Coaching Corner

2. Tips for serving (Part 2).

* To maximise the amount of spin you need to use your wrist and not just your arm.
* For backspin aim to make contact near the bottom of the ball NOT the back.
* For a float ball you can hit through the back of the ball.
* To understand using sidespin it is best to consider the effect the spin has on your opponent.
  + When returning serve you need to watch the servers bat and observe both the direction in which it travels and the point of contact of the ball on the bat.
  + To return side spin watch the direction that the bat travels across the ball. Whichever side of the ball the bat starts then aim to that side of the table, regardless of from where it is played.
  + Once you have mastered this you will realise that you can direct the ball wherever you want by making contact with the correct side of the ball to counter the sidespin.
  + As well as the sidespin you also need to take into account the angle of the bat as to whether contact was near the top or bottom of the ball. This will of course also add a degree of either topspin or backspin to the ball.
  + It is well to remember that most players will often play cross-court when under pressure. If you direct your sidespin serve so that your opponent needs to aim cross-court, they are likely to correct the spin even if they were not aware it had sidespin. You would have played a riskier serve to no avail. However if you place the ball so that your opponent needs to play ‘down the line’, should they not realise the spin on the ball your spin will have full effect. Another way of looking at this is to make your opponent have to make contact with the side of the ball nearest the centre table line.
  + With good use of side spin and placement you can better control where your opponent will return the ball for your next shot.
* Although the serve is an ‘open’ stroke such that the ball and bat must be capable of being seen throughout the serve, you can nevertheless aim to disguise the type and or amount of spin on the ball. This is achieved by varying the contact point of the ball on the bat and or changing the bat angle or direction at the last second.
* When using the advanced forehand service both top and backspin can be achieved depending on whether contact is made on the part of the bat travelling downward (backspin), or the part travelling upward (topspin). You must use the outside of the bat to maximise the spin as this is the part travelling fastest and which will bring the ball into contact with more rubber. However if you make contact nearer the handle or top of the bat you will achieve a float ball.
* The aim is always to have a similar action which can be used to produce different effects on the ball.
  + For example, you may use a simple backspin action making contact at the bottom of the bat so that the ball will contact the rubber for the whole width of the bat to achieve backspin. However if you delay making contact so that the ball only catches the top of the bat being brushed only by a small part of the rubber you will impart very little if any spin (float). If your opponent is unaware of the change and believes the ball to have backspin they might open their bat too much and provide you with an easy high float ball to attack.
  + Alternatively you may flick your wrist making the bat move down, up or across the ball but sometimes before or after making contact with the ball. This will suggest that that spin has been imparted when it is a float ball.

REMEMBER – THE SERVE IS THE EASIEST WAY TO WIN (or lose) A POINT. A weak serve or a weak return would normally lose the rally, so it is well worth practicing.

Next issue:- Service Receive.

*For help or further information please contact Mike Prior at Ryde TT Centre.*