

GRIP, FOOTWORK, AND STROKES IN TENNIS.

Footwork is weight control. It is correct body position for strokes, and out of it all strokes should grow. In explaining the various forms of stroke and footwork I am writing as a right-hand player. Left-handers should simply reverse the feet.

Racquet grip is a very essential part of stroke, because a faulty grip will ruin the finest serving. It is a natural grip for a top forehand drive. It is inherently weak for the backhand, as the only natural shot is a chop stroke.

To acquire the forehand grip, hold the racquet with the edge of the frame towards the ground and the face perpendicular, the handle towards the body, and "shake hands" with it, just as if you were greeting a friend. The handle settled comfortably and naturally into the hand, the line of the arm, hand, and racquet are one. The swing brings the racquet head on a line with the arm, and the whole racquet is merely an extension of it.

The backhand grip is a quarter circle turn of hand on the handle, bringing the hand on top of the handle and the knuckles directly up. The shot travels ACROSS the wrist.

This is the best basis for a grip. I do not advocate learning this grip exactly, but model your natural grip as closely as possible on these lines without sacrificing your own comfort or individuality.

Having once settled the racquet in the hand, the next question is the position of the body and the order of developing strokes.

All tennis strokes, should be made with the body' at right angles to the net, with the shoulders lined up parallel to the line of flight of the ball. The weight should always travel forward. It should pass from the back foot to the front foot at the moment of striking the ball. Never allow the weight to be going away from the stroke. It is weight that determines the "pace" of a stroke; swing that, decides the "speed."

Let me explain the definitions of "speed" and "pace." "Speed" is the actual rate with which a ball travels through the air. "Pace" is the momentum with which it comes off the ground. Pace is weight. It is the "sting" the ball carries when it comes off the ground, giving the inexperienced or unsuspecting player a shock of force which the stroke in no way showed.

A great many players have both "speed" and "pace." Some shots may carry both.

The order of learning strokes should be:

1. The Drive. Fore and backhand. This is the foundation of all tennis, for you cannot build up a net attack unless you have the ground stroke to open the way. Nor can you meet a net attack successfully unless you can drive, as that is the

only successful passing shot.

2. The Service.

3. The Volley and Overhead Smash.

4. The Chop or Half Volley and other incidental and ornamental strokes.