



Key Points from the
Dynamite Doubles for Pickleball
course



WELCOME & INTRODUCTION



Why This Course Was Created

- Until now, only a relatively small number of players have had the opportunity to work directly with Helle and learn the 'Dynamite Doubles for Pickleball' system
- There was a need for a course that would expose players to winning strategy vs. more 'technique'-focused systems
- Doubles is a different game in many ways to singles, so partners should not approach doubles games as two singles players
- As many players come from tennis, review of the tennis habits that hurt you pickleball game as well as those that help

Interview with Helle

- Helle provides a history on the origins of '**Dynamite Doubles**'
- More advanced players have learned to defend and play the 'soft' game
- Hit the shot that puts you and your partner in the best position to defend. *"If your defense is intact, your offense will take care of itself."*
- Never think you hit the last shot
- Helle reviews origins and many of the tenets of '**Dynamite Doubles for Pickleball**'
- Helle introduces us for the first time to:
 - Clock on the Ground
 - The Box
 - Blocker & Workhorse.
- 3 is the magic number (with shot choices)
- Have patience & 'Live for One more Dink'



Why this is important – having a good understanding of how Helle’s background in tennis contributed to the origins of ‘**Dynamite Doubles**,’ first for tennis and now adapted for Pickleball. What were the problems she saw on the courts, what issues those led to for players, and how they are addressed by playing ‘**Dynamite Doubles for Pickleball**.’

Why You’re Losing to Less Skilled Players

- Losing to less-skilled players is often due to one or more of the following:
 - **Having little or no strategy** when you and your partner take the court.
 - Not knowing **which balls are yours** and which balls are your partner’s
 - **Not knowing the best (highest percentage) shot** to hit in a given situation or area of the court
 - Being out of position and causing a ‘**Wrong Way Wanda**’ situation with your partner
 - **Unexpectedly changing the direction** of the ball and putting your partner in a bad situation
- All of these and more are addressed throughout ‘**Dynamite Doubles for Pickleball**’

Why this is important – being able to recognize these addressable issues with you and your partner is the first step in their elimination and improvement in your overall game.



Basic Tenets of Dynamite Doubles

- There are several concepts that are considered 'basic building blocks' for understanding 'Dynamite Doubles for Pickleball'
- You will hear the following many times as you are progressing through the course:
 - Ready, Read, React
 - Where, What, Where
 - Defend 100% of our court when the ball is in the opponents' court
 - Fulfill your role responsibilities as Blocker or Workhorse
 - Hit the ball back in the 'right' direction
 - Defend first!
 - Play 2 against 1
 - The lines on the court are only there for the balls
 - Expect every ball to come back
 - 3 is the magic number
 - Live for one more shot

Why this is important – these will be the building blocks you will use to improve your game using '**Dynamite Doubles for Pickleball.**' Remembering these as you're out on the court will bring you back to playing sound, solid doubles pickleball on the court. If you're experiencing a dip in your level of play, it's likely you're not following one or more of the tenets.



THE BLOCKER & WORKHORSE



Introduction to Blocker & Workhorse

- It's not about who has the stronger/weaker backhand
- Having defined roles reduces confusion on the court and makes for more relaxed play
- Knowing your roles helps provide clarity (avoid confusion) because you won't be doing 'everything' and covering 'everywhere'
- **The Blocker & The Workhorse** each have responsibilities regarding court coverage and what shots to take
- These roles can change during a point
- Always know where your partner is and keep the ball in front the player who is closest to the net. *That way you don't have your middle exposed (Wrong Way Wanda)*

Why this is important – Many issues with poor performance on the court can be addressed by you and your partner having defined roles and responsibilities on the court AND fulfilling those responsibilities. Knowing who has what shots takes a lot of stress out of playing and lets you play in a more relaxed way that leads to more successes on the court.

The Blocker

- This is the aggressor role with minimal court coverage/responsibilities
- The Blocker looks to attack or fake on most points and should be seen as a disruptor on the court
- Positioned directly across from the ball and closest to the net (in front of their partner)
- 'Little V' defending area from net post (outside arm of V) and net strap (inside arm of V)



- Defends against drives down-the-line (or at the body)
- Tries to keep the ball back at the opponent directly in front of them
- Does not take high lobs, only those they can comfortably hit high and down on
- Defends 5 squares in the kitchen (1,2,3,5, and 6)
- Looks for weak middle shots to poach <see lessons on Poaching>
- Wins points by hitting high balls back hard in the direction of the opponents' Blocker, sharp, short, hard cross-court to split opponents, or down the middle if they see a **Wrong Way Wanda** formation

Why this is important – The Blocker is responsible for the least amount of area on the court, but has a critical role on the court as a disruptor. Even though they may not be targeted very often by the opponents, the Blocker should be active on the court with their movement and looking to poach shots meant for their partner. Even when they're not poaching, they keep the opponents guessing by faking a poach periodically and keeping themselves in the point that way.

The Workhorse

- This is the cross-court player from the ball
- The role of the Workhorse is to
 - Defend the larger part of the court (typically 2/3 to 3/4 of the court) and
 - Setup a possible poach for their partner (Blocker)
- Covers the 'big V' which spans between the net post (with their outside arm) and the back corner of the court behind their partner (~130 degrees between their arms)
- Takes cross-court lobs and shots down the middle



- Steady player that doesn't miss and keeps the ball in play
- More defensive-minded than the Blocker
- The Workhorse should 'back up' their partner, the Blocker
- The Workhorse will take balls later to give their partner the 1st opportunity
- Defends 7 squares in the kitchen (their #1-6 and partner's #4)
- Positioned behind their partner and takes all middle balls their partner doesn't take
- Hits cross-court in front of their partner when possible. Exception would be if they have a clear winner they can hit down the line in front of themselves

Why this is important – The Workhorse is the director or 'quarterback' on the court. They should be the ones dictating the responses to the balls coming from the opponents. They will cover the majority of the court and should take all lobs that their partner cannot easily hit as an overhead. They will typically hit the ball to the opponent in front of their partner (the Blocker) unless they have a winner and/or want to assume the Blocker role.

Positioning / In Practice

- You're always positioned slightly diagonally from each other, never side-by-side. Even at the kitchen line, the Workhorse is angled slightly to face diagonally to the opponent with the ball (and thus a little behind their partner)
- When hitting cross-court, you should always be able to see your partner in front of you. If not, hit in front of yourself and make your partner the Workhorse since they're behind you.



- It doesn't take long to realize that changing direction of the ball is rarely the best thing to do. It may create a hole that opponents could exploit before you could defend (**Wrong Way Wanda**)
- If you do change direction, have a reason for doing so and hit a shot that will allow you time for you and your partner to re-position into your new roles (such as a bouncing ball vs. one that can be volleyed)
- The Workhorse is the 'quarterback' that gets to move the ball around and is in charge of the point. The Blocker will reset and attack only
- If one partner is injured/slower, then make that player the Blocker and the other (healthy/faster) the Workhorse (with larger court to defend). You can accomplish this by **stacking** <see lesson on Stacking> before the point begins or **switching** sides <see lesson on Switching> as soon as you've hit the ball
- If you hit the ball in the middle, between opponents, you won't know which opponent will hit it and, therefore, if you or your partner will be the Workhorse/Blocker. Always target an opponent unless there is a clear winner in the middle
- When you and your partner are communicating by positioning, with a lead player (the Blocker) in front of the ball and the Workhorse (the backup player diagonally across front the ball and slightly behind the lead player) you're a unified Pickleball force on the court.
- Keep the ball in front of the person that doesn't want/need to be the Workhorse.



Drills: Blocker & Workhorse

- **Warm-Up Dinking**
- **Straight ahead 2-balls (4 players)**
 - Blocker to Blocker
 - Emphasis on the 'little V' and 5 kitchen squares of coverage
 - More north and south than sideways movement
 - This is where a lot of people choke so concentrate on not missing
 - Volley as many balls as you can reach
 - Emphasize going to the ball. You're not waiting on the ball
 - More touch off of a live ball than a dead ball. Live ball has energy and requires very little of your energy to 'touch' it over
 - Learning patience to hit endlessly in front of yourself.
- **Cross-court 2-balls (4 players)**
 - Workhorse to Workhorse
 - Emphasis on 'big V' and 7 kitchen squares of coverage
 - Recovery place is behind square #5 (center), in the center and facing the cross-court opponent with the ball
 - Your shuffle is along the kitchen line, keeping the angle to the ball/opponent
 - Volley as many balls as you can reach and do not go backwards. Keep a foot at the kitchen line
 - Switch and do the opposite side of the court
- **Combination of Blocker and Workhorse with 1 ball**
 - Emphasis on team movement
 - Dinking with a purpose
 - All dinks are done on the rise
 - Footwork is stressed
 - Put-away is straight in front of yourself.
 - Heat is coming back at you and
 - partner has more time to respond
- There is a reference to Resets which will be covered in greater detail in later lessons.



Why this is important – You not only need to ‘know’ what to do, you have to execute on it. Drilling will, over time, make the right actions ‘automatic.’ You won’t have to think about it during a game, it will just happen because you’ve made the right action a habit and developed the appropriate muscle memory. It will become ‘second nature.’



ZONES



Introduction to Zones

- The lines on the court are only there for the balls.
- **Defense Zone** -> always let the ball bounce here to buy you some time. Defense Zone is mostly for the serving team.
- **Transition Zone** -> You need to practice from here a lot. This is a decision making area as you move between Zones.
- **Offense Zone** -> This is the preferred area for you as a player. Need to earn the right as serving team to get to neutral in the Offense Zone.
- **Attack Zone** -> Comprised of the kitchen & Erne areas. This should be a one-shot zone with the goal of ending the point.
- The word 'Terminator' is sometimes used for 'Blocker'
- Know which Zone you and your partner are in, as well as your opponents, and you'll know what to do!
- You have different objectives based on your Zone on the court
- To win the point, you'll want to advance from Defense Zone -> Transition Zone -> Offense/Attack Zone
- You'll very likely move back and forth through Zones throughout a point
 - Which Zone is best for what you need to accomplish right now?
 - Are you in a bad spot and need the extra time that the Defense Zone provides?
 - Are your opponents in a bad spot and you need to get up to the Offense Zone to take advantage?
 - A lot may be determined by the shot you or your partner hit!

Why this is important – Even though the pickleball court is relatively small, there is a distinct landscape that you need to be aware of. Each Zone on the court has distinct advantages that you need to use in your favor. They also have responsibilities that you and your partner need to know and be on the same page about. Knowing these things will put you miles ahead of your competitors who see the court as one big rectangle and don't vary their behavior based on where they are.



Defense Zone

- Shot options from here are generally (in order):
 - Lob (get it in, don't go for the opponents' baseline. It will likely go out)
 - Drop (cross-court)
 - Drive (down the line, passing shot)
- Pay attention at **6:13** to ball being hit to wrong opponent (**Wrong Way Wanda**).
- You can't come to the net on a hard hit ball.
- If your opponent's paddle is up = STAY BACK. Advance up on balls below the net on opponent's side. Drops should peak on your side to be 'advance-able' balls.
- This is where most 3rd shots are hit from and some returns (most should be hit in the **Transition Zone**, if possible)
- You'll only win a point from here when your opponents make a mistake
You're not trying to hit a winner from here
 - You can, however, win a point from here by being consistent and waiting on your opponents to miss or invite you forward (closer to the **Offense Zone**) with a short ball
- No hurry! – You have a lot more time when you're hitting from the Defense Zone because all balls bounce first when hitting from here
- The harder/faster the ball comes, the less you want to do with it
- If a ball is peaked and is dropping, you can drive it hard and low from the Defense Zone as your first choice (Passing Shot)
- Defense is:
 - slow it down when hard, fast balls are coming at you and
 - hit it hard when soft/shorter balls are coming at you. *Opposites attract!*
- Learn drops into the kitchen from any area back here and you can turn defense into neutral (and even offense)
- **WARNING!** A *defensive lob* is not meant to get over your opponents and hit the back line because you will likely hit it out
- The *defensive lob* is to:
 - push them back,
 - maybe get them off balance



- force an overhead that may be a miss but possibly landing a bit shorter in the court off of which you can more easily
 - make a passing shot (drive) or
 - make a drop and advance to the kitchen
- It's generally wiser to use the change-of-pace, change-of-height, change-of-spin philosophy (lobs, drives, drops) from the Defense Zone than charging to the kitchen line at any cost. **Don't be predictable from the Defense Zone.**
- Defend at all cost! Only advance forward when opponents can no longer attack your ball
- **WARNING!** You're extremely vulnerable to short balls and angles from here.
- **Bottom line:** you're keeping the ball in play to allow your team to come forward and neutralize the opponents' attack/advantage

Why this is important – This is the place on the court that will give you more time and offset some of the speed and power your opponents might be using against you. Patience will help you immensely from here as you wait for mistakes from your opponents to win on their error or get an opening to move up and get to neutral.

Transition Zone

- The harder you hit, the faster you get beat from here.
 - Attack on attack from Transition zone will be won by opponents in Offense zone.
 - Soften to buy time to get to Offense zone.
- Practice 5th and 7th shots from here. Get comfortable being here...don't panic.
- This is the 'gray' area on the court
 - It's not the Defense Zone where all balls are bounced
 -



- It's not the Offense Zone where you're dinking, looking for an attackable ball and trying to volley as many balls as possible
- It's a very important area you must learn to survive in and successfully navigate
- It's a mixture of Offense and Defense. You're in the area (mainly) to:
 - Reset (softly) to the opponents' kitchen and get to the Offense Zone
 - Attack a softly popped-up ball by your opponents and continue to the Offense Zone to finish up
- **Advance** to the kitchen on the non-attackable shot you hit, **back up** to defense if your attempt to reset popped up too high, or **stay put** and hold your ground to defend one more shot
- Stay and hold your ground as attackers are coming at you. Defend. Get every ball back.
- Both volleys and half-volleys are hit from here
- You are defending before you are attacking here
- You and your partner may be in the Transition Zone for a shot or two before you can move to the Offense Zone or, in the worst case, back to the Defense Zone in the case of a bad pop-up that the opponents are going to slam back at you
- Be flexible in the Transition Zone and know you're in motion trying to get to the Offense Zone
- A slow ball (ideally one that will bounce in the opponent's court) is a good shot when you need to buy time /change Zones
 - A drop in the kitchen is ideal to accomplish this (this is why mastering the 3rd shot drop is so important)
- Guard against changing directions in the Transition Zone as the serving team as you're especially vulnerable on the way to the Offense Zone.

Why this is important – This is an odd “no man’s land” for a lot of players. They are often not comfortable hitting shots from here or will try to rush through this area of the court to get to the Offense Zone. This lack of patience combined with lack of comfort hitting from the Transition Zone will cause them



to lose points faster and more often than others who understand and respect the Transition Zone.

Offense Zone

- Here's where you and your partner want to be and where you want to play the most Pickleball
- The Offense Zone (dinking) is what separates the higher-level players from lower-level.
- The goal is to build up a point and patiently wait for the right ball that you can attack (that ball is hit hard and down at either the middle, in front of yourself, or sharply cross-court). Until then, you keep resetting and patiently building the point
- Know where your winner is (normally right in front of you to the opponent with less time).
- When all 4 players are here, the dinking game begins
- When in the Offense Zone, either dinking or volleying, think 'outside-to-outside' and 'inside-to-inside' for best teamwork and results
 - If you don't want to get beat down the middle, don't hit down the middle from the Offense Zone (unless opponents are in Wrong Way Wanda)
- Understand that the receiving team has the advantage of getting to the Offense Zone first due to the two-bounce rule.
 - The serving team has to 'earn' their way up to the kitchen line by hitting NON-ATTACKABLE balls
 - When the receiving team takes the Offense Zone first, the odds are that they will win the point. **This is what makes it so hard to score in this game!**
- Volley as many balls as you can reach. There will be less time for your opponents to react
- You must develop confidence in your overhead if you're going to play from the Offense Zone
- As the receiving team, this is where you want to play 2 against 1
- Whenever you hit cross-court, part of you has to acknowledge that any lobs hit by your opponent are yours to get
- Think above the net (hit down on balls) and below the net (reset)



- When all four players are in the Offense Zone, hold your ground! Don't back up! Keep your paddles out in front, block the hard balls with reflex volleys and respond to dinks with other dinks (reset, neutral, or offensive dinks)
- For those targets, we use kitchen squares
 - 3 reset squares (1,2, and 3) and
 - 3 offensive squares (4,5, and 6)
- You are expecting an attack which you must defend by
 - Attacking back hard (easiest response)
 - Resetting soft, or
 - Lobbing
- High balls should be hit hard (aggressively) for the highest percentage shot either
 - straight in front (keeping your team in a good position should the ball come back),
 - down the middle to expose a gap between your opponents, or
 - sharp cross-court if the middle is covered

Why this is important – Your objective should be to get to here to take the advantage (typically receiving team) or get to neutral as the serving team. Strategy, patience, and comfort level in the Offense Zone is often what separates the higher-level players from the lower-level players. The dinking game occurs when both teams establish themselves here and you need to know how to get the advantage.

2 against 1 Strategy

- The returning team is trying to keep the serving team back.
- You want to volley to take time away from the team in Defense Zone or Transition Zone
- Every time you hit the ball cross-court, remember that the lob is yours.
-



- Be specific and isolate a specific opponent. You and your partner need to be in agreement on that opponent.

Why this is important – If you are often changing direction with your shots back at your opponents, it becomes chaotic for you and your partner. “Now I’m the Blocker.” “Now I’m the Workhorse.” By isolating one opponent, you are putting the pressure on that player, but you’re also getting comfortable (for more than a few shots) in your role on the court as either the Blocker or Workhorse. No surprises!

Above the Net / Below the Net

- Dropping ball into space in front of feet is non-attackable ball (reset).
- You must know if opponents have advanced and hit back accordingly.
- Opponents will/should advance on drops/low balls.
- Hit the ball back to the feet of the deepest player

Why this is important – Not all volleys are created equal. Depending on the ball coming to you, you’ll want to be comfortable taking different actions to sustain the attack you’re begun. If the ball is high (and your paddle is up) you’ll be able to keep them back by hitting deeper in their court. But if the ball is coming to you where you have to hit it below the level of the net, you’re going to have to target your opponents’ feet as they will (or should be) coming in on that ball. Know where your opponents are based on the ball you’re having to hit to keep yourself out of trouble.



Attack Zone & Ernes

- An Erne is a ball struck outside and parallel to the kitchen. It's typically hit close to the net and is often done off a reset attempt into the kitchen by the opponent
 - The Blocker anticipates reset attempt to jump the kitchen and put the ball away.
 - Timing is everything (surprise) when jumping the kitchen.
- The whole kitchen can be an Attack zone -> if ball bounces high, you can step in and put away.
- Faking an Erne attempt can also be effective in getting an unforced error from opponents.
- Kitchen/NVZ is part of the Attack Zone. And the area outside the NVZ.
- When a ball is hit to the 6th kitchen square on the opponents' side and really penetrating, their only choice for a reset is either a lob (which the Workhorse should take) of a shot aimed softly at your 1, 6, or 2 square. In this case, you can jump the corner of the kitchen, get up next to the net, and volley that attempted reset. Surprise!
- The Blocker will take this shot the vast majority of times
- It's a fun play that should be tried occasionally to keep your opponents guessing
- Even if you're not successful, it'll make future reset attempts by your opponents more difficult, adding pressure to their dinking game, and may force them into errors.
- Hit down on the ball when hitting the Erne and straight ahead in most cases
- Executing the Erne is about anticipation and patterns you've seen that you can take advantage of
- You can also act as if you're going to hit one shot (like hard for a short ball in the kitchen) and then hit something else (a soft drop in the opponents' kitchen)
- This is a 1 shot zone. Hit and return to the Offense Zone



One Team Offense Zone & One Team Defense Zone Drill - Part 1

- The team in the Defense Zone is practicing their 3rd shots and the team in the Offense Zone is practicing their 4th shots.
- You need to understand with each shot, who is the Blocker & who is the Workhorse.
- Defense Zone should go soft back with attempted resets and not hit hard on hard.
 - Defense is executing but not advancing on the drill.
 - Soft & up.
 - Defending is blocking and not swinging.
 - Defense should hit up to start to put themselves in trouble.
- The team in the Offense Zone volleys and hits hard to keep the team in the Defense Zone back
- The team in the Defense Zone hits the ball on the bounce
- Offense Zone should focus on hitting to a player and not to the middle very often
- The team in the Offense Zone is Learning to isolate 2 against 1

Why this is important – Too often, teams make the mistake of hitting the wrong shot based on the Zone they and their opponents are in. If you are in the Offense Zone and your opponents are in Defense Zone, you should be hitting back hard and deep to keep them back. Conversely, if you are in Defense Zone and your opponents are in Offense Zone, you are better served by hitting resets (drops) to give yourself the time to advance up and eventually get to neutral (negating their advantage).

One Team Offense Zone & One Team Defense Zone Drill - Part 2

- Shuffle to get on side of ball to get the volley you want from the Offense Zone.
- Hitting straight is a builder shot and often a winning shot.
- Hitting in front of yourself tells your partner that they should get the lobs (as the Workhorse)



Why this is important – Too often, teams make the mistake of hitting the wrong shot based on the Zone they and their opponents are in. If you are in the Offense Zone and your opponents are in Defense Zone, you should be hitting back hard and deep to keep them back. Conversely, if you are in Defense Zone and your opponents are in Offense Zone, you are better served by hitting resets (drops) to give yourself the time to advance up and eventually get to neutral (negating their advantage).

One Team Offense Zone & One Team Transition Zone

- From Transition zone, Blocker will face the ball,
- Workhorse will angle slightly to face the ball.
- Object of team in the Transition Zone is to get comfortable and learn to ‘survive’ from here for extended periods
- Playing catch with the ball and going out left or right to get it. “Catch it and send it.”
- Fishtail = your arm is the fish and your hand is the tail.
- Practice staying in the Transition Zone without moving forward to the Offense Zone
- Your paddle is out more in the Transition Zone because there’s ‘danger’ here (paddle out is like water skiing position)
- Focus on hitting hard from the Offense Zone and soft from the Transition Zone

Why this is important – Too often, players are not comfortable in the Transition Zone. And during games, they may not be there for extended periods of time to get enough shots sequentially to establish a rhythm that will be useful later. This drill has the Transition Zone team stay there, even after hitting good resets/approaches to both get them more comfortable and reinforce good muscle memory for shots (like half-volleys) they’ll need in use in Transition Zone in game situations.



Earning Your Way Up from Defense Zone to Offense Zone

- Goal here is for team in Defense Zone to move only on the right shot and with the right leading player (the Blocker)
- The team starting in the Defense Zone learns to drive, drop, and lob effectively
- Offense Zone should play very aggressive trying to keep the other team back.
 - The team in the Offense Zone learns where to hit high balls and where to place lower volleys
 - Emphasis for the team in the Offense Zone is how to stay safe without leaving holes
- Once team in Defense reaches Offense zone, dinking game begins.
- Resist the urge to get into 'chaotic' pickleball where you're just wailing on the ball. Have a plan and hit 'smartly'
- Players rotate to give everyone time starting in both the Offense and Defense Zones

Why this is important – This is a drill where we bring everything together. One team is in Offense Zone and drills on keeping the team starting in Defense Zone back. They will work on hitting both high balls as well as low volleys. The team in Defense is working on hitting the shots required to get to the Offense Zone and start the dinking game. These are fundamental skills that you will need in order to elevate your game.



MOVEMENT & STRATEGY



Introduction to Movement & Strategy

- You and your partner are always facing the opponent who is hitting the ball. This way, the Blocker has first right to take the ball and the Workhorse takes anything the Blocker let's go
- The most important time to improve your position (Zones), to take command of the situation on the court, is between the time you strike the ball and when it bounces in the opponent's court (or crosses the net if the response will be a volley). Move with the ball!
- Always know where your partner is and keep the ball in front of the one of you who is closest to the net. This way, you don't have your middle exposed to **Wrong Way Wanda** (WWW)
- The gap between the partners is the main thing to protect against
 - Protect and defend against this on your side
 - Exploit this on your opponents' side
- If an easy ball presents itself in the middle of the court, take it down the middle right back at your opponents for a winner with a low, hard drive (not deep, as it might go out). The second option is to aim right at the person closest to you so they TAKE your out ball (right hip or shoulder on right-handed players). This will handcuff them
- Any shoulder-high balls from the kitchen line should be hit down on, not deep, and alternate the direction of your shots between straight, down the middle, and sharp cross-court. Aiming deep will result in half your balls, on average, going OUT.
- Balls at waist level when you're at the NVZ should be hit with spin when hitting deep (topspin or backspin)
- There are only three types of shots your opponents can make – lob, drive, or short-angle dipper (drop) and three different directions they can hit – straight, down the middle, and cross-court
 - Drive – be ready to block hard back or duck to get out of the way if you suspect the ball will go long
 - Lob – a *defensive* lob most often happens when a ball is behind the player, they're late getting to it, they're off balance on the



- move going backwards. An *offensive* lob is typically disguised and hard to read/anticipate
- Drop – create space and either take it out of the air or let it bounce. You normally have plenty of time to track it
- Try to learn to READ what your opponent is going to hit **before** they hit it based on their preparation with their feet, their paddle work, and their body
- Hitting back in the same direction as where the ball came from = less movement. Change of direction usually = more movement as the roles of each player change
- Remember **CHANGE OF DIRECTION = CHANGE OF PARTNER ROLES**
- You can be in separate Zones when the ball is in your court, but immediately get back together again as soon as one of you has hit the ball, with the Blocker in front of the Workhorse and in front of the ball

Why this is important – This is where we tie together the previous sections of Roles (Blocker & Workhorse) and Zones (Defense, Transition, Offense, & Attack) to create a comprehensive strategy. If we know where to be, what are the highest percentage shots to hit in a given situation, and what balls are ours to take and what balls are our partner's, we're becoming a real force to be reckoned with out on the court!

Moving After You Hit the Ball

- Stopping after your ball clears the net (or bounces) prepares you for the shot coming back from your opponents.
- Partners should be stopping at the same time.
- Workhorse should be a 1-2' behind to ensure proper court coverage as you're moving up to Offense
- Use a lob after a drive down the middle as a surprise element.
- At **4'27"** of the video is an example of **Wrong Way Wanda**



- There's a reference to the **Clock on the Ground** which is covered in a later lesson in this Section.

Why this is important – Getting up to the kitchen line is the goal to get to neutral with your opponents or get an advantage first. But it's critical that we move the 'right' way so that we're prepared for any shots coming back to us. So it's both moving at the right time (on the right shot) and in the right way that keeps us prepared.

Hitting the High Ball

- Using 3 targets on the court to show 3 directions to hit overhead based on the ball you get.
- Focus is hit it hard and down, don't hit it deep which may go out.
- Keep opponent back with spin since power will likely go out.
 - Paddle coming down from above the ball = slice.
 - From below level of the ball = topspin

Why this is important – A frustration many players have is getting an opportunity for an overhead that they could potentially end the point with...and hitting it out. Rather than trying to go deep and aiming for the baseline, it's just as effective (and safer) to hit the ball hard but down and more shallow. It will still be a difficult ball for your opponents to get back, and you've not given them a free point by hitting the ball long.



Changing Direction & Avoiding Wrong Way Wanda

- You should never be side-by-side with your partner
- Staying on one person (playing 2 against 1) makes it much calmer for your team.
- Changing directions = changing roles/responsibilities and this can make you exhausted.
- If you do change direction (intentionally), you want to hit a shot that gives you and your partner time to change positions/roles (ideally a shot that will bounce on your opponents' court)
- The video shows a **Wrong Way Wanda** example at **2:26**

Why this is important – Many points are lost by teams who are out of position with the middle of their court exposed for their opponents to exploit. It's important that you and your partner are defending 100% of your court while the ball is in your opponents' court. Isolating one player on the opponents' side is a good way to keep from changing direction which causes you to change roles with your partner and often causes confusion (and lost points).

Shadow Doubles

- The serve like a kickoff in football
 - You want to get the serve in to get the point started
 - You get attacked on the return and must be ready to defend.
- Focus (like the '**Perfect 4' drill later**) is on getting the serve and the 3rd shot in
- There are 2 players (server/returner) playing on the diagonal.
- This is a **Workhorse drill** (cross-court).



- Think about having a partner that would move ahead of you and might poach some balls in a game scenario.
- Also practice straight ahead (**Blocker**) after the serve.
- With Workhorse drill, you can practice some lobs, but not with the down-the-line version

Why this is important – Not much thought is given to these first shots of a point, especially from the serving team’s perspective. But these first few exchanges can set the tone for the remainder of the point and, too often, careless errors occur at this time that give quick, unearned points to the receiving team. Drill with the objective to keep your focus during the point on your plan and on building consistency.

Options When Hitting Your Third Shot

- Slice is best done on a higher ball and it gives you time to advance.
- Hit the ball out in front of you and on the rise.
- Preparation should be done well before the ball gets to you.
- If the return is close to your feet -> half volley that you hit up & soft.
Keep it slow
- If the ball is away from you, it might be a candidate for a drive

Why this is important – How you hit your third shot (soft, hard, the type of spin,...) will often be determined by the return you get from your opponents. You don’t want to think “I’m going to drive this ball.” or “I’m going to slice this third shot back.” because how effective your attempt will be will be based on the return. High returns are easier to slice back and you don’t want to drive a ball that’s at your feet. But you should know that if a return is coming back to



you high or away from you, what the best shot for each of these is (or what options are no longer on the table).

Hitting Your Third Shot Off A Deep Return

- Third Shot options off a deep return are lobs, drops, and drives.
- Backing up on a deep return, lob is the easiest shot.
 - Highest percentage shot to get it over the net, which is the objective.
 - Response back will often be an overhead that lands shorter in the court to give you more time to hit back.
 - Partner should stay back on the lob so they don't become an easy target of the overhead from opponents.
- Drive then drop are next options but depends on skill level.
 - Drive is to make sure the ball doesn't go into the net. Opponents might volley it short.
 - Third option is a drop, but it's for a more advanced skill-set because hitting off your back foot.
 - More about the trajectory, soft & up.
 - Apex/peak should be on your side of the net

Why this is important – Again, your options are dictated by the return you get. Knowing what is considered 'deep' and being comfortable with your own skill level will tell you what you can do on your third shot. When the return is deep in your court, being farther from the net, you want to think lob first, especially if your skill level is on the lower side (trying a drop off a deep return will be difficult for most players and you don't want to dump the ball into the net). Your objective is to get the ball back over and be ready for the



overhead smash that's likely coming. It will be easier to handle from deep in your own court.

Hitting Your Third Shot Off A Mid-Court Return

- Order of third shots from here will be drop, then lob, then drive (banger)
- Middle court returns are perfect for 3rd shot drop.
- Use the energy of the rising ball to soften and go up.
- It's a bunt/block, working with pace of ball.
- A good drop will allow you to continue forward toward the kitchen/NVZ.
- Think if the 'Danish 2-step' when hitting the ball.
- It's all about touch & feel here, not power.

Why this is important – like before, the return will dictate your options here. Being closer to the net and likely moving forward on the ball, the traditional third shot drop is a great option. Knowing this (and drilling this) will prevent you from making an error by hitting the ball too deep on a lob attempt or driving a ball from there that will come back hard and fast at your feet!

Hitting Your Third Shot Off A Short Return

- Because of the distance to run and ball likely dropping, returns landing in this area should be driven.
- Drop and lob are the next 2 options by percentage.
- Drive at the person in front of you who has the least amount of time to react.
- Drive is 'going for broke' vs. drop is resetting it.
- The higher the short ball sits -> drive it.



Why this is important – Many players are conditioned to always try to drop their third shots. A better option on a short return that your running to is a drive. The ball will be ‘dead’ (dropping) so trying to find the touch to drop it will be much harder than a ball you’re catching on the rise.

Movement After Your Third Shot

- Define and reference the ‘A’ and ‘B’ sides of the court.
- Determine who is getting picked on 2 against 1?
- Server’s partner (Blocker) can let some balls go to use the time to advance up to kitchen/NVZ.
- There are several great examples of where (and where not) to hit the ball as you advance.

Why this is important – The person (Blocker) not hitting the third shot needs to use this time (during the third shot return) to advance up to the kitchen line. Too often, this player will hit a shot that is not so great and it would have been better to let the Workhorse take it. By letting the ball go to their (deeper) partner, they can move up to be even with the closest opponent on the other side of the net (essentially getting the team to neutral).

Objectives Of Your Return

- The return of serve is not a groundstroke, it’s an approach shot.
 - A big mistake is returners will wait for the serve and hit a groundstroke.
 - Don’t wait for the ball, the main objective is to get to the line (not hit it deep, not hit it anywhere in particular,...).



- Slicing it gives you time to get to the NVZ line with your partner.
- Take the ball on the rise and just block it / slice it.
- Hitting cross-court is the highest percentage.
- Never stand where you have to back up for a return.
- Get on the side of ball to hit.
- No backswing because it will go out.

Why this is important – Many players will forget the two-bounce rule and try to do too much with their return. The depth of the return matters less than a return that allows you to get up to the kitchen line with your partner. **That is the primary objective and the function of the return...getting to the kitchen line.**

Keeping Your Advantage

- Take advantage of the 2-bounce rule.
- Serving team has to let it bounce.
- Hitting high in the air is not dangerous.
- Hit hard back and be in offensive mindset.
- Return itself is not aggressive.
- Make the 2nd shot (return) to make the 4th shot. 4th shot is most important.

Why this is important – Many players will forget the two-bounce rule and try to do too much with their return. The depth of the return matters less than a return that allows you to get up to the kitchen line with your partner. That is the primary objective and the function of the return...getting to the kitchen line.



Knowing Where Your Opponents Are

- Hitting deep to keep opponents back who've already advanced will get you in trouble.
- Don't hit a mediocre shot at the body.
- Returner's partner should stay off the line a bit to either move up to Blocker or stay for Workhorse depending on where return goes.
- On the way up to NVZ, try to stay on the same opponent.
- Build the point by going cross-court, winner will normally be straight ahead.

Why this is important – Players will have it drilled in their head to hit their shots deep to keep the serving team back in the Defense Zone. They will do this even as the serving team might slowly be advancing into the Transition Zone and into Offense Zone. Continuing to try to hit deep in these situations will provide the serving team with waist-high (or higher) balls that they can hit back aggressively for winners against an unsuspecting return team. Always know where your opponents are and hit at their feet if they're advancing toward the kitchen.

Why Keep The Returner's Partner Off the Kitchen Line

- Lobs are difficult to defend against in the traditional formation with one partner at the kitchen line and the other rushing up.
- Standing further off the line discourages the lob.
- It also makes down-the-line returns more easy to defend without having to purposefully switch.
- Shade more toward the middle to be a factor in the point.
- A return can be hit in any direction with this formation as long as returner knows where to go after hitting it.



Why this is important – In the rush to get up to Offense Zone and as close to the kitchen line as possible, you will often leave yourself open to lobs that will bounce behind you (as offensive lobs) and take you quickly from offense to defense. If you find that you and your partner are getting burned this way, you'll want to position the non-returning partner a little further back off the line to discourage lobs which can now more easily be taken as overheads.

The Dreaded Lob

- Getting lobbed on 3rd shots as the returning team is the initial scenario.
- You're looking to "Stop the bleeding" if getting beat by lobs repeatedly.
- The Workhorse hangs back a bit more than usual as discussed in a previous lesson
- Don't close in too far if you're constantly getting lobbed.
- You're trying to take the lobs in the air vs. letting them bounce.
- What to do based on your team's response to the lob:
 - If your response back is a **drop**, get back up quickly to get the drop back,
 - If your response back is a **drive**, be ready to reflex the volley coming at you
 - If your response back is a **lob**, stay back and start over as a serving team would, with patience, good shot selections, and good teamwork
- If one partner stays at the kitchen line while the other partner runs back and gets the lob, only a perfect drop back to the kitchen is an option. So that's why it's best if you go back at least to the Transition Zone while your partner runs the lob down to give the runner more options than a drop (which is very hard from there after running back)
- A lob is the highest % shot, a drive second, and a drop is the last, most difficult shot to hit, but one that must be practiced



Why this is important – A lob from your opponents can be very easy for you to handle, extremely difficult, or something in between. To make your lob responses more often ‘very easy’ it’s important that you and your partner are in the right position on the court and clear on who will go back to retrieve lobs that are out of reach. So we first try to make them not out of reach by out positioning. Next, we have clearly defined roles that tell us who will retrieve the lob and then clarity on what to do next based on the shot you hit back. Doing these things makes sure lobs = very easy.

The Offensive Lob

- When dealing with an offensive lob that can’t easily be taken in the air with an overhead, it will often be better to let it bounce and use one of your 3 shot options (lob, drop, drive) vs. hitting a poor/weak overhead if you’re too stretched.
- No overhead will overpower your opponents when you’re back deep in your own court.
- An offensive lob (as opposed to a defensive lob) typically comes from the kitchen line (or Transition Zone) and is a surprise
 - If a surprise, turn around, run it down towards its second bounce and reset with either a drop, a drive, or a lob
 - The partner needs to follow the player who is running back to anticipate what is coming next and give their partner more shot options

Why this is important – Offensive lobs can be difficult if not handled properly. While attacking a lob with an overhead is normally the preferred option, if the overhead will have you stretched out and/or you’re deep in your own court, it’s often better to let the lob bounce. This is because you may hit either a weak overhead that’s ineffective or mishit it for an error. Letting the ball bounce, with



proper movement by your partner, opens up more options for responses back like lobs, drops and drives.

The ABCs of Poaching

- Poaching is typically intercepting a ball (as the Blocker) intended for your partner's (Workhorse) feet.
- The opponent is trying to keep Workhorse back.
- It's important that you know what to look for to poach.
- Faking a poach is also very important.
- A fake is done when opponent can see you (unlike an actual poach where you're trying to make it a complete surprise)
- As a right-hander, you're looking for a forehand poach coming off the left/odd side of the court.
- The poach attempt needs to be a winner because you're totally out of position having taken your partner's ball.
- Hit directly at players (shoulder, for example) to save 'out' balls.
- Staggering is important so you and your partner are not going for the same ball.

Why this is important – A lot of players will not be active when they're in the role of the Blocker. Being an effective Blocker means being a disrupter and one of the ways to do that is to get involved in points that you're being excluded from by taking balls meant for your Workhorse partner. And even when you're not poaching a ball, you're getting in your opponents' line of sight by faking a poach and making sure they don't ignore you during the point.



Poaching on a Lob

- Uneven bars analogy with dink being over net (lower bar) and offensive lob being over outstretched hands (high bar).
- It's not about the depth of the lob but the steepness because you're so close to the net.
- Your partner should be taking care of your feet if you go back for lob by poaching as this is likely where opponents are going to hit back (if they don't have a put-away).
- Lob over your partner, if you're Workhorse, would be you retrieving, partner ducking and staying, and you hit in front of them (so there's no switching of roles)

Why this is important – responding, as a team, to a lob can be a bumbling mess if you're not careful. Having clearly defined roles (as with Blocker & Workhorse) will alleviate some of this confusion, but it's also important to know what the partner should be doing as well. This is especially true on when retrieving an offensive lob. It's the ideal time for your partner to poach after you've retrieved a lob because the opponents will most likely be aiming at your feet (and this shot can be expected and picked off with a poach). It's also important for the Workhorse retrieving the lob to hit back in front of their Blocker partner to prevent having to change roles.

Stacking as the Receiving Team

- Stacking might be done because you like to return down the line, your partner likes a particular side or a particular matchup lined up with a specific opponent, ...
- The return should be in front of Blocker to maintain correct positions.
- Down the line return is normally a better option than cross-court.



- Not much of a surprise for your opponents when you're stacking

Why this is important – As you're playing against your opponents, it should become apparent after a while that a certain formation yields better results than others. Once you've determined what that is, you should replicate it as often as possible by stacking. This way, you're in that formation more often, lined up against a particular opponent on the other side of the net or returning down the line more often than cross court and ultimately winning more points.

Switching as the Receiving Team

- Provides element of surprise that stacking does not
- Uses hand signals to indicate 'go' or 'stay.'
- Visualize building the point up based on partner moving or staying for switching to be most effective
- When the partner moves over, the return should go in front of them (making them the Blocker) and the returner becomes Workhorse.
- Will often force a very difficult cross-court third shot from opponents (because of the changing direction).
- The switch could be called off if not feasible due to a short, wide serve.
- Just like with poaching, you will want to fake often if not actually switching.

Why this is important – The same advantages and reasons discussed previously with stacking apply here with the added benefit of a surprise element. And another added benefit of faking a switch is constantly having the opponents second guessing who is going to be where as they hit their third shot. Watch how the game is developing with certain formations and switch



appropriately to get in the right formation. Find how you're winning your points and do that more often. Result is winning more games!

How to Return When Switching

- More time is need to move to proper position so you'll want to hit a loftier ball vs. a drive.
- Directional intent.
- Talks about 3 and 9 with the 'Clock on the Ground' that is covered in a later lesson
- Discusses the the energy differences and intents between serving teams (slow motion) and returning teams (high energy offense)

Why this is important – Effectively switching requires that you be aware of not just the return (and giving yourself enough time for the switch) but also what should happen directly after. Too often, players get in a rhythm with their returning and then don't factor in the differences required with switching. Know where you and your partner need to be along with your associated role responsibilities.

Stacking as the Serving Team

- "Traditional" stacking.
- Serving partner will be the Workhorse.
- Return will likely be a down-the line approach shot.
- One player might have a preferred side and/or your team has more success with one player lined up across from a particular opponent (You will likely know this is the case after several points).



Why this is important – Just as it is with returning and stacking, serving and stacking allows for your preferred matchups against your opponents and/or partners to play on their preferred sides of the court. If you find there's a winning formation you should use stacking (or switching) to achieve this as much as possible.

Switching as the Serving Team

- This (unlike with stacking) provides the element of surprise.
- You can talk to each other by using your paddle to cover your mouth.
- Make sure you 'describe' the move, like "I'll go in front" to ensure you don't bump into your partner.
- Partner can move early (during serve) because they need to get into position to cover the larger 'V' as Workhorse.
- Server will be Blocker and looking for short returns.
- Showing means distraction so you want to show movement here.
- You can also fake when you're not planning to switch.

Why this is important – The same advantages and reasons discussed previously with stacking apply here with the added benefit of a surprise element. And another added benefit of faking a switch is to constantly have the opponents second guessing who is going to be where as they hit their return. Watch how the game is developing with certain formations and switch appropriately to get in the right formation. Find how you're winning your points and do that more often. The result is winning more games!



Patience

- Patience leads to good habits that translate to improvement in your game.
- Helle stresses Patience out there on the court because *“it’s the single most important virtue you probably don’t have.”*
- If you’re not patient, you can be beaten by “lesser” players
- Patience plays a huge part on both defense and offense
- The more balls you hit, the more balls your opponents hit and the more information they will give you...and you will be testing their patience!
- Watch your opponents’ feet, body, arms, and paddle. With a little practice, you can gather enough information in a very short time to make a good decision about what and where the next shot will likely be
- Be patient with yourself. You’re learning things that will become habits and when they do, you won’t have to do them consciously because they’ll come naturally, and **your game will naturally move up a level**
- Live for one more dink! One dink at a time

Why this is important – A lack of patience will cause problems for you on both offense and defense. Very often, the outcome of a point will be determined not by which team was more technically sound, but which team was more patient, not forcing an opportunity where none existed and who did not become frustrated by the consistency of their opponent. They bided their time and only attacked when the opportunity presented itself. They gained more information by observing their opponents and eventually won the game because of it.



Drills: The Perfect 4

- Game simulation with emphasis on the first 4 shots
 - Serve, return of serve, 3rd shot, and 4th shot
- Mentally prepares you for consistency, repetition, mental toughness, being present, and execution.
- So many errors are made in the first 4 shots at the lower player levels.
- Stop at 4 and then progress with “packages” of these.
- Focus on serve/return and next shot (+1).
- **Under stress you fall to the level of your practice.**
- When returning, you want to get to the NVZ. If not, keep playing out the Perfect 4, but that point was not successful.
- In a game, you will get scored on because you’re not in Offense (and inviting Bangers!).
- The high energy will help defeat the negative self-talk that can creep in.

Why this is important – As you progress to becoming a higher level player, you want to ensure that your foundation is strong. Foundation, here, refers to the opening shots of each point, the serve, return of serve, third shot, and fourth shot. Each of these needs to be consistent, solid, and instinctual and this is accomplished through repetition and muscle memory. Having the four shots down will provide a level of separation between you and many other players who hit their serves or returns long, dump their third shots in the net, etc.

The Box: Introduction

- Your two feet make up 2 points on the Box.
- You hit the ball on either the top left or right corner of the Box.
- If first step is into the Box, lost an opportunity for an accurate shot.
 - Get out of the box before stepping in to hit the ball.



- Otherwise you're crowding your contact point and not getting on the side of the ball.
- "Ready, Turn/Move, Hit"
- Turn like in tennis, core/shoulder discipline, balance.
- Paddle stays in front, should never go behind your hips

Why this is important – This is where we start introducing more technique into what has primarily been a discussion of strategy. To make sure that your shots are as accurate as can be, it's important to have sound technique and form when hitting your shots. The Box is a visualization that will help you get in the right position with your body and feet to make sure your shot goes where you want it to go. Many players will unknowingly step 'into' their box which will lead to all sorts of bad outcomes. You'll know better and execute your 'Danish 2-step' to the side of the ball and get much better results.

The Box: Foot Placement & Ball Direction

- Box will be at a right angle to the target.
- Only need 3 dots to a square as your feet will make the 4th.
- Your feet create the target.
- Or dot, dot, hit where the dots are your feet and the 3rd cone is the ball contact point.
- Contact point stays stationary (feet are moving and ball is moving).

Why this is important – The mechanics of hitting your shot and having it go where you want is straightforward, but few players really give it much thought. Knowing how your feet, body, ball, and contact point align will get you in the habit, with practice, of knowing not only where your balls can/will go when you hit, but also that of your opponents (which will really take your game to the next level!)



Clock on the Ground

- The Clock will tell you the latest you can hit the ball (this is your wall).
- Where you hit it on the clock will determine the direction of the ball (to the right or wrong opponent, in or out).
- Hit at 10 & 4 for cross-court and 3 & 9 for straight ahead.
- 4 is defense and 2 is offense (lurking).
- “What’s the latest I can hit the ball before it goes behind me? “
- That’s your personal wall defense mechanism.
- Workhorse has 4 and 10, Blocker has 3 and 9 (or 10)
- Spacing between partners provides a ‘double door’ in the middle (Workhorse backs up Blocker)
- These numbers are primarily for Defense. For example, you can hit at 2 and this would be more of an intentional Offense shot, going for a winner
- Numbers will be the same but forehand vs. backhand for lefty
- Where are you hitting the ball in relation to your ‘wall’ -> changing of direction
- 4 o’clock is defense as the Workhorse, 2 o’clock is offense (changing direction to become the Blocker)

Why this is important – Having a personal wall defense mechanism will help you and your partner better understand who takes what balls based on the intended target. Using the clock on the ground that travels with you around the court ensures that you know how ‘late’ you can hit a ball and still have it go where you want (and without letting it get behind you).



The Split Step

- This is a timing step
- You split-step every time an opponent is about to hit the ball, even on return of serve. If not physically, at least mentally you're **ready to read and react!**
- Practice pausing / slowing down every time the ball bounces in your opponents' court
- Think of the split-step as a moment where you can let go of the last shot and focus totally on reading what's happening in front of you to react quickly and appropriately
- The split step is energizing, and you're motivating yourself not to give up on any ball.
- As for timing, when opponent is swinging, you're hopping.
- The sound of the hit by the opponent will correspond to your hop.
- You'll time your split step to the tempo of the point.
- Gets you in sync faster, from the feet up. *"Talk to your feet first"*
- Alertness and focus on what your opponent is doing intensifies
- Standing flat takes no effort and your mind can/will wander

Why this is important – It's easy, especially late into a match, to mentally check out of a point. This mental laziness is often followed by physical laziness where we become flat-footed, our reactions slow down, and we generally just don't go for balls that we should. The split step will help with this because it gets our body moving and in a position that's ready for the next ball that's coming.

Split Step at the Kitchen

- Just because you're at the kitchen doesn't mean you stop split-stepping.
- We split step at the kitchen because we're expecting the worst from our opponents.



- You still want to be alert and energized in the point.
- Helps your defense as well as your offense.

Why this is important – At the kitchen, especially when your opponents are in Defense or Transition Zone, it's critical that you remain alert to what's coming your way. Being close to the net, the time you have to react naturally goes down, so you'll need to be very alert to the changing speeds and heights coming from your opponents. Split stepping here provides that same increased energy and alertness here at the kitchen as well.

Split Step & While in the Air

- It can give you heightened awareness.
- When you're up in the air, senses are heightened to prevent you from falling.
- You can be a little ahead of your opponents in knowing what's coming and what direction they're hitting.
- Being in the air when the opponent is about to hit makes you more ready to defend what is coming (vs. being flat-footed)

Why this is important – An often overlooked aspect of the split-step is the part of the movement when you're airborne. When practiced, this can provide you extra insight into your surroundings and specifically what's going on on the court and with your opponents. It's been described by some as time slowing down and objects, like the ball, getting bigger. All of which make your reactions and decisions that much easier.



Drill: Volley “Bump & Hit”

- This drill is about developing touch with the ball at the NVZ.
- The objective is to not have any balls go past the kitchen line.
 - Volley balls you can comfortably reach.
 - Think of yourself as a goal keeper.
 - Prevents you from going back and giving your opponents more time.
- Another goal is to try to setup a surprise volley (roll the ball to the opposite side of the court with a **‘topspin flicker’**).
 - You are looking to take a volley (below the net) and roll over it (forehand or backhand) to the outside ‘triangle’ on the opposite side of the kitchen
 - It’s a surprise move because it looks like the other dinks and has topspin which will be moving quickly
- Offense is hitting to the opposing outside triangle, not down the middle
- Ideally you want to hit this below the level of the net and aim for the opposing kitchen ‘outside’ triangle
- Most players will hit this hard down the middle which will likely be hit back.
- It’s placement more that power.
- After you hit this, you would come in and cover the middle.

Why this is important – As was discussed before, comfort and skill level at the kitchen line is often what separates the ‘better’ players from everyone else. Getting comfortable with your touch, learning to soften the ball, and developing consistency are all important milestones on the path to improving your game at the kitchen line. You’ll additionally want to practice shifting to offense from neutral here as well, and the topspin flicker is a great shot to have in your arsenal for this.



Reset Areas



Getting Out of Trouble With Reset Areas

- Reset areas are areas of the court where you hit balls that cannot be attacked by your opponents while also buying you time.
 - There are four triangles on the court, 2 in the kitchen and 2 at the baseline which are only reached by lobs.
 - There's a middle triangle that 'could' be used as reset, but must be a low bouncing ball.
- To reset means to hit it to the feet of the deepest player regardless of who/where they are
 - Deepest player if they are not in the Offense Zone
 - If opponents are in the Offense Zone, kitchen squares 1, 2, and 3 (closest to the net) are resets
 - Thus, the feet of the opponent or so close to the net (kitchen squares 1, 2, and 3) that they can only lift it back up – not attack it.
 - The neutral line is the aim for the bounce, not the back line of the kitchen since that will be volleyed at you and thus not a reset.
- Reset is used to slow down, buy time, and hit a non-attackable ball.
- Time is so important to buy when in trouble and take away from opponents when they are in trouble. Buying time to reset the mind, the body, your team, and ready to defend against a new attack
- If you can place your shot in one of your opponents' reset areas at any given time from any place on the court, you can not only get yourself out of a lot of trouble during a point, but you can also turn bad situations into opportunities
- If you do not see a clear opportunity to win the point, you push your Reset button and start again



Why this is important – To stay in a point when the momentum is against you, you need areas of safety on the court. Reset areas are just that...spots on the court where you hit non-attackable balls to slow things down and allow your team to get back in the point. Being able to hit to these areas from anywhere on the court can help shift the tide of momentum that may be currently against you. Being able to play one more shot can often times make all the difference.

Reset Areas: Deep Triangles

- If momentum prevents you from resetting in front of your opponents, you can reset behind them into the deep triangle reset areas.
- The 2 deep triangles are back in the Defense Zone close to the baseline
- These are mostly used for return of serves and the occasional offensive lobs
- The 2 deep triangles in defense are used when opponents are in offense and you are recovering with a lob trying to get them off balance and out of the Offense Zone.
- If you can place your shot in one of your opponent's triangles (Reset areas) at any given time from any place on the court, you can not only get yourself out of a lot of trouble during a point, but you can also turn bad situations into opportunities

Why this is important – You need to be familiar with ALL of your reset options. One of those are triangles deep in the opponents' court on the outsides of their Defense Zone. You would reach these areas via lobs and this is meant to get your opponents out of the Offense Zone (where they may be hurting you) and give you time to recover. Hitting these triangles should be practiced regularly as you're going to need them at some point.



Reset Areas: Beating Bangers

- If momentum prevents you from resetting in front of your opponents, you can reset behind them into the deep triangle reset areas.
- The 2 deep triangles are back in the Defense Zone close to the baseline
- These are mostly used for return of serves and the occasional offensive lobs
- The 2 deep triangles in defense are used when opponents are in offense and you are recovering with a lob trying to get them off balance and out of the Offense Zone.
- If you can place your shot in one of your opponent's triangles (Reset areas) at any given time from any place on the court, you can not only get yourself out of a lot of trouble during a point, but you can also turn bad situations into opportunities

Why this is important – You need to be familiar with ALL of your reset options. One of those are triangles deep in the opponents' court on the outsides of their Defense Zone. You would reach these areas via lobs and this is meant to get your opponents out of the Offense Zone (where they may be hurting you) and give you time to recover. Hitting these triangles should be practiced regularly as you're going to need them at some point.

Drills: Inside to Inside & Outside to Outside

- Drill to work on discipline of staying cross-court without missing and not hitting attackable balls
- The lines that make the triangles used for defining inside and outside in the kitchen are perfect for aligning your shoulder and ball path when hitting in this drill



- Start the drill by hitting into the middle and then work your way to the outside triangles
- Step back with one foot or use a cross-over step depending on the depth of the ball from your hitting partner
- Go back to the middle after a while and practice hitting both forehands and backhands
- In a match, if someone goes to the middle from outside, you need to make them pay for it

Why this is important – It's important to get comfortable dinking at the kitchen line but also knowing where to dink. It needs to become instinctual that you're hitting outside-to-outside and not outside-to-middle unless there's a clear winner. You'll put your team in a bad situation. Drilling this will help reinforce this so that you're thinking about it less during a match and just hitting the right shots as habit.

Reset Areas: The Kitchen

- The entire kitchen is a reset area and a go-to target when in trouble.
- Anytime you drop into the kitchen, you have bought some time and temporarily brought your team to neutral
- Within the kitchen we have three triangles
 - Two outside and one in the middle
 - Outside to outside triangle, middle to middle are the safest shots
 - If you're outside then going middle, you won't know which opponent will be hitting it, and thus what role you have.
- Kitchen squares 1,2,3 are reset areas and 4,5,6 are more for offensive/dictating shots.
- The kitchen area is a level separator.



- It's a chess game at the higher levels vs. 'don't miss it' at the lower levels.
- Because closer to the net post the net is higher, you need to get comfortable with the steepness.
- Reset allows you to become the Blocker and have the little 'V' of court coverage.
- Learn to reset into the kitchen area from all over the court

Why this is important – Because no volleys can be taken there, a well-placed shot into the kitchen, is a great way to reset a point. Closer to the net (squares 1, 2, and 3) will do this more effectively than deeper in the kitchen (squares 4, 5, and 6). Getting comfortable at the kitchen line is a big level-separator vs. less-skilled players.

Reset Areas: Kitchen Options

- You want to maintain your roles, when possible, to prevent a scenario (like a lob) that can't be addressed
- Don't become the Workhorse from the middle.
- You're opening yourself up to the lob after being so close to the net.

Why this is important – Understanding your roles along with court dimensions and shot options will help your decision making when dinking at the kitchen. Don't hit a ball that puts you in a bad position, such as assuming the Workhorse role by hitting cross-court and then having to chase back any lobs attempts after being so close to the net.