



# SPECTENNIS

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# news

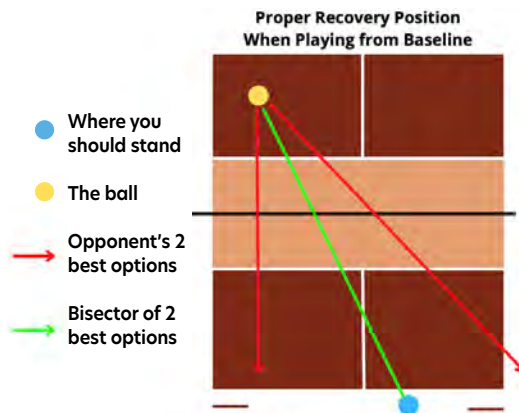
## Coaches Corner: Positioning

Simple changes to your positioning can make a huge difference in the success you have on the Spec Tennis court.

### Baseline Positioning

Most players don't know this, but when you are playing from the baseline (in both singles & doubles), after you hit you should stand slightly crosscourt from the ball.

Think of it as standing 'halfway between your opponent's two best shots'



Here's a singles example. You hit the ball to the left side of the court (which is the right side of the court from your opponent's perspective). Your opponent's two best options are #1 a crosscourt angle and #2 down the line (straight ahead).

Now put your geometry thinking cap on. This means that you want to find the 'bisector' of these two options, and stand not in the center of the court, but slightly to the right of the center.

When you do this, the distance you have to run to reach their best down the line shot, will be the same distance you have to run to reach their best crosscourt shot.

*The center of the court changes based on where the ball is.*

What this also means is if you hit crosscourt often, you won't have to move as far to be in good position to wait for your opponent's next shot. But if you hit down the line often, you have a greater distance to move before you're in the optimum waiting position for the next shot.

### Net Positioning

When you are at the net, you want to have the opposite thought process of when you are at the baseline.

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You want to “Follow the Ball” when playing from the net.

This means that if you hit the ball to the left side of the court (your opponent’s right side), you want to be waiting about one step to the left of the center line, and visa versa.

By positioning yourself this way rather than standing in the middle, you give yourself the best chance of covering all your opponent’s options.

If your opponent hits down the line, you’ve got it covered. If they hit crosscourt and you move diagonally towards the net (to shorten the distance), you’ve also got it covered.

Why is the positioning different when you’re at the net?

The main reason is **time**. If a ball goes past you when you’re at the net (unless it’s a high slow lob), there’s not enough time to get there.

In terms of distance that the ball travels, when hitting a shot down the line, the balls travels a smaller distance than when a player hits crosscourt. So when you’re at the net, a down the line shot will arrive sooner than a crosscourt shot will.

By “following” the ball, you make it harder for a player to pass you down the line, and if you move in the most efficient direction (diagonally unless the ball is too high), you can still get to the ball if your opponent hits crosscourt.

### **When at the Net, How Close to the Net Should You Stand?**

This depends on the shot that you just hit as well as your ability to cover the lob. If you are able to move quickly to cover the lob, then you can stand closer to the net. If you aren’t as confident in your ability to cover the lob, then stand further away from the net.

How close to the net you stand also depends on the type of shot you just hit. For example, if you hit a deep shot to your opponent (especially if you hit it with some pace), you should stand further away from the net than if you hit a shorter shot.

Why? The stronger the shot you hit, the more likely your opponent is to lob. The shorter you hit, the less likely they are to lob, as their court to hit ratio becomes shorter.

Think about if you’ve ever chased down a drop shot

before, and how it’s more difficult to return that shot as a lob.

Players make this mistake all the time, and think that “I hit an amazing approach shot, now I’m going to ‘close’ on the net, but it should be the opposite.

The goal I give players on volleys is “get as close to the net as possible to play the volley, but don’t start too close to the net most of the time when you’re waiting or a good player will burn you with a lob”.

### **Doubles Net Player Positioning**

You might find yourself in a “1 up 1 back” situation in doubles where you’re at the net and your partner is at the baseline.

If the other team also has a “1 up 1 back” formation, there are some things you need to be aware of. Imagine both baseline players are crosscourt from each other and both net players are crosscourt from each other.

Again, you’ll use the idea of “following the ball” but need to be aware of a few more things.

When the ball goes behind you (to your partner at the baseline) you should retreat back a few steps and towards the center of the court. In other words, move diagonally backwards towards your partner.

The reason is, if your partner hits a shot that gets intercepted by the net player on the other team, you want to be in the best position to defend if their net player hits at you.

If you don’t move in this fashion, you run the risk of their net player hitting a winner through the middle of the court or hitting it right at you hard, leaving you with no time to react.

If your partner hits a shot that goes to the opposing baseline player, then you want to move diagonal forward towards the opposing baseline player.

How far forward you move depends on how much time you have, and how prone you are to be lobbed.

Continue moving in this fashion depending on where the ball goes.

All you need to remember is:

- If your baseline partner has the ball, move diagonally backwards towards your partner and stay in that position until the opposing baseliner gets the ball.

One other thing you want to do is to keep your eyes

**Positioning** *continued from page 2*

on the opposing net player when your baseline partner has the ball (don't look back at them), because if their net player is moving and you're watching your partner instead of them, you might be late reacting.

### **When Both You and Your Partner are at the Net**

We just talked about a "1 up 1 back" formation but what about when both players are up at the net?

Again, depending on athletic ability and the type of shot you just hit, you might play around with how close to the net you stand.

But as a general principle it's good to "Stagger" your positioning when both you and your partner are at the net.

The player that is crosscourt from the ball should be further from the net than the player who is closest to the ball.

By doing this you give the close player the best chance of poaching the others team's shot, and you give the other player the best chance of covering potential lobs, especially if the ball gets lobbed over the close player's head.

If your team changes direction of the ball, then you will want to shift your staggered position. So if the ball is on the left side of the court (from your perspective), you want your left net player to be closer to the net and your right net player to be further from the net. If your team then hits the ball to the right side of the court, your positioning should shift, so now your right net player is closer to the net and your left player is further from the net.



### **Would you like to see more articles/content like this?**

If you found value in this article, would you be interested in a \$6/month subscription to the **Game Improvement Lab**? Each month I'll pick a new spec tennis theme and teach/explain it through both written and video content.

Reply to [nate@spectennis.com](mailto:nate@spectennis.com) for more information.

**Kapalua Golf & Tennis Club in Lahaina, Maui adds Spec Tennis (top)**

**Spec Tennis Club of Ocean Pines holds 2nd tournament; a crew from ABC Channel 47 came out to document some of the action (middle)**

**Dartmouth YMCA recently held a free Spec Tennis clinic for kids, taught by USPTA pro and Spec Tennis Ambassador, Jesse Gotlib (bottom)**





## FEAR THE PADDLE T-SHIRTS

Receive a Free "Fear the Paddle" T-Shirt when you sign up for a 1-year subscription on the Spec Tennis app (\$7.95).

Go to [App.SpecTennis.com](http://App.SpecTennis.com) to sign up.

Once you have done so, email [nate@spectennis.com](mailto:nate@spectennis.com) with your shipping address and T-shirt size (M - XXL are available; shirts are 100% cotton so they will shrink.)

**Getting on the Spec Tennis app helps to build the community by connecting players together!**

## T-Shirts for Sale to Support SPEC US OPEN

Would you like to help raise funds for the first ever Spec Tennis US Open?

One way to do this is by purchasing a T-shirt. All proceeds go towards raising money for the Spec Tennis US Open, December 2-4 in Coral Spring, Florida.

These shirts are now available on [spectennis.com/shop](http://spectennis.com/shop).





## Niagara-on-the-Lake Has Record Turnout

Niagara-on-the-Lake Spec Tennis Club (Canada) recently had 25 players come out to play Spec Tennis.



## Boston Metro Spec Tennis Club is on Fire!

The club hosted a 16-player Round Robin on May 1st and recently introduced Spec to a local high school tennis team.

*"This week, Dave Fish and I set up Spec nets for the Newton North varsity and JV tennis teams – and then it rained. So we moved the nets to a concrete walkway near the NN field house. Then magic happened! The kids loved it, and started improvising."*

-Tom Friedman



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