

Analysing Strokes and Corrective Practices

In order to analyse a stroke, coaches need to have a 'benchmark' to judge against. This benchmark should be a technically perfect stroke notwithstanding style, which is an individual trait in all players.

Technical perfection should be your goal but, realistically, you will never achieve perfection. You just need to be able to see the perfect shot and coach TOWARD that perfection.

But a word of caution - be forgiving and do not put too much pressure on your player to achieve the full stroke. Start with getting the point of contact right and then expand the stroke from there.

My 'perfect' player is Jan Ove Waldner who, in his prime, was a 'technically correct' player. More recent players would include Wang Liqin and Vladimir Samsonov. So if you are looking to get your players to watch and 'emulate' players, they would be my suggestion.

Analysing Strokes

As a tutor, I encourage coaches to analyse the stroke from the 'feet upwards'. I find that this method works because on many occasions, if the feet are in the wrong position, the whole stroke can be affected.

So I look at the stroke in the following order.

1. Feet - are they in the correct position in relation to the table - distance from, in relation to the shot to be played and are they on the line of play
2. Feet - are they placed to be able to move quickly
3. Weight - is the weight distributed correctly (balance)
4. Weight - does weight transfer take place
5. Knees - are they bent slightly
6. Hips - do they rotate properly
7. Waist - is there a forward bend
8. Waist - does the waist rotate with the hips
9. Body - is there a 'hollow' in front of the body
10. Arms - Elbows 'in front' of the body
11. Arms - 'Orange' size between arm and body
12. Arms - Preparation for stroke is correct, with wrist relaxed and bat following forearm
13. Arms - All joints work together as shot is played
14. Arms - Free arm works as a 'radar', following ball and balance, is it doing this
15. Contact place in relation to body- Is the point of contact correct for the stroke
16. Contact on the ball - is the ball hit at the correct contact point for the spin / speed
17. Timing or contact on the ball in relation to it's flight - is the ball being hit at the correct time of flight: off the bounce, peak of bounce or late timing
18. Follow through - is the follow through correct
19. Grip - has the grip changed for the shot
20. Bat angle - is the bat at the correct angle to get the ball on the table

If the ball has gone on the table, and yet the shot is not technically perfect, we don't need to take the players 'personality' out of the shot by trying to make it technically perfect. It may be better to tweak what you see in order to make it a more effective and consistent shot? This is the main consideration and the skill of coaching is to develop the mix of technique and style relevant and appropriate to the individual player to produce an effective 'player package' that gets results.

With experience, you may miss out, for example, numbers 1-19 and go straight to the bat angle because that is where the problem is MOST apparent to you. All I will say is *consider* the other options as well as there may be an underlying problem that you haven't identified.

Intervention

Then there is the 'intervention'. Praise burger approach WHEN you intervene. But allow the player to try to rectify the problem themselves and if it is obvious that they can't, then step in and correct them. Don't overload the player with 6 changes to the shot all at once. Do the correction that will get the best result fastest and then bring the other corrections in gradually. When you intervene is dependent on a number of factors but a general rule of thumb is that you intervene more at the start of the practise and then less and less as the practise continues, maybe using one or 'few' word reminders without stopping the play. E.g. 'shoulders' or 'hips' or 'faster feet'.

Corrective Practices

In the early days of coaching a player, you will see many different techniques and faults that you can correct easily. As the player gets better and better, it is more difficult to see faults unless you use the 20 point format in the earlier section. Corrective practices can be put into place at any level but at the development stage of the game, many of these are hugely effective in getting the ball on the table and giving success for the player, success in that the ball now hits the table. As the player gets better, your corrective practice will be aimed at consistency or 'point winning'.

This is not a comprehensive list and many other coaches will give you their versions. Listen, steal and use and if it works, then tell me!!

I've broken it down into strokes and the initially, aimed at the beginners problems.

Forehand Drive:

Fault	Corrective practice
Shoulders don't turn in preparation for the shot	Place the index finger of the free arm on the inside of the wrist of the bat hand and play all forehands with the finger in place
Ball keeps flying off the forehand edge of the opponents side of the table	Drop the 'bat foot' back slightly to delay the timing of the shot
Hips don't rotate in preparation for the shot	Make bat foot point to side of court and do single ball multi ball, allowing player to prepare for each shot before feeding.
Elbow tucked into body	Put fist under bat armpit and try to keep it there for the rally

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Bat arm too short	Use the back of the free hand to force the elbow away from the body
Cannot hit the ball with the forehand (timing problem)	Place them at the side of the table and teach to bounce and hit at a target on the other side of the table. Gradually move back toward the end of the table and then have an accurate feed directly onto the bat which is held at the 'point of contact' by the player
Over rotation	Place free hand in front of forehead and get the bat to meet the hand OR encourage hands to meet in front of the face at the end of the stroke
Over rotation of the hips	Prepare the shot in advance and adjust feet to restrict over rotation
Limited backswing	Adjust feet, reinforce hip rotation, prepare shot before ball is fed

Backhand Drive

Body rotation on playing shot	Place free hand on the table to maintain square shoulders
Reaching outside line of body	Encourage stepping footwork, use regular drills to instil correct position, initially with the head in line with the oncoming ball
No wrist action on contact	Use rolling ball drill to practise brushing the ball

Forehand 'touch'

Elbow straight and too high	Place elbow on the table and get the player stationary in position before feeding the ball, allowing the elbow to lift slightly on contact. Reduce distance between head and point of contact by encouraging leading with the head
Footwork too slow into and out of table	Slow down feed, put the player further from the table to encourage quicker step into the table
Ball going too long	Hold the bat like holding a baby bird, you don't want to drop it but you don't want to crush it. Take the ball off the bounce

Backhand push

Ball going too long	Hold the bat like holding a baby bird, you don't want to drop it but you don't want to crush it. Take the ball off the bounce
Ball going too high on return therefore misreading the spin	Get head lower to the table to see the bounce on the ball, use marked ball to assist learning about reading spin

There are many adaptations of the corrective practices above. There are many more. Use your imagination with the 'perfection' model at the forefront of your mind.

The Technical Resources (TR) issued by the ETTA is the new 'manual'. In the early stages of learning, the player should be taught the strokes as per the TR.

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