PLAYER SOLUTIONS

*Created by **Wayne Elderton**, a Tennis Canada Level 4 Coach. Head Coach-Developer for Tennis Canada Coaching Certification in BC and Tennis Director of the North Vancouver Tennis Centre.*
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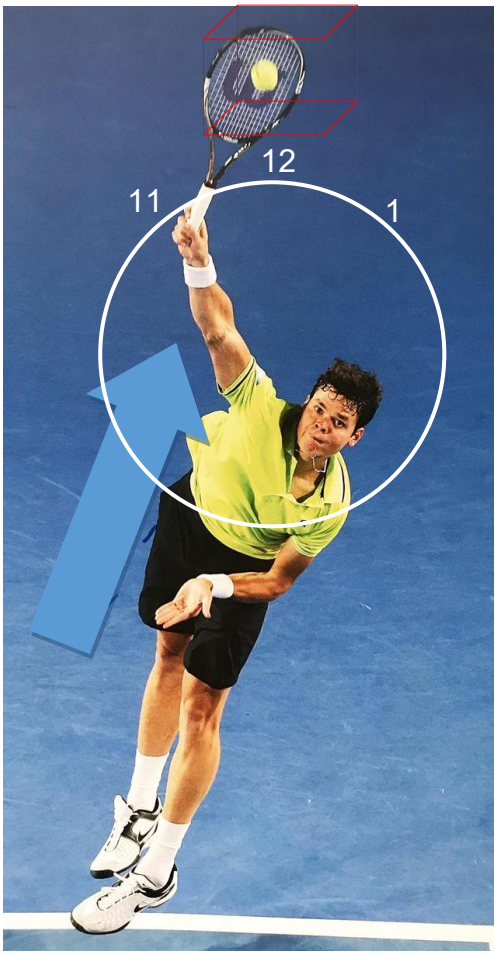
TIMING IS EVERYTHING

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.



SERVE IMPACT POINT

Establishing your 'Ball Control Box'
Imagine a 3 dimensional box floating in space (see photo) as high as you can reach with your racquet and slightly closer to the net than your head. This is your 'ideal' serve impact point. Every point in tennis starts with a serve. The serve starts with a good service toss which lifts the ball into place just above your Ball Control box (approximately 30 centimeters) so you can contact it in the box at full upward extension, at about 12 o'clock (if you were standing in a clock face).

Timing and power
The purpose of serving overhand (rather than underhand) is to gain potential to generate power. The timing of your impact can make or break your serve power.

To achieve a more powerful serve, use a feeling of 'letting go' with an overhead throwing action (Imagine throwing the face of your racquet at the ball when it is sitting in your box). It should feel like quick 'hit' rather than a 'hard push'.

Timing and placement
The timing of the serve impact is important for placing the serve. Your racquet angle at impact is the key determining factor controlling where the ball goes. It is important to 'feel' the racquet angle at impact and relate that to the placement.

Court ~~Home~~ work

Practice Activity: 'Timing & Placement': Place a target area 1 racquet wide and 1 racquet long into both corners of the Ad service box. Give yourself 1 point for a 'clean' hit of the ball in your serve Ball Control Box (only if it goes into the appropriate target area). Start at the service line. After 10 points, move to ¾ court and play again. Then, play from the baseline. The practice activity is over when you have accumulated 10 points at the baseline. After playing from the Ad side, play from the Deuce side. The goal is to 'feel' the timing of your racquet angle at impact and directly connect that to the target you are aiming for.

Practice Activity: Timing & Power: For power, you want to feel your racquet is at maximum speed at impact. This is a 'hit' feeling. If the speed feels 'after' the impact, that is more of a 'push'. Serve and measure where the 2nd bounce lands (e.g. just past the baseline, hitting the back fence, etc.). See if you can make the second bounce go further by experimenting with where the maximum speed occurs, and timing it to be at the impact.