

Rösner strikes a ball that could have gone straight or crosscourt

# MATCH POINTS PART 2

*Simon Rösner talks squash with Ian McKenzie*

Simon Rösner has improved his game and started the year as the world's no.3 player. In Part 1 of this two-part series (in issue SP184, available on *Squash Player digital*) he talked about his developing game, the opportunities he looks out for in a rally and how he has learnt to play fast. In Part 2 he discusses options, setting up opportunities, deception, how to wrong-foot an opponent and his all-important forehand volley.

**IM:** *When we watch you play a forehand volley, we see you have a whole range of options – the volley drop, deceptive crosscourts, overhead shots, straight volleys etc. They are often difficult to read. It looks as if you have a similar set-up for each. You can't tell what shot is coming – it is disguised. What are the options you are looking for?*

**SR:** It depends on where the shot comes from. If it comes from the backhand corner, I try to step in and play a volley drop – as I have demonstrated in the practice I highlighted (see issue SP184). If it is a difficult ball, I will play it straight (for a dying length) or even use a deceptive shot. For this, I hold and go crosscourt again. As my opponent is on the way to the front, I am showing

them a straight shot and at the last minute I switch and play back across them. I am wrong-footing my opponent, making him turn. If it is an easy ball, I will go for a volley drop; if it is not so easy, I will go for the straight shot or a wrong-footing crosscourt.

Unless the opponent's crosscourt hits the sidewall early, you have almost every option. In training you may even hold it and play a boast, even though it may not seem the best (positional) option.

If you are deceptive and hold the shot a little bit, so your opponent is not going in the direction you are going to play the shot, then you have done a good job in stopping his movement.

If you have worked your opponent well and you have time to be deceptive, you can play

the ball to the same corner he is coming from. You then have the chance to work him harder again. He is moving in one direction and then has to switch and move in another direction. If you can do this, your opponent has to cover all your options – and you can play a drop, a drive, boast, a crosscourt drop etc.

That is the important thing in sport – you need to be able to play many shots, not just one. If your opponent knows that from the crosscourt you are going to play the straight drive each time, then he will move for the straight drive. But if you are able to play any shot, he doesn't know where the ball is going, so he always has to go back towards the T. Then you can hold him and you have all the options.

RÖSNER'S DISGUISE





**IM:** *Sometimes we see you have disrupted your opponent, perhaps on the volley, and they play a weak ball. You take the opportunity to attack and show a full swing, but then you play a little drop.*

**SR:** Yes, I do this, but I set up these situations by playing good quality shots first. You need good quality first and you are able to do this by converting into matches what you have done in training. Doing this gives you confidence. If you are not confident, it is because you have not trained at it as much as I have.

The task is to get what you have practised into the game, transfer it and convert it! Players who find it difficult maybe haven't done the background training to be confident in these shots.

**IM:** *Do you get coaching and training advice on your game?*

**SR:** My former coach, Ronny Vlassaks, has now moved to the States and is based at the Squash On Fire club in Washington.

However, I know what to do now. I have

been at it 15 years. You get into a routine and know what sort of stuff you have to work on.

I also have my athletic coach. The thing that has helped me most in the last few years has been my athletic training. He has allowed me to go further. It was the biggest weakness in my game.

I was not able to push hard enough against the top guys. I think I have improved that a lot.

**IM:** *Do you debrief after matches and how do you do this?*

**SR:** I watch my matches and look out for things I can improve on. I also work with my national coach, Oliver Pettko, who now helps me in my matches.

**IM:** *What advice do you receive at tournaments?*

**SR:** He (Ollie) will watch me play on TV and text or leave a voice message on my mobile phone. He will send tactical stuff, a few tips to check quickly between games.

### RÖSNER'S TIPS

1. To wrong-foot an opponent, wait until they are rushing to recover. Then use deception. Show them a shot, hold it, then play back to where they have come from.
2. Develop a full range of options from each position.
3. Set up your opportunities. Don't rush to finish.
4. Practise your shots and moves. Then work at getting them into your game.
5. Review your matches to find things to improve on.

### RÖSNER'S DISGUISE

1. Rösner steps in and sets up his body position for what could be a variety of shots, but this looks like a drive.
2. Suddenly, he holds the shot and adapts for a trickle boast. His opponent, Paul Coll, watches intently.
3. Rösner's position still gives little away as Coll tries to pick up the ball.
4. Is it now too late for Coll?

### RÖSNER'S WRONG-FOOTING DECEPTION

5. Rösner is quickly on to Coll's loose crosscourt shot. He shapes to volley and his racket and body position show it is going to be straight. He holds it momentarily. Coll, realising he has left a positional gap, is quick to react.
6. Rösner uses his wrist for a crosscourt shot. He holds his body position so as to give nothing away. Rösner and Coll are looking for the ball in different places.
7. Coll is still racing to retrieve the expected straight forehand.
8. Too late, Coll realises he has gone the wrong way, but he is committed and can't change direction. He has been wrong-footed by Rösner.

### RÖSNER'S WRONG-FOOTING DECEPTION

