



MASTERSHOT

Matthew's forehand volley drop

Nick Matthew's opponent has injudiciously ventured crosscourt. The shot seems wide enough to pass an ordinary player – look where the ball is in relation to the floor markings – but Matthew is no ordinary player.

His basic play is to hang into the left side of the court (off the T intersection), set up straight rallies and look for volley intercepts both long and short. This leaves a tempting gap on the right for an opponent, but really this is a trap. Look how Matthew has eaten up the space – a little sidestep shuffle, a long open-stance lunge and the space is shut down as if it was not there.

Matthew has options here. He can play long for dying length, forcing a scrambled recovery from his opponent, or go for the prize of a winner. The volley drop (or kill) off a crosscourt is one of the game's standard combinations.

In pic.1 we see Matthew picking up the ball as it comes off the front wall, lunging, taking the racket up and turning his body as he seeks the volley opportunity. All this is happening easily in one coordinated movement.

In pic.2 we see the lunge and the racket-head control. He could go short or long from here.

In pic.3 we see the result of all that strength training. There is great stability in his undercarriage and plenty of room for the shot. A strong head position allows him to focus on impact. We also see the technical flattening of the racket as the butt comes through and the arm turns or pronates in a slingshot action. This is what the forehand does which is not visible to the naked eye.

In pic.4 the racket has snapped down through the ball with cut. Notice how Matthew still has control over the racket head with his grip and wrist. His eyes are checking the results of his shot.

In pic.5 he is already pushing back from his shot.

For practice: See 'volley drop and crosscourt' on squashplayer.co.uk > Workshop > Practices

Practise this combination in your knock-up; practise feeding crosscourt from behind, with a partner volley-dropping straight and then driving. Look out for this combination in your game.