

Mike's Tennis Tips

'The Great Exchange'

Poaching and Covering the Middle

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Skill Objectives:

- ◆ To be aggressive at the net.
- ◆ To learn to poach effectively from various positions in the court.
- ◆ To recover and hold the middle.

Sequence: (Assume all students are right handed)

- ◆ Create (2) lines. The first player in one line is positioned in the Hot Seat, (HS₁) in the Deuce Court and the first player in the other line is positioned at the net as the Volleyer (V₁) in the Ad Court.
- ◆ Have as many as 3-4 players in each line as the drill will rotate quickly.
- ◆ The Pro is positioned around the Service 'T' in the deuce court on the opposite side of the net.

Procedure:

- ◆ The Pro feeds the ball cross court down the middle.
- ◆ V₁ moves right (to V₂ position) cutting in front of HS₁ and hits a forehand poaching volley to his/her opponent's Ad Court.
- ◆ Pro feeds crosscourt and HS₁ moves to their Ad Court at a diagonal (becoming HS₂) and hits a backhand poaching volley.
- ◆ Pro feeds the ball down the middle cross court toward deuce court.
- ◆ V₂ moves right and intercepts ball hitting a backhand poaching volley to Deuce Court, (left of center).
- ◆ Pro feeds down the middle cross court towards the Ad Court.
- ◆ HS₂ moves right to intercept ball and hits a forehand poaching volley to the Ad Court, (right of center).

Options:

1. Once the sequence is complete Pro may play out a random point with the volleyers.
2. Have one line of servers and one line of volleyers and play same sequence with a student initiated drill with a serve.

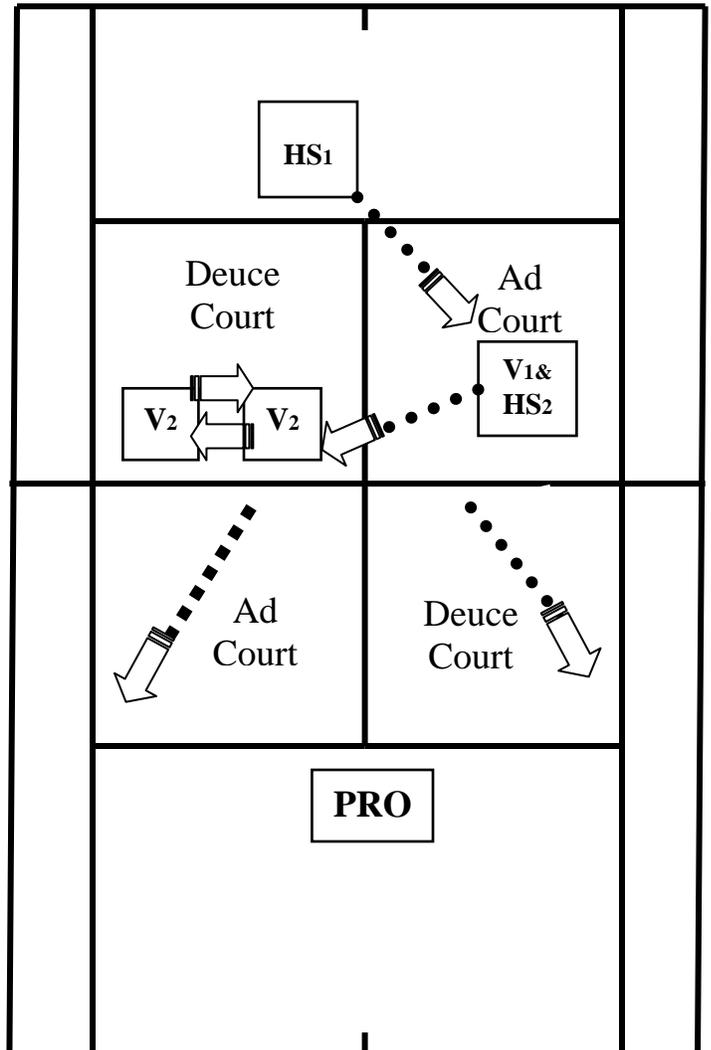


Diagram A
The Great Exchange
Poaching and covering the Middle

In summary:

- ◆ Anticipate and poach aggressively at the net.
- ◆ Hit in the direction of your intended target.
- ◆ Positioning effectively in doubles.
- ◆ Covering the middle of the court.

NOTE: If you can effectively poach and recover for your partner in doubles, you will not only play better as a team, but you will significantly increase your winning percentage.

Additional Things to Keep in Mind

- 1. Choose your poaching opportunities wisely. What gives you a ‘Green Light Opportunity to poach’?**
 - a. Your proximity to the net
 - b. The height of the ball relative to the net
 - c. The speed of the ball as it comes over the net.

Here are your ‘Green Light Opportunities’ to poach:

- a. When you are close to the net
- b. When the ball is hit high over the net &
- c. When the speed of the ball is slow.

- 2. Poach in the direction you are being pulled.**

In other words, keep the ball in front of you on the poach. As a general rule, poach and volley ‘with the grain’ rather than ‘against the grain’ unless you have a winning shot or are attempting to keep your opponents second guessing. Notice how when V1 poaches and moves to position V2 how the volley is hit in the direction he/she is running. This ensures that the court doesn’t open up behind him and his doubles partner. (See Diagram A).

- 3. Remember to poach at an angle** as illustrated by V1 in moving to position V2. This enables you to close into the net faster and catch the ball while it is still high thereby giving you an easier volley.
- 4. Continue to run through the poach.** Once you identify the poaching opportunity, turn and pivot and set your racquet and run to intercept the ball. Keep your weight moving through the shot. Notice how V2 continues to move to V3 after he has hit the volley. (See Diagram A) Remember if you cross the center service line in front of your partner, continue to move to the deuce court and recover to play out the point on that side.
- 5. Your partner H1 should quickly identify that you are poaching in front of him/her and run in at an angle to HS2 to cover the court that you have vacated.** This ensures that you are effectively covering the court.