

Know Your Craft

It is well known that when you do anything, unless you understand its actual circumstance, its nature and its relations to other things, you will not know the laws governing it, or know how to do it or be able to do it well.

Mao Tse-tung*

Like any interesting craft badminton is made up of a number of parts. All players must learn them and become competent in them all if they seriously want to become good players of the game.

They are:

- technical skill practices
- tactical skill practices
- individual specific skill practices
- informal competition
- formal competition
- studies
- fitness training
- mental training.

Most of what there is to learn and master in these parts and the ways in which they are learned has been developed and handed down over the years as part of badminton tradition. These traditional practices may be changed or added to as new ways of playing are introduced which, if successful, become the conventional practices of the day. Thus the game continues to develop and the store of knowledge and practices that must be learned by the players grows.

This chapter will provide you with a simple explanation of these parts. They will also be examined in greater detail in later chapters. The explanation of each part will include a brief description of the **content**, what the part contains, the recom-

mended **procedure** in learning the part, and the mental **attitude** required by the player in learning and mastering the part.

TECHNICAL SKILL PRACTICES

These practices should be learned and performed by all players, from beginners to world champions. They are the essential means for you to learn, improve and maintain the technical skill required to play badminton. In these practices the focus should always be on your SELF and **how** you do **what** you do.

CONTENT

- Racket skill.
- Body skill.
- The strokes.

PROCEDURE

FIRST PHASE, you should learn *what* the technical skill is, its *function* in the game and *how* to perform it.

SECOND PHASE, you should practise each skill to attain the desired standard of performance; then, to raise the standard and, finally, to maintain the standard.

MENTAL ATTITUDE

Your attitude in the first phase should be one of *interest* in how to perform the technical skill; you should apply yourself to the task and show *perseverance and patience*; adopt an enquiring mind and be prepared to discuss and explore ways of performing and using the skill. Above all do not expect to achieve too much while you are still learning how to perform the skill.

*Quotations from *Chairman Mao Tse Tung*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1972.

Your attitude in the second phase will be different in several ways. You will have learned the skill and will want to improve your standard of performance. So now you should concentrate on the task, show determination to do it well and persevere until you do so. This is where more self-discipline is required. It should hurt your pride to get it wrong or not achieve the standard you are working to attain or maintain. The quality of your performance in practice should be game-like, i.e. demanding the same degree of commitment, effort and skill as you would give in competition.

TACTICAL SKILL PRACTICES

CONTENT

These practice routines should also be learned and performed by all players from beginners to world champions. They refer to the conventional tactical situations that emerge in the game. In these practices your emphasis should be first on trying to control, and second on trying to outwit, the OTHER PLAYERS in singles and level and mixed doubles.

PROCEDURE

First, you should determine the stroke-move and the game situation, e.g. you will lob from the forecourt.

Second, you should determine the action phrase you will perform, e.g. travelling forwards to play a lob from below the net in the forecourt with the opponent ready to attack.

Third, you should practise the action phrase with the focus on your reply and its effect on the *other* player.

Fourth, you should develop the practice and add more action phrases to re-create the situation as it might have occurred in a game.

Fifth, you should make it more 'game-like' by introducing the elements of uncertainty and competition, thus making it more difficult and challenging to perform.

MENTAL ATTITUDE

Your attitude should be one of interest, concentration, self-discipline, determination, perseverance and patience, as you question and discuss the situation and explore possible ways to improve your performance in game-like practices.

INDIVIDUAL SPECIFIC SKILL PRACTICES

CONTENT

These practice routines may be selected from the conventional practices in the game or some variations devised especially for you or your doubles team. They will be devised to correct and to improve particular weaknesses that have been exposed in competition.

PROCEDURE

First, you should determine what you need to improve by analysing your performance in formal competition.

Second, you should devise and develop a technical and/or tactical skill practice.

Third, you should practise until the required standard is attained.

MENTAL ATTITUDE

Your attitude should be one of interest, concentration, discipline, determination, perseverance, patience, as you question and discuss the situation and explore possible ways to improve your performance in game-like practices.

INFORMAL COMPETITION

CONTENT

When you have learned or improved some aspect of your performance you should test your competence in competition. This is best done initially in informal competition when *the score is not so important* and when the main focus can be on trying to implement the practice work in the game. Informal competition in club nights and practice games is the ideal setting for new ideas and skills to be tried out. On these occasions you can focus on your own game and try out ideas or new skills without being too concerned about winning or losing the game.

If, unfortunately, the results do matter to you it is unlikely that you will take the risk of using the strokes or tactics that you are still working on, and may be unsure about, just in case you should lose the contest. And if you do not use them in informal competition you will be unlikely to include these new skills in formal competition. Consequently you will slow down or restrict your progress in becoming a better player. Players who have the

BEYOND THE BASICS

Excelling at BADMINTON

good sense and sometimes the courage to try out new ideas will assess their performance not on the score at the end of the game but on how often and how successfully they used their improved or new technical or tactical skill in the game.

MENTAL ATTITUDE

Your attitude should be one of concentration, perseverance, patience, discipline, and determination. You should not be concerned about the score and the result of the game but that the practice work is implemented. You should be prepared to lose games in informal competition in order to win them, eventually, in formal competition.

FORMAL COMPETITION

CONTENT

Here the results do matter – they are all-important, as is your attitude. You should give 100 per cent effort in trying to win. Only by doing so will you provide a true *test* of your current competence and gain an accurate measure of your progress as a player. You will also establish the areas of performance you are improving or lacking. You will learn what to work on to become a better player.

MENTAL ATTITUDE

Your attitude should be one of concentration, determination, adventure, perseverance, care, patience, fairness and a 100 per cent commitment to trying to win the game.

STUDIES

Over the years new ideas and ways of playing the game have been added to our conventional knowledge of badminton. The idea of spinning the shuttle at the net developed in the 1970s; new doubles formations developed with the increase in speed and power that came with racket technology. The game will continue to develop by accident or design as the equipment improves or the players introduce new innovations. Rather than wait for new ideas to develop it is possible to explore and to create new ways of doing things ourselves. Studies are not part of badminton convention but they are an essential part in learning the craft.

Their purpose will be to help you to experiment, to explore ideas and new or different ways of doing things, e.g. hitting techniques, develop-

ing skill in moving, deception, tactical moves and positional play. Studies will be a means of helping you to develop your imagination, to be innovative and creative. They will help to increase your practical knowledge and to raise your skill levels.

CONTENT

The content will include tasks to tackle, problems to solve, and questions to answer with respect to any part of the game.

MENTAL ATTITUDE

Your attitude should be one of interest and curiosity in trying out new ideas and developing your technical and tactical skill. You should remain open-minded and be willing to explore various ways of doing things in different game situations.

FITNESS TRAINING AND DIET

CONTENT

You must be fit enough to do the work required at the levels at which you play. A balanced programme of fitness training, diet and rest will make this possible.

MENTAL ATTITUDE

Your attitude should be one of determination, patience, self-discipline, perseverance, care and commitment.

MENTAL TRAINING

Mental training is the means by which you will learn to adopt the appropriate mental attitude to perform the craft of playing badminton. Adopt the recommended mental attitude for any part of your craft and you will train yourself through regular practice to respond appropriately and effectively in any situation in badminton. It is an on-going part of your development as a player.

Think about what you want to achieve and then focus solely on that. If you are not clear in your *purpose* you will not express the appropriate mental attitude and train yourself to respond effectively.

SUMMARY

The following diagram illustrates the parts of the craft you must master if you want to become a better player.

