Coaching Corner

I’m often asked for the easiest and quickest way to improve someone’s game. It starts with serving. So here goes -

1. Tips for serving (Part 1).

* No mid-table balls; either serve short (2 bounces white line) or long (one bounce by end line).
* Always serve low by striking ball at net height or below.
* Concentrate only on the bounce your side of the table.

For a short ball; it should be around half way between you and the net and with a soft touch (think of the ball as a newly laid egg).

For a long ball, it should be by your end of the table, low and fast.

* Mainly serve from your backhand court (and recover) to maximise being able to play the 3rd ball with a strong forehand.
* If in doubt, aim at your opponent’s crossover point – forehand elbow or hip. This will force your opponent to have to move to play a strong return and minimise the chance of a return wide to either wing. Serve long to open up the rally so you can attack their return. Serve short if your opponent is stronger than you to limit their attacking options.
* Use a fast wrist action and try to achieve a brushing or dragging feel between bat and ball to produce the spin. A loose wrist is essential and requires a change of grip, (just for the serve), basically releasing the grip on the handle and holding the blade between thumb and forefinger.
* Do NOT serve with topspin unless the spin is disguised or also with sidespin. It is the easiest ball to return with a block.
* Use mainly float (no spin) or backspin, with or without sidespin. Float cannot be blocked and will force your opponent to spin or lift the ball to get it over the net making it easier for you to attack.
* Learn to use sidespin with top or backspin but placement is critical otherwise you are wasting your time with a

riskier serve for no gain. Select the spin that will help to get the return where you want it. Say onto your forehand side, or to minimise the risk of it being placed where you don’t want it. (More of this later)

* Always serve with a purpose to get the return you want for the 3rd ball.
* AND ALWAYS - TAKE YOUR TIME, DO NOT RUSH). Have a routine that forces you to slow down before serving and **always throw the ball up at least 16cm (6’’). Otherwise it is cheating!**

REMEMBER – THE SERVE IS THE EASIEST WAY TO WIN (or lose) A POINT. The serve is the only time when you are in total control. A weak serve or a weak return would normally lose the rally.

Good luck, it’s well worth practicing.

*For help or further information please contact Mike Prior at Ryde TT Centre.*