MATCHPLAY – TAKE TIME TO `SCOUT` YOUR OPPONENT
by Peter Farrell

Playing Standard: ITN 2 to 5
Long Term Player Development Pathway: Phase 5

Most players use the knock up and the first few games of a match to get an idea of their opponents strengths and weaknesses. But at an open tournament you have a great opportunity to get a good look at your future opponents, simply by showing up early for your match, or staying on after you play.

Let's say you have just won your first round, and tomorrow you will play the winner of a match that starts in half an hour. Its time to settle down to do a little scouting. Scouting simply means watching and analysing your next opponent. Of course many professional players have a personal coach to do this for them, but we normal mortals must do it ourselves...

Some of the questions you should ask yourself:
- **Does she have any obvious weaknesses?**
- **Any major strengths?**
- **Is she a baseliner, a net player, or an all courter?**
- **What type and amount of spin does she like to use?**
- **First serve – cannonball or marshmallow?**
- **Movement around the court – fast, medium or slow?**
- **Does she have any patterns in her game – eg hitting most passing shots crosscourt?**
- **What type of ball does she dislike receiving – fast, slow, high, low, sliced, wide, at the body etc?**

The information you collect will allow you to prepare a match plan for your next round. If you have scheduled a hitting session the next morning, you can start to practice the tactics and match plan you intend to use later on. All of this means you will be as well prepared as possible. *Going into the match with a plan, you will be ready to play effective tennis from the first point.*

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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