

SECOND SERVE SECRETS. Peter Farrell (Development Officer)



At advantage receiver, your first serve goes wide... miss this second serve and you lose the game. Worse, you hand your opponent the game on a plate – she does not even have to hit a shot! What to do... better get this done quickly, slow down your swing, tap the ball, make sure it goes in... here we go... but it dribbles into the net... WRONG ANSWER!!

So what should you have done? Here are my four secrets of how to hit a successful second serve...

1. Lets go back a bit before we go forward. Are you hitting an awful lot of second serves in this match? If so, maybe you are trying to do a bit too much with your first serve – going for an ace all the time. If you were to take a little pace off your first serve you would miss less. Then you would not be under as much pressure to hit good second serves, simply because you would not be hitting as many of them.

2. Rushing into the second serve immediately after missing the first is a common mistake. Take your time, relax, breathe deeply - decide what you want to do with this second serve as you go through your `service ritual` (details in `Tip of the Month` April 2008 -

http://www.leinstertennis.ie/news_item.php?number=219&type=news&archive=yes).

3. Use the `chopper` grip. Also called the continental or hammer grip, its purpose is to allow you to put **spin** on the ball. Spin gives you control, and control is key on a second serve – it must go in. However, because spin gives you control, it allows you to hit the ball with reasonable pace while still being confident it will go where it is supposed to go. Spin is a bit like the brakes on a bike. If you have good brakes, you feel you can go fast, because you know you have the means to control the bike if you need to stop in a hurry. With bad brakes, better not go too fast in the first place...

For details on grips, go to -

<http://www.tennis.com/articles/templates/instruction.aspx?articleid=1337&zoneid=16>

4. Swing at the ball at least as fast as you do on your first serve. Yes, you read that right! Although it seems totally counter intuitive, swinging faster gives you a better chance of getting a second serve into play, *provided you are using the chopper grip and putting spin on the ball.*

Why? Because the faster you swing the more spin you put on the ball, and the more spin you put on the ball the more control you have... It will not go as fast as your first serve, because the `brushing` motion you use to generate spin will slow the ball down, but it will reach the receiver with enough `oomph` to keep her from attacking.

The second serve is a crucial shot. If you have confidence in it, you will have confidence to go for big first serves. You will avoid giving away free points by double faulting, and you will feel better about your game overall. If the second serve is causing you problems, an hour with your club coach focusing on `the four secrets` will pay dividends.