

Learn to Deceive Your Opponent

You should learn how to deceive your opponent to increase your chances of winning a rally. The main purpose of deception is to gain a tactical advantage and you can do this in two ways: you can make your opponent anticipate your shot wrongly and send him the wrong way; or you can make him pause and wait to move until you hit the shuttle. In both instances your opponent should be late getting into position to hit the shuttle or unable to reach it at all.

HOW TO SEND YOUR OPPONENT THE WRONG WAY

Your intention here will be to make your opponent move forwards so that you can hit the shuttle behind him; make him move backwards so that you can hit the shuttle in front of him; or make him move to the left so that you can hit it to the right and vice versa. To do this requires some form of pretence from you.

Play Pretends

When you deceive an opponent you would usually pretend to do one thing and then do another. For example, I could pretend that I am going to smash at you. So you get ready and brace yourself to receive the smash. Instead I play a check smash, a dropshot to the forecourt, which you are not ready for and you may be late getting to the shuttle, if at all.

Body Language

You have to use 'body language' to deceive an opponent. If you pretend to play a particular shot, e.g. a net reply, then you will want your opponent to think 'Oh, he looks as if he is going to play a net reply.' He can only do this by reading your 'body

language' which suggests you are going to play a particular shot. If he interprets your body language as you expect then you will succeed, you will deceive him.

It is important, therefore, that you keep your pretence very simple or you won't deceive anyone. If your body language is unclear or too complex your opponent may not be able to interpret it and you will be less likely to deceive him. Likewise you have to give your opponent time to 'read' your body language and to respond as you intended.

YOUR OPPONENT'S RESPONSE

Your opponent's response will depend on two factors:

(a) his reaction time, which is to do with how quickly he can transmit information through his nervous system to his muscles, and (b) his speed of movement, which is determined by how quickly he can contract his muscles to enable him to respond in travelling to the shuttle.

You cannot do much about his speed of travelling but you can do a lot about the information that he sends to his muscles through his nervous system. You simply give him false information so that he anticipates your shot wrongly and goes the wrong way.

Make your opponent wait to see what shot you actually play before he responds

You may have played opponents who use deception and have such good technique that it's difficult to know what shot they will play until they actually hit the shuttle. For example, the player who takes up a *smash position* in the rearcourt. He starts to 'throw' his racket head at the shuttle and until he actually hits the shuttle you do not know whether

he intends to hit a clear, smash or dropshot. You have to wait to see. Such players are successful because their preparation is the same for all their overhead strokes. The same would apply for the sidearm and underarm strokes.

The main point here is that you should not give your opponents any 'clues' about your intentions. They will 'read' the clues from your body language.

For example if you prepare for an overhead stroke and drop your elbow when you do a dropshot, or remain more square on when you do a clear, or turn completely sideways when you smash, then any intelligent opponent will notice these 'clues' and be able to anticipate your shot.

To prevent this you should practise to make sure that your preparation is similar for particular groups of strokes.

HOW DO I LEARN AND IMPROVE MY DECEPTION?

It helps to learn deception if you adopt the right attitude towards it. You should enjoy outwitting your opponents, to trick them and cause them to delay or make the wrong response. You should also appreciate that there is a tactical basis to deception. You should not use it just for the sake of it, which is pure indulgence; you should use it to gain a tactical advantage.

To be deceptive you will need a good standard of racket and body skill. You should learn to control the speed of your racket head; to speed it up or check the speed at any time during your stroke-cycle. You should learn to control the racket face so that you can direct the shuttle where you please with a change of the racket face position at any time before impact with the shuttle. Refer to chapter 7 for racket skill practices.

Finally you should practise using deception as much as possible in conditioned games, informal and formal competition. It may help to look at some of the ways that you can be deceptive.

Some ways in which you can be deceptive

- Always prepare as if you will play the most attacking shot (stroke-move) in any situation. This poses a threat to your opponent who should always get ready to cover that shot. You will then be free to play other shots.
- Try to keep your preparation identical for similar groups of strokes, e.g. overhead strokes. This will prevent early anticipation and may actually cause your opponent to experience some doubt and uncertainty about your intentions.
- Always have your racket prepared to make your stroke as you approach the shuttle. In this way you can put the actual stroke 'on hold' and tempt your opponent to anticipate your shot.
- Try some of the deception and tactics used in other sports. If you watch football, basketball, rugby, hockey, netball and martial arts you will see many examples of feints and body sway to send the opponent the wrong way. There are many instances in badminton when you can do this, for example when you defend, play net replies, or serve. You could sway or step in one direction and hit the shuttle in the other direction.

Finally remember you can only deceive an opponent if, when you pretend to do one thing, he actually believes your pretence and has given time to respond to it. The best advice I can offer here, is to keep your deception **simple**.

