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Beginning (STAC 146) and Intermediate (STAC 147) Racquetball

## CLASS SYLLABUS

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WHAT IS IN THIS PACKET?

This packet contains the following important information about the Beginning (STAC 146) and Intermediate (STAC 147) Racquetball classes:

- **Class Syllabus**—Most of the class information you need is included in this packet. The information will be reviewed by your instructor during the first few days of class. A class syllabus may not be handed out in class but is available on-line on the Student Wellness web site:

  http://studentwellness.byu.edu

- **Instructional DVD**—One limitation in teaching racquetball is that the instructor can give personal instruction to only a few students each class period. Due to these limitations, an instructional DVD is provided in this packet. The instructional DVD included in this packet is an important part of the class and your instruction. You can view the instructional DVD at your convenience on a computer or a home DVD player. You can watch instructions and demonstrations multiple times outside of class.

- **Written Instructional Material**—This packet includes instructional material that would typically be found in a racquetball textbook. The material is designed to be a companion to the instructional DVD and class instruction. The written instructional material in the packet includes information about rules, definitions, descriptions of offensive and defensive shots, game strategies, player classifications, and racquet and string information. There is some material that is not included in the written packet because it is included in the instructional DVD.

- **Quiz / Exam**—As in all activity classes, you will be required to pass a written exam in order to pass this class. STAC 146 and 147 have different exams. If you are enrolled in either STAC 146 or 147 for the second time, you must take the exam again. The exam is available at the Testing Center. Information about when to take the exam is available on the web student wellness website and will be announced by your instructor.

  http://studentwellness.byu.edu

ABOUT THE CLASS

HOW TO REACH YOUR INSTRUCTOR

The racquetball classes at BYU are taught by students and faculty. Your instructor will provide you with any appropriate contact information, such as office location, office hours, office phone, and an email address. You can also obtain this information at the Student Wellness office in 203 RB. If you have questions about your particular class, contact your instructor. If you have questions about the racquetball program, contact the Student Wellness office in 203 RB.

COURSE MATERIALS YOU WILL NEED

This packet includes a Wall-to-Wall Racquetball instructional DVD. The DVD, together with the information in this packet are all the course materials that you will need. The packet and the DVD are required materials for both the beginning and intermediate racquetball classes. If you have a packet and DVD from taking either of these two classes previously, you may use them again for this class. You are responsible for watching the instructional DVD and studying the information included in this pack. The exam for this class will include questions about information included in this packet and the DVD. Due to the time and logistical constrains of the class, not all of the information included in this packet will be discussed in your class.

CLASS EXPECTATIONS

You are expected to

- come to class on time every day (see “attendance policy”) dressed in approved attire (see “Dress and Grooming Standards and Academic Honesty”).

- demonstrate good sportsmanship while participating in class activities described by your instructor.

- complete and pass the required exam in the Testing Center with a score of at least 75%.

- be safe and have fun.
**CLASS PERIODS**

Classes begin 5 min after the hour. If you have a class immediately following your racquetball class, you may leave class anytime following the first bell at 40 min past the hour; otherwise, you are expected to stay until the second bell (50 min past the hour). If there are no classes following your class, you may continue to play longer.

**WHAT YOU SHOULD ALREADY KNOW**

If you are taking beginning racquetball, no prior racquetball experience is required. If you are taking intermediate racquetball, you are expected to have completed the beginning racquetball class, or have sufficient instruction and experience in playing racquetball. If you are in the intermediate class, you should be familiar with most of the rules, be able to serve 2-3 serves and several variations of each, know and be able to play at least two offensive shots and two defensive shots, and know some basic offensive and defensive strategies.

**WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THIS COURSE**

You will gain a greater appreciation for the game of racquetball as a fun lifetime recreational or competitive sport. You should be able to demonstrate:

1. an understanding of safety precautions, rules, and etiquette of singles and doubles games of racquetball.

2. proper form and technique equivalent to at least a level D or C (beginning class) or C or B (intermediate class) in the following:
   a. **Serves.** Variations of lob, Z, and drive serves.
   b. **Offensive Shots.** Variations of passing and pinch shots.
   c. **Defensive Shots.** Ceiling, around-the-world, lob, high Z, and into-back wall shots.
   d. **Offensive and Defensive Strategies.**
   e. **Practice Drills.** Offensive and defensive shot drills.

**REQUIRED EQUIPMENT**

**EYE PROTECTION.** Protective eyewear is **required** for all racquetball classes. Protective eyewear cannot be checked out from the men’s or women’s issue rooms. You may purchase your own protective eyewear at the BYU bookstore or at a local or on-line sports store of your choice. Racquetball eyewear costs between $10 and $30. If you wear prescription glasses, you must wear protective eyewear that fits over your prescription glasses. You will have until the second week of class to purchase your protective eyewear. If you do not have your protective eyewear by the second week of class, you will not be allowed to play racquetball during class time. The first time you come to class without protective eyewear, you will be able to attend instruction with the class but will not be allowed to play racquetball. The second and subsequent times you come to class without protective eyewear, you will be able to attend class instruction but will not be able to play racquetball AND will be marked as absent. These absences affect one’s grade just as any other absence. If you are unable to comply with this safety policy, you should consider dropping the class.

**RACQUETBALL RACQUET, BALL, GLOVE AND SHOES.**

You must have your own racquetball racquet. The racquet must have a wrist cord which must be worn when playing racquetball. A racquet can be purchased at the BYU bookstore or at a local or on-line sports store. Racquets are not available for check-out from the locker rooms. You must bring a racquet to class starting on the second day of class.

The locker rooms generally do not have a sufficient supply of racquetballs to supply every student. Your instructor may bring extra racquetballs to class. You are encouraged to purchase a can of racquetballs for class use. You are responsible for equipment brought to class. Do not leave your racquet or racquetballs in the play area following class.

Racquetball gloves improve a player’s grip of the racquet, especially when the hand becomes sweaty. Racquetball gloves are not required. You may purchase racquetball gloves at the BYU bookstore or at a local or on-line sports store of their choice. Racquetball gloves cost between $10 and $30.
Shoes must be worn at all times during class. Although special racquetball shoes are available from most racquetball manufacturers (e.g., Wilson, Head, Ektelon), racquetball shoes are not required for class. You must wear a safe type of gym shoe to class. Flip flops, sandals or any form of casual or dress shoes are not allowed. You are not allowed to play bare foot. Soles of gym shoes should preferably be non-marking.

**FOR YOUR SAFETY**

Safety is of primary concern in racquetball classes. For this reason, protective eyewear and wrist straps are required in all racquetball classes. In addition, to assure the safety of all students, racquetball classes will adhere to the following safety precautions.

**Calling Hinders**—All players should call all “hinders” that prevent a player from seeing the ball, getting to the ball, or playing the ball safely. When a hinder occurs, stop play immediately, call a hinder, and replay the rally. The different types of hinders are discussed in this packet, in the instructional DVD, and by your instructor.

**Opening doors**—When entering a court, first look into the door window. If players are in the court, wait for play to stop then blink one light switch to gain the attention of the players in the court. Then enter when it is safe to do so.

**Body Position**—Always maintain the proper ready and hitting positions. Never turn to face the back wall while your opponent is behind you hitting. Face the front wall or one of the side walls. Look over your shoulder to see your opponent behind you.

**GRADING CRITERIA**

This activity class is a PASS/FAIL class. To pass the class, you must (1) attend class at least 80% of the class periods, and (2) pass the exam with a score of at least 75%. A failing grade will be given if one or both of these requirements are not met. You should confirm your attendance record with the instructor on a regular basis throughout the semester. There are no extra-credit options for this class.

**ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Attendance will be taken most if not all class periods. If you attend class less than 80% of the time, you will receive a failing grade for the class. You cannot pass the class if you exceed five hours (class periods) of missed class. In classes that meet for one hour, twice per week during the Fall and Winter Semesters, or meet for one hour, four days per week during the Spring or Summer terms, having six absences will result in a failing grade. The purpose of allowing five absences is to accommodate personal matters, illness, injury, or University business. There are no make-ups for missed classes.

**QUIZ / EXAM POLICY**

To pass this class, you must take and pass the exam with a score of at least 75%. The exam is available in the Testing Center. The exam must be completed by the posted deadline; if it is not, you will be counted absent each day until the test is taken. The due date for completing the exam will be announced by your instructor and is posted on the Student Wellness Web site:

http://studentwellness.byu.edu

The exam will cover materials taught and/or referred to in class and/or included in this packet and DVD. You may retake the exam any number of times if you do not pass the exam and need to retake the exam to pass the class. Retakes are available for a $5.00 fee. A 24-hour period is required between each retake. If you fail the exam on the last day of classes, you cannot take the exam again.

**SKILLS ASSESSMENT**

Although every student varies in their personal level of play, skill and ability development is expected during this course. Evaluation of skills is part of the learning process. Your instructor will evaluate your playing skills by observing your ability to perform drills, observing a game, or by playing a game with you and providing instructional feedback. Your instructor may include a self-evaluation of skills and/or have you evaluate skills of another student as a class assignment.
**Practice Sheets**

Practicing drills is necessary for the improvement of racquetball skills. Your instructor may provide a Practice Sheet as part of the class instruction. The Practice Sheet is a list of practice drills listed in order of difficulty and proper skill development. Practice Sheets provide structure and proper sequence to your daily practice. Your instructor will demonstrate and explain each of the drills. Practice drills can be completed during class or before or after class during free play. Instructions for completing the practice drills are provided on the Practice Sheet.

**Use of BYU Equipment and Facilities**

Inappropriate displays of anger, swearing, intentionally hitting a racquet against the wall or floor, kicking doors, or breaking lights are not appropriate during class or free play and should be reported to the class instructor or PE Services in 112 RB. Inappropriate use of BYU equipment and facilities may result in the loss of some privileges.

**Injuries**

Participation in this class includes some inherent risk of injury. For this reason, protective eyewear and wrist cords are required in class. In addition, you should follow the safety guidelines outlined above and any other safety instructions provided by their instructor. Every precaution should be taken to avoid injury. If an injury occurs during class, notify your instructor immediately. Extensive injuries requiring more than minor first aid may necessitate calling the BYU or community emergency medical technicians (EMT). You are responsible for the cost of any required medical care.

Injuries, whether they occur during or outside of class, which prevent participation in class may affect your grade. In such cases, you may enroll in STAC 102R for the remainder of the semester. Enrollment in STAC 102R provides a supervised exercise program while recovering from and rehabilitating an injury. Enrollment in STAC 102R counts toward the general education wellness requirement. Because of the attendance requirement of this class, you should notify your instructor immediately if you have been injured and are unable to participate in class. You should also contact the Student Wellness office in 203 Richards Building with questions about enrolling in STAC 102R. Delaying one’s enrollment in STAC 102R following an injury may result in a failing grade in this class.

Note that the attendance policy does not make exceptions for missing class due to illness. If you are ill and are unable to attend or participate in class, notify your instructor. Enrollment in STAC 102 is not designed to make-up absences due to illness (or any other reason). If you have excessive absences due to illness, you will receive a failing grade in the class.

**Dress & Grooming Standards and Academic Honesty**

You are expected to adhere to the Dress & Grooming Standards & the Academic Honesty Policy as described in the Undergraduate Catalog. Violations will be dealt with on an individual basis according to recommended University policy. During this activity class, you must wear modest clothing appropriate for physical activity and the sport of racquetball. T-shirts must be modest in length and have a normal short sleeve. Tank tops and sleeveless shirts are not permitted. T-shirts should also be modest in that logos, graphics, and text should not be distracting or offensive to the instructor or other students. Gym shorts should be modest in length. You may wear sweat pants. You cannot wear long pants, dress shorts, cargo shorts, cut-off jeans, etc.

**Preventing Sexual Harassment**

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity receiving federal funds. The act is intended to eliminate sex discrimination in education. Title IX covers discrimination in programs, admissions, activities, and student-to-student sexual harassment. BYU’s policy against sexual harassment extends not only to employees of the university but to students as well. If you encounter unlawful sexual harassment or gender-based discrimination, please talk to your professor or contact the following offices:

Equal Opportunity Office  422-5895
Honor Code Office   422-2847
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere that reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have a disability, which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the University Accessibility Center or the Equal Opportunity Office. Reasonable academic accommodations and services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the University Accessibility Center. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of disability, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures.

University Accessibility Center  (422-2767)
Equal Opportunity Office  (422-5895)
Getting Started

Welcome to the game of racquetball—a fun game that can be played with friends at a recreational level or a highly competitive sport played at the collegiate, professional, national, and international levels. In any case, it is a great form of physical activity and exercise. Learning how to play racquetball can lead to years of enjoyable physical activity, recreation, and sport.

As in other racquet sports, there are two basic swings: the forehand and backhand. The grip for the forehand and backhand are different. Gripping the racquet correctly is the first step in hitting the ball correctly. Gripping the racquet may seem intuitive but many first-time players grip the racquet incorrectly. An incorrect grip can adversely affect your swing and the way you hit the ball.

**THE FOREHAND GRIP**

Imagine that someone hands you the racquet, handle first, with the head of the racquet perpendicular to the floor. Grip the racquet with your dominant hand as if you were shaking hands with the racquet. If you are right handed, grip the racquet with your right hand; if you are left handed, grip the racquet with your left hand. The "V" formed between the thumb and index finger is placed in a comfortable position near the center of the handle (top figure of Figure 1.1) or top right edge (if you are right handed) or top left edge (if you are left handed). Wrap the thumb over the top of the handle and wrap the four fingers on the underside of the handle. Place the index finger in a “trigger” position (bottom figure of Figure 1.1). Do not extend the index finger along the side of the handle. The butt end of the handle should be just slightly tucked into the butt end of the hand so the little finger lies on the bottom edge of the butt end of the handle.

The correct forehand grip allows for the most wrist action which generates more power. Gripping the racquet too high on the handle reduces wrist action and power. Gripping the racquet too low on the handle (so the hand overhangs the handle) reduces grip strength and control.

**THE BACKHAND GRIP**

The backhand grip is a slight variation of the forehand grip. In order to contact the ball with the face of the racquet in the correct position, change the grip so the “V” in your hand is closer to the top left edge of the racquet handle (Figure 1.2) if you are right handed. If you are left handed, move the “V” of your hand closer to the top right edge.
THE READY POSITION

The ready position is a neutral athletic position. It is from this position that the serve is received. From the ready position, you can easily move to either a forehand or backhand hitting position.

To get in the ready position, face the front wall with your feet about shoulder width apart and pointing forward. The majority of your weight should be on the balls of your feet and your heels are just lightly touching the floor. Bend at the waist and the knees as if you are beginning to squat down to sit in a chair (Figure 1.3).

The racquet should be held in front of the body with the hand about waist height. The racquet is generally held in a loose forehand grip with the racquet head tilted up and perpendicular to the floor. This allows you to easily spin the racquet into the backhand grip if the serve is hit to your backhand side. If you are anticipating a serve to your backhand side, hold the racquet in a backhand grip. This will eliminate the need to spin your racquet into the backhand grip while moving into the hitting position.

The descriptions in the rest of this packet are for a right handed player. Movements of the left handed player will be the mirror image of those described for the right handed play-

THE FOREHAND SWING

There are four parts to swing: the hitting position, the step and swing, the contact zone, and the follow through (Figure 1.4). Successful execution of all four parts of the swing is required to hit the ball correctly, powerfully, and with control.

The first movement from the ready position is to reposition yourself so your body faces the side wall. Most, preferably all shots (forehand and backhand) will be hit while facing one of the side walls. Rarely will you hit shots while facing the front wall or back wall.

From the ready position, turn and take a small step with your right foot so your right foot points to the right side wall. Turn the rest of your body so it faces the right side wall while taking a step with your left foot so it also points to the right side wall. Your two feet should still be about shoulder width apart.
The Hitting Position. As you move from the ready position to facing the side wall, you will also begin moving the racquet back into the hitting position. Move the racquet from its ready position in a back and upward motion so the upper arm is near parallel to the floor, the elbow is almost shoulder height, the wrist is about head height, and the racquet head is about head height or higher. The wrist is cocked so the face of the racquet faces the right rear corner of the court. With the feet still square to the side wall the hips are slightly turned so the upper body faces the right rear corner of the court. This is the hitting position for the forehand. Once in the hitting position, you are ready to begin the forward motion of your swing. This involves a coordinated movement of a step, hip rotation, and an arm swing.

The Step and Swing. From the hitting position, step with the lead foot (if you are a right handed player, this will be your left foot) toward the front wall to take a slightly wider stance. The front foot should turn about 45-degrees so it points toward the right front corner. Initiate the swinging motion with the hips, turning the back hip forward. The right arm begins its forward motion by dropping the elbow and moving it around the front of your body toward the front wall. As the hips continue to turn and the racquet is brought around the body, the right foot begins to pivot so it points to the front wall. The hips can only turn through the entire swing if the right foot pivots. As the racquet approaches the contact zone, the racquet moves parallel to the floor and the head of the racquet is perpendicular to the floor. The wrist is still in a cocked position.
The Contact Zone. The contact zone is the area in which the racquet will contact the ball. Ideally, ball contact should occur at your center of gravity. During the step and swing, the hips continue to turn toward the front wall, followed by the elbow, and eventually the wrist and racquet. Just prior to contacting the ball, the wrist will snap forward, producing additional power and ball velocity. The arm should be extended, with little elbow flexion. If you are rotating your hips properly (and the back foot is pivoted), your center of gravity will be near your front foot. If ball contact occurs at your center of gravity and the racquet is in the correct position, the ball will be directed straight forward. If ball contact occurs early, or behind your center of gravity, the ball will be hit into the floor (skipped ball) or to the right of your target. If ball contact occurs too far forward in the contact zone, ahead of the center of gravity, the ball will be directed to the left of your target.

The Follow-Through. Once ball contact is made, the hips continue to turn, the right arm stays extended and continues to move around the front of the body. At the end of the follow through, the hips and front of the body face the front wall. The racquet finishes the swing on the left side of the body, pointing to the side wall or the back wall, depending on the flexibility of your shoulders and the total amount of hip rotation. You should feel balanced at the end of follow through, with slightly more weight distributed toward the front foot (which is still pointing at the right front corner). The rear foot is pivoted, pointing to the front wall, and balanced on the ball of the foot.

From the ready position, the first movement is to reposition yourself so your body faces the left side wall (if you are a right handed player) using a similar footwork pattern as you did with the forehand. Both feet should be about shoulder width apart and pointing to the side wall.

As you reposition to face the left side wall, change your grip to the backhand grip.

The Hitting Position. As you are moving from the ready position to facing the side wall, you will also begin moving the racquet back into the hitting position. Move the racquet from its ready position in a back and upward motion across your body so the wrist is near your left shoulder and the racquet head is about head height or higher. The wrist is cocked so the racquet head faces the left rear corner of the court or the back wall. With the feet still square to the side wall the hips are slightly turned so the upper body faces the left rear corner of the court. This is the hitting position for the backhand. Note that while moving the racquet back, the hitting arm is brought across the body and upwards towards the left shoulder. Many players make the mistake of keeping their hitting arm about waist high as they bring it across their body.

The Step and Swing. From the hitting position, you are ready to begin the forward motion of your swing. Like the forehand, this involves a coordinated movement of a step, hip rotation, and an arm swing.

Step with the lead foot (if you are a right handed player, this will be your right foot) toward the front wall to take a slightly wider stance. The front foot should turn about 45-degrees so it points toward the left front corner. Initiate the swinging motion with the hips, rotating the back hip forward. The right arm begins its forward motion by dropping the hips and moving it around the front of the body toward the front wall. As the hips continue to turn and the racquet is brought around the body, the left foot pivots so it points to the front wall. The hips can only turn through the entire swing if the left foot pivots. As the racquet approaches the contact zone, the racquet moves parallel to the floor and the head of the racquet is perpendicular to the floor. The wrist is still in a cocked position.

The Backhand Swing

Although the backhand swing has the same basic movement patterns as the forehand swing (Figure 1.5), it has some unique characteristics that make it more difficult for most players.

Proper hip rotation is essential to developing power during the racquetball swing. Power is generated from the rotation of the hips. The position of your follow through will give you immediate feedback about your hip rotation.

Page 4
The Contact Zone. During the step and swing, ball contact will occur as the hips continue to rotate toward the front wall, followed by the elbow, and eventually the wrist and racquet. Just prior to ball contact, the wrist will snap forward, producing additional power. As the racquet passes through the contact zone, the arm should be extended, with little or elbow flexion.

Ideally, ball contact should occur at your center of gravity, which if you are rotating your hips properly and the back foot is pivoted, will be near the front foot. If ball contact occurs at your center of gravity with the racquet in the correct position, the ball will be directed straight forward. If ball contact occurs at the back of the contact zone, behind your center of gravity, the ball will be directed into the floor (skipped ball) or to the left of your target. If ball contact occurs too far forward in the contact zone, ahead of the center of gravity, the ball will be directed to the right of your target.

Timing of the wrist snap is critical to an effective backhand. Snapping the wrist too late (or not at all) is a common problem among many players, resulting in a skipped ball.

The Follow-Through. Once ball contact is made, the hips continue to turn, the right arm stays extended and continues to move around the front of the body. At the end of your follow through, the hips and front of your body should be facing the front wall. The racquet finishes the swing on the right side of the body pointing to the side wall or the back wall. You should feel balanced at the end of follow through, with slightly more weight distributed to the front foot. The front foot remains stable in the same position as it was in the step and swing phase, pointing at the left front corner. The rear foot is pivoted, pointing to the front wall, and balanced on the ball of the foot.

Figure 1.5. The backhand swing.
BASIC PRACTICE DRILLS

Consistent regular practice is essential to developing your racquetball skills. Practice begins with drills designed to develop basic forehand and backhand skills. Practicing advanced drills prior to developing basic forehand and backhand skills is discouraged since the goal is to practice drills correctly. Practicing incorrect technique will not improve your game.

There are four basic drills that can be used by beginners to practice the forehand and backhand and by intermediate players to warm-up prior to any game. Start with the simplest drill, preferably with the forehand, and progress to the other drills.

DROP-HIT & CATCH. Stand facing the forehand side wall. Drop the ball in front of your front foot. Hit a forehand shot. Aim so you hit the front wall directly in front of you and the ball rebounds directly back to you. The objective is to consistently hit and then catch 10 forehands without moving more than one step in any direction to catch the ball. Repeat with the backhand with the same goal in mind.

DROP-TURN & HIT. Stand facing the front wall. Drop the ball to your forehand side. Turn to face the side wall and hit a forehand shot directly to the front wall (similar to the drop-hit & catch drill). Perform 10 forehands without moving more than one step to catch the ball. Repeat with the backhand.

TOSS-TURN-STEP & HIT. Stand facing the front wall, gently toss the ball in front of you to your forehand side. Turn to face the side wall, take a shuffle step to get into a good hitting position. Hit 10 forehands. Repeat the drill with your backhand.

OFF-THE-BACK-WALL. Stand about 5-10 ft from the back wall. Face the side wall. Toss the ball against the back wall. Let the ball bounce at least once. Take shuffle steps to get into a good hitting position. Hit 10 forehands directly to the front wall.

Once you have mastered the basic practice drills, you are ready to be more specific in your practice by performing certain drills from specific locations on the court. The nine different drill positions are illustrated in Figure 1.6. Table 1.1 lists sequences of specific basic practice drills. The drills in Table 1.1 increase in difficulty as they progress from Level 1 to Level 3. Perform easier drills before attempting more difficult drills. Go to the next drill after completing 10 successful attempts as described.

Figure 1.6. Drill positions in the court.

ANALYZING YOUR SWING

When performing basic forehand and backhand drills you may notice that the ball is not hitting the intended target or lacks velocity. You may feel as if you have less control over your shot than you would like. Table 1.2 lists several common complaints and ideas for identifying and correcting the problem.
Table 1.1. Basic Forehand and Backhand Drills

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<td>1 Forehand drop hit catches from position 9.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Forehand drop turn &amp; hits from position 9.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Forehand toss turn step &amp; hits from position 9.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Off the back wall forehands from position 9.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Repeat these drills from position 7 with the backhand.</td>
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Table 1.2. Problems and causes of common mistakes with the forehand and backhand.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complaint</th>
<th>Possible Problems and Suggested Corrections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of power</td>
<td>The speed (mph) at which the ball travels is directly related to racquet head speed. A faster racquet head speed generates more power (assuming that the ball is hit correctly). A lack of power could be caused by incomplete hip rotation, poor wrist snap, and slow movement of the upper body. Check for correct hip position during the hitting position and the follow through. Make sure the back foot is pivoting during the swing and the hips are facing the front wall during the follow through. Practice increasing racquet head speed during basic drop, hit, and catch drills.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table continued on next page.
Table 1.2  Problems and causes of common mistakes with the forehand and backhand (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complaint</th>
<th>Possible Problems and Suggested Corrections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skipping balls (ball hits the floor before hitting the front wall).</td>
<td>The most likely cause of skipping balls is hitting off the back foot. This means that during the step and swing, your center of gravity is more towards the back foot rather than the front foot. Because more of your weight is on your back foot, your back foot cannot pivot and your hips are not rotating as they should. Hitting off the back foot results in hitting the ball “early” before the racquet has leveled off and the face of the racquet pointing toward the floor. Working on your body’s position in relationship to the ball will help correct this problem. Don’t set your stance too early. Stay light on your feet and move with the ball until you are ready to hit. Always plant the front foot, allowing your back foot to pivot and your center of gravity to shift towards the front foot. Practice drop-hit-catch drills by dropping the ball on the receiving line. Then, during the step and swing, step on, or a little past the receiving line. This assures that the contact zone is in the right place. During the swing, focus on proper ball contact position, body weight distribution, and hip rotation. If you are skipping the ball with the backhand, a second common problem is hitting with the racquet tilted downward. This usually occurs for one (or more) of three reasons: improper grip, hitting off the back foot (see above), or your wrist snap is occurring late (too slow) or not at all. The very first thing to check when hitting a backhand is your grip. Second, check to make sure that you are hitting off the front foot using drop-hit-catch drills as described above. If you are still skipping balls when your weight distribution and ball contact are toward the front foot, skipped balls are likely due to a late wrist snap. Continue to practice drop-hit-catch drills, focusing on proper ball contact position, weight distribution, and the wrist snap.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect grip</td>
<td>If you are having a hard time with the backhand grip, try this. Imagine that your racquet is a sword. Place the racquet on your nondominant hip with the handle facing forward like the handle of a sword. If you are a right handed player, place the racquet on your left hip, then with your right hand reach across your body and grasp the handle of your racquet as if you were going to pull the sword out of its scabbard. This is the backhand grip for a right handed player.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Racquetball Rules

THE COURT

The court is 40 feet long, 20 feet wide, and 20 feet tall (Figure 2.1). All walls and the ceiling are playable surfaces except during the serve.

The service area (Figure 2.1) is 20 feet wide and 5 feet deep. The front edge of the service area is marked by the service line and the back edge is marked by the short line. The receiving line is a dashed line that lies 5 feet behind the short line. Eighteen inches from each side wall is a line outlining the doubles box used when playing doubles. Three feet from each sidewall is the drive serve line.

The service line and short line are considered part of the service area. This is important in defining the foot fault and short serve faults.

Figure 2.1. Overhead view of the court

OBJECTIVE

The objective is to win each rally by serving or returning the ball so the opponent is unable to keep the ball in play. A rally is over when a player (or team in doubles) is unable to hit the ball before it touches the floor twice, is unable to make a legal return of the ball, or commits a hinder.

SCORING

A game is won by the first player (or team) to score 15 points. A match is three games. A match is won by winning two games. In match play, the third game is played, if necessary, as a tiebreaker. The third and final game is played to 11 points. Points are scored only on the serve.

SERVING

The first server of the first game is usually decided by a coin toss. In unofficial play, players may also lag for serve by standing near the back wall and rebounding a ball off the front wall to see whose ball lands (on the first bounce) closest to the short line. The player who wins the coin toss or lag for serve chooses to either serve or receive the serve. In the second game, the serving order is reversed. In the third game, the player with the most total points in the first two games chooses to either serve or receive first. If players have an equal number of points in the first two games, the winner of another coin toss chooses to either serve or receive.

Before serving the ball, the server must check to make sure the opponent is ready. The receiving player can signal “not ready” by raising their racket above their head or turning their back to the server. Prior to each serve the server must call out the score of the game, giving the servers’ score first. In a refereed match, the referee calls the score. After the score is called, the server may serve the ball if the receiver is not signaling “not ready.” If the receiver attempts to signal “not ready” after the server begins the service motion, the serve remains a legal serve.
SERVING MOTION

With the exception of some drive serves, when serving, you may stand anywhere in the service zone. At the start of the serve, your feet may be touching the service line or short line but not crossing over. To start the serving motion and to put the ball into play, you must bounce the ball off the floor and serve the ball off a single bounce. You may bounce the ball more than once but you must catch the ball between bounces. You have 10 seconds to put the ball into play. Serves may be hit with a forehand or backhand swing. Slow serves are usually served with an upright no-step serving motion. Power serves are usually served with a one- or two-step motion. You will read more about serving motions in chapter 3.

SERVING RULES

A legal serve hits the front wall first then contacts the floor between the short line and the rear wall after touching no more than one side wall.

DEAD BALL SERVES

On occasion, a player may hit a “dead ball serve.” Dead ball serves are not returned by the receiving player. The serve is replayed. If a dead ball serve occurs on the first serve, the serve is replayed and the server has the usual two serving attempts. If the first serve was a fault and a dead ball serve occurs on the second serve, the fault serve is not canceled and only the second serve is replayed.

Two situations result in a dead ball serve.

1. Court Hinder: A served ball that hits a predetermined irregular surface and takes an unusual bounce.

2. Broken Ball: The ball breaks during the serve. There is only one legal way to check for a broken ball — that is to squeeze the ball in your hand.

CHANGE OF SERVE

The server will continue to serve until he/she

• fails to keep the ball in play (i.e., side out).
• commits a penalty hinder.
• wins the game.

SERVING FAULTS

Faults are illegal serves. A server has two serving attempts to make a legal serve (in one-serve play open players have only one serving attempt). If the first serve is a fault, the server serves a second time. If the server hits two consecutive faults, he or she loses his/her serve. In a game of singles, there are nine serving faults.

1. Foot Fault. When the service motion begins, no part of the server’s body or racquet may touch the floor outside of the service area. The service line and short line are considered part of the service area so when the service motion begins, the feet may be on the short line or service line but not over the line. At the end of serving motion, the feet can be on or partially over (but not completely over) the service line.

2. Short Serve. Any served ball that first hits the front wall and, on the rebound, hits the floor on or in front of the short line either with or without touching a side wall.

3. Long Serve. A served ball that hits the back wall before touching the floor.

4. Three Wall Serve. Any served ball that after hitting the front wall, hits both side walls before touching the floor.

5. Ceiling Serve. Any served ball that first hits the front wall and then touches the ceiling.

6. Bouncing the Ball Outside Service Zone. Bouncing the ball outside of the service zone, including the ball touching a side wall, as a part of the service motion.

7. Illegal Drive Serve. A player’s body or racquet must not extend beyond the plane of the drive serve line (3 ft line) if a drive serve is hit down the same wall. The 3 foot line rule does not apply if the ball is served to the opposite side of the court or to half lob, lob, or Z serves.
8. **Screen Serve.** A serve which rebounds off the front wall so closely to the server that the receiver does not have a clear view of the ball. A screen serve is not called if the receiving player is out of position. In one-serve play (open players), if a serve is called a screen, the server will be allowed one more opportunity to hit a legal serve. Two consecutive screen serves results in an out.

9. **Serving Before the Receiver Is Ready.** A serve is made while the receiver is signaling “not ready.” If a receiver is not ready, they must signal by raising the racquet above the head or completely turning the back to the server. In one-serve play (open players), if a serve is made while the receiver is not ready, the server will be allowed one more opportunity to hit a legal serve.

**OUT SERVES**

Serving an out serve on the first or second serve results in a loss of serve. There are nine out serves.

1. **A fault serve that occurs on the second serve.**

2. **Missed Ball.** A server’s swing misses the ball or the ball is touched by any part of the server’s body. Also, allowing the ball to bounce more than once during the service motion.

3. **Touched Serve.** Any served ball which on the rebound off the front wall hits the server or server’s racquet. Any ball intentionally stopped or caught by the server.

4. **Fake or Balk Serve.** Any non-continuous serve intended to deceive the receiver.

5. **Illegal hit.** Double hitting, carrying or hitting with any non-string portion of the racquet.

6. **Non-front Wall Serve.** A served ball that strikes any surface other than the front wall first.

7. **Crotch Serve.** Any served ball that hits the crotch of the front wall and floor, front wall and side wall, or front wall and ceiling is an out serve (because it did not hit the front wall first).

A serve into the crotch of the back wall and floor is a good serve and in play. A served ball that hits the crotch of the side wall and floor beyond the short line is in play.

8. **Safety Zone Violation.** If the server - or servers partner - enters the safety zone before the served ball cross the vertical plane of the short line.

9. **Out of Court Serve.** Any served ball that first hits the front wall and, before striking the floor, either goes out of the court or hits a surface above the normal playing area of the court that has been declared as out-of-play.

**RETURNING THE SERVE**

The following rules apply to receiving and returning a serve.

1. The receiving player must stand behind the receiving line in the back court. Generally, the best position to receive a serve is about an arm and a racquet length away from the back wall in the center of the court.

2. The receiving player may not catch or touch a served ball (such as a serve that is obviously long or short) until the referee has made a call or the ball has bounced twice. Doing so results in a point for the server.

3. The receiving player may not break the plane of the receiving line with his/her racquet or body until after the ball either bounces in the safety zone or crosses the receiving line. When returning a serve on the fly (after it passes the vertical plane of the receiving line), the receiving player’s follow through may carry his/her body or racquet over the receiving line.

4. The receiving player must return the ball before the ball touches the floor the second time.

5. The serve can be returned to the front wall, either directly, or off any or both side walls, back wall, or ceiling, as long as the ball hits the front wall before hitting the floor.
6. Failure to return a serve or make a legal return constitutes a point for the server.

7. The primary responsibility of calling fault and screen serves lies with the player receiving the serve. He or she must do so immediately. If there is dispute over a call, replay the serve.

CONTINUING A RALLY

All of the play that occurs after a successful serve is called a rally. During a rally, the side walls, rear wall, and ceiling are in play. The ball may be returned directly to the front wall or to the front wall after contacting the rear wall, either or both side walls, or the ceiling. The ball must contact the front wall before it hits the floor. To continue the rally, the ball must be contacted after it hits the front wall, either on the fly or before the second bounce. The ball remains in play until a player is not able to legally keep the ball in play, after which the ball is considered a dead ball. When the player receiving the serve is unable to keep the ball in play, the server is awarded a point. In singles, a side-out occurs when the server is unable to keep the ball in play and loses the rally. The receiving player will then serve.

If a player swings at and misses a ball, the player may continue to attempt to return the ball until the ball touches the floor for the second time.

A ball is dead only after its second bounce. Thus, a ball that hits the front wall then hits the back wall on the fly, then hits the front wall before bouncing twice, can be played after it rebounds off the front wall but before it takes its second bounce.

The following rules apply to keeping the ball in play.

1. Legal Hits. Only the head of the racquet (strings or frame) may be used to hit the ball (not the handle or hand). The racquet may be held in one or both hands. Switching hands to hit a ball, touching the ball with any part of the body or uniform, or removing the wrist safety cord results in a loss of the rally.

2. One Touch. The player or team trying to return the ball may touch the ball only once or else the rally is lost (i.e., no double hits). An unintentional carry (i.e., the ball rests on the racquet slightly longer than a true hit) is allowed.

3. Failure to Return. The following constitute a failure to make a legal return during a rally.

   - The ball bounces twice before being returned.
   - Skipped ball. The returned ball hits the floor before hitting the front wall.
   - A player returns the ball and it strikes another player but the ball does not have the velocity or direction to hit the front wall on the fly.
   - The receiving player hits the ball out of the court into an area that has been defined as out of play.
   - A player commits a penalty hinder.
   - A player does not make a legal hit. For example, a racquet wrist safety cord is removed or not used, the ball is hit off the racquet handle or hand, the player switches racquet hands during the rally, or the ball touches any part of the body or clothing.
   - Intentionally carrying the ball or double-hitting the ball during the swing.

HINDERS

After hitting the ball, a player must give his/her opponent fair view of the flight of the ball so that he or she has a fair opportunity to get to and play the ball safely. Hinders can be avoided by anticipating where the ball will be, being aware of your opponents’ position, and moving in a direction that will allow your opponent to get to and play the ball.

A player is responsible for making a reasonable effort to return the ball. If the player attempting to return the ball moves in the wrong direction, there is no hinder.
Committing a hinder results in either replaying the rally (replay hinder) or ending the rally (penalty hinder), resulting in either a side out or point.

**REPLAY HINDERS**

Replay hinders result in the rally being replayed. There is no penalty or loss of point. The rally is replayed, with the same server having two serving opportunities.

1. **Court Hinder.** Play is stopped when the ball hits a predesignated object in the court causing the ball to take an irregular bounce and affects the players’ ability to play the ball. Objects which might be designated as court hinders include door frames or handles, light fixtures, vents, or window frames.

2. **Ball Hits Opponent.** A returned ball that hits an opponent. A returned ball that hits an opponent but obviously does not have the velocity or direction to reach the front wall is not a hinder. Under certain circumstance a returned ball that hits an opponent may be called a penalty hinder.

3. **Body Contact.** A body contact hinder occurs when body contact between two opposing players is sufficient to stop the rally, either for the purpose of preventing injury by further contact or because the contact prevented a player from being able to make a reasonable return. Incidental body contact in which the offensive player clearly will have the advantage is not a hinder, unless the offensive player obviously stops play. Contact with the racquet on the follow-through normally is not considered a hinder for either player, assuming that the swing was not restricted due to the proximity of the players. In this later case, a “stroke interference” hinder may be called.

4. **Screen.** A screen hinder occurs when the ball travels close enough to one’s body to impair the vision or play of the opponent. A ball that passes between the legs of a player who has just returned the ball is not automatically a screen. It depends on whether the other player is impaired as a result. Generally, the call should work to the advantage of the offensive player. A screen is not called if the defensive player was out of position to see or get to the ball.

5. **Back Swing Hinder.** Any body contact or contact with the racquet that impairs the hitter’s ability to take a reasonable swing.

6. **Safety Hold Up.** Any player about to hit the ball who believes that striking the opponent with the ball (or racquet) is likely, may stop play and request a replay hinder. Under certain circumstances, this may be a penalty hinder.

7. **Unintentional Interference.** Any unintentional interference which prevents the opponent from seeing or playing the ball, including interference by an opponent or distracting another player.

**PENALTY HINDERS**

Penalty hinders result in either a side out or a point for the server. If the server commits a penalty hinder, he or she will lose his/her serve. If the receiving player commits a penalty hinder, the server will earn a point. Penalty hinders are not always “intentional.”

1. **Failure to Move.** A player does not move sufficiently so that an opponent may return a ball directly to the front wall or cross-court.

2. **Blocking.** Moving into a position so as to block your opponent from getting to or hitting the ball.

3. **Stroke Interference.** A player moves, or fails to move, so that the opponent returning the ball does not have a free, unimpeded swing.

4. **Pushing/Shoving.** Deliberate pushing or shoving an opponent during a rally.

A player must give his/her opponent opportunity to play a down-the-line or cross-court passing shot from any part of the court.
5. **Moving Into the Path of the Ball.** A player moves into the path of the ball and is struck by the ball just played by the opponent.

6. **Intentional Distractions.** Shouting, stamping feet, waving of the racquet, or any other distraction.

7. **View Obstruction.** A player moves across an opponent’s line of vision just before the opponent strikes the ball.

8. **Wetting the Ball.** This applies particularly to the server, who should assure that the ball is dry prior to the serve. Serving a wet ball, even if the server did not intentionally wet the ball will result in a penalty hinder.

9. **Apparel or Equipment Loss.** If a player loses apparel, equipment or other article, that player will be called with an avoidable hinder - unless the player just hit a shot that could not be returned. If the loss of equipment is caused by the opponent, then a dead ball hinder will be called.

**TIMEOUTS AND REST PERIODS BETWEEN GAMES**

Each player (or team) is allowed three 30 second timeouts in games to 15 and two 30 second timeouts in games to 11. Calling timeouts when none remain or taking more than 30 seconds will result in a technical foul for delay of game.

Timeouts up to 15 minutes can be called for injury due to contact with the ball, racquet, floor or wall. If play cannot be resumed after 15 minutes, the opponent shall be awarded the match. Pre-existing conditions or muscle cramps, pulls, fatigue & other ailments not caused by direct contact on the court are not considered injuries.

In the event that equipment (racquets, gloves, shoes, shoe strings, headbands, etc.) needs to be repaired or replaced, regular time outs are to be used. If there are no more remaining time outs, the referee may call a 2 minute equipment time out to assure that play is fair and safe.

There is a 2 minute rest period between the first and second game of a match and a 5 minute rest period between the second and third game.

**TECHNICAL FOULS AND WARNINGS**

The referee can deduct 1 point from a player’s or a team’s score when the player is being overtly and deliberately abusive (e.g., profanity, arguing, threatening an opponent or referee, striking of the ball between rallies, slamming of the racquet against walls or floor, delay of game, failure to wear lensed eye wear, and any other unsportsman-like conduct).
Serving

Center Court Advantage

The "center court" is an oval area about 15 feet wide and 10 feet deep centered between the side walls and between the short line and back wall (Figure 3.1). The center court position is the most advantageous position to gain offensive and defensive control. From this position it is easier to get to balls hit to all areas of the court. For this reason it is important for each player to maintain the “center court advantage.” Most, if not all shots should move your opponent out of center court.

Types of Racquetball Serves

There are three basic serves in the game of racquetball and each serve has at least one variation.

- Lob serve. The half-lob is a variation of the lob serve.
- Z serve. Variations of the Z serve are the high Z, mid-wall Z, and low Z.
- Drive serve. A variation of the drive serve is the jam serve.

Purpose of the Serve and Serve Return

The primary purpose of your serve is to force a weak return from your opponent. All serves should be hit along the side wall and/or into the rear corners of the court. All of the serves are equally effective in forcing a weak return. A good serving strategy includes the use of a variety of serves and knowing when to use each one. You will read about serving strategies later in this chapter and in chapter 5.

The purpose of the serve return is to move the server out of the center court and gain center court advantage.

The Serving Motion

The lob, half-lob, high Z and mid-wall Z serves are considered slow serves. The drive serve, low Z and jam serve are considered power serves. Different serving motions are used for slow serves and power serves. The serving motion refers to your foot movement and the swinging motion during the serve. There are no-step, one-step, and two-step serving motions.

The no-step serving motion is easy to control since it only involves upper body movement and generates less power than the one-step and two-step serving motions. The no-step serving motion is appropriate to use when serving the lob, half-lob, high Z and mid-wall Z serves. The one-step and two-step serving motions are used for power serves such as the drive serve, jam serve, and low Z serve.
SLOW SERVES

Although slow serves can be very effective, they are easy to anticipate and allow time for opponents to plan and set up their return. The advantages of slow serves are that they change the pace of the game and tempt impatient opponents to hit low percentage shots. The high Z and nick lob serves are especially effective since the ball bounces into the rear corners of the court at different angles. Soft, high-bouncing slow serves usually force an opponent to return the ball from above their waist, which causes him/her to either play defensively or risk hitting an offensive shot from a low percentage position. A well-placed slow serve is very effective in forcing a weak return. A poorly executed slow serve will set up your opponent.

NO-STEP SERVING MOTION

Slow serves are usually hit with a no-step serving motion. Begin the no-step serving motion by facing the side wall in the upright position with your feet about shoulder width apart. When hitting a lob, half-lob, or high Z serve, drop the ball from about chest or shoulder height. The serving motion with a lob or high Z serve begins below the waist so the ball can be hit upward (Figure 3.2). During the swing, the body remains in the upright position. Just enough power is generated from the rotation of the upper body and the arm swing to have the serve rebound off the front wall, bounce past the short line, and end up in forehand or backhand corner of the back court. Because the ball should not be hit so hard as to bounce off the back wall too far, it is important to control the serving motion for the slow serves.

HALF-LOB SERVE. The half-lob serve can be hit from almost anywhere in the service area to either the right or left rear corners. This serve is hit about one-third to one-half the way up on the front wall with a flat or tilted racquet face with just enough force so the ball takes its first bounce in the safety zone. Hitting the half-lob too deep may set up your opponent for an offensive shot off the back wall (chapter 4). An effective half-lob serve will force a weak return as the ball drops into the rear corner of the court or tempt your opponent into returning the serve waist high.

LOB SERVE. This serve is usually underrated (and thus not practiced enough) by players. Well placed lob serves force weak returns! When serving, the ball is dropped from about shoulder high and allowed to bounce above the waist. The racquet is held at your side below your waist. The ball is hit at the peak of the bounce with an upward motion of the racquet with a slightly tilted racquet face. The ball is hit high off the front wall as near to the ceiling as possible without actually hitting the ceiling on the rebound. Practice this serve so the ball lands in the safety zone and then takes a high arcing bounce deep into the corner. You can also hit this serve a little deeper, so it bounces closer to the receiving line, takes a high arcing bounce and hits the back wall on its way down and drops sharply off the back wall.

A variation of this serve is the nick lob serve. This serve is hit at a slightly different angle so it nicks the side wall on the fly before its first bounce. The ball is hit a little deeper in the court (otherwise the ball will deflect into center court after nicking the side wall). Ideally, the ball nicks the side wall behind the receiving line. The nick lob creates angles in the rear corners and near the rear wall that are difficult to return.
You can stand anywhere in the service area when hitting the lob serve. Adding variety to your serving position makes this serve a little different each time. Changing serving positions also changes the angle of the serve. Practice this serve from all different positions to both the left and right rear corners.

The key to this serve is to have it stay along the side wall, corner, or back wall as it takes its second bounce. The lob serves should be hit high on the front wall and just soft enough to get the result you want. When the ball is hit too hard, it will rebound off the side wall or back wall far enough into the court that it will not force a weak return.

**HIGH AND MID-WALL Z serves.** These serves are generally hit from the left or right sides of the service area. The swing motion is much like a lob serve described above. With the high Z serve, the ball hits the front wall 2-3 feet down from the ceiling and about 2-3 feet from the opposite sidewall. The flight of the ball follows a “z” pattern. The ball hits high on the front wall then the side wall and takes its first bounce near the safety zone. It then takes a lofty bounce into the back court corner, forcing a weak return. By hitting the ball at a slightly different angle high on the front wall, the ball will bounce a little past the safety zone, then rebound off the side wall near the corner, forcing a weak return along the back wall. A variation of this serve is the mid-wall Z, where the ball is placed about one-third to one-half the way up on the front wall. Selecting the right height and angle to hit an effective Z serve takes practice.

**POWER SERVES**

Power serves force weak returns and occasionally result in an ace. Remember that the purpose of the serve is to force a weak return, not ace your opponent. Poorly placed power serves may set up your opponent.

When hitting power serves, use either a one-step or two-step serving motion. The two-step serving motion will generate more power and ball velocity than the one-step serving motion. Experiment with each one to find out which one works best for you.

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**ONE-STEP SERVING MOTION**

Begin the one-step serving motion standing near the short line, facing the side wall with your feet about shoulder width apart (or slightly wider). During the swing, the body remains in the upright position and the swing begins about waist high and remains a nearly horizontal swing. Drop the ball just slightly forward of your stance. Take one step towards the service line with the front foot so ball contact occurs in the correct contact zone.

**TWO-STEP SERVING MOTION**

The two-step serving motion is a little more complex and requires coordinated and controlled movements of the upper and lower parts of the body. If you are a right handed player, place both feet on the inside edge of the short line, with the left foot ahead of the right foot (Figure 3.3).

![Figure 3.3. The two-step serving motion.](image-url)

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Begin in a crouched position, lowering your center of gravity closer to the floor. The first step occurs with your back foot. For a right handed player, this is the right foot. Step with the back foot, behind the front foot, toward the front wall. The second step is with the front foot. For a right handed player, this is the left foot. As you gently toss the ball into the anticipated contact zone close to the service line, step with the front foot all the way to the service line. Remember, you can step on the service line, partially over the line, but not completely over the line. Step directly toward the front wall rather than towards the right or left (thereby giving away the direction of your serve). Much like the mechanics of the forehand swing discussed in chapter 1, power will be generated as the hips rotate through the swing and the arm comes from the hitting position into the contact zone. To maximize hip rotation, pivot the back foot. The body should be facing the front wall during the follow through. Practice selecting a “target” on the front wall, that when hit, the ball will rebound off the front wall, pass the short line, and end up in the forehand or backhand corner of the back court. Practice this serve from different positions in the service area, hitting to the left and to the right, to determine the position of a target for each serving option. The target should be just high enough above the level of the floor so the ball will end up in the desired location with the amount of power that you can generate during the swing.

**Drive Serve.** This serve can be hit from almost anywhere in the service area (see “Illegal Drive Serve” on page 12). This serve is hit hard and low to the front wall so the ball travels low and fast to one of the rear corners. If hit low enough, the ball will bounce just past the short line, forcing the receiver to return the serve before the ball bounces the second time near the corner. If the serve is low on the front wall and the first bounce is deeper in the court, the ball will bounce low off the back wall. If the ball is hit a little higher on the front wall so it takes its first bounce near the back wall, it will take a long fast bounce off the back wall, making it difficult for your opponent to return. All drive serves should be placed close to the sidewall to move your opponent into the corner and sidewall. Poorly placed drive serves may not force a weak return.

**Jam Serve.** This is a variation of the drive serve. This serve is usually hit from position 2 (see Figure 1.6, page 6) in order to get the right angle. The difference between the jam serve and the drive serve is that the jam serve hits the left side wall a little past the receiving line. The ball then cuts across the rear corner and after taking its first bounce, rebounds off near the center of the back wall. This “jams” the receiving player against the back wall as the ball comes off the side wall directly toward him/her. The receiving player either backpedals to get out of the way or tries to hit the ball as it is coming toward him/her. In either case, this unexpected serve forces a weak return.

**Low Z Serve.** This serve is hit from positions 1 or 3 (see Figure 1.6, page 6) low to the front wall, rebounding off the sidewall and traveling to the opposite back corner. If hit properly, after hitting the floor, the ball will rebound off the sidewall almost parallel to the back wall. Even if you can’t get this effect on your serve, the ball will bounce around the corner and sometime cause enough confusion to force a weak return. Selecting the right height and angle to hit an effective low Z serve takes practice.

Caution should be used when using low Z serves since the ball will cross the service area and may prevent the server from moving out of the service area into center court. The server must move quickly into center court after the ball crosses the short line. One advantage of using the low Z serve is that it can be used deceptively. For example, a server can stand on the left side of the service area and hit a drive serve to the right rear corner. The next serve can be a low Z serve, hit from the same position but to the left rear corner. With practice, the low Z serve can be hit from just left (or right) of the center of the service area. Since this is a position that drive serves are often hit from, a Z serve hit from this serving position often catches your opponent off guard.

**Improving Your Serving Game**

An important part of your serving strategy is deciding which serve to hit at different times during the game. Here are some ideas to help you select the best serve.
Practice your serves before playing a game. A game is not the time to practice a new serve for the first time. Use only those serves that you have practiced and can serve well. Your serves should force a weak return by moving your opponent out of center court, towards the side walls and into one of the rear corners of the court.

Although there are only three basic serve patterns (lob, Z, and drive serves) you can add variety to your serves by serving from different positions in the service area, hitting to the left or right sides of the court, and by hitting serves at different heights, speeds, and angles.

Hit most (about 80%) of your serves to your opponent’s back hand.

If a serve is working well against your opponent, use the serve regularly. If a particular serve is not working (i.e., not forcing a weak return and you are not getting points), try something else.

Get out of the service box as soon as the served ball passes the short line. Watch your opponent as you move into center court, making sure you are not hindering your opponent and watching to see how they are setting up for their return. This will help you anticipate where you should move to for your next shot.

Reduce anticipation with your drive serve. When hitting a drive serve, the two-step serving motion should always look the same from your opponent’s point of view. He or she should not be able to anticipate whether you are serving to the right or left. By keeping the footwork the same, the direction of your serve is changed by changing where you drop the ball and the angle of your racquet when you hit the ball. When hitting a drive serve to the left, drop the ball to the outside of your front. When hitting a drive serve to the right, drop the ball to the inside of your lead foot.

To slow the pace of the game, use a half-lob or a mid-wall Z serve or high Z serve.

If your opponent has difficulty returning serves that include angles, use the low or mid-wall Z serves or nick lob. These serves are great choices if your opponent has difficulty tracking the ball or cannot anticipate where the ball is going to end up. Use the low or mid-wall Z if your opponent has difficulty returning balls that come across his/her body.

If your opponent is tempted to hit offensively when they should hit defensively, use the half-lob, lob, or high and mid-wall Z serves to force your opponent to hit the ball above his/her waist.

If your opponent is standing in a position to receive the serve that is too far forward, hit a drive serve. Also use the drive serve to maintain a fast pace if your opponent is tired or when your opponent is slow to move from the ready position to a hitting position.

**RECEIVING THE SERVE**

As you read in chapter 1, you will receive the serve in the ready position (Figure 1.3). Stand in the center of the back court, about an arm and racquet’s length from the back wall. Keep your body weight towards the balls of your feet so you can quickly move to either the right or the left. Keep both feet pointing forward, in other words, do not turn your feet to the left in anticipation of the serve going to the left. Watch the servers stepping motion during the serve and watch the flight of the ball as it leaves the server’s racquet. About the time the ball hits the front wall, you should know if the ball is going to your right or left and be starting to move in that direction.

You should anticipate that a majority of serves will be hit to you backhand side at various heights, angles, and speeds. To decide how best to return the serve, you will have to judge the height of the ball, speed of the ball, angles, and how the ball will bounce. Here are some basic suggestions to help make your return of serve more effective.

Always remember that the primary purpose of the serve return is to move the server out of the center court and regain center court advantage. Trying to end the rally on your first hit may re-
sult in a poor return, which may set up your opponent for an offensive shot. Only attempt to end the rally off a serve if the ball sets up for a good shot, otherwise stay with the primary purpose of moving your opponent out of center court.

- You can expect that most serves will end up in one of the rear court corners. Do not over commit to the corner. Stay a step or two away from the corner, anticipate how the ball will bounce out of the corner, chose what shot to make, then step into the corner and execute the shot. Committing into the corner or to a side wall too early will result in being out of position and hitting a weak return.

- Use a backhand swing when the ball is served to your backhand. Do not back up against the side wall and try to hit a forehand swing.

- When returning a serve from a height above the waist, play the ball defensively. Hit to the ceiling.

- When pressed up against the back wall, use your free hand to feel for the back wall so you can keep your eye on the ball and still know how close you are to the back wall.

- From the ready position, move to either the right or left as soon as you know the ball is going in that direction. This is usually about the time the ball hits the front wall. If the serve is a power serve, responding too late may end up as an ace for your opponent.

- From the ready position, as you move to the right or left to return the serve, simultaneously re-grip the racquet with the back hand grip if necessary and begin to move the racquet up into the hitting position. If the serve is a power serve, not being in the hitting position early enough will cause a poor return.

**PRACTICE DRILLS**

Most players spend most of their practice time practicing offensive shots. Many players fail to dedicate enough time practicing serves. Effective serves can change the entire outcome of a game, and should therefore be practiced regularly. Table 3.1 is a list of sequences of serving practice drills. The drills increase in difficulty as they progress from Level 1 to Level 3. Perform easier drills before attempting more difficult drills. After completing 10 successful attempts as described, go to the next drill.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serving Drills</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Half lob serves from position 2 to the left rear corner without hitting a side wall and bouncing twice before hitting the back wall (repeat to right rear corner).</td>
<td>1 Lob serves from position 1 to the left rear corner without hitting the side wall (repeat from position 3 to the right rear corner).</td>
<td>1 Lob serves from position 1 to the left rear corner nicking the side wall so the ball bounces lightly around the corner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Lob serves from position 2 to the left rear corner bouncing in the safety zone and not hitting a side wall</td>
<td>2 High Z serves from position 1 to the left rear corner (repeat from position 3 to the right rear corner).</td>
<td>2 Down-the-line drive serves from position 3 to the right rear corner without hitting the side wall and bouncing twice before hitting the back wall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Repeat this sequence serving to right rear corner</td>
<td>3 Drive serves from position 2 to the left rear corner without hitting the side wall and bouncing twice before hitting the rear wall (repeat to the right rear corner).</td>
<td>3 Down-the-line drive serves from position 1 to the left rear corner without hitting a side wall and bouncing twice before hitting the back wall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 Cross court drive serves from position 1 to the right rear corner without hitting the side wall and bouncing twice before hitting the back wall.</td>
<td>4 Low Z serves from position 1 to the left rear corner, hitting the left side wall deep in the back court after the first bounce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 Cross court drive serves from position 3 to the left rear corner without hitting the side wall and bouncing twice before hitting the back wall.</td>
<td>5 Mid-wall Z serves from position 1 to the left rear corner, bouncing in the receiving zone and lightly bouncing around the left rear corner.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Lob serves from position 1 to the left rear corner nicking the side wall so the ball bounces lightly around the corner.</td>
<td>2 Down-the-line drive serves from position 3 to the right rear corner without hitting the side wall and bouncing twice before hitting the back wall.</td>
<td>3 Down-the-line drive serves from position 1 to the left rear corner without hitting a side wall and bouncing twice before hitting the back wall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 Low Z serves from position 1 to the left rear corner, hitting the left side wall deep in the back court after the first bounce.</td>
<td>5 Mid-wall Z serves from position 1 to the left rear corner, bouncing in the receiving zone and lightly bouncing around the left rear corner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Low Z serves from position 3 to the right rear corner, hitting the right side wall deep in the back court after the first bounce.</td>
<td>7 Mid-wall Z serves from position 3 to the right rear corner, bouncing in the receiving zone and lightly bouncing around the right rear corner.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Offensive & Defensive Shots

**Offensive and Defensive Shots**

All offensive and defensive shots should always move your opponent out of center court position and force weak returns.

**Offensive Shots**

Effective offensive shots end the rally with a side-out or point. Offensive shots include:

- down-the-line, cross-court, and wide angle passing shots
- pinch shots and reverse pinch shots
- kill shots
- splat shots

**Passing Shot.** The passing shot is the most frequently used offensive shot in the game. The passing shot can be effective even though it may lack pinpoint accuracy. The two elements of an effective passing shot are that the ball must pass your opponent and bounce twice before hitting the back wall. A passing shot will move your opponent away from center court, make them run the furthest distance to get to the ball, and either force a weak return or end the rally.

Passing shots hit the front wall at various speeds and heights (6 inches to 24 inches from the floor). If the ball is hit too hard and too high off the front wall, it may not bounce twice before hitting the back wall. This is a common mistake for many beginning and intermediate players. A passing shot that rebounds off the back wall on the fly or after bouncing only once may set up your opponent for a good shot instead of forcing a weak return.

The choice to use a passing shot depends on your position and the position of your opponent. Use a passing shot when your opponent is in front of you.

*Down-the-line passing shots* are hit off the front wall and down the side wall on the same side (without hitting the side wall). Ideally, the ball bounces twice before hitting the back wall. Down-the-line passing shots are used when you and your opponent are on opposite sides of the court (Figure 4.1) or when your opponent is in center court.

*Cross-court passing shots* are hit to the front wall so as to create a “V” pattern to the rear corner of the opposite side of the court. Cross-court passing shots are effective when your opponent is out of center court and on the same side of the court as you are (Figure 4.2).

*Wide Angle passing shots* are an alternative to the down-the-line passing shot. Use this shot when you and your opponent are both playing in the front two thirds of the court. The ball hits the front wall and then the side wall next to your opponent or 1-2 feet behind your opponent. The wide angle passing shot forces your opponent to turn, then chase the ball into the opposite corner (Figure 4.3). If the ball hits the side wall in front of the opponent, it will not have the same effect and may end up with your opponent ending the rally.

*Pinch Shot.** The pinch shot is hit hard into the front corner, hitting the sidewall first about 1 to 2 feet off the floor and about 1 to 2 feet from the corner. After hitting the front wall, the ball bounces twice in front of the service line before hitting the opposite side wall. Pinch shots hit too high may bounce back into center court, setting up your opponent for an offensive shot.

There are two kinds of pinch shots. *Pinch shots* are hit into the front corner that you are facing (Figure 4.4). A *reverse pinch shot* is hit the same as the pinch shot except into the cross-court front corner so the ball crosses your body. (Figure 4.5).
Figure 4.1  Down-the-line pass

Figure 4.2  Cross-court Pass

Figure 4.3  Wide Angle Pass

H = Hitter;  O = Opponent

Figure 4.4.  Pinch Shot
(Right-handed player, forehand)

Figure 4.5.  Reverse Pinch Shot
(Right-handed player, forehand)

H = Hitter;  O = Opponent
For a right handed player hitting a forehand, pinch shots are hit into the right front corner (Figure 4.4) and reverse pinch shots are hit into the left front corner (Figure 4.5).

Pinch shots keep the ball in the front court so use a pinch shot (or reverse pinch shot) when your opponent is behind you or tends to stay in the back court. Choose either a pinch shot or reverse pinch shot so the ball bounces to the opposite side of the court from where your opponent is standing (see figures 4.4 and 4.5).

**Splat Shot.** The splat shot is a difficult shot and thus requires a lot of practice. A splat shot is similar to a pinch but hit at a wider angle. When the hitter is positioned near the side wall, the ball is hit hard into the side wall at about a 45° angle and rebounds to the front wall and bounces in the front court twice. Use the splat when you are only about a foot or two from the side wall. Hit the ball hard against the side wall near or slightly ahead of the service area. Choose to splat when your opponent is standing near or behind you on the same side of the court (Figure 4.6).

**Figure 4.6.** Splat shot.

**Kill Shot.** The kill shot is a highly effective offensive shot because it cannot be returned. The ball is hit hard, directly to the front wall so it contacts the front wall within six inches of the floor. The ball bounces twice long before the opposing player can get into position to make a return. Kill shots attempted from the rear of the court are low percentage shots, so kill shots are generally not attempted from behind the receiving line.

**Offensive Game Strategies**

Playing defensively will not win games! You must develop an offensive game. This means being able to choose the right offensive shot and then execute it well. This section describes some basic strategies in developing an offensive game. Shot selections are summarized in Table 4.1. You will read about other strategies in chapter 5.

- First, practice your offensive shots by doing drills.
- The shot that you actually select will depend on the position of your opponent, your position in the court, and how the ball sets up. Select shots that move your opponent out of center court. Well placed offensive shots generally (but not always) are hit to the open court, making your opponent run the furthest distance from where they are currently positioned. To do this, offensive shots should be targeted (a) along the side walls, (b) into one of the two rear corners, or (c) into one of the two front corners.
  - If your opponent is in front of you—hit a passing shot. The further your opponent is toward the front court, the easier it is to pass.
  - If your opponent is behind you—hit a pinch shot, making your opponent move the furthest distance.
  - Hit shots at different speeds and angles, always causing your opponent to respond to different situations.
  - Hit shots to make your opponent run the furthest distance.
Plan ahead. Hit a passing shot to move your opponent deep in the back court. On your next shot hit a pinch shot to the front corner.

Play the angles. Hit the ball at different angles to move your opponent around the court. Keep in mind that the ball needs to end up in a place that will move your opponent out of center court into a weak hitting position.

If you are hitting the ball from a height that is knee high or lower – hit offensively.

If you are hitting the ball from a height that is between the knees and the waist – play the best shot (either offensively or defensively).

DEFENSIVE SHOTS

Defensive shots are often a last-resort shot or when an offensive shot is not a good choice. Defensive shots can be used to

- change the pace of the game.
- rest from a faster level of play.
- regain control of the center court.
- move your opponent out of center court.
- keep your opponent from playing offensively.

Defensive shots include:

- lobs
- ceiling shots
- around the world shots
- high Z shots
- into the back wall shots

LOB SHOT. This shot is much like the lob serve or half lob serve. It is hit above the middle of the front wall with just enough force for the ball to drop or bounce into one of the rear court corners. Lobs should never be hit into center court.

CEILING SHOT. This is the most common defensive shot. The ball is typically hit with an upward underhand swing. The ball hits the ceiling first about 3-6 feet from the front wall and then hits the front wall. The ball hits the floor in the front court and takes a high arcing bounce into the rear corners or rebounds softly off the back wall.

A key to hitting good ceiling shots is to hit only softly enough so the ball drops into the rear court corners. Hitting too hard will cause the ball to rebound off the back wall and set up your opponent for an offensive shot off the back wall.

AROUND THE WORLD. If you are standing on the right side of the court behind the receiving line, this shot would be hit high on the left side wall, then the front wall, then the right side wall. The ball hits the floor in the back court, bounces off the left side wall and around the left rear corner of the court. The angles and high bounces makes it difficult to return this shot offensively. You can return this ball after it takes its first bounce or wait to see if the ball will bounce out of the corner, giving you a last chance to make a play.

HIGH Z SHOT. This shot is much like the high Z-serve with the exception that the ball will hit the front wall then both side walls. This shot is hit from one side of the court high into the opposite front corner. The ball hits the front wall first, then the side wall and then the side wall from where the shot originated. Although this shot can be hit at any height, it is most effective as a defensive shot when hit high. When it rebounds off of the second side wall, the ball will reverse its spin and rebounds perpendicular to the side wall instead of at the expected angle. If hit deep into the back court, the ball will rebound off the side wall parallel to the back wall: a difficult ball for your opponent to return. This defensive shot is an excellent choice when you are in the front court and need time to regain center court position.

HITTING INTO THE BACK WALL. When you are trying to retrieve a serve (or any other shot) out of the corner and there is not enough room (or time) to take a forehand or backhand swing, hit into the back wall. It is also a great way to return a drive serve or a passing shot that is passing by you very fast. As the ball passes you toward the back wall,
follow the ball with your racquet and hit the ball hard enough against the back wall to return the ball to the front wall. This is a last resort defensive shot, nevertheless, hitting into the back wall can keep the ball in play, possibly giving you another chance.

Do not chase or follow a ball into the back court. Move to the back court quickly as soon as you notice your opponent is playing a defensive shot. Anticipate where the ball will be when it approaches its second bounce, then move to that position. Getting into position early allows you to see how the ball sets up, watch your opponent, and make a good choice on how to return the ball.

**Hitting off the Back Wall**

Almost all beginning and intermediate players hit serves, offensive shots, and defensive shot that rebound off the back wall, either on the fly or after the first bounce. In these situations it is to your advantage to let the ball rebound off the back wall and then return the ball before it takes its second bounce. Hitting balls “off the back wall” is advantageous because the ball is moving slower and in the same direction that you are hitting. It is much easier to hit a ball that is moving toward the front wall than a ball that is moving away from the front wall. It also gives you additional time to watch your opponent and to plan and set up your shot.

Any offensive shot can be hit off the back wall. Playing the ball off the back wall is not easy for many beginning players. One distinguishing characteristic between beginning and intermediate players is their ability to make offensive shots from balls rebounding off the back wall. Here are a few suggestions about playing balls off the back wall:

- Few balls should ever be hit on the fly. If you think a ball returned by your opponent will bounce deep in the back court or hit the back wall on the fly – let the ball go by and play it offensively off the back wall.

Remember that you can play the ball any time before its second bounce. Therefore, if the ball hits the back wall on the fly (or after the first bounce), be prepared to move into the best position to play the ball.

- Anticipate and observe the height, speed, and angle of the ball when it hits the back wall. The higher the ball hits the back wall, the more you can move forward to play the ball. The lower the ball hits the back wall, the closer you need to be to the back wall to play the ball. If the ball hits the back wall on its way up (e.g., after the first bounce of a ceiling shot that bounces deep in the back court), it will bounce far enough away from the wall to make a good offensive shot. If the ball hits the back wall on its way down (e.g., after the first bounce of a ceiling shot that bounces near the receiving line), it will drop quickly and there will be little room to take a swing. In this situation, it may be best to hit an into the back wall defensive shot.

- When anticipating hitting off the back wall, many beginning players position themselves too far away from the back wall. When this happens, they must reach back to hit the ball. This usually results in a skipped ball.

- Allow time for the ball to “set up.” Do not stand still and hit the ball as it goes past you. Move (shuffle) with the ball as it rebounds off the back wall, then wait for the ball to fall to a height that you are comfortable hitting. Consider balls that are hit off the back wall “set-ups.”

**Defensive Game Strategies**

Many players practice offensive shots and serves and ignore their defensive game. The majority of your practice time should be dedicated to serving, offensive shots, and physical conditioning. However, necessary time should also be devoted to practicing your defensive game. You should not
lose a rally, or a game, due to poorly executed defensive shots! Here are a few ideas that may help developing your defensive game. You will read about other strategies in chapter 5.

- Your primary game strategy should be offensive, or in other words, forcing weak returns and ending rallies. Play defensively only when it is necessary.

- Generally, return defensive shots with another defensive shot. Avoid hitting “overhead” shots.

- Choose a defensive shot, for example, a high Z, when you are in the front court and need time to regain center court advantage.

- When returning serves or shots from above the waist or shoulders – hit defensively.

**PRACTICE DRILLS**

The way to practice offensive and defensive shots is to practice them from different positions in the court. The obvious purpose of practicing offensive and defensive shots is to be able to execute the shot well during a game. A less obvious, but equally important purpose is to accumulate enough repetitions of each drill so that when the same shot is presented in a game, the execution of the shot can occur almost without thought.

The nine different drill positions are illustrated in Figure 1.6 in chapter 1. Specific offensive and defensive practice drills are listed in Tables 4.2. The drills increase in difficulty as they progress from Level 1 to Level 3. Perform easier drills before attempting more difficult drills. Go to the next drill after completing 10 successful attempts as described.

### Table 4.1. Summary of shot choices depending on your position and that of your opponent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Opponent’s Position in the Court</th>
<th>Front Court</th>
<th>Center Court</th>
<th>Back Court</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Front Court</strong></td>
<td>Down-the-line pass</td>
<td>Down-the-line pass</td>
<td>Down-the-line pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cross-court pass</td>
<td>Cross-court pass</td>
<td>Cross-court pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wide angle pass</td>
<td>Wide angle pass</td>
<td>Wide angle pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ceiling or mid/high Z</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Center Court</strong></td>
<td>Kill or pinch</td>
<td>Kill or pinch</td>
<td>Down-the-line pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Down-the-line pass</td>
<td>Down-the-line pass</td>
<td>Cross-court pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cross-court pass</td>
<td>Cross-court pass</td>
<td>Wide angle pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wide angle pass</td>
<td>Wide angle pass</td>
<td>Ceiling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ceiling or mid/high Z</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ceiling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Back Court</strong></td>
<td>Kill or pinch</td>
<td>Kill or pinch</td>
<td>Ceiling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pinch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Down-the-line pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cross-court pass</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.2. Offensive and Defensive Shot Drills

**OFFENSIVE SHOT DRILLS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Forehand down-the-line passing shots from position 9 without hitting the side wall and bouncing twice before hitting the back wall.</td>
<td>1 Backhand down-the-line passing shots from position 7 without hitting the side wall, bouncing twice before hitting the back wall.</td>
<td>1 Forehand down-the-line passing shots hit off the back wall from position 9 without hitting the side wall, bouncing twice before hitting the back wall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Forehand cross-court passing shots from position 6 without hitting the side wall and bouncing twice before hitting the back wall.</td>
<td>2 Backhand cross-court passing shots from position 4 without hitting the side wall, bouncing twice before hitting the back wall.</td>
<td>2 Backhand off the back wall down-the-line passing shots hit off the back wall from position 7 without hitting the side wall, bouncing twice before hitting the back wall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Forehand pinch shots from position 5.</td>
<td>3 Backhand pinch shots from position 5.</td>
<td>3 Forehand wide angle passing shot from position 6 (with a player standing in position 1, 2, 4 or 5).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Forehand reverse pinch shots from position 5.</td>
<td>4 Backhand reverse pinch shots from position 5.</td>
<td>4 Splat shots from position 6.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DEFENSIVE SHOT DRILLS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Forehand around the world shots from position 6.</td>
<td>1 Forehand high Z shots from position 3.</td>
<td>1 From position 7, hit 10 consecutive forehand ceiling shots to the left rear corner. Repeat from positions 8 and 9.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Forehand ceiling shots from position 9.</td>
<td>2 Backhand high Z shots from position 1.</td>
<td>2 Repeat to right rear corner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Backhand ceiling shots from position 7.</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 Repeat with the backhand from positions 7 and 8.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Game-Winning Strategies

Many players depend on a power game to win games. Although this may work when playing against a beginner, it will not always work against a seasoned player. A player who knows his/her own strengths and weakness and the opponent's strengths and weaknesses, can chose good shots, play smart, and play a good game against just about any player.

A game strategy is a plan of how to play your opponent based on your own strengths and weakness, and theirs. Although you will have a general strategy for every game, specifics will change with each opponent.

Coaches always have a game plan. They watch live games or hours of films of opposing teams. Then, they develop a plan for how to play that team. Before the game even starts, they know how to run their offense and defense.

Without a game plan, you will just be playing a game of racquetball with no intent. If your purpose is to play well and to win, then you need a game plan, or strategy.

DRILLS, DRILLS, AND MORE DRILLS!

Doing drills is essential to the improvement of any player’s game! The purpose of doing high volumes of drills is that when you have to perform the same shot in a game, you have the confidence and ability to execute the shot well since you have done it hundreds of times before. An important word of warning though – drills are only advantageous if you perform them correctly. Practicing something incorrectly is not good practice. If the goal is to hit 10 down-the-line passing shots, then hit 10 good down-the-line passing shots that stay close to the side wall and bounce twice before hitting the back wall. Just hitting the ball 10 times will not give you the results that you are expecting. Do drills every time you step into the court. Be patient. Your ability to perform drills correctly will improve. Chapter 1 included basic forehand and backhand drills. Chapter 3 includes some serving drills and chapter 4 includes drills for offensive and defensive shots.

FIVE TOP GAME-WINNING STRATEGIES

You can improve your game more and faster by following these five strategies than anything else you do to improve your game.

1. **Hit every shot (serve, offensive shot, and defensive shot) with the purpose of moving your opponent out of center court (and you moving into center court).** The player that controls center court will almost always win the game. After every shot, relocate to the center court. Keep an eye on the ball and your opponent to watch how they are setting up for their return. Stay out of the “dead-man zone” (the few feet of court in front of the back wall). Being too far back gives your opponent too many choices to play offensively and end rallies. Likewise, being too far forward makes it easy for passing shots to get by you.

2. **Hit every shot to move your opponent as far away from center court as possible.** Make your opponent run the furthest distance. Keeping your opponent on the move increases the difficulty of their game. Hit where your opponent is not. If your opponent is behind you, hit pinch shots to the front court. If your opponent is in front of you, hit passing shots. If they are on the left, hit to the right. If they are on the right, hit to the left.

3. **Hit to your opponents weaknesses.** A competitive racquetball player has to play to their own strengths and their opponent’s weaknesses. A player should also be able to leave the focus on their own strengths and another’s weaknesses in the court when the game is over. What goes on in the court, leave in the court!

   • Most racquetball players don’t have a chance to watch game films of their opponents, but they can watch their opponents play other people in their class or during a tournament. You can also watch your opponent warm up
prior to your game to notice any strengths and weaknesses. During the game, watch your opponent closely and make note of potential weaknesses in his/her game. Hit a variety of shots and serves to learn your opponent’s strengths and weaknesses. Do they have a weak side? Do they resort to hitting into-the-back-wall shots? Do they hit shots off the back wall effectively? Are they tempted to hit overhead shots? How well do they play the front court? Do they have an effective backhand? How quickly do they move out of the service area? Do they take you out of center court position? Do they position themselves for a good offensive shot? Do they tend to hit the ball early or do they allow time for the ball to set up? Do they return lobs and ceiling shots with another defensive shot or do they try to make an offensive shot from a weak position? Do they watch you as you are hitting or do they tend to face the front wall?

• If your opponent is a power player, change the pace of the game by hitting defensively and hitting off-speed shots (e.g. hitting slow but well placed passing shots).

• Keep your opponent deep in the back court using passing shots and defensive shots.

• Young, less experienced players often resort to a power game. These players tend to be less patient and lack fundamental skills. They tend to hit the ball early, not let the ball set up, and not take the time to choose the best shot. The best strategies against these players are to play smarter, not harder; set the tempo of the game so you play your game, not theirs; keep the ball tight in the back court corners where they will have to control their swing; and if they are too far forward in the front court, either pass or hit directly towards them, thereby closing the distance between the ball and their body and forcing them to “react” to the ball.

• Does your opponent stay near the side walls in an effort to stay out of the way? If so, hit cross court passes or hit directly to the side wall where they are standing.

• If your opponent tends to chase the ball rather than track the ball with their eyes and anticipate where the ball will end up, then include lots of angles in your shots. Hit pinch shots or wide angle passing shots when appropriate. Use the nick lob serve instead of the regular lob serve. Try a jam serve instead of the drive serve and the Z serve instead of the lob serve. When appropriate, use a high Z or an around the world defensive shot instead of a ceiling shot that has no angles.

• If your opponent tends to play defensively (i.e., a slow game), change the pace of the game by hitting power serves and passing shots. Hit a variety of shots that move your opponent around the court.

• If your opponent tends of be out of position to make good returns, hit to the open court, making them run the furthest distance to make a play.

• Is your opponent slow in responding to a serve or passing shot? This might suggest slow foot work or they do not anticipate well. In either case, play a faster game by using power serves and passing shots.

• Does your opponent have a favorite shot that they hit well each time the situation is presented? If so, avoid setting your opponent up in that situation.

• Does your opponent have a strong forehand? If so, avoid it and hit most shots to their backhand.

• Does your opponent stay near the back wall? If so, hit pinch shots to the front corners.
4. **Keep your opponent on the back wall.** Keeping your opponent in the back court, especially the corners, increases the difficulty of his/her shots. Keeping your opponent in the back court also leaves the front court open for you to hit pinch shots. If your opponent likes to move forward in the court, hit passing shots, half lobs, or ceiling shots to keep them in the back court.

5. **Keep the ball off the back wall – always.** No serve, passing shot, or ceiling shot, should rebound off the back wall on the fly or after only one bounce, resulting in a setup for your opponent for an offensive shot off the back wall. This tactic ensures that all passing shots, once they pass your opponent, are winners with no second chances of returning the ball off the back wall. Some players, especially beginners and intermediate players, think that hitting the ball hard increases the likelihood of a win. This is rarely the case. In fact, don’t hit a ball harder than is necessary to maintain center court position! You don’t have to hit every shot as hard as you can! Doing so often results in balls rebounding off the back wall and setting up your opponent. Playing smarter is often better than playing harder.

**OTHER GAME-WINNING STRATEGIES AND TACTICS**

This section will review some of the key serving strategies (chapter 3) and key offensive and defensive strategies (chapter 4) then introduce other ideas to improve your game.

**SERVING STRATEGIES** (Chapter 3).

- Practice your serves before playing a game. A game is not the time to practice a new serve for the first time. During a game use only your best serves.

- Serves should always move your opponent out of center court, towards the side walls and into one of the rear corners of the court. This by itself does not always force a weak return. Ball speed, height, angle, and placement are important factors in forcing weak returns.

- If a serve isn’t working well for you, add variety to your serves by serving from different positions in the service area, hitting to the left or right sides of the court, and by hitting serves at different heights, speeds, and angles.

- Focus your serves to your opponent’s weak side which would be the backhand.

- When hitting drive serves, keep your foot work and swing motion consistent to minimize your opponent’s ability to anticipate if you are hitting the ball to the right or left.

- To slow the pace of the game, use a half-lob or a half- or high Z serve.

- If your opponent has difficulty returning serves that include angles, use one of the Z serves.

- If your opponent is tempted to hit offensively when they should hit defensively, use the half-lob, lob, or high and mid-wall Z serves to force your opponent to hit the ball above his/her waist.

- Notice the position of your opponent when he/she is receiving the serve. If they are too far forward, hit a drive serve.

- If your opponent is slow on their feet, hit a drive serve.

**OFFENSIVE STRATEGIES** (Chapter 4).

- Take advantage of a set up. If the ball sets up well, hit offensively. Balls rebounding far off the back wall are usually set ups.

- Hit the high percentage shots. Hitting low percentage shots loses rallies! Passing shots are high percentage shots from back court. Pinch shots are high percentage shots from the front court.

- If you can play the ball at knee level (or lower) hit offensively. If you can’t hit at knee level, hit to the ceiling
• If you winning rallies because your opponent is making mistakes, this may be because you are doing a good job at forcing weak returns. It could also mean that his/skill levels are not up to par. If this is the case, be careful to not get lazy in your game, anticipating that you will win the game because of the mistakes of your opponent. In these circumstance you should still focus on your offensive game. Never play down to the skill level of your opponent.

• If your opponent stays in the service area after serving, return the serve with a passing shot. It works every time!

• Always have three or four choices of shots to make. Usually the order of shots to pick from is a down-the-line passing shot, a cross-court passing shot, a pinch shot, or a defensive shot. The shot you select will primarily depend on your opponent’s position in the court and your position in the court. Review the chapter 4 about shot selection.

• Watch your opponent’s direction of movement. This is an advanced skill but it is good to start thinking about this when you’ve mastered the basics. If your opponent is in motion (e.g., toward the front or rear court, or to the left or right), hit to the opposite direction he or she is moving. For example, if your opponent is in front of you but is moving toward the rear of the court, you could hit a pinch shot. This causes your opponent to stop and change directions, delaying their ability to get to the ball in time to make a good shot.

DEFENSIVE STRATEGIES (Chapter 4).

• To slow the pace of the game, use a half-lob or a half- or high Z serve.

• Return a ceiling shot with another ceiling shot.

• Include angles in your defensive shots. For example, if you are in the right position, hit a high or mid-wall Z shot to add some angles for your opponent to contend with.

• If the ball does not set up very well or you are out of position to make a good shot, hit a defensive shot (e.g., ceiling shot) to stay in the rally.

• Long rallies usually mean that neither you nor your opponent are playing offensively (trying to end the rally). If rallies go more than about 5 shots each, they are too long. Play more offensively.

OTHER STRATEGIES

• Notice how you losing rallies. If you are losing rallies to passing shots, it generally means that you are positioned too far forward in the court. If you are losing rallies to front court shots, you are probably standing too close to the back wall. If your opponent is hitting balls to the front court because he is always in front of you, then move him to the back court but hitting passing shots or defensive shots.

• Make observations about your own level of play during a game. Are you hitting too many balls off the back wall? Are you playing more defensively than you are offensively? Are your serves forcing weak returns? When your opponent is in front of you, are you hitting passing shots? Are you hitting pinch shots when your opponent is behind you? Are you playing the front court at all? Are you letting the ball set up and making a choice of what shot to hit or are you just hitting the ball? Are your shots taking your opponent out of center court? Answers to these types of questions can lead you to focus just one or two things in the game that can make a difference. Focusing on too many things to try to work on is not productive.

• Identify your own strengths and weaknesses. To do this, you will simply observe your own level of play and ask yourself some questions. Interestingly, these are some of the same questions—or at least similar to the questions you would be asking yourself about your opponent. Is there a particular shot that I play really well? Do I move out of the service area into center court after serving? Is there a particular serve that I hit really well? Can I hit a variety of serves from different places in the service area
at different heights, speeds, and angles? Do I let the ball set up so I can make a good offensive shot? Do I play the ball off the back wall well? Do I watch my opponent so I can anticipate the next play? Do I choose the right shot depending on where my opponent is positioned and my position? Do I tend to play offensively or do I tend to play defensively? Under what situations do I get wrapped up in the psychology of the game? How do I deal with the emotional aspects of the game? The list can go on to cover every aspect of your game.

• Keep a player's journal in which you record what your goal for the day was, what you did in practice, what you did well, what you did less well, how you played that day, and then list one goal to work on the next day. As you keep track of your practice and games, you will be able to identify things that you need to work on as well as things that you do well.

Although it is good to know what your weaknesses are so you can practice specific things to improve, focusing on your strengths during an actual game will result in a much stronger game.

• Always look over your shoulder to watch the ball and how your opponent is setting up to hit. Does it look like he/she is going to hit the ball low and hard or high and soft? What direction is he or she facing? This will help you anticipate where to move in the court and plan your next shot. If you merely face the front wall and wait for the ball to go by, you will be reacting rather than anticipating and responding. If you are consistently out of position to make a good return, it may simply be because you are not watching your opponent and are therefore unable to anticipate.

• As you watch your opponent, you will begin to notice patterns. Does your opponent hit the same shot every time the situation is presented? Do they have a favorite shot? Do they consistently make the same mistakes? If so, you can anticipate his/her shot each time. We call this, “reading your opponent.”

• Once you have identified the strengths of your game, how do you play to your strengths? Basically, it comes down to doing those things that you do well and avoiding those things that you don’t do so well. Here are just a few examples.

  ✓ Use your strongest serves. There is no reason to use a serve that you have not practiced enough to consistently force a weak return. Game time is not a good time to practice.

  ✓ Use your favorite and most practiced offensive and defensive shots. A game is not time to practice new shots.

  ✓ “Read” your opponent to assume good court position and to choose the best shot to make.

  ✓ If you physically fit, you can use this to your advantage by maintaining a high level of play during the game. If you notice your opponent is tiring, maintain a fast paced tempo of the game.

• Control the tempo of the game. Your best tempo is based on your own physical abilities as well as your personal skill levels. Play the game at your own tempo. What makes this difficult is that your opponent is trying to play the game at his/her own tempo. You can change the tempo of the game by playing more or less defensively or by using slow serves or fast serves. Here are some other ideas for controlling the tempo to your advantage.

  ✓ Use your allotted timeouts to change the tempo of the game. You have three 30 second time out in games played to 15 points. In the third game of match play (if it is necessary), you have two 30 second time outs. If the game is going too fast or if you need a little extra time to gather your thoughts and rethink your game plan, call a timeout.

  ✓ Use the 10 second serving rule to control the tempo of the game. This can be done with two different intentions. First, take time to observe your opponent in the receiving position. Based on his/her court position or body posture, you can select a serve that will force
a weak return. Second, if you are tired and need to rest, take the entire 10 seconds to begin your serving motion. You can use this time to rest or for some “self-talk” about your game plan and to stay focused. If your opponent is tired, you may serve quickly to keep the game moving.

- Convert defensive shots to offensive shots. This means that when your opponent hits a mediocre defensive shot that does not force you to the back wall or corner, play it offensively. A good example is when your opponent hits a ceiling shot that falls short of the back wall. Wait for the ball to drop to below waist high and hit offensively.

- All shots, including serves, offensive shots, and defensive shots should force a weak return. Evaluate every rally. Did you win (or lose) the rally because your shots forced (or did not force) weak returns.

- Let the ball set up. This means to delay hitting the ball until the ball (and you) are in the best position to hit the chosen shot. You do not have to hit the ball at the first opportunity. To let the ball set up, you must be able to “read the ball.” This means that you can anticipate where the ball is going to be when you want to hit it (usually just before the second bounce). Notice the angle, height, and speed at which the ball hits the front wall; where the ball takes its first bounce; and the angle and speed at which it hits a sidewall (or back wall). Reading the ball well helps you anticipate the best court position to be in to make the best return. If you are not reading the ball well, you are probably chasing the ball around the court, are tired because you are running too much, and you are probably not hitting good shots because you are out of position to make the best return.
Playing doubles involves four players. There are two teams of two players each. There are two scores, one for each team. Doubles is an exciting variation of racquetball. Because there are four players in the court, it can also be a challenge to play safely.

**RULE MODIFICATION—SERVING**

All of the serving rules for singles apply to playing doubles. There are some additional serving rules when playing doubles.

- The team that is to serve first in the first game is decided as in singles. After deciding the first team to serve, the two players on the team must decide who will serve first. This serving order must be maintained for the entire game. The serving order can change for the second and third games.

- The server’s partner must stand erect in the doubles box (see Figure 2.1 on page 9). The server’s partner can stand in the doubles box next to either side wall. Usually the server will tell you against which side wall he or she wants you to stand.

- The server should always serve to the corner opposite of his/her partner. If the server wants to serve to the left rear corner, his/her partner should stand in the doubles box along the right side wall. Serving to the same side of the court that your partner is standing on will almost always result in a hinder of the player receiving the serve.

- During the first service opportunity of each game, the team who serves first is allowed only one server and one handout. In other words, the first player will continue to serve until he or she loses his/her serve. The second player will not have a serving opportunity. The receiving team will become the serving team (they must also establish a service order that will be maintained the entire game). The first player to serve from the second team will continue to serve until he or she loses his/her serve. The server’s partner will then have a serving opportunity and will serve until he or she loses his/her serve.

- A handout occurs when the first player loses his/her serve. In doubles, a side out occurs when both players have lost their serve. It is only during the first serving opportunity of each game, that the team to serve first has only one serving opportunity.

- Foot faults apply to both the server and the server’s partner. Both the server and his/her partner must remain in the service area until the serve rebounds off the front wall and passes the vertical plane of the short line.

- If a served ball hits the server’s partner while the partner is in the doubles box, it is a fault. If a served ball hits the server’s partner while he or she is outside of the doubles box, it is an out serve.

- There is no written rule describing the position of the two players receiving the serve. Generally, they are positioned on the left and right sides of the rear court. They do not have to rotate positions and they can change positions any time.

**RULE MODIFICATION—RALLIES**

- A ball hit by a player that hits his own partner is not replayed. Hitting your own partner with a ball results in a loss of serve if you are the serving team, and a point for the opponent if you are the receiving team.

- Two partners may simultaneously swing at the ball but only one player may actually hit the ball.
• The blocking hinder includes moving in front of an opponent while your partner is hitting the ball.

• There are no provisions for hindering your own partner. Doing so does not result in replaying the rally. Two partners who hinder one another should try to continue to play out the rally in order to avoid losing the rally.

STRATEGIES FOR PLAYING DOUBLES

Playing doubles can be easier to play than singles since you can depend on your partner to cover part of the court and to make shots that may be difficult for you to get to. Nevertheless, playing doubles challenges a player’s skills because he/she has to consider the position and skill level of two opponents, not just one, and the position of his/her partner. Playing doubles is a great way to practice your offensive game. Here are some tips to help you enjoy playing doubles.

• Communicate with your partner by calling each shot. Use simple phrases such as “mine,” “help,” or “yours.” Although it may be confusing to call “yours,” some doubles teams use this phrase to tell their partner that they cannot make the play.

• Communicate with your partner only when you are on the offensive side of the rally. Talking to your partner when the other team is hitting is considered a penalty hinder (i.e., intentional distraction).

• Practice enough with your partner that you both can anticipate each other’s movements and shots.

• Before beginning a game, discuss your defensive formation with your partner. Some players like to play a front-back formation, a left-right formation, or split the court diagonally from the right front corner to the left rear corner. One effective way to play doubles is to play “opposite” of your partner. If your partner moves to the left rear corner to return a serve, you should move to a position in front of and to his/her right. The player not returning the ball should always move to a position opposite of his/her partner who is returning the ball. This movement pattern ensures that all areas of the court are covered at all times.

• When playing a team that uses a front-back formation, serve to the front court player (which makes him/her take a position in the rear court) then hit your next shot to the front court.

• Force one of your opponents into one of the rear corners. When he or she makes a weak return, hit an offensive shot into the corner his/her partner has left uncovered.

• Playing the front court will often draw both of your opponents into the front court. When this happens, hit a passing shot.

• If one of your opponents seems to dominate the game, this may be a sign that the other player is a weaker player. Try hitting balls to the other player to test your theory.
Appendices

Racquetball Skill Levels

Skill level classifications are used to establish some equality in skill between two competing players. The descriptions below provide some general characteristics of the skill level classifications.

**Open Players.** A player who is classified among the highest level of players in any given region. Is competitive at the regional and national level. All shots are hit crisply and with authority. Center court position is maintained. Excellent game strategy. Backhand and forehand are equally excellent. Every shot is planned and executed with precision.

**A Players.** Advanced player. A player who plays regularly and has become a top player at their facility. Trains regularly with drills and games. Well rounded player. Backhand and forehand strokes are near equal. Good depth of knowledge. High shot percentage. Uses all shots as part of an effective offense. Patient. Keeps the ball low. Plays off the back wall and corners well. Anticipates court position. Constantly achieves center court position. Hits the ball with confidence and authority. Serves effectively. Strong mental aspects of the game.

**B Players.** Intermediate player. A player who plays regularly and finds time to practice alone to perfect his/her shots. One or two effective serves. Has good knowledge of court strategy and positioning in offensive and defensive situations. Correct use of strategy is inconsistent. Tries to maintain center court but relinquishes it often. Reacts well to most rebounds and ball angles. Use of backhand is consistent but only occasionally used as an offensive weapon. Tends to keep the ball low but hits some high shots by mistake. Selects proper shots most of the time and is consistent with most of them. Lets high balls go by and plays them off the back wall. Developing more patience. Beginning to anticipate opponents shots and establishes court position. Mental aspects of the competitive game effect level of play.

**C Players.** Advanced beginner. Plays frequently and is developing strengths in the qualities listed for a D player. Executes shots with some precision. Can safely attempt ceiling, pinch, and passing shots with an occasional kill shot. Is beginning to perfect one or two serves. Increasing in patience but still hits the ball high and sometimes still follows the ball with the body. Body position and swing dynamics are improving. Understanding ball rebounding and angles. Greater ball velocity but hard shots are generally uncontrolled. Backhand is weak. Understands need for strategy and center court advantage but does not consistently maintain center court. Begins to play shots off the back wall. Beginning to plan shots. Willing to enter small tournaments.

**D Players.** Beginning players. A wide range of skills can be found in players in this class. A player who is beginning to receive instruction but lacks playing experience. Is in the process of learning safety, rules, forehand and backhand strokes. Experiments with a variety of serves, back wall shots, angle and passing shots. Little court sense regarding deflection and rebound of the ball, especially out of the corner. Not clear about the advantage of center court positioning and usually does not knowingly hold center court. Little knowledge of game strategy. Hits shots randomly trying to stay in the game. Lacks patience to wait on the ball and chases the ball with the body rather than the eyes. Overhead shots are frequent. Lacks power and control of the ball due to poor or inconsistent body position and swing dynamics. Hits the ball with slow or intermediate speeds. Forehand is preferred stroke. Is ready to start participating in friendly competition.
Racquets and Strings

There is a large variety of racquets available on the market. Racquets differ in the materials used to make the frame, the shape of the frame, design of the frame, the type of strings, string pattern, and string tension, grips and grip sizes, the length of the racquet, head size, and weight of the racquet. Each of these factors affects the performance of the racquet.

Each player should play with a variety of racquets to select the racquet with the best combination of characteristics that match his/her individual style and level of play.

Size of the Racquet. Racquets vary in size, in other words the length of the racquet and the size of the head of the racquet. Racquets have been getting much bigger in the last 20 years. The legal length limit is 22 inches. The size of the head of the racquet varies from about 80 to about 106 square inches.

Grip Size. The size of the grip is just as important as any other characteristic of the racquet. Grip size is measured as the circumference of the grip (inches). When gripping the racquet, the middle and ring finger should almost touch the base of the thumb. Grips come in the following grip sizes:

3 5/8 in ............... Super small
3 7/8 in ............... Extra small
4 1/8 in ............... Small

The smaller the grip, the greater the wrist snap (flexion/extension). A proper grip size is important in controlling the racquet. An improper grip size can cause the racquet handle to twist in your hand. Some grips are made of materials and design that will help maintain a strong grip. Aftermarket grips can be wrapped or slipped onto the racquet to increase the grip size or change the material or design of the grip. Some players wear a glove to absorb sweat and strengthen the grip.

Racquet Shape. Most racquet heads were originally oval or round headed. Today, many different shapes are available but most heads are either teardrop or rectangular shaped. The shape of the head determines to some degree the location and size of the “sweet spot,” flexibility of the racquet and torque of the racquet.

Racquet Frame. The thickness of the frame of the racquet in the head area also affects the power and control characteristics of the racquet. Stiffer racquet frames offer more control. Racquet frames that are more flexible offer more power. Stiff racquets may also result in sore elbows. Racquet frames were originally made of wood but are now made of a variety of composite materials (graphite, boron, fiberglass, Kevlar, ceramic, carbon, tungsten, titanium) to better withstand the constant impacts of the game. The balance of the racquet is important and varies between brands. Most racquets balance evenly between the head and handle. A racquet that balances with a heavy head gives more power but requires greater strength to control.

Racquet Weight. The weight of the racquet is measured in grams. Racquets vary in weight from about 145 grams to 250 grams. Generally speaking, the lighter the racquet, the faster the swing speed, which in and of itself increases speed (power) of the ball. Lighter racquets also offer greater maneuverability which is advantageous when playing in the front court, corners, and during fast paced games. Heavier racquets frames require more strength to swing and control. Most players prefer lighter racquets for their increased swing speed with less effort and greater maneuverability. Using a racquet that is too light may also result in a muscle injury commonly referred to as tennis elbow. Using a racquet that is either too light or too heavy may also result in a lack of control of the swing and poorly executed shots.

Strings. Strings are made of gut or synthetic materials. The “gauge” of the string indicates its thickness; the higher the gauge, the thinner the string. Most racquets are strung with 16-17 gauge strings. Thicker strings are more durable and last longer but are not as resilient as thinner strings. Thinner strings will not last as long and will tend to “cut” into the ball when hit. Textured strings will provide more control of the ball since they will grip the ball on contact. Each racquet comes with a manufacturer recommended stringing pattern and tension range (i.e., 32-36 pds). Generally, stringing a racquet at the lower end of the recommended tension range results in the ball having more time in contact with the strings and a fuller rebound off the racquet - resulting in more power. You can think of this as a “trampoline effect.” When a rac-
quet is strung at a higher string tension, there is less power - but because the ball quickly deflects off the strings, the player can direct the ball with greater accuracy and control. Racquets are strung with a variety of string patterns. Typical patterns include horizontal and vertical patterns whereas some racquets are strung in wishbone patterns. Some racquets have string patterns that travel through the handle which essentially lengthens the string, increasing the flex of the string at the time of contact and thereby increases power. Other racquets use string patterns that attach to braces located at the throat of the racquet. Some racquets vary the spacing between strings. Strings spaced further apart play as if they are strung at a lower tension. Strings placed closer together play as if they were strung at a higher tension. Some racquets have larger holes or grommets where the string winds through the racquet frame - allowing more flex in the string during ball contact.

**Balls.** Professional racquetball tournaments have settled on the blue or green non-pressurized racquetball. Non-pressurized balls obtain their bounce from the rubber from which it is made rather than from the air pressure within its hollow core (such as a tennis ball). Once a ball is worn smooth or the rubber is hardened, it does not bounce as well. Although several manufacturers make racquetballs, Penn and Ektelon balls are most commonly used in tournaments. The Pro-Penn green balls are the approved balls for USA Racquetball sanctioned tournaments.
RACQUETBALL VOCABULARY

Ace. A serve which goes untouched by the receiver and results in a point for the server.

Around the World Shot. A defensive shot that hits high on the sidewall - front wall - side wall before hitting the floor in the back court and bouncing into the rear corners.

Back Court. An area of the court between the receiving line and the back wall.

Blocking. Preventing your opponent from hitting the ball by moving some part of your body between your opponent and the ball.

Carry. Any ball which rests on the racquet long enough that the effect is more of a sling or throw rather than a hit.

Ceiling Shot. A defensive shot that hits the ceiling then the front wall and bounces off the floor in a high arc into the rear corners of the court.

Ceiling Serve. A fault serve that hits the ceiling after hitting the front wall.

Center Court. An oval area about 10 feet deep and 15 feet wide centered between the sidewalls and between the short line and back wall.

Court Hinder. An abnormal deflection or bounce of the ball caused by an obstacle in the court such as a door handle, window frame, light fixture, etc.

Crack Serve. A drive serve that hits the front wall at an angle and then bounces off the side wall very low to the floor or in the side wall - floor crotch.

Cross-court. A ball hit at an angle off the front wall and driven into the opposite rear corner.

Crotch Ball. A ball hitting the junction of the front wall and side wall, floor, or ceiling. The ball is treated as hitting the non-front wall surface first. A ball hitting the junction of a back wall and floor or the side wall and floor. The ball is treated as hitting the floor first.

Cut-throat. A game involving three players.

Dead Ball. A ball that is no longer in play.

Dead Ball Serve. A serve that is replayed with no penalty to the server.

Doubles Box. See “Service Box”

Doubles. A game involving four players: two teams of two players.

Drive Serve Line. A line in the service area, 3 feet from each side wall over which the server may not cross with his/her body or racquet when serving a drive serve to the same side.

Drive Serve. A serve hit low and hard to the front wall so that it rebounds on a relatively low straight trajectory into one of the rear corners.

Drop Shot. A finesse shot with little speed that barely reaches the front wall. Sometimes called a “dink.”

Eyewear. Approved safety glasses worn for the protection of the eyes.

Fault Serve. An infraction of the rules of the serve. Two faults in succession results in a hand-out or side-out.

Foot Fault. An illegal position of the server’s feet any time during a serve and before the ball crosses the short line.

Half Lob Serve. A half speed serve that rebounds one-third to midway up on the front wall, bouncing twice before hitting the back wall. The ball goes into the rear corners of the court above waist high. Also called the garbage serve.

Front Court. An area of the court in front of the service line.

Handout. The first loss of serve in doubles.
**High Z Shot.** A defensive shot hit high on the front wall - sidewall corner and then rebounds off the opposite side wall deep in the back court.

**Hinder.** Any situation that prevents an opponent from having fair view and play of the ball. The hinder can be caused by the court or a player. Depending on the nature of the hinder, the hinder may result in a replay of the rally or a penalty.

**Into The Back Wall Shot.** A defensive shot that is played off the back wall and driven back into the back wall hard enough to lob the ball to the front court.

**IRT.** International Racquetball Tour. The organization which sanctions international tournaments for professional racquetball players.

**Jam Serve.** A drive serve that hits the front wall at an angle and then bounces off the side wall toward the receiver, forcing the receiver to take a bent arm swing or to spin and chase the ball into the opposite corner or off the back wall. Sometimes called a “wrap” serve.

**Kill Shot.** A ball hit low to the front wall and is usually unplayable.

**Lob Serve.** A serve hit softly to the upper one-third of the front wall that rebounds in a high arc deep in the back court corners.

**Lob.** A defensive shot hit high on the front wall, rebounding in a high arc to the back wall corners.

**Long Serve.** A fault serve which hits the back wall before hitting the floor.

**Match.** A best out of a three game series.

**Mid Court.** An area of the court between the service line and the receiving line.

**Non-Front Wall Serve.** An illegal serve that hits either sidewall, ceiling, floor, or any crotch before hitting the front wall, resulting in a handout or side out.

**Out Serve.** Any serve that results in a loss of serve (hand-out or side-out).

**Passing Shot.** A ball which passes the opponent before he or she is able to make a successful return. Passing shots include down-the-line, cross-court, or wide angle.

**Pinch Shot.** A ball hit into the side wall - front wall corner, bouncing twice before the service line or hitting the opposite side wall. The pinch shot is hit into the side wall that you are facing.

**Rally.** A continuous exchange of shots from the time the ball is served until the ball is no longer in play (dead ball), resulting in a point, side out, handout, or replay.

**Receiving Zone.** An area of the court between the receiving line and the back wall in which the defensive player receives serves.

**Receiving Line.** The dashed line parallel to and 5 feet behind the short line. The player receiving a serve may not cross over the vertical plane of this line to return a serve until after the ball has crossed the vertical plane of the receiving line, after the ball has bounced once, or after the ball has rebounded off the back wall.

**Reverse Pinch Shot.** A pinch shot that is hit into the cross-court side wall - front wall corner.

**Roll Out.** A kill shot hit so low on the front wall that it rolls on the floor and cannot be returned.

**Safety Zone.** The 5 foot area bounded by the short and receiving lines.

**Screen.** Interfering with the opponents vision of the ball during a serve or rally.

**Service Area.** The area between & including the service & short lines.

**Service Line.** The line parallel to, and 15 feet from the front wall.

**Service Box.** The area in which the server’s partner in doubles must stand during the serve.
**Setup.** A weak return of a shot that results in an easy opportunity for the opponent to hit an offensive shot which ends the rally.

**Short Serve.** A fault serve which after hitting the front wall, hits the floor on or in front of the short line.

**Short Line.** A line parallel to, and 20 feet from the front wall.

**Side Out.** Retiring the server in singles or a team in doubles.

**Skip Ball.** A ball which hits the floor before hitting the front wall.

**Splat Shot.** A ball hit from within about 1 foot of the side wall into the side wall which rebounds off the front wall and bounces twice in the front court.

**Tether or Wrist Cord.** A strap attached to the butt end (or handle) of the racquet which must be worn around the wrist during play.

**Three Wall Serve.** An illegal serve which hits the front wall & both side walls before hitting the floor.

**Z Serve.** A serve which hits the front wall-side wall corner and bounces on the floor past the short line before hitting the opposite side wall. Z serves can be hit low, mid wall or high off the front wall.
**Racquetball Web Sites**

Racquetball Central  
Good information site for the sport.  
http://www.racquetballcentral.com/

Racquetball Warehouse  
On-line shopping for everything you need.  
http://racquetballwarehouse.com/

Racquet World  
On-line shopping for everything you need.  
http://www.racquetworld.com/

ProRacquetballNet  
Video streams of the pros.  
http://www.proracquetball.net/

United States Racquetball Association  
http://www.racquetball.org/

International Racquetball Federation  
http://www.internationalracquetball.com

Racquetball Lessons Blog  
Tips, strategies and lessons.  
http://racquetball-lessons.com

Ektelon  
http://www.ektelon.com

Wilson  
http://www.wilson.com

Head  
http://www.head.com