

Grand Slam Point Outcomes – WTA Tour

A Study into the 4 Shot Combinations™ in Tennis

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Rule 2: This rule demonstrates both positive court and shot geometry working for the player. As surface speed increased the number of forced errors decreased because positive court geometry was working with the surface speed to enhance the effectiveness of the Rule. As the speed of surface increased the number of winners also increased. There was 15% more winners to forced errors made when compared to Rule 4.

Rule 3: Employs negative court geometry and should be used as a tactical rule. Its tactical use can be validated as it accounts for only 13.8% of total point outcomes and the outcome type is surface dependent.

Rule 4: As surface speed increases more forced errors are made as players are reaching the ball. Here negative court geometry is more of a factor than surface speed. There was no more than a 2% difference in the number of winners hit on each surface using Rule 4. However, there were 15% fewer winners than forced errors compared to Rule 2. Hence, if the influence of surface speed was greater than negative court geometry, more winners would occur.

Coaching Applications

1. A player who possesses the ability to reduce unforced errors has a distinct advantage over their opponent.
2. It is essential for a player to develop the ability to maintain a cross-court rally without committing unforced errors. This should be reflected in the structure of drills and practice in both their purpose and the time spent hitting cross-court in relation to down-the-line directions for both rallying and point ending situations.
3. Players must focus on creating forced error outcomes at the expense of unforced errors and not focus on hitting winners at the expense of increased unforced errors.
4. The better the technical foundation and understanding of court geometry the less your tactical development is influenced by surface. The more open a player's tactical development remains, the more a complete game style can be developed within the player's potential.
5. Coaches should emphasise creating forced errors over hitting winners on Rule 4. Although being the largest point outcome, the rule itself should be taught with the understanding that it is more important to hit the right shot at the right time rather than the number of times it is hit in a match. In practice, coaches should train the execution of hitting down-the-line in the context of a Rule 4 combination.
6. The faster the court surface the more coaches should emphasise the importance of hitting Rule 2 winners.
7. REMEMBER: You can't do tactically what you can't hit technically.

Glossary

- **Court Geometry:** Dealing with the measurements and relationships of lines, angles and surfaces of a tennis court. The two major components are distance of usable court that shots can be hit into and what position a shot direction leaves your opponent in.
Court Geometry is governed by the laws and physics of tennis. It cannot be changed unless the shape, size, height of the net or laws of the game are altered. Therefore it governs the implementation of a player's overall strategy.
- **Negative Court Geometry:** A situation where a player changes the direction of the ball with the court geometry working against them. E.g. A shot down-the-line travels the shorter distance than cross-court and leaves the opponent no wider than the singles side line.
- **Positive Court Geometry:** A situation where a player changes the direction of the ball with the court geometry working for them. E.g. A shot cross-court travels the longer distance than down-the-line and can leave the opponent wider than the singles side line.
- **Shot Geometry:** The angle of deflection from two shot directions combined with a margin of error of the ball landing in the playable court. It also includes the way in which the shot is constructed in relation to the body.
 - **Positive Shot Geometry:** The angle of deflection and direction is across the body.
 - **Negative Shot Geometry:** The angle of deflection and direction is away from the body.
In general it is considered easier to hit the ball across the body regardless of technique. Negative shot geometry can be counteracted by hitting the 'inside-in' shot.

What – Where – Why – When?

The four W's is a simple formula that helps put in context the 4 Shot Making Rules.

What to hit? (Rule 1): Cross-court forms the foundation from which all shot combinations emanate. It is supported by both positive court and shot geometry. Remember, the 2.9:1 ratio!

Where to hit Winners? (Rule 2): By focusing on hitting Rule 2 winners, a player has the open court to hit into in addition to having positive court and positive shot geometry working for them. It does not get any better than that!!

Why to hit? (Rule 3): It's tactical. Use it for specific purposes as you have negative court geometry working against you. So send a strong message by using it to exploit an obvious weakness in an opponent's game. Remember you will leave the cross-court, open-court option for them to hit.

When to hit? (Rule 4): The right shot at the right time is more important than how often you hit it. Rule 4 is the most important shot in tennis, so you have got for it. Make sure you think forced error over winner because you are facing negative court geometry.