

THE DRIVE IN TENNIS.

The forehand drive is the opening of every offensive in tennis, and, as such, should be most carefully studied. There are certain rules of footwork that apply to all shots. To reach a ball that is a short distance away, advance the foot that is away from the shot and thus swing into position to hit. If a ball is too close to the body, retreat the foot closest to the shot and drop the weight back on it, thus, again, being in position for the stroke. When hurried, and it is not possible to change the foot position, throw the weight on the foot closest to the ball.

The receiver should always await the service facing the net, but once the serve is started on the way to court, the receiver should at once attain the position to receive it with the body at right angles to the net.

The forehand drive is made up of one continuous swing of the racquet that, for the purpose of analysis, may be divided into three parts:

1. The portion of the swing behind the body, which determines the speed of the stroke.
2. That portion immediately in front of the body which determines the direction and, in conjunction with weight shift from one foot to the other, the pace of the shot.
3. The portion beyond the body, comparable to the golfer's "follow through," determines spin, top or slice, imparted to the ball.

All drives should be topped. The slice shot is a totally different stroke.

To drive straight down the side-line, construct in theory a parallelogram with two sides made up of the side-line and your shoulders, and the two ends, the lines of your feet, which should, if extended, form the right angles with the side-lines. Meet the ball at a point about 4 to 4 1/2 feet from the body immediately in front of the belt buckle, and shift the weight from the back to the front foot at the MOMENT OF STRIKING THE BALL. The swing of the racquet should be flat and straight through. The racquet head should be on a line with the hand, or, if anything, slightly in advance; the whole arm and the racquet should turn slightly over the ball as it leaves the racquet face and the stroke continue to the limit of the swing, thus imparting top spin to the ball.

The hitting plane for all ground strokes should be between the knees and shoulders. The most favourable plane is on a line with the waist.

Never step away from the ball in driving cross court. always throw your weight in the shot.

The forehand drive from the left court is identically the same for the straight shot down your opponent's forehand. For the cross drive to his backhand, you

must conceive of a diagonal line from your backhand corner to his, and thus make your stroke with the footwork as if this imaginary line were the side-line. In other words, line up your body along your shot and make your regular drive. Do not try to "spoon" the ball over with a delayed wrist motion, as it tends to slide the ball off your racquet.

All drives should be made with a stiff, locked wrist. There is no wrist movement in a true drive. Top spin is imparted by the arm, not the wrist.

The backhand drive follows closely the principles of the forehand, except that the weight shifts a moment sooner, and the R or front foot should always be advanced a trifle closer to the side-line than the L so as to bring the body clear of the swing. The ball should be met in front of the right leg, instead of the belt buckle, as the great tendency in backhand shots is to slice them out of the side-line, and this will pull the ball cross court, obviating this error. The racquet head must be slightly in advance of the hand to aid in bringing the ball in the court. Do not strive for too much top spin on your backhand.

I strongly urge that no one should ever favour one department of his game, in defence of a weakness. Develop both forehand and backhand, and do not "run around" your backhand, particularly in return of service. To do so merely opens your court. If you should do so, strive to ace your returns, because a weak effort would only result in a kill by your opponent.

Do not develop one favourite shot and play nothing but that. If you have a fair cross-court drive, do not use it in practice, but strive to develop an equally fine straight shot.

Remember that the fast shot is the straight shot. The cross drive must be slow, for it has not the room owing to the increased angle and height of the net. Pass down the line with your drive, but open the court with your cross-court shot.

Drives should have depth. The average drive should hit behind the service-line. A fine drive should hit within 3 feet of the baseline. A cross-court drive should be shorter than a straight drive, so as to increase the possible angle. Do not always play one length drive, but learn to vary your distance according to your man. You should drive deep against a baseliner, but short against a net player, striving to drop them at his feet as, he comes in.

Never allow your opponent to play a shot he likes if you can possibly force him to one he dislikes.

Again I urge that you play your drive:

1. With the body sideways to the net.
2. The swing flat, with long follow through.
3. The weight shifting just as the ball is hit.