

Effective Court Positioning By: Mary Lyons, AmPRO Professional

Control of the center of the court can be the number one difference between winning and losing in racquetball. Many "not so quick" players are able to make up for their lack of speed by proper court positioning and good anticipation, enabling them to play competitive racquetball at the highest level.

Center court is not easily defined as a "spot" on the court but is more of an area where players should be positioned to give themselves the best possible opportunity to take an offensive shot and score a point and also the best opportunity to retrieve an opponent's offensive shot. The Center Court area can best be described as an oval, approximately 8 feet wide which extends from the center of the court at the short line (5 foot line) toward each sidewall.

From this center court area, you should position yourself toward the side wall (1/2 to 1 step) where your opponent is hitting from and turn your body slightly toward that side. Looking over your shoulder at your opponent will give you the opportunity to see player as they set up and strike the ball. Seeing this, you will be able to determine where your opponent's shot is going - - even before it gets to the front wall, making your retrieval much easier. If your shot rebounds off of one of the side walls and /or back wall and your opponent sets up to shoot from behind you, you will be able to move to the open side of the court and give the shooter a clear shot at the front wall - - as well as avoid getting hit with the ball. According to the rules, you must give your opponent a clear path to and shot to the front wall as well as a clear angle to hit a cross-court pass. From this center court position, you will be able to put yourself in good (and legal) court position to do this.

By using this court positioning technique you will, in effect, increase your reaction time by keeping an eye on the ball during the entire rally. For example, if your opponent is behind you and swinging with an upward motion you will know that they are most likely going to hit a ceiling ball. You can therefore begin moving back toward the back of the court before the ball even reaches the front wall and be in perfect position when the ball reaches the back of the court. Similarly, if your opponent appears to be getting low to shoot an offensive shot, you will be able to react forward, giving yourself that extra second to get to their shot and make the retrieval. Those players who use the "linebacker" technique of watching the front wall and reacting after the ball hits the front wall waste valuable time and put themselves in a dangerous position and at a severe disadvantage.

Using good court-positioning techniques can help you become a more effective racquetball player and enable you to move to a new, higher level. Give it a try and remember... keep on "rolling."