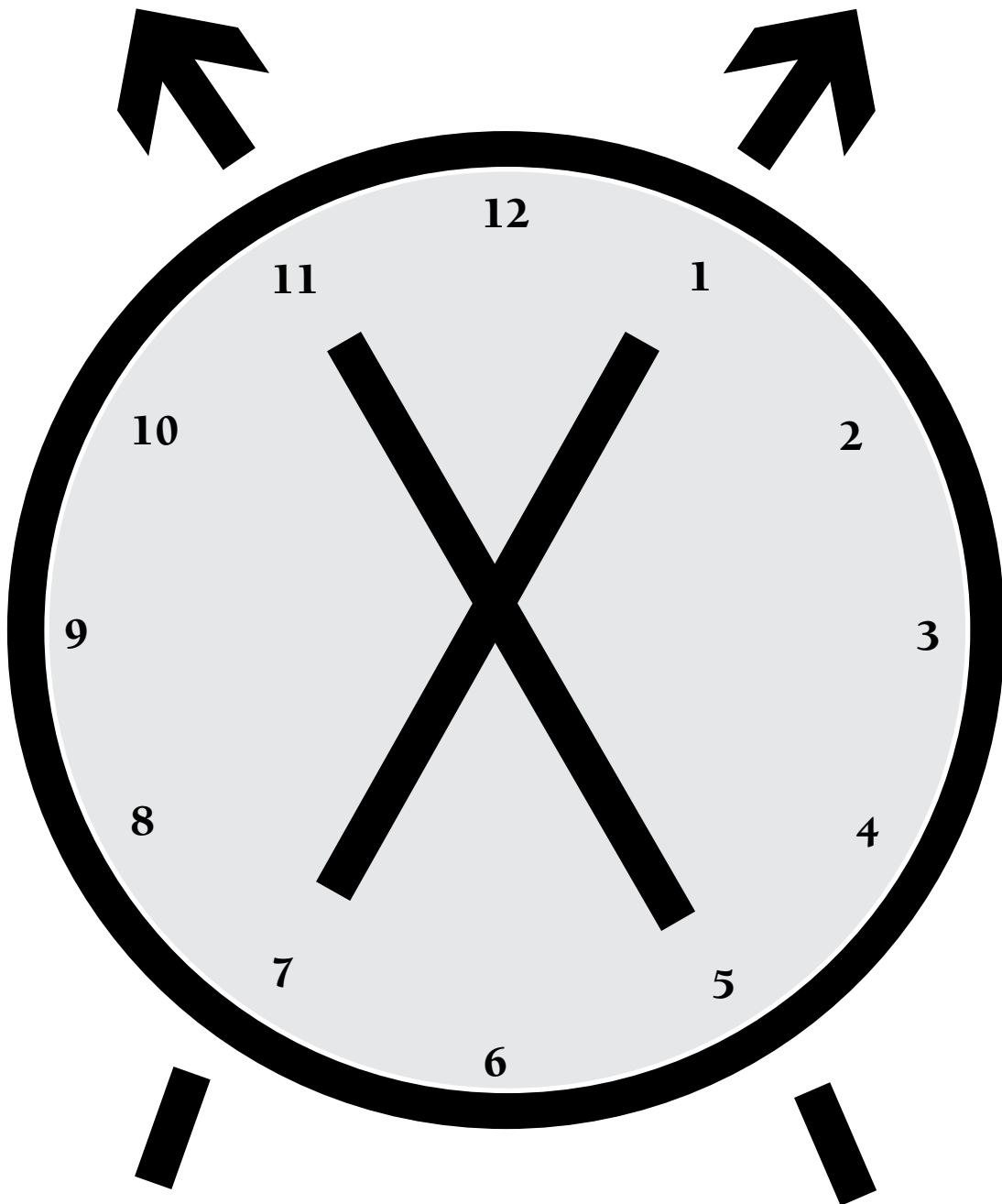


Fig. 102 The clock represents the ball. For a right-hander: after the edge of the frame passes by the ball the strings would contact the ball at the seven o'clock position and brush up to the one o'clock position. For a left-hander the strings would contact the ball at the five o'clock position and brush up to the eleven o'clock position.

A FINAL WORD



A FINAL WORD



You can trust the suggestions in this book; they've been proven successful on thousands of my students. Practice the various Two Key Points listed for different problem areas and you'll be on your way to a more consistent game.

Remember, if you execute a stroke that is not consistent, then you need to develop a new signal in the brain to produce a more consistent stroke. This takes time, so be patient. You'll know this book is working for you when you start recalling and implementing the Two Key Points after mistakes are made.

As an example, let's say you're playing a match and your forehand is continually going long beyond the baseline, what Two Key Points come to your mind? Think about it for a moment...your forehand is going long. What Two Key Points will help you keep the ball inside the baseline? Well, if you're thinking (1) face closed (2) palm down, this book is already starting to work for you.

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