



## READY FOR CLAY? PART 10

### IN THIS WAY YOU CAN CUNNINGLY VARY YOUR SERVICE

**MANY PLAYERS ONLY CONSIDER A TACTICAL CHANGE ON THE SECOND SERVICE. OUR TUTORIAL WILL SHOW YOU HOW YOU CAN REACT CUNNINGLY ON THE FIRST SERVICE.**

Bounce the ball. A glance at your opponent. Toss the ball. And off you go.

Most players rise to the challenge with little or even no thought on the first service. The emphasis here being on the first service not the second. The second service is given over to more reflection. How can one best make use of the opponent's weaker side? Is your opponent standing well back on the court to return aggressively? Do I play the second service taking no risks - or maybe just a little?

Strangely enough such consideration is seldom given on the first service. Logically enough, one still has a second service up one's sleeve. One is not under so much pressure with the first service. You toss the ball up and simply see what happens.

But stop!

According to the situation and how the match is progressing, it is wise to use your head and make use of the first service. Instead of a straight through the middle or direct shot to your opponent, a tactical first shot can also bring advantages.

Let's take a look at what various options can offer you.

### VERSION 1: FAST, WITH BODY SLICE

Always good: Fast, with body slice

You know the service with outward slice on the starting side. You play it in order to squeeze some variety into your service.

You play it when you are not completely at ease with your service. The extended version of this is the service with body slice. But played with more speed and harder. If you are a player who happily serves with full power,

this version is a clever move in your game

.Adjust the slice service in a way that on take off, it turns towards your opponent. If you are right-handed, you aim a fraction more to the right. According to how “extreme” your slice is. If you were to aim directly at your opponent, the ball would turn away from your opponent on take off. This is definitely not your aim with this version.

Put all the speed you possibly can into the service. Due to the slice the ball will not have so much speed as one you serve without slice. Even so, after take off the ball will be “mean”. And fast.

Your opponent will have to move well to the side. Additionally, he or she will have to return a flat ball which comes at him at high speed. The return player is presented with several hazards to deal with.

### **VERSION 2: WITH FULL POWER THROUGH THE MIDDLE!**

Score 40:0 or 40:15? Then, with full power through the middle!

You can adjust your varieties of service to suit the score. Apart from the score, your confidence and the way the game is progressing also play a role as to how you can deliver your first service.

If the score is 40:0 or 40:15, you have a small advantage. Your opponent has possibly already put aside thoughts of the service play. You are in a comfortable situation in order to take more risks.

Sometimes the simplest things are the correct and most effective ones. Slam the ball towards the middle. Try to keep the speed a little under control. Strike with about 90% of your possible speed. Focus on getting as near as possible to the middle of the service area. Without slice. Or spin. Without fuss.

You have a calculated risk. You still have, in case your first service does not succeed, your second one plus the advantage of the actual service shot. You can serve with a relaxed arm and put your opponent under maximum pressure. Use this version when you are feeling good and the score allows you certain level of risk.

### **VERSION 3: WITH SLICE THROUGH THE MIDDLE.**

Again slice? Yes!

Again fast and direct? No!

If you a right-handed, the slice gives you another possibility, one which Andy Murray likes to use. Serving on the advantageous side it is possible to pull the ball away from your opponent. Give your opponent a greater run for his or her return shot.

Reduce your speed a little. Concentrate on the middle. Put as much slice as possible into your serve. The aim is that on take off the ball turns towards the middle away from your opponent. This of course is even more effective against left-handed players. Even with right-handed opponents, however, it is a clever variation.

Speed is not the most important matter with this version. The priority is your slice. The meaner you make this, the more effective it is. Your opponent will have to stretch and keep moving. This service makes it difficult for your opponent to return long and well to this serve.

Now go out. Grab a few balls. And make your service into a super weapon

Author: Marco Kühn