



READY FOR CLAY? PART 11

HOW TO DEFEAT THE “MOON-BALL PLAYER”

THIS IS HOW YOU SHOULD PLAY AGAINST AN OPPONENT WHO CONTINUOUSLY PLAYS HIGH.

After the first set you are sitting completely unnerved on the bench. As far as tennis went, the first set had little to do with you. Every one of your shots was returned by your opponent with a moon ball. Mostly on your weaker side. The back hand. The first set was close. Because you allowed yourself to be provoked more and more from service ball to service ball, it now stands 4:6 from your perspective.

NOW WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Go back on the court with a furious arm and play every ball with full risk is the wrong way to go about this. You must calm down and accept that this is how your opponent plays. There have been no prizes given for beauty in tennis. You are allowed to play moon balls and it is often a successful method of play. Even on a professional level, for example the Chinese Saisai Zheng, repeatedly and deliberately plays high balls. She is 22 years old and has already won \$ 1,266,962 in prize money. It will hardly matter to her what someone else thinks of her tactical methods.

Once you have calmed down and accepted the situation, you must make a plan. Because you certainly do have clever tactical ways in which you can combat your opponent's high balls. One option for you is to position yourself behind the baseline, allow the ball to trundle out and return it at half height with plenty of length and lots of spin. The longer your shot, the more difficult it becomes for your opponent to play an effective moon ball. Due to spin your ball will accelerate after take off. For your opponent the ball will be more difficult to control on the strings. In this way it can easily happen, that your opponent's moon ball falls too short. An excellent chance for you to gain a direct winning shot.

PLAYING THE BALL ON THE ASCENT

Another option for you is to play your opponent's high balls as soon as they rise. Take care with the timing of your consequent movements and watch the ball even more intently. It is not easy to play a controlled faster ball after a slow oncoming ball. You must be clear about this. Never underestimate the high balls from your

opponent. If you take your opponent's ball on the ascent, meet the ball in front of your body at hip height. These two factors are important in order to achieve best possible control over your shot. With this option you have the chance to make more out of your opponent's high ball. You can play a short cross ball. You can react with more speed. You can, if the situation permits, follow your ball up to the net. Depending on how confident you feel.

WHAT YOU SHOULD NOT DO UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES

Do not approach every high ball with full power. Try not to think of every shot as a direct winner. Against a player who constantly plays high, a quick point should not be your aim. Do not get annoyed when you make a small mistake. It is harder to respond to your opponent's high balls than to fast balls. Do not become agitated and do not lament your opponent's playing tactics. This will only please and fortify your opponent. Instead, remain patient. Move your opponent up to the baseline. Return a high ball with a high ball. Calmly wait and see – be ready for your chance. Your chance will emerge when you hardly react to your opponent's high shots.

Then you can turn on offensive play and calmly and with control fix your opponent once and for all.

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