

Footwork - The Bailey Method

Part 2 - Rallying Contact Moves

by David Bailey

David is a footwork and tennis trainer and creator of The Bailey Method, a revolutionary way of learning footwork. He spent 15 years studying and researching the steps and movements of the top pros, and developed a language and a method that is cutting edge in one of the most complex and misunderstood aspects of the game - footwork and court movement. David has worked with world class players and coaches at the top academies, and has presented at coaching seminars around the world, including PTR International Tennis Symposium. The Bailey Method has become a regular part of the coaching curriculum at Bollettieri Tennis Academy. It is a system with a common language for tennis movement and footwork that is becoming universal and is now being taught around the world. To find out more about The Bailey Method, visit www.thebaileymethod.com

This is the second in a three part series of articles that explain the correct contact move by listing the relevant approaching ball, footwork selection, hitting stance, contact move and corresponding balance move.

Without a doubt, tennis is an extremely athletic sport. In 2006, Roger Federer said, "My game is all about footwork. If I move well I play well."

Part 1 of this article series covered Offensive Contact Moves. In this article we will look at Rallying Contact Moves. When deciding which contact move to select, you must first:

1. Read an Approaching Ball
2. Decide what Footwork Steps you are going to use to reach the ball
3. Set up your feet into a Hitting Stance
4. Respond with a Contact Move
5. Control your center of gravity with a Balance Move
6. Recover and Get Ready for your opponent's next shot

Sequential Progression Contact Moves

Each article explains with Sequential Progression the chosen contact move by listing the relevant approaching ball, footwork selection, hitting stance, contact move and corresponding balance move. The important aspects that distinguish each contact move from the next is the fact that each contact move has a -

- Distinctive approaching ball - be it fast, mid court, floating, deep or wide
- Certain footwork selection - be it offensive, defensive or rallying
- Particular hitting stance - be it open, closed, neutral, semi-open, running or a back foot stance
- Athletic contact move - be it lunging, spinning, hopping, shifting, transferring or pivoting the hips
- Relevant balance move - using the non-dominant leg to counterbalance with a side kick, a kick back, leg curl, knee drop or inside knee drop

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Part 2 - Rallying Contact Moves

Rallying Contact Moves

Rallying Contact Moves use rallying footwork patterns where the player keeps his position on the baseline and lets the ball come to him. These tend to be on fast deep or angled balls. Examples of offensive contact moves are the Closed Pivot, the Two Foot Pivot and the Low Spin Move.

The Low Spin Move

The Low Spin is a rallying contact move where the player establishes an athletic semi open stance, makes contact with the ball, then powerfully rotates/spins the hips with his outside toe pointing toward the target. Often the player comes off the ground, while maintaining a low center of gravity. The Low Spin is the most aggressive rallying contact move because there is elevation of the body. The Low Spin is challenging athletically and, from a timing point of view, is the hardest rallying contact move to master.

Approaching ball is a semi wide deep ball

The deep approaching ball is one that lands near the back of the court and is low and fast landing near the baseline. You tend to hit a low spin on a shot that requires a few adjusting steps to set up the feet, thus giving you room to swing the racquet. Because the ball is not cramping the body, you can aggressively use the hips to add power to the shot.

REACT with footwork selection . . .

Rally Footwork

Rally Footwork is footwork where you let the ball come to you and you maintain your position on the baseline. You tend to hit the ball before making your contact move, and the contact point tends to be in line with your outside foot. I also like to call this "stay in it" footwork!



Ready 1



Ready 2



Ready split step



Step out



Step forward



Step back into semi open stance

SET UP with a hitting stance . . . Semi Open Stance

With the Low Spin, you tend to use three or five Cha-Cha adjusting steps out to the ball, as these 'out' steps set you up in an Semi Open Stance, i.e., first step (step out) second step (step forward) third step (step back). If five steps, repeat second and third steps to make it five steps, and once a stable semi open stance is established, keep 65% of the weight on the back foot with the toe pointing toward the side fence.



Low spin on a deep semi wide ball



Toe points in shot direction

RESPOND with a contact move . . . Low Spin Move

The Low Spin move is an rallying contact move where the ball is hit off the outside foot from a semi open stance. The body becomes elevated after the hit where the hips rotate powerfully and the outside foot finishes pointing in the direction of the hit. The player's body will always come off the ground, while maintaining a low center of gravity and keeping the same distance between the feet. The head must remain still through contact and angles kept in the legs. It is important not to jump up or rotate the hips too far.

and a balance move . . . Stay Low and Spin the Hips

The is no balance move as such with the Low Spin, but keeping down through contact is essential. A good sign of a well completed Low Spin is when the outside foot is flat on the ground and the body remains centered and well aligned. The player should sink down into their athletic base after contact.



Front cross recovery step



Balance with split step

Two Foot Pivot Move

The Two Foot Pivot move is an Rallying Contact Move where the ball is hit off an open stance. The hips stay low and rotate around a central axis, keeping good angles with the legs. The hips pivot on the balls of both feet and there is a dropping down of the inside knee and the hips. When completing the Two Foot Pivot, make contact before pivoting the hips. The Two Foot Pivot is a move where both feet stay on the ground before, during and after the hit.

Approaching ball is a deep ball down the middle

The approaching ball comes very fast and cramps the body. The beauty of this move is in its simplicity - especially if you need to shift out of the way of the ball to give you room to swing properly.

REACT with footwork selection . . . Rally Footwork

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Ready 1



Ready 2



Ready split



Pivot step



Make contact first on a middle deep ball

SET UP with a hitting stance . . . Open Stance

With the Two Foot Pivot, the out steps are very simple. Either pivot or take one step to the side on the backhand or forehand side, while and if the ball is coming at the body. Stay in a Open Stance and shift quickly sideways while keeping a wide base. Most players prefer to hit a forehand when cramped, as they can get away with later contact because the wrist is behind the racquet.



Two foot pivot from open stance



Inside knee drop for balance

RESPOND with a contact move . . . Two Foot Pivot

The Two Foot Pivot is an rallying contact move where the ball is hit off an open stance. The hips stay low and rotate around a central axis, keeping good angles in the legs. The hips pivot on the balls of both feet and there is a dropping down of the inside knee and the hips. When completing the Two Foot Pivot make contact before pivoting the hips.

and a balance move . . . Inside Knee Drop

The balance move of the Two Foot Pivot is an Inside Knee Drop. An Inside Knee Drop is when the knee farthest from the ball drops straight down toward the floor as both feet pivot and the racquet extends out through the ball. The elbow of the racquet hand points toward the net, as the leg that is inside drops to create a 90° angle. The Inside Knee Drop will help you extend through your swing and prevent you from coming up too early, thus losing balance and power.



Regain balance



Split to finish

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Closed Pivot Move

The Closed Pivot is a rallying contact move where the ball is hit off the front foot from a semi closed stance. The move is usually a backhand move that suits one or two handed players, and can be hit with slice, flat or topspin. The front foot stays on the ground during and after the hit as you stay down on the shot.

Approaching ball is an angled ball to backhand side

The angled approaching ball is one that bisects the singles line and passes the doubles line before passing the baseline.

REACT with footwork selection . . . Rally Footwork

Rally Footwork, in this case, is where you cut the angle out to the ball, but are not in a strong position to hit a winner. By moving quickly to the ball, you maintain a good position on the baseline and are in a strong location to hit a corresponding angled reply. I also like to call this "stay in it" footwork!



Ready 1



Ready 2



Ready split



Pivot step



Front cross over



Balance on outside foot



Close off stance at 45 degrees

SET UP with hitting stance . . .

Closed Stance

The out steps are then followed by a Closed Stance. Here the weight goes from the back foot to the front foot and you step *before you swing!* Keep the front foot pointing toward the net post.



Closed pivot with back knee drop on an angled ball



Brake step with outside leg

RESPOND with a contact move . . . Closed Pivot Move

The Closed Pivot Move is a rallying contact move where the ball is hit off the front foot from a Closed Stance. The front foot stays on the ground during and after the hit. Keep the angles in the leg through contact and finish looking under the net tape, watching the ball bounce on the other side of the net. Finish the swing before bringing the trail leg around for balance. Bring the leg around to 2 o'clock if left handed and 10 o'clock if right handed. When this leg comes around, it should be like a push to the next ball not a brake. It is like swimming - you must finish the tumble turn before you push off the wall. The Closed Pivot is usually a backhand shot and can be hit with one or two hands with topspin or slice.

and a balance Move . . . Back Knee Drop

The Balance Move of the Closed Pivot depends on the height of the ball. If the ball is low then, like a skateboarder who has hit a bump on the road, drop the back knee for balance. This will keep alignment with the body and also help generate racquet head speed and enable topspin or slice to be generated. If the ball is higher and you close off the stance, then kick the leg back for balance. The kick back will help you extend through your swing and prevent you from opening up too early and losing your balance. By kicking the leg back or dropping the knee down, you have also gained control of your back leg, so you can then use it effectively to push you toward your intended recovery position. This position on the court will depend on the success and direction of your last shot.



Drop step inside foot



Front cross over recovery step



Square up hips



Side skip



Split to finish

Part 3 of this article series will appear in the next issue of *TennisPro* and cover Defensive Contact Moves.