

Bending the pips

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Tuesday, 16 October 2007

2. Compressing and bending the pips:

As mentioned before, spin reversal is one of the key properties of long pimple rubbers. However once you climb the grades ladder and get to play to more experienced players, this property alone may not be enough. If these players know that whatever spin they feed to your long pimple rubber, will come back with almost the exact reverse, they can control the spin completely, and can feed you spin, so that just the right spin comes back to suit their own game… Of course you still have control over the speed and placement of the ball, but this may not be enough. Other options are still available for the more advanced players, such as twiddling to use the other side of the bat, or running around to play the ball with the rubber on the other side, but this will be discussed in the strategy section.

OK so what options are available to combat your opponents from dominating play by exploiting the spin reversal property? Well the concept of the spin-reversal was described with an ‘ideal’ long pimple rubber, where spin reversal is maximized. Some rubbers have hard pimples and very glassy and slippery tips come close to this ideal long pimple rubber, and are suited for a style where maximum spin reversal is required. Examples of these are Dr Neubauer “Super Block” and Hallmark “Super Special”. These rubbers are commonly referred to as “Frictionless long pimple” rubbers, and are a very important class of rubbers. However there is another main class of rubbers, commonly referred to “Grippy” or “Friction” long pimple rubbers, and these have some other interesting properties which will be discussed here.

The reality is that ALL long pimple rubbers DO have some grip and therefore the type of stroke played WILL have some effect on the spin that is returned. Many long pimple rubbers also have softer pimples, which means they’ll bend under impact, the harder the impact, the more they bend. By bending the pimples, more of the rubber surface is exposed to the ball, so the contact area between the rubber and ball is increased. This has the effect of reducing the spin reversal, but increasing the amount of spin you can impart. Some of these Grippy long pimple rubbers are designed to have significant grip on their tips and sides, and are often made softer so that the pimples can bend more easily.

So what use is this property if it reduces the key spin-reversal property of long pimple rubbers? Well it offers another key feature of grippy long pimple rubbers, which is the ability to manipulate and control the spin, which can be used as a form of deception. This will be described below. Just as in section 1 we used an ideal frictionless rubber to illustrate the principle of spin reversal, here we’ll use an ideal grippy long pimple rubber for illustration purposes. This rubber will have grippy tips, will bend under impact, and will have grippy sides.

Consider the following…

1. Your opponent feeds you a ball with topspin:

2. The ball strikes your bat. But because the pimples are soft, they compress and push in as shown, resulting in many more pimples contacting the ball surface. The pimples are grippy, so they grab the ball and try to stop it from spinning.

3. The ball rebounds off with reduced speed and with virtually no spin.

The extent of how much of the spin is taken off the ball depends on quite a few other factors. The grippier the pimples, the better they can grip the ball and take off the spin. Also the longer the ball is in contact with the rubber (i.e. dwell time), the better the pimples can take off the spin. So a soft blade and/or a sponge will also increase the ability of taking off the spin. Finally the speed of the ball has an effect, the slower the ball, the slower the rebound, so the pimples have more time to take off the spin. An actual picture of the ball compressing the pimples is shown here:

This property by itself can already be very useful. A spinney loop that is returned short with no spin can be hard to attack again. However the player can actually control how much spin is taken off the ball as well, by the movement of the bat upon contact.

By brushing the ball in the same direction as the ball is spinning, you can control whether you take off all the spin, return all the spin back to your opponent, or even add a little spin if you brush the ball faster than it's spinning:

1. Your opponent feeds you a ball with topspin:

2. You strike the ball with a brushing action in the same direction as the ball is spinning. Note the squashing of the pimples while you're brushing exposes even more contact area for the ball to grip the rubber, allowing more manipulation of the spin. Because the bat travels in the same direction as the surface of the ball, some of the spin is continued on:

3. A reduced amount of spin is returned to the opponent, you control the amount:

The amount of spin returned is obviously also dependent on other factors. There will often still be a moderate amount of spin reversal, depending on factors explained earlier. By disguising how fast you're brushing the ball at the point of contact offers a form of deception, drawing errors from opponent who misjudge this.

A picture of a ball making contact with a brushing action of a bat is shown here:

Note that if you brush the ball fast enough, you can actually add some spin to the ball as well. Against fast loops this may be very hard to do, and this is not really unique to long pimple rubbers.

There are a variety of different strokes that can offer further manipulation of the spin, but this will be discussed in the 'Long Pimple Strokes' section.