

Footwork - The Bailey Method

Part 3 - Defensive Contact Moves



This is the third and final part of a 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.

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. 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

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 series was on Offensive Contact Moves and Part 2 addressed Rallying Contact Moves. This final part is on Defensive Contact Moves; the moves are for both forehand and backhand side. 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 are 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 3 - Defensive Contact Moves

Defensive Contact Moves

Defensive Contact Moves use defensive footwork patterns where the player is pushed back off the baseline or forced to move very quickly to the corners of the court. These tend to be on wide, angled wide, or high, deep balls. Examples of Defensive Contact Moves are the Mogul Move, Power Move and the Reverse Spin Move.

The Mogul Move

The Mogul Move is an Defensive Contact Move where the player is forced wide, and hence, made to use quick crossing steps out to the ball. The player establishes a quick open stance and shifts the weight sideways after making contact. The player travels beyond the ball, while keeping good angles in the legs, and with the outside foot pushes himself back to the center of the court.

Approaching ball is a wide deep ball

The wide deep approaching ball is low and fast landing near the baseline and close to the corner.

REACT with footwork selection . . . Defensive Footwork

Defensive Footwork is footwork where you are challenged to reach the ball or pushed into a position where you either hit the ball with a lot of top-spin or hit the ball high into the air so you have time to recover. There also might be a "go for it" mentality where you go for an out right winner, because you are so far out of position. Therefore I also like to call it "in trouble" footwork or "go for it" footwork!



Ready split 1



Ready split 2



Push from outside foot



Drop step inside foot



Front cross over 1



Step out 1



Front cross over 2



Step out 2 into open stance

SET UP with a hitting stance . . . Open Stance

With the Mogul Move, you set your feet up in an Open Stance. This means having the toes lined up and pointing in the same direction as if standing on a balance beam. When set up in an open hitting stance, you must shift your weight sideways after contact as any spinning or rotating of the hips will cause the ball to dump into the net. The out steps are always one or two crossing steps, as these are fast and simple steps that get you to the ball quickly. A Mogul Move tends to be hit off a moving unstable stance with the secret being staying down through the shot, not jumping or lifting on contact.



Shift weight sideways with a mogul move on a wide, deep corner ball



Land on side of foot, stay aligned and keep angles in legs

RESPOND with a contact move . . .

Mogul Move

The Mogul Move is an defensive Contact Move where the ball is hit off the outside foot from a Open Stance. The body becomes elevated after the hit, where the hips shift powerfully sideways and both feet turn and finish pointing at the net. The outside foot should end up flat against the ground, while it is important to maintain a low center of gravity while 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 when shifting the weight.

and a balance move . . .

Stay Low and Shift the Hips

The is no balance move as such with the Mogul Move, but keeping down through contact is essential. A good sign of a well completed Mogul Move is when the outside foot is flat on the ground, both toes are facing the net, and the body remains centered and well aligned. The player should sink down into his athletic base after contact. The outside leg should extend straight and the inside leg bent under to aid recovery. Keep the eyes facing the net.



Drop step inside foot & front cross recovery step

Side skip 1 to recover



Side skip 2 to recover

Split to finish

Power Move

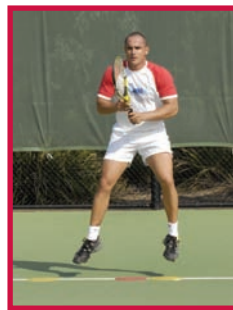
The Power Move is an Defensive Contact Move where the ball is hit off a running stance. Both feet come off the ground after contact, while the hips remain closed. The rear leg kicks back for balance while the front foot is pointing toward the side fence. A Power Move is really a sideward elevated lunge.

Approaching ball is a wide angled or wide deep ball

The approaching ball comes very fast, wide and angled, and is really challenging for the player to reach, thus they tend to hit this shot while on the move. The Power Move is a difficult move to master as you are moving at high speed so you need good balance and timing.

REACT with footwork selection . . . Defensive Footwork

Defensive Footwork is footwork where you are challenged to reach the ball or pushed into a position where you either hit the ball with a lot of topspin or hit the ball high into the air so you have time to recover. There also might be a "go for it" mentality where you go for an out right winner, because you are so far out of position. Therefore I also like to call it "in trouble" footwork or "go for it" footwork!



Ready split 1



Ready split 2



Drop step inside foot



Front cross over 1



Step out 1



Front cross over 2



Make contact first off a running stance on a very wide, deep, fast ball

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SET UP with a hitting stance . . . Running Stance

With the Power Move, the out steps don't vary. With the Power Move, you are running to the ball using running steps and hitting from an unstable stance. Many times, the player will have to pump the arms initially to get the legs turning over and help them reach the wide, difficult ball. Try to keep the steps an equal distance, as this will give the Power Move better fluency and rhythm.



Power move by lunging laterally



Use a kick back balance move where legs kick toward side fence

RESPOND with a contact move . . . Power Move

The Power Move is an Defensive Contact Move where the ball is hit off an open running stance while the player is on the run. The rear leg kicks back toward the side fence, while the front foot points toward the other side fence. Keep the angles in the leg through contact and use the wrist to impart spin, not the legs. It is important to hit through the ball and not to jump up on contact or look up (lift the head) too early. A Power Move is really a sideward elevated lunge. When running cut the angle if possible!

and a balance move . . . Kick Back

The balance move of the power is a Kick Back. A Kick Back is when you kick the back leg toward the side fence as you make contact with the ball. The Kick Back helps stop over rotation, ensures good balance, and loads the back leg so it can swing around, extend and stop the body from taking further steps. Kicking the leg back also helps extend the point of contact. It is important to stay down on contact and not to jump up. Jumping leads to loss of balance and power.



Brake step as outside leg swings around, extends & stops body



Drop step inside foot to aid recovery



Front cross over recovery step



Side skip 1 to recover



Side skip 2 to recover



Split to finish

Reverse Spin

The Reverse Spin is a Defensive Contact Move where the ball is hit from well behind the baseline. The player finds an athletic semi open stance while being pushed back, and quickly spins their hips (counter clockwise) while kicking out the outside leg as they rotate. The back foot should end up facing the side fence. The Reverse Spin is a very athletic move, but is a lot easier to master than it looks. If you set up the feet properly, it is a lot more effective than hitting off one foot.

Approaching ball is a high deep floating ball

The high deep floating ball is one that forces the player to retreat well behind the baseline where the ball is then allowed to drop into the player's strike zone.

REACT with footwork selection . . . Defensive Footwork

Defensive Footwork is footwork where you are challenged to reach the ball or are pushed into a position where you either hit the ball with a lot of topspin or hit it high into the air so you have time to recover. In the case of the Reverse Spin, you are trying to counter attack with a heavily spun ball, and the nature of this move enables the player to hit aggressively up the back of the ball. There is no thought of going for a winner, thus it is more of "in trouble" footwork!



Ready 1



Ready 2



Ready split



Set feet into semi open stance



Stay in stance and shuffle back from baseline



Load legs into semi open stance



Let high deep floating ball drop into strike zone

SET UP with hitting stance . . . Semi Open Stance

With the Reverse Spin, you first find your Semi Open Stance, then stay in your stance and shuffle back, and load the legs for balance and power. Try to keep 65% of the weight on the back foot, as the weight will be driven upward more than forward.



Reverse spin



Land on back leg and side kick balance move

RESPOND with a contact move . . . Reverse Spin

The Reverse Spin is a Defensive Contact Move where the ball is hit from a stable Semi Open Stance from well behind the baseline. It is more effective to run around and hit a Reverse Spin than trying to deal with a very high difficult ball on the backhand side. The player finds an athletic Semi Open Stance while being pushed back, and quickly spins his hips (counter clockwise) while kicking out the outside leg as he rotates. The back foot should end up facing the side fence. It is important that the head stays still, with the eyes look forward and the hips rotate around the central axis (the head). It works well that as soon as you land on the back foot that you recover back to the baseline in a smooth continuous motion.

and a balance move . . . Side Kick

The balance move of the Reverse Spin is the Side Kick. Kicking the leg to the side fence enables the racquet swing from high to low and generates a lot of topspin to the ball. It is important that the elbow of the racquet arm end up facing the net and up in line with the front shoulder. This will keep alignment with the body and also help generate racquet head speed. By kicking the leg to the side, you also gain control of your leg so you can then use it effectively to push you back toward the baseline.



Bring balance leg down to regain balance



Step forward and recover to baseline



Finish with split step

Parts 1 and 2 of this article series, covering Offensive Contact Moves and Rallying Contact Moves, appeared in the previous two issues of *TennisPro*.