

Singles Strategy

Basics:

1. Know your strength (net play, forehands, heavy top spin, etc.).
2. From behind the base line, hit smart high shots (5 feet over net to behind the service line, avoid heavy top spin moving backwards). Don't be afraid to lob – a deep lob to the backhand is a smart shot. Do NOT try to win the point from behind the base line. After your shot, recover to the base line.
3. From the base line, try to hit shots that keep the opponent off balance and hitting outside of their comfort zone (running to the side, backward, forward, non-bouncing flat or slice shot, drop shot, high bouncing top spin or base line shot, deep lob, strong to the backhand). Your goal is to make your opponent hit a weak shot. Don't force this strategy when off balance – play defensive.
4. Your strategy on the weak ball is player specific (see below).
5. Have a Go-To Baseline shot:
 - a. Backhand
 - b. Angle Left then Right then Left etc.
 - c. Cross-court
6. Keep shots to the opponent's backhand as much as possible.
7. Find the area of the court where your opponent is weak and put them there every point!
8. Remember that cross-court is the high percentage shot (lowest net and longest court).
9. NEVER hit in the net. Wide is also a bad miss. Aim 2-3 feet inside the line on aggressive shots.

General Strategies

Hit to the backhand.

Don't miss any shot and out rally your opponent.

Find the shot your opponent hates to hit and make him hit it repeatedly! (lobs, drop shots).

Make him run forward, backward, left, right, etc.

If opponent comes to the net, play to your strength (lob versus passing shot) and hit the smart shot based on where you are on the court and if you are balanced and strong. Watch the ball, not the opponent.

Recommendation: make them hit a backhand overhead while backing up.

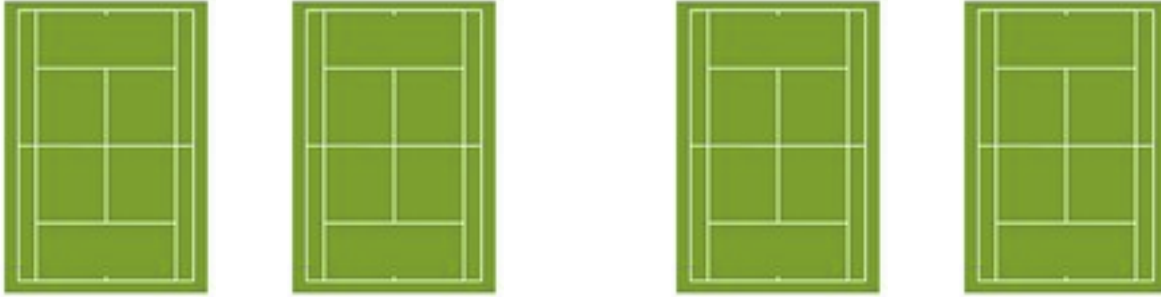
The Serve

Position: Between the center mark and half way to the singles line. After the serve, move to the center line. Master the 3 types of serves: wide, body, and T. Serve standing halfway between the center mark and the far alley line. Use the serve that sets up your strategy.

The Return

The fundamentals:

- When the ball is tossed, you come off your heels (chop feet, do split step) and lock eyes on the ball.
- Watch the ball from the toss all the way into your strings.
- As soon as you know if you need to hit a forehand or backhand (which occurs before the ball crosses the net), you must take the racquet back and turn your feet and body.
- The backswing is short, quick, and direct (no loop).
- Do NOT over swing on a fast serve.
- If you see the ball out, call it quickly and decisively. If it is a let, call it quickly and decisively.
- A good serve will be blocked to the high percentage area.



First serve return:

- Stand slightly behind base line halfway between the center mark and the far alley line.
- If the server has not shown he can hit wide, then cheat to the center to hit more forehands.
- On a first serve, take a Defensive Mindset.

Bad Returns: in the net, slow floaters, other shots that allow the server to control the pace.

OK Returns: blocked ball hit to the T, lobs to the center of the back court.

Good Returns: balls that make the server run wide or forward, balls that bounce close to the base line that the server hits at their feet or are forced to back up, lobs to the back hand side.

Second serve return:

- Stand in front of the base line halfway between the center mark and the far alley line.
- If the server has not shown he can hit wide, then cheat to the center to hit more forehands.
- All serves are considered Bad, OK, and Good identical to above.
- On a second serve, take an Offensive Mindset. View second serves as break point opportunities.

Master returning the 3 types of serves: wide, body, and T.

After the return, move to the center of the baseline to have a chance at all types of shots.

Player Type 1: The Strong Net Player (Zach)

Weak balls are hit as approach shots and followed to the net.

Good Shots:

- deep to backhand
- shot that bounces above or below his comfort zone, like the low chip
- shots that must be hit off balance, like wide shot

Your goal on the approach is to do a split step in front of the service line. Consider his possible shot angles and place your self in the middle. Your next shot is based on the strength of your opponent's shot.

Where to hit the ball

- When you are strong (ball is high) you should aim for strong angle shot to the service line.
- When you are weak (ball is low or you are off balance) you should aim at the base line to the opponent's backhand.
- If your opponent hit his shot from a wide part of the court, hit short to the opposite side and be ready to pounce on his shot.

After your first volley, move to the net until you are about half way between the net and service line.

Move according to your partner's shot and the possible angles the opponent can hit. If the ball is sent wide, take a big step toward the alley.

On overheads, play to your strength and if you are weak, let it drop and take it as a groundstroke.

Learn to Serve and Volley.

On a good lob, rush the net.

If opponent comes to the net, play to your strength (lob versus passing shot) and hit the smart shot based on where you are on the court and if you are balanced and strong. Watch the ball, not the opponent.

Recommendation: make them hit a backhand overhead while backing up.

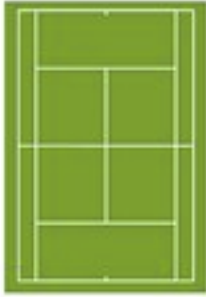
A serve-and-volleyer has a great net game, is quick around the net, and has fine touch for volleys. Serve-and-volleyers come up to the net at every opportunity when serving. They are almost always attackers and can hit many winners with varieties of volleys and drop volleys. When not serving, they often employ the "chip-and-charge", chipping back the serve without attempting to hit a winner and rushing the net. The serve-and-volleyers' strategy is to pressure the opponent to try to hit difficult passing shots. Some of the great ones in history are Jack Kramer, Frank Sedgman, Pancho Gonzales, Roy Emerson, Lew Hoad, John McEnroe, Boris Becker, Goran Ivanisevic, Pete Sampras, Stefan Edberg, Patrick Rafter, Richard Krajicek, Tim Henman, Jana Novotná and Martina Navratilova, Amelie Mauresmo. Some players, such as Tommy Haas, Roger Federer and Andy Roddick will only employ this strategy on grass courts or as a surprise tactic on any surface. Roger Federer uses this commonly against Rafael Nadal to break up long rallies and physically taxing games.

All-court players have aspects of every tennis style, whether that be offensive baseliner, defensive counter-puncher or serve-and-volleyer. All-court players use the best bits from each style and mix it together to create a truly formidable tennis style to play against. In game situations, they have the ability to select an action usually executed by one tennis style. They usually have an attacking game, mixing some groundstrokes and volleys to keep the opponent guessing. Most all-court players won't rush the net immediately after a serve like a typical serve and volley player would. However, their game often revolves around "constructing" a point to where they will be able to approach the net and put away an easy volley or pulling their opponent into the net and hitting a passing shot. They are very versatile; when an all-court player's baseline game is not working, he may switch to a net game, and vice versa. All-court players have the ability to adjust to different opponents that play different styles easier than pure baseliners or serve and volleyers. All-court players stereotypically have the speed, determination and fitness of a defensive counter-puncher, the confidence, skill and flair of offensive baseliners and have the touch, the agility around the net and tactical thinking of the serve-and-volleyer. But just because the all-court player has a combination of skills used by all tennis styles doesn't necessarily mean that they could beat an offensive baseliner or a defensive counter-puncher or even a serve-and-volleyer. It just means it would be more

difficult to read the game of an all-court player. Among the best all-court players of all time are: Bill Tilden, Ellsworth Vines, Rod Laver and Steffi Graf, Roger Federer, Novak Đoković, Amélie Mauresmo.

Player Type 2: The Strong Groundstroke Player (Paul, Sean)

Weak balls are hit as stingers (aggressive placements). Hit the ball to one of the four corner shots shown below:



After your shot, drop back to the baseline.

Only hit aggressively from the baseline if you are extremely balanced and confident.

On short shots that your opponent hits to bring you to the net, hit a drop shot and return to base line.

If opponent comes to the net, play to your strength (lob versus passing shot) and hit the smart shot based on where you are on the court and if you are balanced and strong. Watch the ball, not the opponent.

Recommendation: make them hit a backhand overhead while backing up.

An offensive or aggressive baseliner tries to win the point by hitting winners from the back of the court, attacking with fast penetrating balls that the opponent cannot reach or return effectively to get them back in the point. Being an offensive baseliner player requires a deadly array of shots and shot-types. The tennis player may not try to win the point outright with one shot, but instead may hit the ball from side to side until he/she spots an opening. Offensive baseliners normally have at least one great groundstroke, forehand or backhand. The best offensive baseliners have a huge serve to go with a great groundstroke or can hit huge groundstrokes off both wings. Usually offensive baseliners (as well as defensive players) have the ability to read the game very well and also their opponents' styles and tendencies so that they can spot a weakness and use one of their aggressive shots to act upon it.

An offensive baseliner can overpower and overwhelm most opposition. However, when going for winners, he/she can also produce many errors since an offensive baseliner has to repeatedly and correctly execute the most difficult strokes and shots in tennis. Errors can be due to physical and/or mental reasons such as fatigue and/or hesitation. Two great old-time players, R. Norris Williams and Ellsworth Vines, were famous for being unbeatable when their strokes were "on"; they played with such little margin for error in making their strokes, however, that when they were not 100 percent "on" they could be beaten by other players. Another advantage in being an offensive baseliner is since the shots they do are usually very ambitious or "high risk" and difficult to achieve, the offensive baseliner executing these sometimes truly amazing shots can shock and stun the opposition which increases confidence to the offensive baseliner and lowers the opponent's confidence.

Professionals who play this way: Ivan Lendl, Jim Courier, Andre Agassi, Steffi Graf, Monica Seles, Fernando Gonzalez, Juan Martín del Potro, James Blake, Nikolay Davydenko, Serena Williams, Venus Williams, Jelena Janković, Dinara Safina, Maria Sharapova and Ana Ivanović.

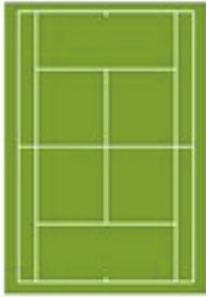
Player Type 3: The Counter-punching Player (Zach)

Find his weakness and exploit it. Annoy Him! Make him hit his least favorite shots from his least favorite spot on the court.

Never hit it in the net or out. Keeping the ball in play is more important than hitting hard shots.

This causes your opponent to fall apart physically and mentally.

Weak balls are hit as mini-stingers (slightly aggressive placements). Hit the ball to the corner that represents your opponent's weakness.



After your shot, drop back to the baseline.

On occasion, it is OK to hit aggressively from the baseline if you are extremely balanced and confident. This is for change of pace.

On short shots that your opponent hits to bring you to the net, hit a drop shot and return to base line.

If opponent comes to the net, play to your strength (lob versus passing shot) and hit the smart shot based on where you are on the court and if you are balanced and strong. Watch the ball, not the opponent.

Recommendation: make them hit a backhand overhead while backing up.

A defensive baseliner, or counter-puncher or retriever, returns every ball and relies on the opponent making mistakes. He/She has consistent shots, makes few errors of his own while making it difficult for opponents to hit winners. The game of the defensive counter-puncher has more to do with physical endurance and determination to retrieve un-retrievable balls as well as mental stamina. They tend to make relatively few errors because they don't attempt the complicated and ambitious shots of the aggressive baseliner. But that doesn't mean they don't ever attempt aggressive shots. A counter-puncher must have speed and agility to cover the court. He/She is a fighter, and has to have willingness to chase down every ball to frustrate opponents. Especially offensive baseliners who naturally have a fiery attitude and flair, returning every aggressive shot which they do will just encourage their aggressiveness and thus encouraging errors and mistakes. Usually, the defensive counter-puncher frustrates their opponent so much that their opponent might actually try to change their game by either coming to the net in which case they can just execute "Passing Shots" down the lines or cross-court (depending on the situation), or by attempting to also be a defensive counter-puncher. Counter-punchers are often particularly strong players at low-level play, where opponents cannot make winners with regularity.

Professionals who use this strategy: Mats Wilander, Björn Borg, Guillermo Vilas, Michael Chang, Chris Evert, Arantxa Sánchez Vicario, Martina Hingis, Rafael Nadal, Andy Murray, Lleyton Hewitt, Gaël Monfils, Jelena Janković, Caroline Wozniacki, Agnieszka Radwanska and Kim Clijsters.