

## Developing a relationship: You and the ball (part 6)

*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.*

### VOLLEY 'BOX'

**For the Beginner...** (Play Tennis rating 1.0-2.5)

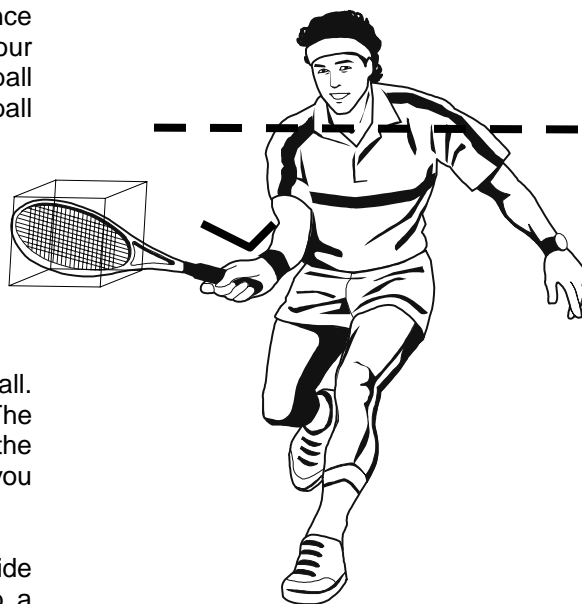
When in the mid-court or at net, it is more effective to volley (take the ball in the air before it bounces) than to move back and let it bounce. The 'ideal' impact point on a volley is created by imagining a 3 dimensional box floating about shoulder level, a comfortable distance from your body, and slightly closer to the net than the rest of your body. When at the net, organize your body around the oncoming ball in order to have it pass through this "Ball Control Box" before the ball bounces.

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...** (Play 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. It is important to 'feel' the ball. Keep the muscle tension in your arm low. The laid back wrist should allow you to 'absorb' the impact of the ball just like catching a ball.

For volleys further from the net, a slightly later impact (back beside your shoulder) will allow you to 'sweep' the ball deep to set up a putaway. When closer to the net, volley with the hand and the elbow to add power and 'punch' the ball for a putaway.



### ~~Court~~ Home work

**Beginner:** Start with partners halfway between the net and the serviceline across the net from each other. To train making a quick decision, call out "bounce" before the ball hits the ground. Take the ball after it bounces if the landing point is in between you and the net. Call out "Volley", if you anticipate the landing point will be at your feet or behind, and intercept the ball in the air. Attempt to impact in your "Ball Control Box" with a laid back wrist every time. Groundstrokes at waist level, volleys at shoulder level. Every time you exchange the ball 6 times with your partner, they move back 2 steps. When your partner reaches the baseline, switch roles.

**Intermediate:** Player "A" starts at  $\frac{3}{4}$  court with a 'friendly' shot to Player "B" and comes to the net. Player "B" tries to keep the ball low on the first shot and the point begins. The goal is for Player "A" to set up a 1<sup>st</sup> volley and finish the point within the next 2 shots. Player "B" cannot lob. First player to 5 points wins. Switch roles.