

3 Steps to Winning Your Serve

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The most feared shot in the game is the return of serve. I see many servers get unnerved before ever putting a ball in the court. The game of platform tennis is a game of routine. Often times, many of the same shots are hit again and again. Defending the return of serve should be no different.

1. PICK YOUR SPOT

No matter if the returner hits their return 1, 10 or 100 mph, I teach my students to make the serve and first volley a routine. When grasping this concept, one must understand it is okay to have the returner drive the ball as long as the return is hit on the server's terms. This means moving the serve around - either into the body or away from the body. However, remember that no matter where a serve is placed, a good returner will drive the ball.

2. GET TO THE SPOT

Most drivers tend to hit the ball over the same area each time. That area is located two feet on either side of the center strap. As a server, I tell students to look at the spot where they are going to make that first volley from and GET THERE! After the server does this repeatedly, they start to realize that the first volley appears to be in the same location every time.

3. VOLLEY TO THE SPOT

The server is now more than half way to neutralizing the returner, but you are not done yet! Especially for intermediates and advanced players, the first volley needs to go to an area of the court that will hopefully reward them with a lob. When serving to the deuce court, the safest and highest percentage volley is hit to the backhand of the deuce court player. In the ad court, when serving out wide to the body, hit the first volley to the hole between the two players, favoring the deuce court player's backhand. When serving towards the centerline, the first volley should go in behind the returner utilizing the length of the cross-court volley.

Next time you serve, map out these three things ahead of time. This will enable you to get into a good routine of getting to the net and committing to the shot, rather than making every trip to the net a mysterious adventure with inconsistent results. And when your faced with a huge returner, don't worry about the return, just do your 3 step routine and let the results speak for themselves.

