Coaches Corner / Workshop

Week 4 Perception linked to your initial movement

Introduction

A squash player's initial movement to the ball is a crucial component in ensuring you arrive at the optimum time to the shot. A common fault is that players focus on the action to begin with, when in practice your perception plays the biggest role. You are looking for indicators and messages to be relayed to your brain in order to gain that head start from your perception. The top players in the world will read the play and often move into the space as their opponents strike the ball, this gives them a vital head start. It is then crucial that your initial movement is synced with your perception, racket carry, racket preparation and footwork. If you fail to understand how this works you simply can't expect to be able perform this complex sequence under pressure and you severely limit your potential or capacity to play at the highest level. This week's edition aims to break down that initial movement and provide players with a resource to understand and practise this skill.

Action

It is imperative that players also understand the importance of the quality of their shot. Without the initial quality shot it will be impossible to control the T position or have a semblance of control in your racket work or movement simply because it's impossible to cover all 4 corners. Get your initial ball tight and in the right areas and you limit your opponent's options, leaving you with the possibility to read your opponent's next shot. Then you are in position to do the following:

- ➔ Watch your opponent and the ball
- ➔ Adjust your body position and racket carry to an optimum position in relation to the area of the court you believe the ball is getting hit into e.g. if you play a good straight forehand drive and your opponent's body position and the placement of the ball indicate your opponent is going to boast. Adjust your racket carry position to the backhand side, lower your carry position to take advantage of the low boast and move up the court slightly on the backhand side, this will ensure you are ready and prepared to take advantage of the loose boast if it arrives. Don't fully commit and leave room to adjust if your opponent plays a different shot (their options should be limited by the quality of your shot)
- ➔ Now that you are in the optimum position, firstly take your racket head to the ball after your opponent strikes the ball. This creates space for your swing, creates natural timing to the shot ensuring you have the space in the swing and arrive at the ball with the ability to swing, arrive too soon and you will get on top of the ball, arrive too late and you will not have the option to complete the strike (swing is compromised)
- ➔ Sync your lead leg inline with your racket preparation. Thus ensuring your movement and racket are aligned
- ➔ This will ensure you are balanced and ready to flow through the shot on striking

Benefits

- ➔ Efficient effective movement linked to your swing
- ➔ Allows player to take the ball early
- ➔ Control of the rally
- ➔ Good preparation will affect your opponent's movement
- ➔ Ability to punish loose balls
- ➔ Increased options on the ball
- ➔ Ability to cut balls off through early anticipation
- ➔ Control the pace of the match
- ➔ Create volley opportunities
- ➔ Decrease your opponent's time

Ghosting and ball work exercises

Demo video https://youtu.be/SUJwBTT6eEg

Ghosting Pattern

- ❖ Start from the T Position
- ❖ Visualise yourself playing a good straight drive and watch the ball into the corner
- ❖ Visualise your opponent playing a boast off your straight deep ball into the front corner
- ❖ Ghost an attacking shot into the front corner
- ❖ Return to the T, always visualising the ball and your opponent
- ❖ Again, visualise your opponent playing a deep ball off your front court ghost / shot
- ❖ With early movement ghost into the back corner and play a straight deep drive
- ❖ Repeat process (start with your opponent boasting the ball off your deep straight drive) into the opposite corners. Visualization is key
- ❖ Repeat as necessary
- ❖ It is important to get the technique right and initial movement linked to the racket prep
- ❖ Once you're confident with this, increase the speed

Ball Work (see video for visual demo)

- ❖ Keep an open stance for this routine, working on early movement and using the nearest foot to the ball
- ❖ Feed two straight volleys

- On the third shot feed a crosscourt volley
- With early racket prep linked to your footwork, play a straight volley deep
- Once you become confident you can mix up the patterns and shot selection

Match Examples

- **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MtGdN-_dqII** some great examples of early movement especially to the front corners. Concentrate on the initial racket head prep which is inline with the movement, to utilize the opportunities and allow the player to hit the ball as soon as they arrive at the ball (no time lost or lag in the swing)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9ZaBJxP9ME a good example of both players using early racket prep and initial movement to try and control the T. The real battle in this match to gain ascendancy and control by trying to take the ball early. Look at how the initial movement allows the players to take the ball so early on the drive and volley.