

VOLLEYING & VOLLEY DROPPING

Volleying / volley dropping is one of the key components of the game and is an excellent way of speeding up the game for your opponents and creating attacking opportunities for yourself. Balance and footwork are key aspects if the volley is going to achieve its aim. The volley can be used to attack the front of the court or to add length with a straight or crosscourt shot which can be directed with pace or placed softly.

COACHING POINTS

- Watch the ball closely with the racket prepared ready to strike the ball early.
- Step forward to the ball with a short or shortened backswing, rather than let it drop.
- Generally the volley is played in a similar way to the drive with the shoulders starting out facing towards the side wall.
- The ball should be hit at arm's length and just in front of your lead foot.
- Ensure that the racket head is pushed or punched through to the target with the appropriate follow through depending on whether it is a hard or softer shot.
- When volley dropping it is important to strike the ball out in front of the body. You can also cut around behind the ball to take pace of the ball but ensure that the racket head still pushes through to the target in the follow through.
- Ensure that you have a target area in mind for the volley drop allowing the ball to hit the front wall at such an angle so that the ball hits the floor first and stays tight to the side wall.

FOREHAND

Preparation



Execution



Follow-through



BACKHAND

Preparation



Execution



Follow-through



DROP

The drop is an essential part of the game of squash. The drop is used to take your opponent as close to the front wall as possible, this tactic is to use up as much of your opponents energy as possible and of course save your own. Once you have managed to get in front of your opponent and force a weaker return, you should be looking to attack the front of the court by playing a soft shot dropping onto the front wall and bouncing as close to the side wall as possible. Remember the purpose of this shot is to move your opponent—as well as making it harder for them to play any type of attacking shot from it.

COACHING POINTS

- Address the ball in a low position intending to strike the ball just out in front of your leading foot.
- The knee should be bent to approximately 90 degrees, this will allow the player to stay balanced and recover to the 'T' position once the shot has been played.
- A shortened backswing is used for best results, bringing the racket head down and forward to the ball.
- The racket head should ideally be in line or slightly above the wrist prior to striking.
- The follow through is also shortened and should be directed towards the target area.
- Always try to angle the drop in such a way that it stays close to the side wall making it difficult to strike for an opponent.
- After practice the shot may be attempted with an amount of "slice" which will reduce the speed and travel of the ball even more.

FOREHAND

Preparation



Execution



Follow-through



BACKHAND

Preparation



Execution



Follow-through



LOB

A lob is mainly a defensive shot which when played well can create pressure on your opponent turning defence into attack. It is often used when you are under pressure at the front of the court, and occasionally crosscourt to push your opponent deep into the corners. It is usually hit quite softly and high on the front wall allowing the player to recover to the 'T' and regain court position.

COACHING POINTS

- Remember the lob is a soft shot and a full backswing is not always required, often circumstances only allow a short back backswing or just the use of the wrist.
- A low position is required to allow the open racket face to get underneath the ball.
- The ball should be struck out in front of the leading foot.
- The ball will need to be hit high on the front wall so that it travels over the opponent on the 'T' ideally striking the side wall just prior to the back wall and then landing on the floor before striking the back wall.
- Ensure that the head is kept down and is not bought up too early, along with completion of the follow through which is vitally important.
- As most lobs are played when under pressure the "stance" is rather a stretched one. The front foot (this could be either) is normally extended, with knee bent, positioned behind the foot, with the back leg in a low position allowing recovery to the 'T'.

FOREHAND

Preparation



Execution



Follow-through



BACKHAND

Preparation



Execution



Follow-through



DRIVE

The drive is a shot that can be hit straight or crosscourt in an effort to put pressure on an opponent in the back corners. The straight drive is played close to the side wall in an effort to make it difficult to return. The other advantage is that a good drive will draw an opponent away from the 'T' area, giving you control of that area. A cross court drive goes on a diagonal from front to back. The shot can be very effective if hit well, however can cause problems if not hit wide enough as it will usually be picked up by the opponent on the volley.

COACHING POINTS

- Take the racket head up and back ensuring that you have a good start position – elbow away from the body at 90 degrees with racket head pointing upwards.
- Turn the shoulders and hips away slightly in the early phase with them finishing square to the side wall before striking for a straight drive. For a cross court the shoulders should be in line with where you want the ball to travel.
- A little turn away from the ball with the shoulder and a slight rotation of the hip will help you to load the racket up in the preparation phase.
- Weight is transferred from back foot to front foot. Lunge with your lead foot, with the knee bent, keeping your back foot down. Front knee should be just behind the foot. Downswing should be on and through the ball. Arm should be extended (not bent) at point of impact.
- Staying balanced hit through the ball, pressing the racket head forward towards its target.
- Elbow should be extended in the follow through, left arm acting as a balancing lever.
- The ball should be struck level, or slightly in front of the front foot. Watching the ball closely return to the 'T'

FOREHAND

Preparation



Execution



Follow-through



BACKHAND

Preparation



Execution



Follow-through



BOAST

The objective of the boast is twofold. It can be utilised to dig the ball out of the corner in an effort to get the ball on the front wall when you have been under pressure or can be used as an attacking weapon by playing a flat two wall boast that dies before the side wall. The defensive boast is tended to be played from deep in the court close to the back wall with the ball striking the side wall, front wall and opposing side wall. The attacking boast is angled slightly further up the side wall hitting the front wall more towards the middle of the court, with the ball going dead before it makes the opposing side wall.

COACHING POINTS

- The actual stroke is almost a drive but played onto the side wall at the appropriate angle.
- Your shoulders and feet should be turned towards the corner (for a defensive boast) or a little more open (for an attacking boast).
- Your body must be well balanced with the knees slightly bent.
- You should try to hit through or slightly under the ball depending on the nature of the shot you are dealing with to ensure the ball makes it to the front wall.
- The shot should be angled at approximately 90 degrees for a defensive boast and again struck just in front of the front foot.
- It should be noted that the boast is a shot to be used sparingly as it can put you under significant pressure if not executed well.

FOREHAND

Preparation



Execution



Follow-through



BACKHAND

Preparation



Execution



Follow-through



SERVE & RETURN

The serve is one of the key shots in the game of squash and can influence the rally outcome significantly. A good serve can give you the upper hand or just as easily put you under pressure. Although there are some variations, the lob serve is generally acknowledged as the most effective. The service return is another key aspect of the game. It is important that a good return is made or you can find yourself under pressure early in the rally. A good return is usually hit straight down the side wall hitting the ball high on the front wall so that it lands behind the service box and close to the side wall. It can also be hit cross-court. A good return behind the server allows you to take control of the 'T'.

COACHING POINTS - FOREHAND SERVE

- Stand in a balanced position towards the front of the service box with your shoulders parallel to the side wall.
- Racket head should be brought up with the racket face open pointing upwards (you should see the strings).
- Select a spot on the front wall to use as the target. You should be aiming approximately half way across the front wall to allow the ball to strike the side wall near the back of the court.
- Throw the ball up slightly in front of yourself; striking the ball using an underarm motion while keeping the wrist firm; the arm should be fully extended on contact.
- Ensure that the racket head follows through and up; finishing with your hand around head height in front of your body.

Preparation



Execution



Follow-through



COACHING POINTS - BACKHAND RETURN

- Stand in a balanced position with shoulders facing towards the side wall. Feet should be positioned halfway between the service box and back wall.
- Racket should be up and in a vertical position ready to strike the ball.
- You should attempt to volley the return where possible as a good serve that is left to drop will usually result in a poor return.
- Try not to move too early as you must first gauge the trajectory of the ball.
- Aim to hit high on the front wall staying square to the side wall and try to return the ball straight.
- Try to keep the racket head travelling in the direction that you want the ball to go and return directly to the 'T'.

Preparation



Execution



Follow-through

