



MASTERSHOT GAULTIER'S BACKHAND COUNTER DROP

The most important attacking shot in squash is the backhand straight drop and one of its most important variations is the counter drop. Those of you who read 2014 Issue 2 will know that this is world champion Gregory Gaultier's favourite shot and he uses it to telling effect.

Excellent at reading the game, at setting up and predicting opportunities, he is explosive to the front of the court and gives his opponent little to hit.

See how long his lunge is, how low it is and how excellent his balance is. He has moved directly to this ball and has not bothered with setting up alternative shots or with disguise (although he has masked the ball from his opponent well). He has covered the ground to maximum effect and reached forward to take this ball at full stretch. Look at the big picture; look at the effort, how still he is and look at the aim.

Ideally, the backhand straight drop will be played to cling and perhaps to nick. Some players emphasise going for the nick, but if there is little angle, it will be difficult to find it and

a clinging ball will present a real problem for an opponent. If they get there, the return may result in a mishit or a loose ball to be killed or smashed away down the court.

Try this out as you are reading. Take your hand to your left shoulder (if you are a right-handed player) and move it out across your body for an imaginary backhand. For a drop shot, you may impart some cut (back spin) and some slice (side spin). The back spin will pull the ball down off the front wall a bit, so allowing the ball to stay on the strings a bit longer, thus taking pace off the shot. The side spin will turn the ball in an anti-clockwise direction, which on impact with the front wall will have the tendency to pull it out from the side. Now have a look at what Gaultier does to get this ball to the side at full stretch and to get it to cling.

His racket comes out to the right (hold your hand out there and turn your thumb down). Note the change of grip; the racket is in a vertical plane. The head is down, but the grip and wrist are still giving it superb control. He angles the racket face, allowing him to push the ball at the correct angle while dragging it across the ball so as to apply the wall-hugging side spin. Then he is out of there. Get that, he says!

