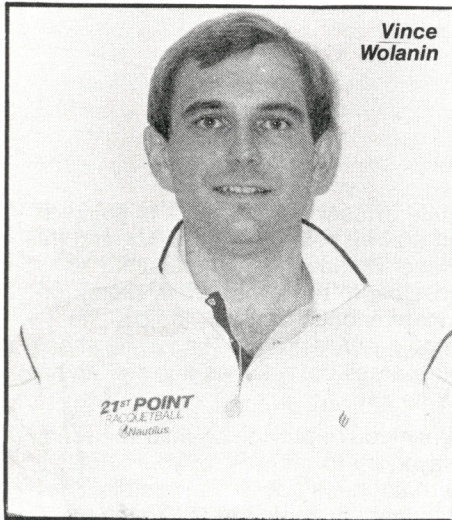


# How The Big Shots Have Redefined The Offensive Parts Of The Court

by Vincent Wolanin



In racquetball it is of primary importance to control the offensive portions of the court floor. The offensive court for years has been defined singularly as a circular area of about eight to 10 feet in diameter which touches the short line at its nearest position to the front wall (Diagram 1).

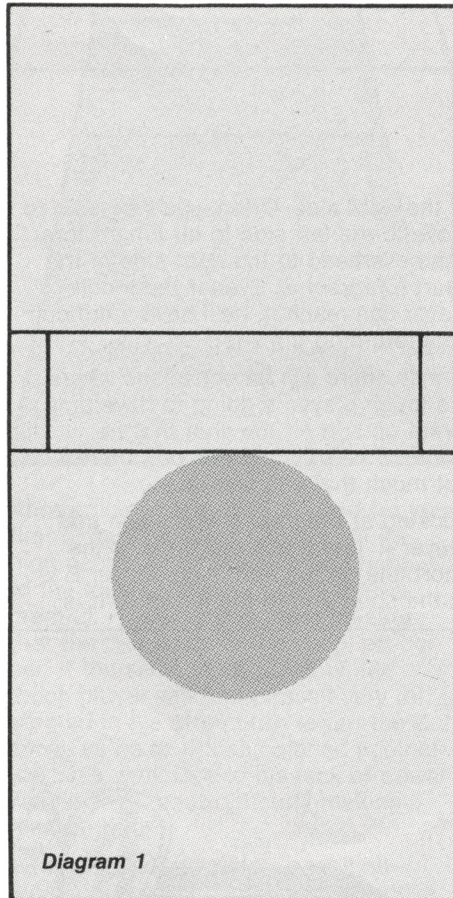
While this relationship is somewhat valid, there are three factors which have eroded that validity over the years:

- 1) The ball is faster;
- 2) The players are better shooters; and
- 3) The rallies are shorter

These three factors have changed the offensive control area significantly. Players in the open and professional ranks today are vulnerable to the shotmaker who, by altering this control area theory, has changed the way the game is played.

My observations and playing experiences lead me to believe that the best players have the ability to alter the control area on every shot they can reach. To understand this, let's look carefully at the mental processes which dictated the "old" control area.

Before the age of the shooter, the defensive player would put himself into offensive position by playing the game (at least) two shots ahead. The first shot (if I'm the receiver) gets me into the control area and the subsequent shots

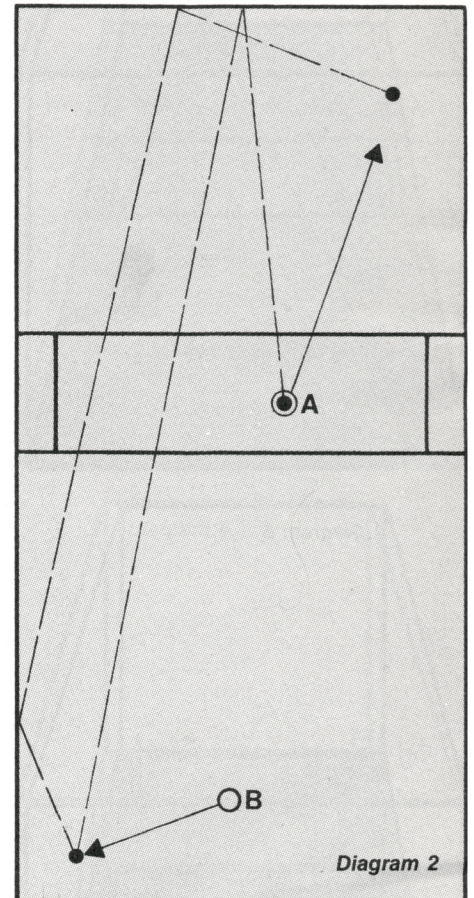


either retain the control area for me or afford me a high percentage opportunity for an all-out winner.

This two shot theory is used by the world's best squash players to control essentially the same area (known as the "T"). The difference between squash or the old style racquetball and today's racquetball is the introduction of the "One Big Shot."

The One Big Shot is the home run, touchdown bomb, and three point jump-shot all wrapped into one. In addition, it comes in many sizes and shapes using front wall, side walls, splats, straight in and other variations of kill shots that can end a rally not in two (or more) shots, but with One Big Shot.

Because today's players are so adept at playing the One Big Shot, the control area is more or less dictated by the selection of the One Big Shot. Here are a few examples.



In Diagram 2, Player A hits a hard, drive serve to Player B's backhand, the normal start to most rallies these days. Player B hits a backhand splat return, his One Big Shot. If B's splat kill attempt stays up, then Player A (who is moving in to cover) has a chance.

Although it's doubtful that A can recover B's shot, if he does, he must still hit a perfect shot on the run as B moves up to cover. Notice in Diagram 3, where the control zone now is for Player B and compare it to that of Diagram 1. While it hasn't moved all that much, it has moved.

Unless Player A can flat kill the ball on the run, B is in a great position to re-kill any of A's shots. You can see that B has forced the control area to move because of his use of the One Big Shot, in this case a backhand splat, one of the '80's dramatic shots.

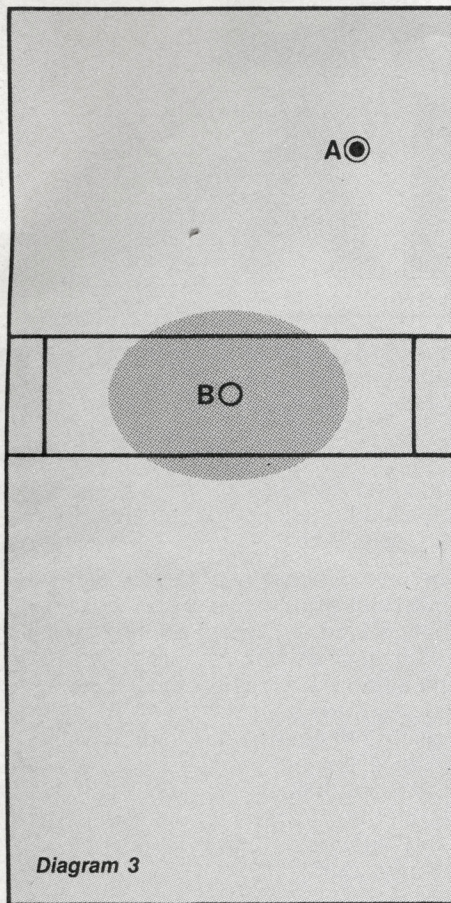


Diagram 3

Significantly, the control area has moved twice, in a sense. First (in the old days) the two players would have traded ceiling shots along the left wall, with each taking turns at the old control area and then to deep left court. Today's control area (in our example) has changed all that.

During a rally, the One Big Shot philosophy also can dictate the course and results of the rally. In *Diagram 4* you'll visualize Player A hitting a cross court pass to Player B, who must hit on the run. In many cases (and many more in the old days) Player B would flip the ball to the ceiling, race back to the control area and get back into the rally.

Not so with One Big Shot.

Rather than taking that ultra-defensive selection, B counters with a wide angle V-pass (*Diagram 4*) knowing full well that as long as the shot doesn't come off the back wall, that Player A must scurry into deep court and hit the ball on the run, if he reaches it at all.

The important thing to note is that even though A had control of the "old control area, Player B, by virtue of his One Big Shot has altered the control area by making it useless.

In order to utilize the One Big Shot theory properly, it is vital that you have One (or more) Big Shots in your arsenal. You need to know what your Big Shots are, the paths they travel, and where you need to set up your control zone in case of any return. Remember, your shots really dictate the control area and the proper mixture of Big Shots and "normal" shots will help make you a winner.

It's important to note that there are variables to be watchful for. The speed of your ball, the speed with which you hit it (pace) and the side wall surface on the court you're using all play a role with Big Shots.

I recommend selecting five shots to practice and incorporate into your game, four of which are splats. Hit backhand and forehand splats from 36-38 feet from the front wall; hit the forehand hypotenuse into the backhand side wall (*Diagram 5*) from 34-38 feet; and hit forehand and backhand splats from the short line.

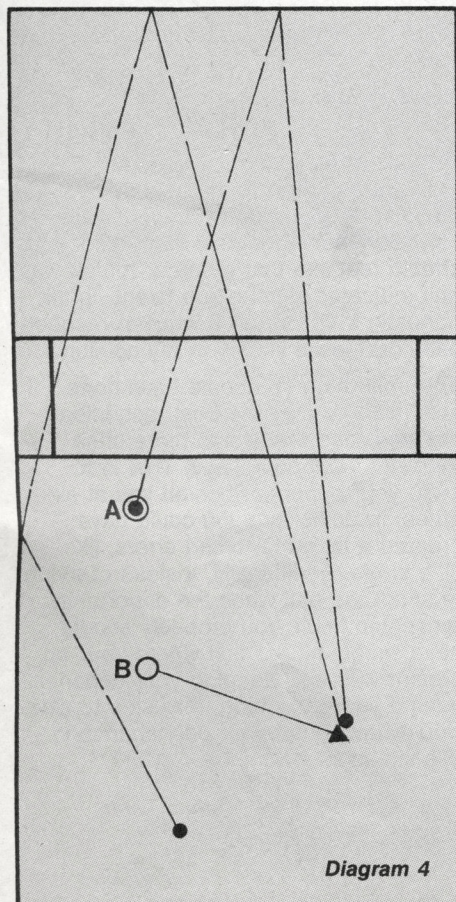


Diagram 4

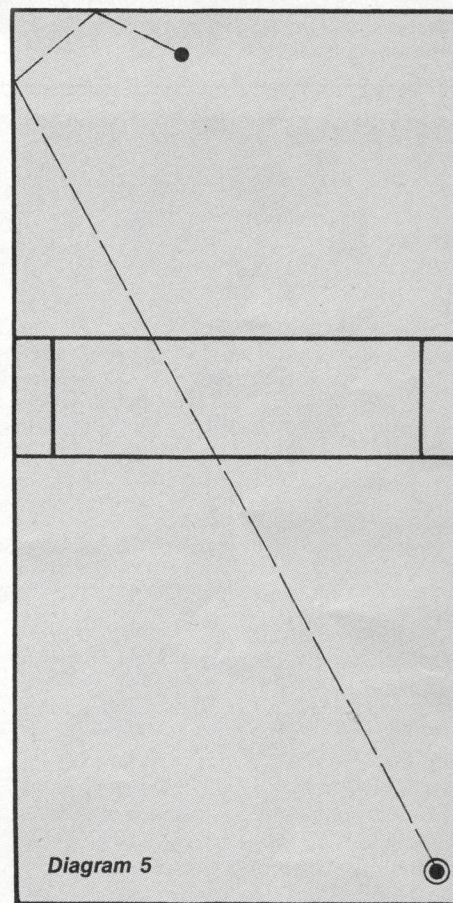


Diagram 5

When you first learn to hit these shots, you may experience a lot of "toe balls" which are balls hit into the floor right off your racquet. This is normal in the learning process. You should also be careful not to hit yourself (usually your knee) with the butt of your racquet as you follow through.

Eventually, you will master your own Big Shots to the point that you can try them out in practice, leagues and then, tournaments. Once you're doing that successfully, it will be a short time before you'll become a Big Shot yourself! ●

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