PLAYER SOLUTIONS

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TIMING IS EVERYTHING

The moment the ball contacts the strings makes or breaks every shot in tennis. Getting that impact right is called 'timing' and is defined as: '***A centered impact, in an optimal relationship to your body, tailored for the intended shot.***' All other techniques in tennis revolve around timing. Top players sacrifice their stroke for their timing, not sacrifice their timing for the 'form' of their stroke. The core 'tactical mission' in tennis is to break your opponent's timing and prevent them from breaking yours.

Developing a relationship: You and your Impact Point

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, control, and a host of other critical elements.

GROUNDSTROKE IMPACT POINT

Establishing your 'Ball Control Box'

Imagine a 3 dimensional box floating in space (See photo). This is your 'Ball Control Box'. The optimal impact point for a groundstroke is defined on 3 'planes':

- **How high compared to your body (e.g. Waist Level)**
- **How far from your body (e.g. Comfortable distance from your body)**
- **How far in front-back (e.g. Slightly closer to the net than your front hip)**

The goal on every shot is to organize your body around the oncoming ball in order to have it bounce and pass through this 'box'. Attempt to contact the ball in the box with a firm grip and your wrist slightly 'laid back' (an "L" shape created between your wrist and forearm)

Adapting your 'Box'

This 'optimal' Ball Control Box must be modified for the height of the ball. The higher the ball, the further from your body and out front 'optimal' becomes. The lower the ball, the closer and further back (see illustration). 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. Any impact between shoulder height and above knee height is acceptable.

'Fight for your impact' by adjusting around the oncoming ball to contact at the optimal spot if possible. Adapt only when forced. Even an impact a few centimeters off can dramatically affect the potential power generated as the whole body movement unfolds though the impact.

~~Home~~ Court work

Practice Activity: 'Establish your timing': Rally with a partner cooperatively at a short distance (service line to service line). 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 (10 'yeses'), players move back 2 steps. When both players reach the baseline and achieve a rally of 6, the game is over.

Practice Activity: 'Timing Buster': Player "A" starts a rally with a difficult shot to 'break' player B's timing (e.g. 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. The goal is to break each other's timing. Winning player starts the next point and gets to feed the 'Timing Buster' ball. First player to 10 wins.