

Pro Tips from... *Cyrus Poncha*



Pro Tips: Improve your Squash with Cyrus Poncha

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Cyrus Poncha is Indian National Juniors Coach and a leading coach in the squash hotbed in Bombay, India. In addition to his highly regarding coaching activities, Cyrus and his brother Neville have created an excellent coaching website, dispensing information and advice for the improvement of your game. You can browse Cyrus's Squash Website at: <http://www.cyrus.indianet.org>

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Dear Squash Player:

Are you a beginner looking for basic advice? Are you a good player seeking to reach for excellence? In either case, it is good to always keep in mind the basics. The principals of squash are fairly simple -- we coaches often over-complicate things.

Here are ten simple rules to always keep in mind as you work to improve your game:

1. Hit to a good length

Stroke the ball to the front wall with sufficient judgement to make it bounce at the back of the court behind the service box. The ball should never hit the back wall on the full or fail to hit the back wall, ideally after one bounce and die. Develop it, as a reflex action with practice, by hitting hard below the front wall service line, or soft above the service line. The objective is to confine your opponent to the backcourt, moving him out of the dominating position at the T.

2. Aim for the back corners

As well as good length the standard shot should be played to the back corner. One can see the opponent's options are reduced when you play in the back corner. Thirty feet away he can't attack and his swing is restricted. While playing a cross-court you should hit wide so that he reply with a volley.

3. Keep it close to the sidewall

As a routine, keep the ball straight, in the corners, along the sidewall (easier said than done). This will cause your opponent to move away from the T and hinder him from attacking or volleying. He will be on the defensive and there may

be a possibility of a weak return.

4. The importance of the 'T'

Moving to the T after playing your shot is most crucial. This will allow you to move and pick up your opponents shot, be it a drop to front court or a shot to the back court. Generally take long strides to the ball, so the body is in the recommended position when playing the stroke, and can also recover quickly for the next rally. The player controlling the T will invariably control the point. Even after playing a drop or front wall boast you should move back to the T, to await your opponents stroke. Practice correct movements by on court shadow (ghosting) routines and shot specific drills.

5. Watch the ball

Some players find it hard to watch the ball, especially when the ball is hit behind the player, they just watch the front wall. Players also tend to lift their head to see their opponent's position, before playing their own stroke. Make it a practice to watch the ball unto impact on your and you opponent's racket. This will give you the extra milliseconds, to respond and can also avoid injuries of being accidentally hit by your opponent, his racket or ball.

6. Move your opponent around

It sounds simple, but most players tend to play strokes mechanically without relation to their opponent's position. Strike a balance between trying to hit winners or just defending and returning every ball. Try and spot your opponents strengths and weaknesses by watching their previous matches and also during knock up. Use this info to frame your game plan. Move your opponent to all four corners and especially if they have a weaker side, which should be exploited.

7. Eat smart

There is no perfect diet, as everyone has different needs and requirements. The best diet is one that provides adequate fuel and is balanced with nutrients in the required amounts. If you eat healthily, you will train harder, and be in better physical and mental condition. Water and proper hydration are very important. Unreplaced fluid losses can impair performance. Please drink water as required by your system during training and matches. Eat well during tournaments, preferably carbohydrates.

8. Think about your game

Squash is a mental as well as a physical sport. Analyze your strengths and weaknesses and try and improve upon them. Even if you do not have a coach take the advice of a friend. Also learn from the pros by studying their matches on TV or video for tips and traps. Check out the squash sites on the net.

9. Keep in shape

"You have to be fit to play squash, not play squash to get fit". Balance your on and off season training with a mixture of flexibility, aerobic, anaerobic and strength training and conditioning. Training must be combined with appropriate diet and also provide adequate recovery periods for your body to rebuild and develop. Stick to your training schedule, avoid short, hectic training and concentrate on longer and systematic training to avoid injury and build up your body's reserves. Everyone needs a specific training program, dependant on your genetics, physical shape and training history. This will determine how much training you can do now and your body's response to the training.

10. Have fun

In the end -it's just a game

Have fun!

Your friend, Cyrus
