

WORKSHOP



MASTERSHOT MASSARO'S DECEPTIVE CROSSCOURT DROP

For a start let's watch the non-striker. The first question Nouran Gohar should ask herself is 'What is she doing hitting the ball here?' The second is 'Shouldn't she be showing just a bit more urgency in covering this short ball?'

Laura Massaro has shaped well. She has alternatives. She has lunged forward (which is indicative of a crosscourt), but she has positioned herself well enough to the side to allow a straight shot. Initially, she has a drive option, but she brings her racket down for a short swing for a classic touch shot. This is what Gohar is expecting and her fast and rhythmic movement will eat up the space. Note Massaro's stable body position, the preparation signalling a straight drop and even the head held on the imaginary front left target. Gohar is looking at this from behind, remember, and she is drawn to the front left.

Even in the third photo below, after Massaro has hit the

ball, she is holding her straight drop position and her head on the imaginary target. Still Gohar cannot see the shot.

Here are the classic ingredients of a deceptive shot:

1. Show your opponent one shot (clearly show it, perhaps even exaggerating it a little); **2.** Hold the shot so an opponent commits to move; **3.** Keep this position and use the wrist to change the direction of shot while maintaining your position.

Even in photo 4 we see Gohar drawn the wrong way. In no.5 she realises she is in trouble. Will she get the ball?

Massaro, the more experienced player, has executed the shot well. She has saved up the opportunity and taken a calculated risk. If Gohar reads this shot or gets onto it quickly, Massaro is vulnerable to a hard straight drive for dying length. She is aware of this. She told *Squash Player* after her match in Qatar: "When I played Nouran in the final of the Macau Open in September I caught her out with cut crosscourt drops and boasts, so I was aware that if I mixed it up, I'd catch her. I was also very aware that if she started reading the cross ones, I would have to straighten up a bit. That was the plan just for today."

Experience versus inexperience; a plan versus lack of a plan; a calculated risk that if it did not come off, it would be changed. And a finely-executed mastershot.

