

THE BACKHAND SLICE by Peter Farrell

Playing Standard: ITN 1 to 6

Long Term Player Development Pathway: Phase 3

Here comes the ball to your backhand. Should you hit it with topspin or slice?

As a general rule (and these type of rules can only ever be general), if you are in a comfortable situation hit the shot with topspin. ***If you are in an uncomfortable situation, go for slice.***

It is usually the type of shot that your opponent has hit to you which dictates whether you are feeling comfortable or uncomfortable at the thought of your next shot.

Take a situation where the incoming ball is to your backhand and is

- Very high (above shoulder height)
- Very low (below knee height)
- Has a lot of pace (e.g. first serve, smash)
- Straight at you (“into the body”)
- Far away (causing you to stretch).

For most players, these are all situations that are ‘uncomfortable’, so slice is a good shot selection. Slice is the “percentage shot” which will be successful more often than not.

Of course there are times in a match when you will choose with good reason to hit slice when you could have used topspin – for example on the approach shot. But a lot of points, and ultimately matches, are lost by players who choose to try for topspin on their backhand when slice would have been the more effective and wiser option.

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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