

Tennis is one of the simplest sports to learn and play.

**Modern Tennis Methodology** (MTM) is a simple, but thorough method of learning the game of tennis. It is designed to have you rallying balls in 2 hours or less with decent control. Once you have control, then you can move onto power, just like driving a car.

Playing and learning tennis has been revolutionized by the use of high speed cameras and a man named Oscar Wegner. We are finally seeing the real truths of tennis that have been promoted by Wegner as early as the 1960's. This new methodology is known as Modern Tennis Methodology (MTM). The whole premise for this method is keep the game simple by concentrating only on hand eye coordination and let other parts of your body do what is natural. After teaching tennis for over 25 years, I can personally tell you that this is by far the best and fastest way to learn the game, especially for beginners. Find it, feel it and finish it. FFF It's that simple. Find it means almost catching the ball before hitting it. Feel it means brushing up on the ball to feel it longer on your racquet and impart topspin or backspin on the stroke. Finish it means following through to the opposite side of your body. This will ensure that you hit the ball with good pace and good spin for control. All instruction will be for right handed players, if you are left handed, just reverse everything. The only variation on FFF, is on the volley where you find it, feel it, then stop. There is no follow through on the volley as you don't have time to get the racquet back in position for the next volley. The following are some exercises you can do with a partner to help you understand the basics of MTM.

### **Forehand Groundstroke Keys**

Stand about 6 feet behind the net and have your partner stand on the opposite side of the net and have them throw the ball to your right hand. It is important the ball bounces before you catch it. Stand with both of your big toes and your upper body facing the net with your right hand naturally hanging to your side and catch the ball like you would a raw egg, (gently). Then toss it underhanded back to your partner. This is called finding the ball. The next step is to "push" the ball back to your partner with your right hand with little or no backswing. Start in the same position with your right hand hanging down by your side, when the ball is about to touch your hand push it back over the net with your hand following across your body and your index finger touching your left shoulder. You want to make sure that your hand brushes up on the back of the ball. This is the "Feel It." part of the stroke. Do not swing at the ball, but rather push it back with your arm following through to the other side of your body. Once you have done

this several times and consistently hit the ball, it's time to use your racquet. To obtain the proper grip, just pick up your racquet from the ground. This should give you a "frying pan" grip or in tennis speak, it is the semi- western grip. Choke way up on the racquet and push the ball back to your partner slowly so they can catch it. Make sure you are following through to the other side of your body. After you do this several times, move a couple of steps backward towards the service line and move your hand down the racquet a couple of inches. To generate more power, turn your shoulders, rather than taking your arm back. As you are uncoiling your shoulders, your racquet will find the ball provided you have moved your feet to get into hitting position.

## **Backhand Groundstroke Keys**

The backhand stroke is basically a left handed forehand with the added stability of the right hand along for the ride. Start about 6 feet behind the net with your partner throwing the ball to your left hand. Catch it, then throw it back underhanded to your partner. Then push the ball back to your partner with your left hand. Make sure you aren't taking a backswing, but are truly pushing the ball back to your partner with a follow through that goes across your body and ends up on your right shoulder this time. Now add the racquet. First we will start with your left hand behind the strings of the racquet so that your palm is behind the strings and facing the incoming ball. From here push the ball back to your partner with a slow follow through. Remember we are trying to play catch with our partner and be under control. To get the proper grip, keep your right hand in the same position you had for the forehand (frying pan grip) and slide your left hand on top of it in a comfortable position. When you are able to perform this with consistency, then take a couple of steps back from the net and move your hand half way down the handle with your left hand touching your right hand. Remember to generate more power, turn your shoulders to coil your body, then uncoil by releasing the shoulder turn and the racquet will come along for the ride. Ball speed is determined by a few things, how far you turn your shoulders, how much you accelerate right before you hit the ball, and the amount of force caused by your legs going from a bent position to almost straight. If you watch the pros, they leave their feet a lot during the stroke, especially on the forehand side. So much for the old thought of stepping into the shot to get power. It is not necessary.

## **Volleys**

These are the shots hit at the net out of the air. The volleys are also hit almost exactly opposite of the ground strokes. There is no backswing and you stop the racquet once you hit the ball. Your racquet face needs to be slightly open upon contact and your racquet follows a path across your body from high to low. It is often called the 2 inch shot. The less you move your racquet the better.

## **Serves**

Serving is essential to tennis since it starts every point. A good serve will resemble a baseball throw with the arm going behind the back and following through on the other side of the body. Although the serve has a few more parts to it compared to the other strokes, the important ones are mentioned below. You still need the 3 F's. FFF. Start at the service line and put your racquet on your back and toss the ball up and hit it into the diagonal service box on the other side of the net. If you get it in, take a step back. If you miss, take a step forward, but never get closer to the net than at the service line. Continue until you are all the way to the back fence or at least to the baseline. If you watch the pros on TV, they approach the ball real slow and then right before their racquet touches the ball, they accelerate into the ball. Their racquets are actually picking up speed well after the ball has been contacted. This again is Newton's 2nd law which states that force = mass times acceleration. When you are hitting from the baseline, in order to get more power, you will need to point the butt of the racquet at the ball while it is in the air to get the proper arm bend and extension.

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## **Helpful Websites:**

MTMCA.com- modern tennis website

Hi-techtennis.com – great high speed camera video shots

USTA.com – great information in general on tennis