

THE CHESS GAME OF TENNIS

Daniel L. Rosenbaum

Some say that tennis is like chess. Players must organize a game plan, program how to begin a match, have in mind and do the perceived necessary adaptations during the game. This way, establish how to play and try to impose it on their opponents in order to increase the chances of victory.

Tennis is a making-decisions game. During the points, there is no much time to make them. Once the speed of the ball is higher and shortens the reaction time, it is important to develop the players' anticipation skills. Players must think on their match plays before they start them, organize the strokes sequences in advance considering the possible variations and changes to which must be ready to react. Nevertheless, each situation offers some margin of time to take decisions, but not enough to hesitate and change the idea at the last moment.

Players should learn to take decisions at the moments they generally "are not" playing the points. During the training sessions, they practice what to decide in all those specific situations: before they start the matches, they prepare a general plan; when they change ends, they decide the next move for the next games; before each point, they program and rehearse mentally the decided match play (for the first and second service as well as for the first and second service returns); and after each point, they evaluate and review their decision and actions. Good players know how to play the "non-hitting" moments.

Increasing their tactical knowledge and technical skills, the players are capable to build better possibilities of reaction.

As long as become more experienced and recognize the situations where usually find themselves, they interpret the possibilities of their opponents and verify their own options in order to know which one will choose conveniently.

TO ANTICIPATE = TO TAKE BEFORE

Makes part of the Tactics – Requires perception abilities

By perception:

- Technical messages of the opponent: (gestures / position of the body and racket / distance and height of the ball in relation to the body)
- Situational (position in court of both / stroke that determines the possibilities of the opponent / score / emotional state)

By study:

- Historic (previous matches / during the match)
- Information (locker room / scouts / coach)

By risk:

- Guess
- Bluff

TOTAL – The player knows how the opponent will play (less used)

PARTIAL – The player knows how the opponent will not play and eliminates alternatives (more used)

ANTICIPATION

- Recognizing tendencies
- Programming tendencies
- Programming tendencies to recognized tendencies

Tactical aspects

- The stroke determines the time and place of recovery and the opponent's possibilities
- Angles theory
- Stop before the opponent hits the ball (split-step / positioning)
- Attack opening the court and shortening the time (down the line / angles / fast balls)
- Defend closing the court and increasing the time (cross court / high and slow balls)

Technical aspects

- Split-Step / Turning unity – prepare the stroke before running to the ball
- Aggressive footwork / cut angles moving towards the ball
- Hit before the opponent stops - get him out of balance and or out from his ideal positioning / shorten his reaction time, reading and reacting possibilities.
- "BOUNCE – HIT, BOUNCE – SPLIT"

ADVANCED PLAYERS SHOW GREAT ANTICIPATION SKILLS.

AS MORE DEVELOPED ARE THE ANTICIPATION SKILLS, THE MORE ADVANCED ARE THE PLAYERS.

ANTICIPATION GAMES – RECOGNIZING AND PROGRAMMING TENDENCIES

1) Based on feedings from the basket.

a) Discover the clues: how was the sequence of the varied feedings?

Ex: three balls to the left, one to the right

- Progress with sequences that are more complex.

- The players themselves feed and choose their own sequences.

b) React with different ways to different feedings. The tasks are defined but the feedings are aleatory.

Ex 1: for the feeding after bounce the player must go forward and volley, for the feeding from air the player must let the ball bounce and hit a groundstroke.

Ex 2: for the sliced feeding the player must go forward and volley, for the lifted feeding the player must let the ball bounce and hit a sliced groundstroke.

Ex 3: for the feeding that bounces in the service area the player must hit a grand stroke, for the feeding that does not bounce in the service area the player must go forward and volley.

Ex 4: on doubles, the server volleys down the line the high return and crosscourt the low one.

c) React in different ways for the same feeding. The player cannot repeat the same stroke.

Ex 1: hitting different strokes

Ex 2: hitting different trajectories (direction, heights, depth, speed, spin)

Ex 3: hitting at different heights of the trajectory (volley, half volley, on the rise, on the descent)

Ex 4: mixed

Goals: Reading skills, reaction and programming.

2) Players exchange balls saying how they receive the ball.

Ex 1: direction – to the FH or BH

Ex 2: height – high or low

Ex 3: depth – short or long

Ex 4: spin – slice or topspin

Ex 5: pace – slow or fast

Ex 6: mixed – FH high, BH deep...

a) Before they hit

b) Before the bounce

c) Before the ball passes the net

d) Before the partner hits

Variation: coach feeds from the basket

3) Players say how they hit the ball

4) Mixed. Players say how they receive and hit the balls.

Goals: Reading skills, reaction and programming.

5) "Burnings". Players try to hit their mates with balls. Use bigger, lighter, softer plastic balls.

Ex 1: Players placed in a big circle try to "burn" the feet of the one in the middle who tries to dodge from the balls.

Ex 2: Two groups of players, each one placed at the alleys, try to "burn" with many balls a third group of players who tries to dodge from the balls inside the single court.

Ex 3: "Where is Wally?" The player will be "burned" when a player of the group touches his body with the ball. The players cannot run holding the ball and must throw from hand to hand.

Goals: Speed reaction, teamwork, "future point", reading-messages, dodging, hiding.

6) Different balls. Playing with many types of balls. Weights, bounces, sizes, qualities.

Goals: Anticipation to the different behaviors of the ball making the necessary adjustments.

7) Two balls simultaneously. Stop & go or straight.

Goals: Shortening the time reaction, control and prediction of the projection, interpretation of the partner's possibilities, synchronism, restore the rhythm.

8) Ping-pong doubles. Players alternate and each once hits only once on his turn.

Goals: Interpretation of the partner's stroke to deduce the opponents' possibilities and to program his own positioning, to hit in order to favor the future action of his partner, improve speed reaction.

9) "Stop & Go". The two-touches game. Players stop the ball with the racket and hit after the bounce.

Ex 1: Minitennis. Forbidden aggressive, forbidden volley, second touch only volley, stops with one hand and hits with the other...

Ex 2: Full court

Ex 3: Doubles. One player stops and the other hits. Forbidden smash. Allowed smash. Only backhand...

Goals: Angles theory. Positioning. Peripheral vision. Reading the opponent's messages. Camouflage.

10) Attack x defense or "penalties decision". One player attacks with winners feeding to himself from the service line having five attempts. The other player tries to defend being enough:

a) Moving to ball

b) Intercepting the ball

c) Returning the ball

Variations:

- Specific strokes (only FH, only BH, smash, drop-shot allowed / not allowed)

- Toss with bounce, toss without bounce

- Coach feeds from the basket

- Size of the court and balls can be adapted

Goals: Reading and interpretation of the gestures and technical messages, tendencies study. Creation and change of tendency.

11) Defense x attack. The defending player starts the point hitting the ball from a defensive position in court (back at one corner of the court). The attacking player can position himself any place in the court (observe if he is near the net). Five attempts.

Goals: Building time to recovery, induction and interpretation of the opponent options in order to program the next position in court and next stroke. Creation and change of tendencies.

12) Only ACE. The player serves next to the net trying to hit aces. Ten attempts.

a) The returner wins the point if only turns to the correct side.

b) The returner wins the point if touches the ball.

c) The returner wins the point if returns the ball.

Goals: Reading of gestures, speed reaction, study of habits, induction, camouflage.

13) "Where is Wally?" The coach feeds from the basket. Player A must choose one side of the court (right or left) to position himself just before player B hits the ball. Player B, by his side, will try to hit to the empty side to win the point. If not, they play until the end of the point. Seven attempts

a) Passing: Player A volleys and chooses one side.

b) Volleying: Player A hits gently to the net player and chooses one side.

c) Smash: Player A lobs and chooses one side.

d) Defending from the base line: Player A hits a short ball and chooses one side.

d) Variations: while coach feeds to Player B, Player A chooses one side.

Goals: Positioning, perception, induction, camouflage, bluff. Study of habits.

14) Obligatory games. Only possible / not possible. Games in half court, crosscourt or down the line. Players can only play with a pre established stroke. Otherwise, lose the point.

Ex 1: Only deep, only topspin, only slice, slice x topspin

Ex 2: BH x FH

Ex 3: BH slice x FH topspin

Ex 4: Alternating strokes (FH/BH, Ground stroke/volley, slice/topspin)

Ex 5: Forbidden volley

Ex 6: Only volley x only ground strokes, only volley

Ex 7: Full court. Obligatory directions (crosscourt x down the line, crosscourt X free)

Goals: Building time to recovery, programming and building the next stroke, difficult the opponent's obligatory stroke.

15) Obligatory match plays. Players play match plays pre-established by themselves or by the coach.

Ex 1: Serve and volley

Ex 2: Return and volley

Ex 3: Wide service, next stroke to the empty corner

Ex 4: FH return of service

Ex 5: Return of service (server comes to the net) makes the net player volley and after lobs him

Ex 6: Only crossing, first opportunity comes to the net with a down the line approach.

Ex 7: The player must say how will play

a) How will serve

b) How will return

c) Options for the first and second service and next shots

d) Same to return

Ask the player to explain the choices

Goals: Programing the match plays and the possible variations, concentration to perform the plan, programing to react to the match play of the opponent known in advance.

Ex 8: The player must win the point with three strokes.

Ex 9: Attack from the base line. Players create attack situations when hitting first service and second service return. Coach can guide the defense player allowing him to hit only sliced strokes.

Goals: Programing and building attack match plays.

16) Doubles exercises. Players program match plays.

Ex 1: Server and net player decide the service direction and the net player roll.

Ex 2: Returner and net player decide the return direction and the net player roll.

Goals: Programing match plays, communication on doubles

17) Unknown service returns. Coach serves from the service line. Two players return, each one from his side.

Ex 1: Players do not know the directions of the service.

Ex 2: Players do not know which of them will return.

Ex 3: Two players in front of the returners volley the returns.

The service direction can be established previously and known by the players or can be totally aleatory.

Goals: Reading, speed reaction, technical elements (split step, turning unity, body weight transfer).

18) Playing games or matches with established game styles by themselves or by the coach. Known or unknown to the opponent. If unknown, check if the opponent finds it out. If known, check how the opponent tries to neutralize it.

Goals: Programing in advance the respective match plays for each style. Opponent adaptation.

19) Playing single and double matches against different opponents.

Goals: Getting match experience, apply game styles, study their opponents' game and play conveniently against.

We can anticipate absolutely sure that these practices will make the players think and develop their tennis understanding, have a lot of fun and improve their game level. Enjoy the practice!