

Proper position a must Backhand shots can be winners

Control center court and you control the game.

True, it's an old racquetball adage, but it couldn't be more accurate. And one of the best ways to control center court is with the backhand pass.

Good passing shots in general — those that fly by your opponent like a runaway rocket — are one of the game's most effective offensive weapons. A pass can be hit from any height, any velocity, and from anywhere on the court.

By going down the line or cross-court with the backhand, you can take your opponent away from center court. You can play "king of the hill" and, more often than not, you'll come home with the crown.

The backhand pass usually arises out of a serious situation: a hard drive or a soft lob deep into the backhand corner.

NOT TOO MANY players can kill out of that spot. Others, including myself, find it just too defensive to go to the ceiling.

That leaves two alternatives: down-the-line pass or cross-court pass. Either can be effective because, unlike a kill shot, with a backhand pass there's no danger of skipping the ball into the



racquetball
Mike Yellen

floor on the way to the front wall.

Again, it's important to remember that good passing shots, whether hit on purpose or just as a missed kill attempt, will determine solid center court play.

To hit a good backhand pass, the angle of the body makes all the difference. To go down the line, the body is facing the side wall. Since I'm right-handed, I face the left wall, my feet perpendicular to the side wall.

That's the way you want to make contact — off the front foot, striding into the front wall, hitting up and down the left wall without the ball hitting the side.

TWO THINGS to remember are, first, keep the ball down low (waist high or lower) so it doesn't rebound off the back wall and, second, wall away. Hit the ball as hard as you can, careful

to keep the first bounce near midcourt so the second comes before the back wall.

When going cross-court with the backhand pass, the right foot pulls back so that the tips of your toes would point to the center of the front wall. The objective is to drive the ball as hard as you can, deep into the right-hand corner. Again, keep the ball low and watch the angle of your stroke.

There is one problem with this shot: If you don't hit the angle just right, the ball will rebound off the back or side

wall and flop into center court.

So do your geometry homework. If you want the ball to travel down the left line, go a couple of feet right of the left corner. If you hit just right of center, the ball will rebound off the right side wall into the backcourt. And if you hit dead center, the ball will high-tail it to the back right corner — where it belongs.

MY EKTELON teammate, Dave Peck, and I have had a few "conversations" on whether to use the cross-court backhand pass. Dave is dead set against it.

"Pops out into the middle for a plum," he says.

I say it can be terrific in some circumstances, especially when your opponent is backing up to his left in anticipation of your shot. Ripping it across court will catch him leaning the wrong way.

LIT Fun-Run winners

LIT FUN RUN

Following are the top 100 finishers in each of the nine competitive divisions of the Lawrence Institute of Technology's third-annual 10-kilometer Fun Run held April 24 on LIT's Southfield campus.

MEV'S DIVISIONS

11-17 — 1. Steve Gurney, 17 years old, Royal Oak, 37:15; 2. Andre Humes, 16, Detroit, 37:35. 18-24 — 1. Andy Skodion, 21, Warren, 34:44; 2. Tim Pausak, 20, Southfield, 35:02; 26-35 — 1. Donald Andersen, 28, Garden City, 31:22; 2. Ted

Farmer, 26, Detroit, 32:36; 36-45 — 1. Cecil Weiss, 39, Detroit, 33:30; 2. Dave Emery, 42, Farmington Hills, 35:30; OVER 46 — 1. George Hugiartia, 56, Southfield, 38:00; 2. Ivo Baras, 50, Windsor, Ont., 38:37.

WOMEN'S DIVISIONS

18-25 — 1. Kim Bruce, 19, Dearborn, 40:56; 2. Janice Morgan, 25, Flat Rock, 41:09; 26-35 — 1. Valerie Johnson, 27, Southfield, 41:50; 2. Connie Kinkel, 24, Northville, 44:36; 36-45 — Bonnie Rose Easley, 38, Farmington, 43:52; 2. Rebecca Belford Rank, 36, Birmingham, 47:32; OVER 46 — Nina Derda, 46, Wyandotte, 55:14.



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