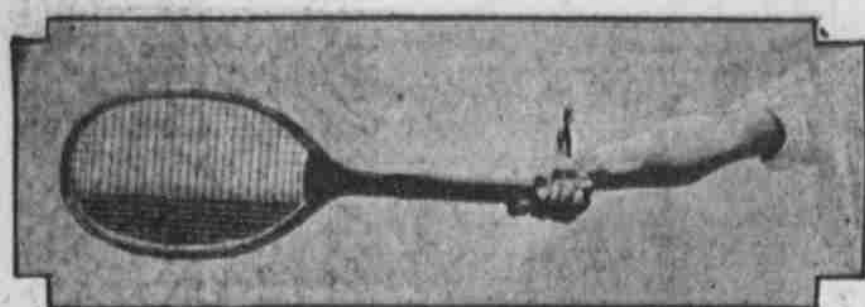


How Every Girl Can Improve Her Tennis.

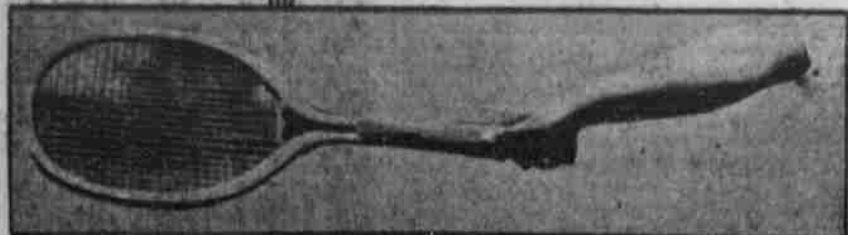
A Lesson from Which Every One Can Learn, By Miss Molla Bjurstedt, the World's Woman Champion

The Proper Grip for a Forehand Stroke.



Miss Bjurstedt's Way of Holding the Racket for Service and Forehand Stroke.

On the Left the Finish of the Forehand Drive.



The Correct Grip for a Backhand Stroke.



The Start of a Backhand Drive.



Finish of Backhand Drive.



A Backhand Stroke for Low Volley.

MISS MOLLA BJURSTEDT (pronounced Bursted) is the phenomenal Norwegian tennis player who arrived in this country last December, and has since carried everything before her in the way of tennis laurels.

No tennis player, man or woman, ever improved his or her game without heeding the advice of more experienced and skilful players. Every girl may profit, therefore, by the valuable suggestions here given by one of the greatest woman tennis players ever developed.

Finish of Service.
By Miss Molla Bjurstedt, National and Metropolitan Champion in Singles, Olympic Champion, etc.

"TENNIS is just a game of getting the ball over the net," said a girl, very confidently to me, the other day.

"Getting the ball over the net" may be one kind of tennis, but it is not the kind I play, and it is not the kind of tennis that wins matches.

"Putting the ball over the net out of the reach of your opponent," is my definition of tennis. For to win points in lawn tennis, it is necessary not only to clear the net but to so place the ball that the other side will have trouble in reaching it.

I win my tennis matches because I always try to send the ball into that part of the court where my opponent is not. I may not outplay but I do outguess my foe.

I do not care how finely a player may execute her stroke—she may have wonderful form—but she will never be a champion unless she uses her brain. The stroke is only one-half the battle.

That is why I like the game so much—it is a matching of strategy as well as a trial of strength and skill. The head must always control the racket; every stroke ought to mean as much as a move in chess.

Therefore control the ball; do not let the ball control you.

"But," asks someone, "how am I to control the ball and think where I am going to send it when I hold myself lucky even to hit the ball, let alone know where it is eventually going to land?"

At first blush it does seem as though the advice, "control the ball," was like telling a man falling out of a building to pick a soft spot. But there is no such dilemma. If one starts tennis with the idea that a stroke is not complete unless the ball is given a definite direction and goes to the intended place, then control will be as much in mind as mere hitting and haphazard whacks will become fewer and fewer as the player gains in experience.

Luck is an element of every game, but I try to reduce my "luck" to rules, and I think every player will be the more formidable for investigating the streaks of good fortune which, running against her, result in lost matches. I confess to a large degree of superstition, but I do not leave my tennis playing to fate; I find that the following code shifts most of the accidents to the opponent. These are my rules for winning matches:

- (1) Play your adversary; do not let her play you. That is "get the jump" on her and force the issue.
 - (2) Find your opponent's weaknesses and take advantage of them. Send her the kind of balls she least likes.
 - (3) Make your opponent run for every ball you return so that she will get out of position and off balance.
 - (4) Play one or two strokes ahead; that is, play so that you have a good idea of the part of the court where the next ball must come.
 - (5) Make your returns quickly, but do not sacrifice accuracy.
 - (6) Hit the ball as hard as you can without losing your control.
- I emphasize control rather than speed because speed is a later development, but both speed and control depend on hitting the ball in the right way. Plays which are ridiculously easy with the correct stroke become very difficult when the style is bungled.

PHOTOS BY BROWN BROS. N.Y.



In the Middle of Service.

I do not believe in the "fancy" strokes which put queer twists on the ball that make it bound in all sorts of directions. These are of use but usually they become a mania with the player and the elementary strokes are forgotten in the desire to make the ball do tricks.

I use only the simple strokes and depend solely on placement and speed to gain points. In the long run I think my game is the best game for all girls. Therefore I will give my way of playing tennis.

The selection of a suitable racket and the proper holding of the racket are the primary matters in which a girl often makes mistakes that ruin her chances of playing even a fair game.

Select a well-balanced racket of about thirteen ounces with a handle of a size that just permits the hand to comfortably close about it. The size of the grip is important, and if one cannot be found of the correct and proper diameter, then select a larger size and have it shaved down. I use a 13 1/4-ounce racket, heavy in the head, but my right forearm is stronger than that of the average girl; too heavy a racket quickly tires the player.

I use two grips: the one for service and all forehand strokes, and the second for backhand strokes. In both grips the racket handle is grasped at the very end with the butt resting against the base of the palm. In the forehand grip the fist is simply closed about the handle with the thumb across. This is the normal grip in which the racket is always held except for the backhand strokes. For the backhand play, the thumb is shifted so that it is parallel with and pressing against the wood in order to prevent the racket from turning.

The racket should be grasped firmly at the beginning of every stroke, but between strokes, the grip had best be relaxed or the hand and forearm will become cramped.

The service of the ball is important, but it is governed by the general rules of play which I have above noted. Many players base their all on their service and spend many hours trying to evolve a delivery which will make the service ball unreturnable.

I, on the contrary, consider the service only as the opening stroke of the game, and I think it a mistake to waste great energy in attempting to deliver an unreturnable service. A girl can never develop a service which is too swift for a good player to handle, and she only wears herself out in the effort; and then a great number of points are lost through double faults for the "canon ball" is never under the best of control.

I use and favor a service of moderate speed that may be placed as the server wills.

I stand behind the backline in the middle of the court. One must be in the middle of the court for the return, and it is best to start there in the first place and thus save steps. I rest the weight of my body on my right foot, observe where I want to place the ball, throw the ball into the air with the left hand and swing my racket back over my head and down on the ball. I hit

Ready to Serve

as hard as I can, putting the weight of my body into the stroke, but I do not make a supreme effort. The ball is met by the middle of the racket face, which is at that moment inclining slightly downward. I do not attempt to "cut" the service by slicing the racket across the ball. The racket is carried through the complete swing and ends parallel with my body. This is known as the "follow through" and is much neglected. In tennis as well as in golf, the ball is given better direction and pace by the "following through."

I direct my service with a view of taking advantage of the weakness of my opponent. If she is weak in the backhand, as most girls are I serve always to her backhand; that is, if she is in her right-hand court, I serve down the middle line and, if in the left-hand court, I try to cut the side line.

If she expects service in a certain place and makes it, I try another spot. I aim to keep her guessing and running; then she is seldom able to place her own return.

If my first ball is a fault, I take no chances with my second ball, for it is not worth while to risk throwing away a point for the slight advantage of a little additional speed.

The service delivered, I am forward on my left foot, behind the base line and ready to take the return wherever it may come. Many players rush to the net as they serve, but that is not the game for girls. The object of getting to the net is to meet the returning ball in mid-air and quickly smash it out of the reach of the opponent or to such a place that she will get it back feebly, if at all, and thus enable you to do what you like with the next stroke.

This is a splendid game if it may be played, but it is not the game for a girl. She cannot get about so quickly as a clever man and the next game requires activity. It is more than likely, if you run at once to the net position, that your opponent will catch you helplessly in mid-court running forward and off balance or she will shoot the ball across the net quickly and so far away from you that you will be passed. I have yet to find a girl I cannot pass at the net. Therefore, I say from my experience to the girl player:

- (1) Wait at the baseline for your opponent's play.
- (2) Go to the net only when you see a chance to win the point by a single hard "smash."
- (3) Do not start for the net unless you see that you can get close to it before the ball comes over; the only effective place to "volley" is right up at the net.
- (4) Avoid a position midway between the baseline and the net as you would poison; it is a fatal point where you can neither volley nor play a ground stroke.

If your service has been well placed, so that your opponent has not been able to return it as she wills, but has only succeeded in getting it back, then you are in a position to take advantage of her return by sending your next ball to the point in the court most inconvenient to her.

If she has been receiving in her right-hand court and your service has been down the centre line and she has had to run across court to reach it on her backhand, put your return to the backhand corner of the court. If her run has carried her off her balance, try the opposite corner of the court; she may not be able to recover herself sufficiently to reach the ball at all and may just pop it back; then you can run to the net for a smash. Or again, if her momentum has brought her up to the middle of the court, it is often well to aim the ball directly at her feet, hitting as hard as you can.

All strokes on a ball before it touches the ground are known as volleys and the important thing to bear in mind is that this

Miss Molla Bjurstedt, the Remarkable Norwegian Tennis Player, As She Looks on the Courts When About to Begin a Championship Match.



stroke must generally be downward or the racket slightly inclined at time of impact to give a top spin. Volley strokes become more and more difficult and uncertain the further one is from the net, but if you are close to the net the main trouble is not so much with the stroke but in reaching the ball at all. I save these strokes for the easy returns made by my opponent when she is out of position. I do not play a volley game.

Keep your eye on the ball and you will not often be caught unawares. Follow the ball every moment; if your eye is keen, you will be able to judge the part of the court in your court in which it is going to land the moment it leaves the racket. Be at that place ready to receive and return it.

Experience will teach you where a ball is going. Sometimes you will be fooled, but not often.

If you play mostly from a position at the back of the court, you will use "ground strokes," that is, strokes taken after the ball has bounced on the ground as distinguished from the "volley" strokes which are made on the ball before it reaches the ground.

Your usual ground strokes will be the "forehand drive" and the "backhand drive." These are the dependable strokes and their proper execution is more important than all the other strokes of the game, including service, combined.

The significant points of these drives are: (1) Take your position in time, being careful of your feet and body balance. (2) Rest in position a fraction of a second before swinging the racket. (3) Try to hit the ball as it is rising from the bounce and not at the top of the bounce or as it begins to fall. (4) Take a full stroke, swinging freely. (5) Follow through.

I have said that the best time to hit the ball is when it is rising from the bounce; the average player waits until the ball begins to descend, but it is self-evident that valuable time will be gained by hitting the rising ball. It is a more difficult play but the secret of fast play.

The backhand drive is made in exactly the same manner as the forehand drive, excepting that the weight is poised on the left instead of on the right foot and the grip upon the racket changes.

Every player likes to rattle her opponent by any fair means and thus win the wit battle. It certainly is trying upon the temper to have an opponent continually fooling you in strokes or lobbing the ball over your head, if you happen to run to the net; a ball hit to one's feet is also most disconcerting. But never lose your temper. The moment you become angry you lose your judgment and the other side will win.

- My three cardinal points of tennis are:
- (1) Use wit.
 - (2) Send the ball out of the reach of your opponent.
 - (3) Hit the ball hard.