

Ball Control Basics

"Making the little round fuzzy ball do what you want is what tennis is all about". Controlling the ball is how players create and solve tactical problems on court. To master tennis, players must learn to receive and send variations of the 5 Ball Control characteristics (Height, Direction, Distance, Speed, and Spin)

HEIGHT CONTROL ON VOLLEYS

Sending different Heights

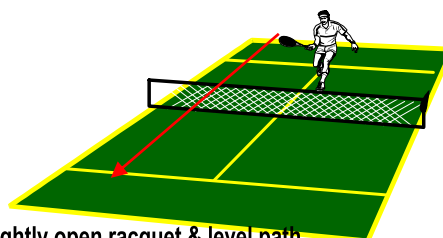
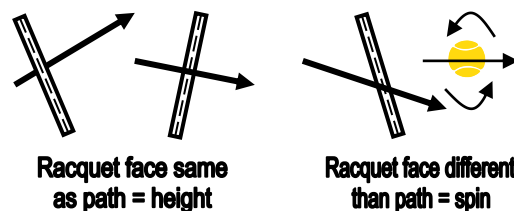
Just like on the groundstrokes, the determining factors for controlling height on volleys are what I call the PAS Principles. The **Path** of the racquet through the impact (high to low, level, low to high). The **Angle** of the racquet (the racquet face being 'open' to the sky, vertical, or 'closed'), and the **Speed** of the racquet (The racquet accelerating, maintaining speed, or decelerating).

When the racquet angle is the same as the path, you get direct height control. When the racquet angle is different from the path, spin results. It is the specific combination of PAS elements that create a height. For example, for a level volley with some backspin, "open" the racquet angle to the sky slightly and level out the racquet path.

Receiving different Heights

The goal is to take the volley higher than the net if possible. Prepare the racquet to match the height of the ball received. Receiving a high ball requires a high preparation, a low preparation helps when receiving a low ball. On volleys, spread out your feet to lower and move forward rather than just, 'bending your knees'.

TACTICAL CONNECTIONS: Correctly determining to be on offence, defense or neutral based on the height of the ball received is the biggest challenge on volleys.



Slightly open racquet & level path makes a level volley with underspin



Kinesthetic Key (Key feeling when doing it)

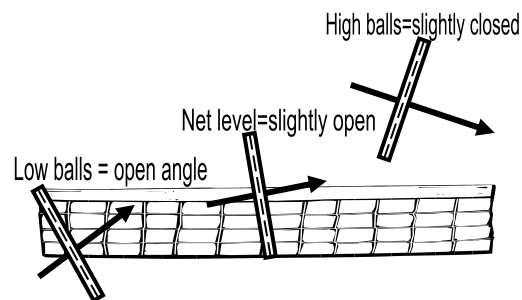
For volleys, receiving different height volleys require different feelings:

"Catch & Carry": Open the face with a longer, slightly upward racquet path to lift it over the net for low or net level balls.

"Touch" Absorb the speed for a drop volley on low or net level balls.

"Block": Quickly set the racquet up and freeze it in place to receive hard shots (use their power) on net level and shots that are received just above the net.

"Punch": Close the face a little with a downward path and a short, fast action to attack with power on higher balls.



Racquet angle in relation to height of ball received to the net

~~Home-work~~ Court

Practice Activity: 'Sending & Receiving different Heights': This game is called, **"Cat & Mouse"**. Players start at the servicelines and play on one half of the court (doubles sideline to centre line). The goal is to move in and take the ball higher than the net for a put-away volley (become a 'Cat'). To start, Player #1 feeds the ball to Player #2 low to their feet (making them a 'mouse'). If Player #2 pops the ball up, Player #1 can become a cat. The mouse must place the ball low to the feet of the other player to neutralize them and make them into a mouse as well. Once the game begins, any player can be a mouse or a cat. The court does extend to the baseline, so if a cat comes too close to the net, the opponent can become a 'bird' and lob it over the cat's head to get out of trouble. Great drill for volley decision-making.