

VOLLEY WITH YOUR FEET

by Noel Callaghan



The purpose of learning any stroke in tennis, a player must first understand the mechanics of the shot and secondly be able to ‘visualize’ and ‘shadow’ the shot perfectly without a ball.

In the case of a volley, the player must also understand that it’s the complete opposite of a groundstroke in every sense, that is, court position, the time available, the continental grip, the technique, no back-swing, and no follow-through. To get a continental grip, hold the racquet handle like you are shaking hands. Make sure your racquet and elbows are out in front with the racquet head higher than the grip and above the net. This will give you a nice ‘L’ shape when you start your volley.

Great footwork is the key to a great volley. Tennis starts from the ground up, so if the feet aren’t right, neither will anything else. Practice the shot repeatedly with shadow tennis, and this is performed without the ball. On your toes in the bounce step, split your step, racquet and elbows in front, minimal swing, step forward, and punch

Imagine this; I send your son or daughter down to the local Baseball Club to try out for their team. The first thing the coach will ask is, “can you catch”?

Of course, this talented youngster can catch, especially with a big mitt on his/her hand. With the intention of impressing the coach, your child wants to make sure they do no drop the ball. Therefore they immediately employ great foot-work to get to the ball and nice steady hands to secure the catch in the mitt with eyes set very close to the action. This course of action is the same strategy to make the perfect volley!



with little to no follow-through while maintaining eye level to the ball. Firstly get it right technically from the net and gradually get it right from just behind the service line. The reason the service line volley is so important is that usually, this is your first volley as you are moving forward to the net.

Practice your volleys with a partner starting both at the net with touch volleys to get your timing right, splitting and

moving your feet into position and stepping forward with a strong wrist. Remember, the feet move way more than the hands. The volley is about going forward, no lateral, so elbows always in front, a nice 45-degree angle on contact, and no backswing. Once you are confident volleying close, move back another three feet and keep this going until you are comfortable volleying at the service line.

Work on transitioning from the baseline to the net, and this is where the service line volley will come into play. Learn not to panic with this volley, that it’s only a placement volley most of the time unless it’s high.

Incorporate as many doubles games, drills and practice matches into your training as possible, this will help improve your volley skills. Have the attitude of wanting



to be at the net and looking for the volley. Good footwork is imperative, always on your toes, splitting and moving forward, don’t let the ball come to you or drop, you go forward to meet the ball. Good doubles players mostly win at the net. Any doubles team that concedes the net to their opponents is going to find winning a real task. Remember, a team that controls the net will also control the match. So practice getting to the net often and quickly, which always comes back to good footwork.

To volley well, you need to want to be at the net, and this is gained through confidence from winning points.

Players should have the attitude that it’s very easy to volley well because less is better, less with the hands and more with the feet. Obey the six laws of hitting any shot in tennis 1. Court Position 2. Split Step 3. Track the Ball 4. Make a Decision 5. Execute 6. Recover

Good volleying is all about good footwork, so remember, volley with your feet!

The Bailey Tennis Footwork Company
Shadow Tennis - The Volley - YouTube
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