



MASTERSHOT

Nicol David's Back-hand Crosscourt Drop

Nicol David's opponent, Victoria Lust, has played a loose ball from the back-left court (looking from behind). David approaches the ball with her racket up, keeping her options open, but she has not turned her shoulder or trunk to obtain power. The tactical rules – attack when you have an easy ball and when your opponent is out of position, and hit away from your opponent – govern her choice of shot in this textbook demonstration.

In picture 2 the racket comes down. A short swing is going to be used for control, touch and cut. The feet are apart, giving the body a perfect stance for this shot. There is no need for any distracting twisting. The focus is on the shot.

Keeping the ball in front allows David to hit it easily across her body. So we would give her full marks for movement control, positioning, balance and distance from the ball. Power is not required here; balance is more important than transfer of weight for the pinpoint accuracy and touch she wants.

But what marks would we give her for racket control? The grip and wrist give her control of the racket head, and that is what hits

the ball. A raised wrist permits excellent control here. The racket face is slightly open, allowing her to come under the ball and impart cut. This will take pace off the ball (energy is lost in dragging the strings across the ball) and aid control. Tension is a killer in many sports – think of golf – and there is no sign of it here in the arm or face.

So in squash our job is to play with high intensity and effort, but use a relaxed touch when the conditions are right.

Mentally, we see excellent concentration and focus in the shot. David holds herself steady through the impact point and lets her weight move through before looking up and pushing back. Lust has a problem.

TOP TIPS

- One of the standard combinations in squash (we mentioned half a dozen in Issue 3 earlier this year) is to crosscourt the short straight ball from behind. That is hit it away from your opponent. Generally, the idea is to aim for the nick. This shot does not come without dangers, though – a player must be alert for the counter-drop and hard, low, straight ball.
- This is an easy shot to practise in a solo session or if you stay on court for a short practice session after a match. Set the ball up off the front wall or front and side walls – and play across court for the nick. Warm the ball every few shots with the figure-of-eight practice around the corners off the front and side walls.



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