

Developing a relationship: You and the ball (part 4)

Tennis is an, 'impact sport'. The impact of the ball is the most important moment in all of tennis. Setting up a good relationship between you and the ball effects balance, power, coordination, timing, control, and a host of other crucial elements.

GROUNDSTROKE 'BOX'

For the Beginner... (Play Tennis Rating 1.0-2.5)

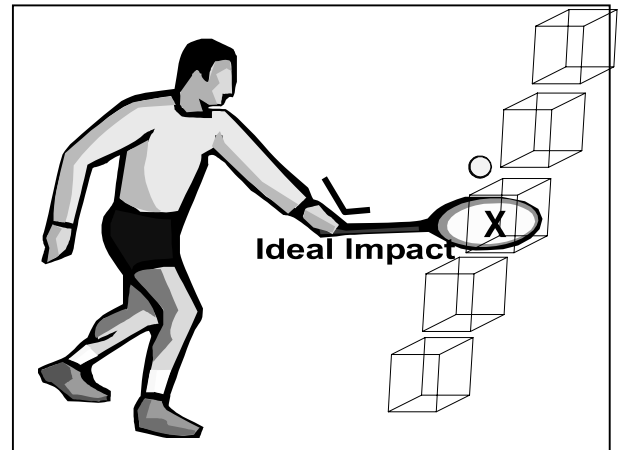
Imagine a 3 dimensional box floating about waist level, a comfortable distance from your body, and slightly closer to the net than your front hip. This is your 'ideal' impact point. In a rally (When players are exchanging the ball at a controlled speed over the net) the goal is to organize your body around the oncoming ball in order to have it bounce and pass through this 'box'. We will call this your "Ball Control Box".

Attempt to contact the ball with a firm grip and your wrist slightly 'laid back' (an "L" shape created between your wrist and forearm)

For the Intermediate player...(Tennis Rating 3.0-4.5)

This 'ideal' Ball Control Box must be modified for the height of the ball. The higher the ball the further from your body 'ideal' becomes. The lower the ball the closer (see illustration). Any impact between shoulder height and above knee height is acceptable. Shoulder height balls can be impacted with your arm at full extension away from your body. Balls below waist level can be impacted much nearer.

Always attempt to contact at waist level if possible, adapt only when forced. The exception would be to take the ball at shoulder height to attack or when moving back would take you too close to the back fence. Remember to, impact 'in the box'.



~~Court~~ ~~Home work~~

Beginner: Rally with a partner at a short distance (12-16 feet apart). Vividly imagine (visualize) your "box" and say "YES" if you impact the ball in the box with the laid back wrist ("L" shape). Every 10 successful attempts, players move back 2 steps. When both players have reached the baseline, the game is over.

Intermediate: Player "A" starts each rally with a difficult shot, a high ball (maybe with topspin) a very wide ball, a short & low ball etc. Focus on impacting in the 'Box' and play out the point. Winning player starts the next point and feeds the difficult ball. First player to 10 wins.