

Mike's Tennis Tips

"Keep it in the Road"

Maintaining Consistent Directional Control on the Forehand Drive

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Making reference to tennis, my uncle Smoke Redding used to say 'keep it in the road'. In other words, keep the ball in the court and get it to go where you want it to go. If you are having trouble maintaining directional control on your forehand here is a simple formula for success:

1. **Keep your racquet face in line with your intended target throughout the stroke.** The forehand drive has two primary components that contribute to directional control and power; **linear momentum and angular momentum**. Linear momentum simply refers to keeping your strings in line with your target as long as you can. An effective way to visualize linear momentum is to stand sideways lining up your racquet head right over the center service line around the Service 'T'. Then place 6 balls on the service line starting from the 'T' and working your way toward the net about 4-6 inches apart. Your feet should be about shoulder width apart and your racquet should be on edge as though you were going to make contact just in front of your left leg (assuming you are right handed) about thigh level. Then without feeding or striking a ball, swing keeping your racquet head in line with the center service line, and with all the balls you have placed on the line. This technique ensures that you keep your strings in line with your target as long as possible and helps to ensure a long exaggerated follow-through.
2. It is also important to make sure that your follow-through starts from point of contact (which is about thigh level) and finishes high so that your right shoulder touches your right cheek. Many players lose control on their forehands because they finish or follow-through across their bodies with the racquet head finishing down instead of up high toward the sky. This, in part, is done consciously or unconsciously to create more angular momentum which, in turn, produces more power. Unfortunately if too much **angular momentum** is created you lose directional control. In the game of baseball you have a great field to hit into. If you swing the bat across your body and make contact a little further out in front then your ball will go to left field instead of center field. If you hit the ball a little late, your ball will go to right field. In tennis, however, we don't have a huge field to hit into. Therefore, we have a smaller margin of error. That's why it is so important to keep your forward swing or follow-through in line with your target as long as possible with a low to high swing. The low to high motion will also help you to produce topspin which will give you more margin for error. When you do this you will find that you will maintain more consistent directional control and generate more spin.

In summary, the two component parts of every stroke that help to maintain linear momentum and harness angular momentum are the **contact point and the follow-through**. Simply put keep your racquet face in line with where you want the ball to go and continue to swing from low to high. This should help you 'keep it in the road'. Have fun swinging!