

Revolutionary Tennis

Tennis Instruction That Makes Sense



Step 12

The Serve

..... in many parts

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HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR TENNIS SERVE UNDERSTANDING THE FOREHAND HIT ABOVE YOUR HEAD

I have been putting off the serve because I have serious doubts merely reading how to improve will benefit you. Here athleticism and practice are paramount to improvement. I can both lead you to the water and make you drink, but I have found that isn't enough. Be that as it may, I will try my simple best to lay out a path and an understanding to this unique stroke.

How did I get my serve? I don't remember. My first influential teacher I remember, Mr. Ferrari, had athletic grace and could style, and certainly my later "finishing coach," Mr. Francois Savy, was a great player with great body sense. My own father is athletic and very coordinated but he was a musician in his heart of hearts. I did watch Rod Laver play quite a bit and up very close as a kid, as well as all the guys on the tennis tour back then, and I have to say they served more gracefully than the talent we have today. Is that why we love Federer so much, and before him Sampras?

I remember a tossing drill, a racket acceleration drill, a wrist snap drill, and a muscle memory drill for flexibility and fluidity which I'll share with you, but I don't remember any gracefulness drills. Maybe that occurs from practicing, lessons, supervision. But I continue to surprise myself when teaching someone how to serve, there is still so much to know and see. Here goes.

IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU

The serve is tennis' most difficult stroke because it requires a symphony of body coordination and you are on the spot. Ever deliver a talk to a group of people? Ever been the one at work or at home everyone's waiting on? You know the feeling, you get self-conscious. It's the same on a serve, we're all waiting for you to serve - come on! We're all watching that silly wind up thing you do - tsk, tsk, ho, ho. And then we rate you on the result - we all can do better. Humiliating, it can be.

Actors have to GIVE when under the spotlight; public speakers have to RELAX with an audience; politicians learn to SMILE for votes, and of course lie.

Tennis players have to OPEN UP to improve their serve. They have to open themselves physically, psychologically, emotionally. This, for me, is the precursor to improvement: Open up. To do this you need to stand well, engage the arms fully, toss higher to make more time in order to take more time, get the body to flex, swing with gusto, reach for more. *Dare to miss.* You

need *Cojones*.

On all the other strokes you do need to improve equally the areas of footwork, rhythm, balance, vision, and arm flexibility, but it's not so demanding for the serve. To improve the serve there is a **rhythm and order of events** to follow first, and then you must have:

- **your body turned a bit to the side**
- **your body weight going forward during the toss**
- **simple arm actions**
- **time between the toss and the hit**
- **a flexible racket arm**
- **zero self-consciousness**

The rest is wholly unnecessary. Unless you want more.