

PLAY WITH VARIATION by Peter Farrell

Playing Standard: ITN 1 to 6

Long Term Player Development Pathway: Phase 3/4

One thing opponents hate is never knowing what is going to happen next. We all feel more comfortable if we can predict a player's response to our shots. Yet many players make the mistake of being predictable, and thus making life easy for the opposition.

Take for example **returning a weak second serve**. Most players most of the time will go for a winner in this situation, making some and missing some. But a clever server will anticipate what is going to happen and, as the match progresses, be more and more prepared for the attempted winner.

Instead, try varying how you deal with this weak serve.

What options do you have?

Chip and Charge - see the short serve as an opportunity to make your return of serve an approach shot, and put the server under pressure to pass you.

Drop Shot - as the server is recovering after her serve, she may not be ready to sprint forward. It's an easy shot for the receiver if the second serve has bounced short.

Winner - *yes of course* - if the opportunity is there and you are hitting the ball well, why not sometimes turn up the power? It will generally be easier to hit a winner crosscourt rather than down the line, since the ball can be angled more effectively away from the server when hitting crosscourt.

HERE'S THE KEY: *the more your opponent is thinking and worrying about what **you might** do, the less she is concentrating on what **she intends** to do....*

For individual advice on this or any aspect of tennis, please contact your local Tennis Coach Ireland coach -

see www.tenniscoachireland.ie

For more information on the ITN:

http://www.tennisireland.ie/player_database/what_is_the_itn

For more information on the Long Term Player Development Pathway:

http://www.tennisireland.ie/coaches/player_development_pathway