

Lob Thoughts

By Adam Boyce

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As the platform tennis season grows near, it is time to set goals for the upcoming year. One simple, but important, goal should be to cut down on the frequency of missed lobs. Whether you miss long or miss wide, it is an error that should not happen more than once or twice per set.

The lob in paddle is very much a utility shot. Back-court strategy can range from the most basic approach of trying to sustain a point, to the more advanced strategy of forcing a short ball for you or your partner to drive. At any level, if you miss the lob by being too greedy, or if you are looking for too much, then ask yourself one question, “Is that the shot I want to miss?”

Platform tennis is a game of errors. If we miss, it should be while being aggressive, as in a drive or a return of serve, but not on a lob. There is very little pressure on us when lobbing so our success rate should be very high.

One of the main reasons for missing lobs, especially at the beginner/intermediate levels, is that players are afraid to face a screen shot. That is understood, but if we are going to improve our game (and our screen play) then we have to be content with a ball going into our corner.

One of the most exciting aspects of platform tennis is the element of screenplay. The screens make our sport unique and, most importantly, help negate the ability of the net team to hit winners against us. That said, players still forget that a good lob is the one that simply goes in. The penalty for hitting a short lob in paddle is far less severe than that of tennis. What is the worst that can possibly happen if you leave a lob short? Most likely a ball in the screens, which are there to help you stay in the point and give you time to recover.

For all the beginners and intermediates out there, think of a short lob as a great opportunity to work on your screens. If you lob the ball short, don't panic; just keep your feet moving and try to stop yourself from staring at the ball as it goes into the screens. I know that this is easier said than done, but take a deep breath and watch the ball as you keep your feet moving. Do your best to give the screens a try. In time you will begin to enjoy them. This also will slow down the action and result in fewer missed lobs.

During the first few weeks of your season, pay attention to your lob game. If this is a common error in your game, set up some time with your local pro to work on lobs off the screen and off the deck. Increased consistency in the backcourt will, not only, put added pressure on your opponent, but also maximize your potential to break serve each and every time.

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