

Effective Power Tennis

Andy Dowsett

www.andytennis.co.uk

“Power is in direct proportion to ones ability to relax”

Drill 1 - Relaxation scale drill for core strokes

Rally with a partner from the baseline and call out the tension in various parts of your body whilst rallying. Start with the grip of the racket and try to gain the ability to use “soft hands”. Use the scale of 0=relaxed 1=slight tension 2=tense

Variations – use the scale above and work with the arm, face and head, shoulders, upper body and lower body. Work through the serve and volleys when doing this also.

Effective shot selection

Poor shot selection is the most common reason for unforced errors. Many players try the wrong power level on their shots and this gets them in big trouble.

The ability to recognize what level you should be delivering is essential to making fewer errors and winning more matches. Below are the five basic levels of power/intensity you will need in tennis.

	Name of Shot	Intensity Level (Scale of 10)	Characteristics of shot
Level 1	The winner (Finishing)	9-10	This shot does occur in matches, but are very rare. You may get only 1-2 per match. This shot is one you can swing your hardest at as it is an easy put away.
Level 2	Opportunity Ball (Building)	7-8	This is a more common type of offensive shot. Perhaps a short ball in the mid court. This shot is swung at aggressively with the intention of wounding your opponent but not necessarily hitting a winner even though this may often turn out to be the case.
Level 3	Rally (Trading)	6-7	This is your bread and butter shot. Many inexperienced players will watch the pros hit a winner and determine that they need to get better at hitting winner. In fact, the pros have often hit 10 or more of these “rally’ balls
Level 4	Counter Punch (Neutralising)	4-5	This is a much needed shot in today’s modern game. The ability to handle a hard hit incoming ball is something that a lot of people struggle with. Shortening the backswing is more effective than just swinging faster.
Level 5	Staying Alive (Staying)	1-3	This is the stab shot where you are just trying to stay in the point. This is a skill that many players do not have. The ability to recognise when you are in trouble is key in helping you make fewer errors.

Drill 1 – Understanding the intensity of play

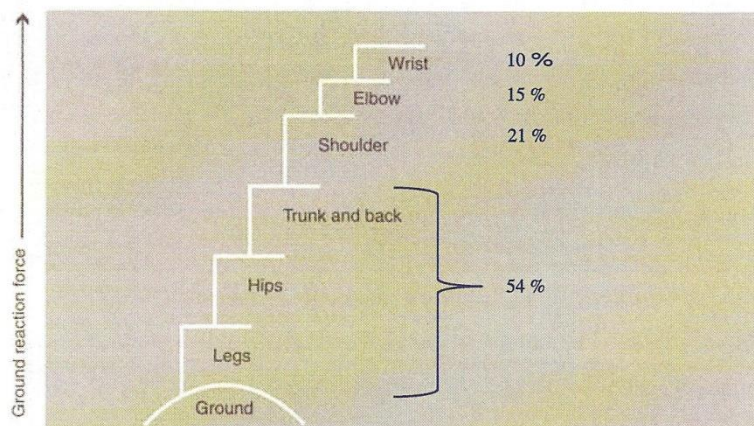
Play points out in any given format but at the end of each point if you make an error try and realise if this was the correct choice of shot compared to the intensity number you have above.

For winners do the exact same but reinforce the fact you used the right intensity number for the right shot.

Understanding the history of biomechanics

The game was once played to a very long and line linear approach. This was using pendulum swings and generally continental grips. As the game evolved so did coaching knowledge and the way a ball was struck using what is known as ground reaction force was at the forefront of every top coaches mind. This was and is currently known as the Kinetic chain or co-ordination chain. You can see from the diagram below how this generally works in a stroke, here depicted is the service action.

Ball speed from a tennis serve



Groppel JL. 1992. *High Tech Tennis*. 2nd ed. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Kibler WB. 1994. Clinical biomechanics of the elbow in tennis: implications for evaluation and diagnosis. *Med Sci Sports Exerc* 26 (10):1203-1206

The trouble with this theory is it is assumed that the force from the ground works from muscle to muscle creating a whip like action. The essence of the kinetic chain is that energy starts in the large muscles and works out to the small muscles. In actual fact a whip action force is created at one end and that force is then transferred outward, increasing in speed as it travels to smaller and smaller segments.