

CHAPTER VIII

Singles

THERE are two main factors in the winning of any game—ability to play strokes and ability to gauge the right time to use them. Quickness of brain joined to skill with the racquet form the combination that makes for success. The single is the type that perhaps calls for the display of this combination to the highest degree. You have to guard against so many varied shots, you have to protect so many open places, and you have to be equipped with some means of making your opponent waste his strength, without the same misfortune happening to yourself. As I said in the first chapter, there is no game that I know of for which greater physical fitness is required. There is no use in entering for tournaments and being disappointed at defeats through exhaustion, if you do not train. If it is a game worth playing at all, if it is a game worth while trying to improve at, it is also worth expending some exertion on in order to become fit. You will not win matches, no matter how good and clever a player you may be, unless you are fit. Likewise, I do not agree with those who want the singles game shortened. The great criticism levelled at Badminton is that it is too easy a game to be taken seriously. This charge is untrue, but it would gain a very close similitude to truth if in a single a man had

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to score 11 points to win, instead of 15. It would, I believe, have serious consequences and give the game a heavy set-back, which would be a most unfortunate occurrence, now that Badminton is increasing in popularity so widely and so rapidly. It is a fact that two-day tournaments put a big strain on a player who has to play three or four singles in an afternoon—some of them probably closely contested and running to three sets, as there are a number of first-class players at present with very little difference between them. But if you have trained properly and are used to playing in competitions, this ought not to be such a source of worry as it appears to be. It is also a point worth thinking about that a game of 11 does not give sufficient time to each player to get well going. On many occasions I have scored 11, while my opponent has only managed to collect 3 or 4. Then he has begun to exhibit his true form and has won the game. The reverse has also happened to me more than once. If you want to give all an equal chance of striking form and possibly recovering from a spell of bad luck, 15 is the ideal number. Any lessening of it would without doubt lay the game open to many shafts of hostile criticism. Hard training and hard practice are necessary if you want to become a successful singles player. Make accuracy and variety of stroke your objects, train your physical powers to be as near 'best condition' as you can, and discipline your mind so that it becomes the power that guides your play.

In a single there are two chief kinds of service—the

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short serve and the lob service right to the back of the court. The latter is the more popular of the two. The essential thing, as in most lobs, is length. You should be able to make the shuttle fall within a few inches of the back-line. Anything short of this will be 'eaten up,' to use an Americanism, by a player with a good smash. Even if he does not win the ace outright, he will probably put himself in a good position to win the next. Good length is, therefore, necessary, and many also consider that good height is a useful adjunct—and it most probably is. In addition to the strain entailed by having to watch the flight of the shuttle—and this undoubtedly counts for something in a long match—it is harder to smash the shuttle when its fall is nearly perpendicular than when it is more inclined. The constant need of having to be watching the high flight certainly involves a strain chiefly on the eyes, and this strain becomes very irksome when you begin to get 'done' and a veritable torture when that unpleasant state is reached. You mark its upward flight and downward fall with despairing eyes, and the loftier it goes, the lower, through some curious psychological influence, sinks your confidence in making a good return.

But this high service has a disadvantage as a counter-balance to its advantages. Even if it is somewhat more difficult to smash when the shuttle is falling nearly at an angle of ninety degrees, yet it is on the other hand far easier to judge in this case whether it is going to be in or out. Few players leave a serve except when it is

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very obvious that it is going to be a fault. When the issue is doubtful, it is much easier to judge accurately if the downward flight of the shuttle approaches the perpendicular closely. There is not much to choose, then, between the very high and the moderately high service in the matter of risk. Whichever you adopt, remember always to go out for good length.

The short serve is little used in comparison with the other, but it is a very useful second string to your bow, as it were. In cases where you see your opponent standing out too far in expectation of one to the back of the court, a short service will frequently put him in difficulties. Thus it is important to have a good look at your opponent before you serve, noting especially where he is standing. This will help you to decide whether to use the short one or not. You should never be too quick to serve. Take up your position, look at the position of the player on the opposite side, know in your own mind what you are going to do—then serve. The actions for giving a short or a long service ought to be as similar as possible. If you can make them so, you may catch your opponent off his guard sometimes. A number of players take a big swing when serving out far and no swing at all for the other. No swing for either is necessary. The wrist alone is quite able to flick the shuttle to the back of the court, if required, and farther than that too, unfortunately. If you do not disguise your delivery, a watchful player will at once guess what you are going to do and will rush your short service accordingly. You will find this concealed

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action very advantageous in a double, as I have dealt with more fully in Chapter IX.

The proper place to serve from, and to wait to receive the serve, is the same in both cases. It is about the centre of the court, close to the centre line. From this point, immediately after the serve, the server can take up his position in the middle of the court, being thus best placed for whatever the return may be. On the other hand the receiver is conveniently situated to go either forward or back, according to the type of serve sent. If he recognizes that you are going to give the short kind, he can usually get in close enough to rush it or at least take the shuttle so high and so near the net as to make his own shot decidedly unpleasant for you. In the case of a high service, he can get into position to receive it comfortably and without undue haste. No better place for both can, I think, be chosen than about the centre of the court close to the middle line.

As the rally proceeds, this central position will have to be modified to suit circumstances. If your opponent happens to be on one side of the court you should move over a little toward that side-line, but not very much. When he is in the centre, your best place to stand will be in the corresponding position on your side of the net. The shots that you have not much time to reach are the fast ones. Now there is an extreme angle outside which he cannot hit or the shuttle will go out. You should be situated so as to reach each arm of this angle in the minimum of time. All this is part of

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tactics in general and comes through experience. As you play, and as you increase in knowledge of the game, you will intuitively put yourself in the most convenient spot to deal with the return. Anticipation on your part may cause you to modify this also, but let it be to a very small extent only.

An objection made to the lob service is that the receiver may score a point straight off by a smash. This objection need not worry you much. To win off a good-length, high service requires a smash of extraordinary pace and one that is placed extraordinarily close to the side-line. There are few players with either the courage to attempt this or the ability to carry it out successfully. You are or ought to be somewhere in the vicinity of the middle of the court and from there should be able to protect practically the full width. There may perhaps be an inch or two on either side out of your reach, but he is just as likely to send the shuttle out as to send it in, his target being so limited in scope. You may and nearly certainly will lose a few points this way against an accurate player, but not too many. If he tries it often, you will find at the end of the game that your gains will transcend your losses.

Any smash from far out that comes within your reach, you should be able to get back. No matter how strong a kill may be, if it is delivered from the back of the court it should not beat you, unless it is placed exceptionally well—that is, when the shuttle falls on or just beside either side-line. Now when to use the

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smash in a single is rather a difficult question. Personally, I am all against going out to make a winner in such a manner from the back. It is seldom that it does score outright and you soon tire yourself out. You may notice that Mr Devlin, the present Singles Champion, seldom or never smashes from the back-line now, yet I can remember a time when it was his favourite method of attack. This fact is very significant, as this great player possesses perhaps the deadliest kill of the players of to-day. Energy is far too important a thing to be wasted by fruitless smashing. It is much better, as a general rule, to reserve your kill until the opening demands such a stroke. If you get a short lob or anything you can kill not much farther back than the centre of the court, then go all out for your smash, as you are practically sure of scoring. Nevertheless there are times when the smash from far out ought to be employed. If you have followed what I have written about the smash and the drop, you will realize that the action should be almost the same for both. Now no matter how cleverly disguised your action may be, there will not be much material advantage gained when it always produces the same results. Therefore, even though there is no opening and no good chance of making an opening, it will pay you to smash occasionally, mainly for the purpose of deceiving your opponent and keeping him guessing as to whether you intend to drop or not. Further, a display of forcing tactics at the right moment helps greatly. But you must be sure that it is the right moment. Perhaps

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your opponent may be weak in his defence in some point, perhaps he may be a bit rattled over something or other—if he is, set about him in deadly earnest. The ability to mark and seize opportunities signifies greatness whether it be in life or in a game. Where you see that these tactics bring no fruitful result, drop them at once. Bear in mind as a guiding principle that to smash from the back of the court anywhere near a first-class player, except for a reason already given, is to court disaster. Nearly all possess an excellent defence, and the shuttle will come back with almost the same regularity as a tennis ball from a wall—with this difference, however, that the racquet of your opponent will probably direct it to a spot most inconvenient to yourself.

The best place for you to wait in order to return a smash depends largely on the quickness of your eye and defensive powers. It is my opinion that, generally speaking, you should aim to take the shuttle as close to the net as possible. Many who like to take it rather late will not agree with this method, but it has undoubted advantages, always provided that you are able to do it. It will be well worth your while to try it in practice games, for it needs very accurate vision and careful training. It is one of the ways by which I know whether I am playing well or not. If I am playing well, I find myself automatically quite close to the net when waiting for a smash. Otherwise I stay farther out. Standing close in gives you the means of sending the shuttle back to your opponent very quickly,

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perhaps before he has recovered from the stroke. By so doing he is liable to become rather chary of following through completely with his racquet, and through this omission his smash may lose some of its customary pace. Also you may bustle him and make him hit wildly and for that reason inaccurately, for he probably will not expect you to be so far in. Furthermore, the difficulty of replying with a drop increases in proportion as you recede from the net, so that the nearer you are, the easier it is to make a really good drop-shot.

An excellent shot of Sir George Thomas is a drop to your right hand, when you have sent a smash to his right hand, off a lob service. He is quite close in, and the shuttle comes back to your right side-line, just when you are trying to get position in the centre of the court—that is, it goes in the direction contrary to that in which you are moving and is extremely hard to retrieve. Unless you know that he is going to do it, you have rarely got time to reach it, and this you seldom or never know, as he does not use it often enough to let familiarity breed anticipation. This would not be possible if he did not stand in so near, as you would in that case have plenty of time to get into position before the shuttle reached your side of the net. It depends for its success entirely on the rapidity with which it is executed, taking you just at the one moment when that right side-line is left exposed.

Again, by keeping in near, you are well placed to clear. Your opponent will be afraid of a drop and will prob-

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ably move toward the net after smashing. It is easy then for you to lob to the back-line, and it is most wearying to have to turn when coming forward quickly and attend to a good-length clear. You must be careful that this lob of yours is accurate and well placed, for, if its length is bad, he has you at his mercy. Therefore, remain a respectable distance from the net and take the smashes late, if you are not sure of your ability to deal with them effectively. This standing in applies mainly to kills from fairly far out. If you have presented him with a sitter, it does not matter very much where you place yourself. Yet never give up hope, even when there appears to be no hope. Although the whole court may be open, the shuttle must fall in one spot only. Watch him with the utmost attention and try to anticipate that one spot. It is rarely that you will be able to do so, but you will be well repaid if you can. For him to lose an ace which he has already considered won means a certain loss of *moral*.

On the subject of anticipation and how far it should affect your position on the court, no hard-and-fast rules can be laid down. Only the experience gained by constant play in tournaments and practice games will teach you. There will always be some players whose strokes will be easy to anticipate, and some of whose strokes the reverse is true. It is the difficult kind that you must study. Close observation during a match helps much. There are certain strokes which may constitute a player's usual shots from certain positions. If he continues to execute the same stroke from the

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same place, then try to anticipate it. I am myself a great believer in anticipation and it certainly saves you a vast amount of labour, accompanied by little risk, if it is properly employed.

Movement toward the probable spot where the shuttle is going to fall is not the main point. The main point is to have the mental intuition that the shuttle is going to a certain place. The physical action of getting there is rendered much easier, since you are already mentally prepared to go in the desired direction. Very little anticipatory movement ought to be made, and it should be made gently and unobtrusively. If you start too soon or too quickly, your opponent may notice it and send the shuttle in a different direction. You must then be able to pull up quickly, and this ought not to be hard, provided that you have not put yourself too much out of position and are not moving too rapidly.

Anticipation does not to my mind mean rushing to a certain place and waiting for the shuttle to come there —“that way madness lies.” It merely means that you make up your mind that the shuttle is coming to one spot, that you get yourself ready to move there without any loss of time, and that you make a slight movement in the required direction. The last, however, is not absolutely necessary. The main point is that you are mentally and physically ready to receive the shuttle as soon you see that your surmise is about to be fulfilled. You will be surprised to find how many strokes you can anticipate by a close examination of

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your opponent's methods of stroke-production. Some little thing often gives him away—it is your business to try to find that out.

Cultivate the mental habit of always attempting to anticipate and you will find your powers developing in this respect the more you play. Make little or no movement except when you are very, very sure where his shot is going, and that, needless to say, will be very, very seldom. Be satisfied to get yourself ready to start at once for a certain place, if you happen to be right in your guess. The moment the shuttle leaves the racquet you will know whether you were right or wrong. Much movement is a great mistake. No matter how concentrated your opponent's attention may be on the shuttle, how intent ~~of~~ performing a certain stroke, his mind will subconsciously register any movement of white that takes place on the opposite side of the net and he may alter his stroke completely at the last moment, sending the shuttle toward that place from which you have just moved. If you are playing against some one who moves about a lot while you are taking your shot, you have a vulnerable spot every time, namely, the place which he has just left. As a rule he will probably be able to return the shuttle, but he will seldom make a good shot, if you have caught him on the wrong foot. It is, therefore, better to restrict your movements as much as possible, except in the actual performing of a stroke or as far as getting back into position necessitates. It is easier then to score against a player who makes a definite movement

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on the court while you are preparing to hit the shuttle than against one who waits quietly, moving only a little and never enough to justify the belief that you have got an opening. No matter how quietly you wait, always be on your toes, ready to start immediately the stroke is made.

A useful stratagem that may be employed as your experience increases is purposely to leave an opening in the hope that your opponent will also become aware of it and aim for that spot. For instance, when your opponent is out at the back of the court, you can leave the space near the net at one side apparently unguarded—but you must make the necessary movements before the shuttle reaches him. You are thus pretending that you expect him to hit the shuttle somewhere else and the chances are that he will go for the unprotected spot. You have to move exceedingly fast once he has made his stroke, for you have to be there as soon as if you had anticipated him in the ordinary way—otherwise you are losing the potential advantage. If it all works out according to plan, you usually have him at your mercy. The risk is that you have to start when he is actually engaged in hitting, so he may tumble to the trick and turn the tables by pretending to go for the open place and in reality sending the shuttle in quite a different direction. However, if you use it with judgment and do not overdo it you will win more than a few points here and there. Be very careful not to try it too frequently. An intelligent opponent may be caught occasionally at intervals, but not often.

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Vary your shots as much as you can. Let the watchword of your attack be variety—that is the best form of tactics.

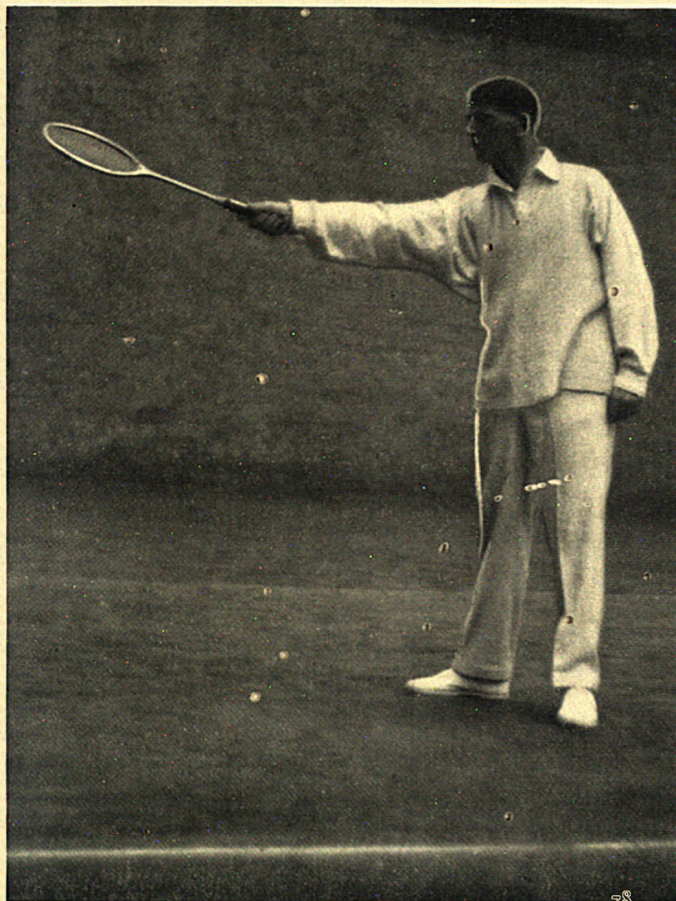
When making yourself mentally ready for a return, assume that the shot is going to be a good one—in fact, the best in the circumstances. If you happen to be right, the shot will be easier to take since you are already prepared—if you are wrong, you are still in a better position. But let me repeat again that anticipation by moving to a certain point where you think that the shuttle is going to fall is a very dangerous proceeding. Move to a certain extent, if you must move, but never let it be enough to hinder your liberty of movement in any other direction at a moment's notice. Your forecast of the coming stroke may be correct at times, but also, if your opponent is alert, you will often be at fault. Act therefore with circumspection. It is always good policy to avoid risks where the risk incurred is greater than the advantage to be reaped. Try to anticipate your opponent mentally every time, altering your position as little as possible, unless you are absolutely sure of yourself. Your powers in this department of the game will increase as you play, and experience is your best guide as to when you should translate the surmise of your mind into action. The study of first-class players will be useful. You will notice how they are always on their toes ready to start at once after the shuttle is hit by their opponent, and on the other hand how little movement, comparatively speaking, they make themselves, while waiting for a

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return, except whatever is necessary to prevent themselves being caught out of position.

On many occasions circumstances will compel you to take the shuttle too low to smash. There is one very important stroke which I have not mentioned so far except *en passant*, namely, the drive. Every player ought to possess this shot, but as a matter of fact it is seen too seldom on the court. Sir G. A. Thomas, Mr Devlin, and Mr Uber are perhaps its best exponents among the men, and Mrs Tragett among the ladies. Numerous players of first-class rank do not use it at all for some strange reason. You will find it very valuable in many contingencies. The arm more than the wrist predominates in the production, and the nearer the shuttle is to the level of the net when struck by the racquet, the better. Half-measures bring no success. The shuttle must be hit with all your force, and to some extent 'cut.' It is remarkable how hard you can hit the shuttle, without putting it out, when it travels toward the net about the net's height all the way and just skimming it *en voyage*—that is, in the case of the drive straight up either side-line, backhand or forearm. In Plate G you see Mr Devlin executing a forearm drive and in Plate H you see the same player at the finish of this stroke. Observe how far he has followed-through with the racquet. This gives you an inkling of how much force he has put into his shot. The follow-through is just as essential here as in the smash—indeed, you can hardly avoid it, even if you try, seeing how hard you have to hit. The backhand drive is

PLATE G



FOREHAND DRIVE
Mr J. F. Devlin

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played in exactly the same way, the arm doing the major amount of the work.

The cross-court drive from either side is a particularly paying shot, especially in mixed doubles when you are playing against a back-and-front pair. The action should be the same as for the drive straight up the line, as far as possible, the ultimate direction being obtained by a quick turn of the wrist, just at the moment of impact. Mr Devlin and Mr Uber are perhaps the most brilliant doubles players at the moment and the drive is one of their staple shots. A match between Mr Devlin and Miss McKane against Mr Uber and Mrs Horsley is always most exciting to watch, when all four are at the top of their form, owing to the amazing swiftness of the rallies. At times the spectator cannot follow the flight of the shuttle, so rapidly does it cross from one side to the other. You may judge from this how fast the drive can be in the hands of a master of the game.

In a single there is not so much scope for the cross-court drive, as it can be hit out so easily, still you must not omit practising it on that account. Occasions which call for it will arise in a single as well as in a double. It is very advantageous when you receive a poor smash down the side-line from fairly far out. Off this a drive of medium pace to the opposite line to that from which your opponent has smashed will often put him in a difficulty. It cannot of course be hit too hard or it will go outside.

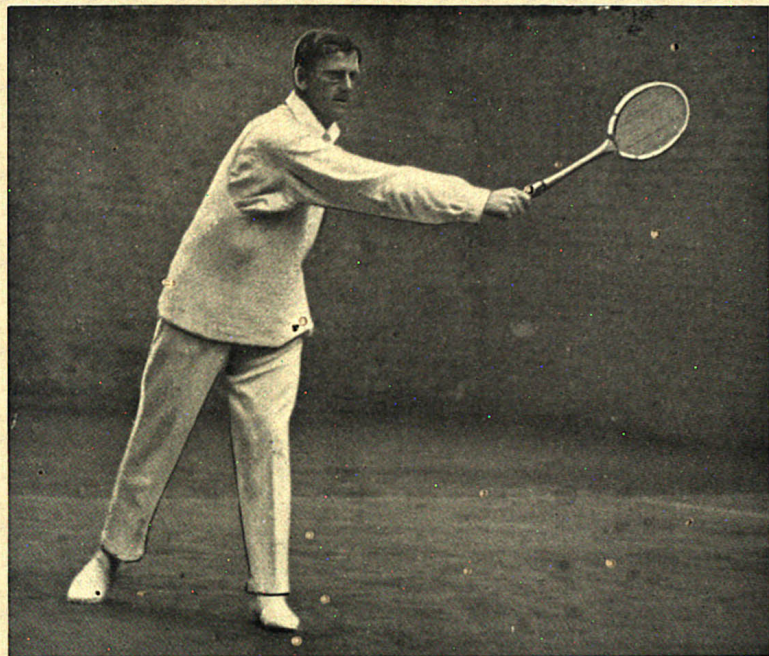
The drive, of whatever kind it may be, demands

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good judgment to ensure correct usage. No matter how fast it is going, or how accurate your direction may be, if your opponent can get his racquet to it, the shuttle will be back on you almost at once, without giving you much time to recover. Improper use is worse than no use. Watch for an opportunity before employing this stroke, and even then get ready as soon as ever you can for a possible return.

Singles as played nowadays by most first-class players are somewhat of a defensive type. The main object seems to be to tire the opponent by a series of deep lobs to his backhand, varied by short drops. This furnishes a game that must be uninteresting to the player and undoubtedly is uninteresting to the spectators. It is hard also to make mistakes when you limit yourself to a couple of shots as your chief scheme of attack, and this possibly is an additional attraction. However, I should advise no young player to imitate these methods. It is like sticking to the base-line in lawn tennis, when the quick volleying at the net offers so many more inviting and remunerative possibilities. It will tend to stereotype your strokes and to limit their variety. The more shots you practise, the more you learn and the greater are your powers of attack. I am confident that this defensive sort of game can be countered successfully by a player who is well trained and has a great variety of strokes at his command. In addition to being most unenterprising, it entails a great strain on the player who adopts it. Two opponents, both of whom use this strategy, if strategy it can be

PLATE H



FINISH OF FOREHAND DRIVE
Mr J. F. Devlin

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called, are physical wrecks at the end of a match which, having started as a test of skill, has ultimately degenerated into a mere test of endurance.

If you are being attacked on your backhand by a series of good-length lobs, your policy is, of course, to save yourself as much as possible and attack also as much as possible. When you perceive that your shots have lost their sting and that your strength is going, then avoid all strokes that necessitate a great expenditure of energy, until you feel yourself strong enough again to execute them with the required vigour. Some players, after winning the first game, let the middle one go, resting themselves and keeping their opponent working all the time to win aces. Never do it as a beginner—it is a most dangerous proceeding. The great risk is that you are liable to become slack and may not be able to get going again when the time comes for you to attack. I have tried it only twice. The first time it was successful, but on the second occasion it was a dismal failure, and I do not intend to employ it in the future if I can possibly avoid it.

In order to defeat the lob attack, your drop-shots both on the forearm and on the backhand need to be of a very high standard. I have already advised you to make the action for the drop, the clear, and the smash as similar as you can, where circumstances permit. With this power of concealing your shot, you should be favourably equipped to deal successfully with an attack of this sort. As the brunt of the assault will fall for obvious reasons on your backhand corner, you

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must devote special attention to perfecting that drop. In my own case I have found the backhand drop more useful to me than any other stroke in opposing a player of this kind.

All players do not possess the same strokes, therefore no definite tactical scheme that could always be used to advantage can be given for a single. The object of all tactics is to gain the best value out of your best strokes and to prevent your opponent from obtaining the same happy result. Now every player employs a different method to suit his own particular shots. This is naturally where the chief charm of the game lies—encountering different types of attack and endeavouring to circumvent them. Each new opponent whom you face will attack you in a different way, unless he be of the lobbing class. Even so he will possess shots that you have not met before, or at all events you will be unaccustomed to his methods of production, although the stroke in question may be the same. Badminton is a game not only of skill, but of brain. As the exchanges are so swift, the mind must, therefore, work swiftly too, and where other things are equal or, as happens often, nearly equal, it is quickness of mental powers that determines the issue. Let the tactics that you employ suit your strokes and you will reap the best results. Do not limit yourself to any definite scheme at the beginning, unless you know your opponent's play thoroughly and are confident that it is the most likely way of bringing the game to a successful termination. Direct your efforts toward making him

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give you good opportunities to use your best shots and then make no mistake. If you have a weak point, try to conceal it as much as possible. All the same you may be sure that your opponent will find it out. There is only one cure for weaknesses, and that is not to have them. Hard and unremitting practice will remove them, and their removal is a necessity if you have set your aims high. The player who has always got a chance of beating anyone is the one who has no weaknesses.

Supposing you have found a weak spot in the enemy's defences, it is not as a rule the best policy to go for that point every time. You may just give him the little practice that he needed, and what was weak may very well become strong. It will be better to test it occasionally without giving him enough opportunities to remedy the defect. You want to prevent him from realizing that it is a weak point, and continuous attack would defeat this end. Also he would be bound to perceive your idea fairly soon, and if he still remained insecure in that particular point, he would do his best to protect it. So in each case your task must necessarily become more difficult.

My advice to you about tactics in a single is to attack right from the start. Apart from the fact that I feel more comfortable when attacking, there is the undoubted advantage of having the initiative, for this, though it may not be very obvious, must be of some advantage. It is better policy in the long run to work to make openings for yourself than to be content to

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wait until your opponent gratuitously makes a mistake. Now the main weapon of attack is the smash and it must be used with discretion. A good defensive player will pick up a kill from the back of the court nine times out of ten and you only wear yourself out in the end with no result. You will be able to estimate for yourself when the energy spent on your smashes outweighs the number of aces gained. You have then to slow down the game somewhat. As a rule for general guidance, whenever you get a chance of a smash, except from very far out, go for it with all your strength, and, in addition to pace, aim to acquire direction also. Do not be afraid to go near the side-lines; lack of confidence in one's own powers is a great bar to fame in all games. You must, if you want to be first-class, practise each shot until you are able to put the shuttle almost exactly where you want. An inch often makes all the difference between a good and a bad shot. One of the most notable points about a really good player is his accuracy. I myself have seen Sir George Thomas' hand put out four times running by a well-directed smash, landing about an inch from the side-line. Yet his service was in each case a lob of very good length. The space provided by an opening may be small. It does not matter—aim for that and it will benefit you sooner or later. Your opportunities against a defensive player, one who wants to run as little risk as he can of making a mistake and to win by your exhaustion, will be infrequent. Whenever there is the slightest opening, take full advantage of it. A vulnerable spot often

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for a smash is the body, especially if you see that he is not quite recovered from his previous shot. You run the risk of putting the shuttle out perhaps, but if your smash is swift and sure, the danger ought to be almost entirely eliminated. Be on the look-out also to catch him on the wrong foot—bad footwork offers many chances.

I have said that you should start to attack immediately the first shot is hit—you must vary your attack too as much as possible. Probe his play in every way you can, with the idea of finding out his weak points. Use your ordinary strokes for this purpose—brilliant ones are unnecessary. In fact, extraordinary strokes should not be attempted except under certain circumstances—namely, when anything else is impossible. If you find that you have a *penchant* for theatrical shots, check it. It is bound to land you in trouble. You may bring off a few in a match, but it stands to reason that you cannot bring off many, and you will almost certainly give away more points than you gain. It is a good thing to have ambition, but it is foolish to seek after the impossible. By attempting too much, you hamper your own efforts. Nevertheless it is a valuable thing to possess just one or two of these shots as a last line of defence. If you can bring one out when your opponent thinks that he has you at his mercy, it will discourage him to a wonderful extent. He will sometimes miss it through not expecting it, and in a close match he may be upset considerably. However, avoid them unless there is no safer shot possible.

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Let your motto always be 'attack,' and let the attack be varied and intelligent. Learn from it something about your opponent's play. You may not be able to find a weak point; then acquaint yourself thoroughly with his strokes. The more you know about them, the better you can anticipate them, and the better you can deal with them. This is the supreme fascination of the game—how to attack and how to defend. There is the greatest scope for the exercise of this in a single. Be on your guard against making the pace too hot, especially against a defensive player. You will make mistakes at first—every beginner must. But mistakes can always be remedied and you are adopting the method that turns out the greatest players.

You should usually try to get to the shuttle as soon as possible, which is another way of saying that you should take it as high as you can. This is a common-sense rule to be followed within common-sense limits, for the higher the shuttle is when struck, the harder it can be hit. It is not enough to be content to get to it with all speed. You must endeavour at the same time to put yourself in the most convenient position for executing your own stroke with the most telling effect. This usually means a little more exertion, but it is labour well spent, for the sooner you are ready to return that shuttle the better. This is why anticipation means so much. Swiftnes of stroke and swiftnes of thinking are distinguishing marks of a great player.

In the case of a drop near the net it is best to take

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the shuttle as near the net and as high as possible. It is easier then to drop back to your opponent or clear, if you think fit. Sir George Thomas has a very paying stratagem off a drop executed from far out. He comes up very quickly and catches the shuttle just as it is coming over the net. You are at the back of the court and you naturally move forward a little in order to guard against the possibility of a drop. Meanwhile he waits at the net, sensing what you are doing. If you come in too much, he clears over your head. If you stay out, he is sure to drop, and to drop so close that you rarely have time to get to it. He has caught me on many occasions by this plan, and it is well-nigh impossible to anticipate which of the two he intends to do. He would not be able to conceal his design so cleverly if he were not so close up to the net.

From the very beginning of a single, or for that matter of a double too, concentrate your attention on winning. Do not let yourself be influenced by such things as fancied 'wrong decisions' or a great name. If your opponent is a famous player, make up your mind to lower his colours. Form is a very variable quantity. Above all, though you may be very much afraid of him, avoid showing it. Nothing will be more inspiring to him than to know that you are frightened of him. Cover up your nervousness under a mask of indifference. I am reputed to be cool and collected on the court. As a matter of fact, nothing is farther from the truth, and the more important the particular match happens to be, the greater is my 'funk.' But as long

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as you can master it, I do not consider nervousness to be a very great disadvantage. You become strung up to a high pitch, and on a great occasion produce your best. The phlegmatic player, on the other hand, maintains a uniform level, yet as his nerves are not influenced by a big test, neither is his play. However, if you notice any signs of 'nerves' in your opponent, attack him all out 'with every weapon at your command. Once his confidence is shaken to any degree whatsoever, this is the method which will shake it more and may in the end make him lose it. It is always pointed out how bad a thing it is to underestimate an opponent—I need not go into that further. But without going so far as to commit this error you can still retain confidence in yourself to perform the ordinary strokes, if you have any pretensions to be considered even a fair player. No matter whether you are playing the greatest player that ever lived, you ought not for that reason to miss shots of the usual sort. The more confidence you have in your ability to perform certain strokes, the abler you are to execute them. A match is not won or lost until the last stroke has been played. Some players 'get their tails down' occasionally when things are going badly, and often for no apparent reason at all. This is a most pernicious habit. You may rank as a great player, but if you are easily discouraged you will never win the Open Championship. This is the type of player who just fails to 'arrive'—a type familiar to every one. Concentrate on doing your best to win all the time and do not relax.

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for a moment. Take the greatest care with each shot until the rally is ended. Do not execute the finishing shot carelessly, when you have a good opening. To lose in such a case shakes your *moral*, while it encourages your opponent. Let nothing shake your will to win, and if you are defeated, look forward to the next meeting as a chance for reversing that result. If you do not already possess this match-winning temperament, which these few sentences illustrate, you can acquire it by mental training and constant practice. Do not judge the time spent in this pursuit as wasted, for it has proved the deciding factor in many a hard-fought contest.