

Secrets

from the Pro Tour

Stoke Mechanics= Physics

Lots of players and coaches try to emulate what the best players in the world are doing. So if they are doing it, it must be right. Right? True, there are many things that world-class players do correctly. But there are things that they do that are not so 'correct'. They too have weaknesses that a trained eye can see.

In tennis for example, it was widely known that women's pro Gabriella Sabatini's backswing was way too big and long. It hindered her on the longer baseline rallies. Boris Becker's serve toss was too high. It made him inconsistent in less-than-perfect weather. But in spite of these mechanical flaws, they were great players.

In old school racquetball, many players left their feet as they hit the ball, to generate more power. But today's game is faster, with more powerful equipment. Players must remain solid and balanced as they contact the ball, to be ready for their opponent's shot because it will be coming back at them much quicker. The physics of leaving your feet to get a few more miles per hour made sense back then, but now it would be silly.

As you watch the best players in the world, you'll see a few common principles in their stroke mechanics...a balanced base, flat swing and lateral rotation. Look for more details about this topic in the next magazine.

Secret # 24

Shorten Your Stroke in Front Court:

We've all been taught to get square to the side wall as we hit a shot, but what if you don't have time? You don't want to miss an offensive opportunity. When you are in the frontcourt, and a ball is coming at you, sometimes you don't have time to step, get square and follow through like you can on a set up shot. If you tried, you would be late coming through with the racquet, and your intended down-the-line pass or kill, will invariably hit the side wall, forcing you to vacate center court, while your opponent steps in and ends the rally. What to do? This is the time to use a short stroke or a 'snap' stroke.

Here's how. You will drop your hips. (Refer to the last 37 Secrets Installment). Your feet will stay facing the front wall, slightly staggered. The racquet tip must not drop AT ALL, and keep the butt of the racquet pointed down to the floor. You will use only your torso, hips and shoulders to 'snap' the racquet to the ball. It's a very compact stroke. It works great for a re-kill or angle pass from the frontcourt. You won't have much of a follow through, so you will be ready for the next shot, if your opponent is so lucky.