

Single-sided Pips-out Penholder Play - 6. Advanced techniques

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6. Advanced techniques.

Advanced techniques are meant to allow you to be more versatile, turning attack into defence and vice versa. This will make it easier to change the pace and to be less predictable.

6.1. Right-hand defence.

The chop is executed as follows. Point the blade downward, open your bat to about 100 degrees and make contact with the centre of the ball stabbing downward with force. This technique resembles a fast push, but it is performed behind instead of over the table. You can counter heavy backspin with it and use it also against topspin, generating heavy backspin in both cases. Make contact with the ball after the highest point of its bounce, when it is dropping. The chop can also be used to return a ball you have misjudged and reached too late. The same is true for the stroke used for lifting against backspin, the small loop. This stroke resembles a flip executed behind the table. Reach down, open your bat slightly and bring your underarm sharply up, making a brushing contact with the dropping ball. Close the bat slightly at contact to maximize the friction.

If you find yourself where you should not be, far behind the table trying to recover a dropping ball, you can turn this small loop into a lob, opening your bat even more and following through high above your head. This is a desperate measure and results will be dubious, for the ball if hit correctly will bounce very high on the other half of the table but virtually without spin. You may prefer to try and get back into the rally by performing a sidespin loop. Reach far down, keep your bat slightly closed and make contact just below the centre of the ball and a bit to its side while moving your bat very fast in a narrow curve to the right and forward. The brushing contact will be prolonged slightly because of this curve (you sort of catch the ball in your moving rubber) and you will be able to produce a considerable amount of sidespin. I have seen Chinese chopper-attackers playing with short pips hit balls this way and produce very flat and curved trajectories that brought the ball actually around the net on the other half of the table. After using desperate measures like these you should be back at the table as fast as you can.

6.2. Left-hand attack.

The left-hand hit is a very useful stroke, but hard to perform accurately. It is only used for attacking fairly high balls or for hitting balls while you come back to the ready position from far to your right. As the standard tactic against penholder players aims at making you move from left to right, you may find fairly frequently use for this stroke.

It is performed as follows. Bring the bat to your left hip while turning your body to the left, making your right shoulder point to the incoming ball and leaning forward. Point at 6 o'clock. Keep your bat at about 80 degrees and swing in the same plane fast up, accelerating towards the ball, using only your underarm, which should pivot around the elbow. Do not use your body. Do not use your upper arm, unless the ball bounces fairly high and you can strike with maximum force. Use your wrist to rotate the blade from 6 o'clock towards 12 o'clock. Make contact with the centre of the ball before it reaches its highest point. Follow through relaxing, bringing the bat to your right shoulder. The stroke is the mirror image of the right-hand hit except that you cannot use the rotation of your body, because this would seriously impair your balance. In the 1960's you could see Chinese pips out players kick back their left leg when performing this stroke; they could hit with great force this way. Nowadays, with play being much faster, this is inadvisable, since kicking back may improve your balance but it also prevents you effectively from moving behind the table; if your hit is blocked, you are caught with one leg up in the air.