Learning from Pushers

Everyone seems to hate playing pushers, and today we will be discussing what we can learn from pushers.

I want to begin with a quote from a very good friend, and longtime doubles partner, Mark:

“There’s another name for pushers; Winners”

The reason people hate playing pushers is because they have a knack for winning. If they didn’t, people would like playing them. However, this is not the case. They use “ugly” tennis often, to defeat us. It may not be a pretty stroke, but they use whatever necessary to get the ball on the court.

Why do they win?

They win because they understand the most basic law of tennis success at its very core. They understand that the last person to hit the ball in, wins.

Seems obvious, right?

It makes sense though. The last person to hit the ball in wins the point, wins the game, wins the set, wins the match. There are no points for style. Or points for how powerful you hit the ball. No points are awarded for the person who hits the ball with the most spin. No points for best outfit, or newest tennis racket.

There are only points for hitting the ball in the court.

A pusher understands this, and is willing to make that happen--whatever the cost. There are two main points I would like to make, and I want you to keep an open mind as you read through them.

First:

Respect the pusher and his/her game: they understand tennis and what it takes to win.

This might be hard for some of you to read, because you may have gone through your tennis career bad mouthing this type of player. My advice goes against that attitude.
Having the right attitude sometimes makes all the difference in being successful.

Second:

Learn from the Pusher: This does not mean to emulate them completely, but we do need to learn from them and their successes.

Only play risky as is necessary to win!

When you are aggressive with your shots, you are taking on risk, and the chances of you missing increase. The harder you hit, the closer you aim to the lines, and the closer you hit to the top of net, is more of risk and your chance of failure increases.

This might seem obvious, but we need to make those connections in your mind to create a 'big picture'. We need to create a new attitude, and have a clear understanding about the fact that the more aggressive you are, and the more risks you take, the more chance you have for failure.

If it’s not necessary to take that risk to beat your opponent-- Why do it?

Be Careful!

It’s important to understand the risks, and it’s important to understand why pushers are successful, but I don't want you to take this too far.

Now as you read and internalize this, please understand I am not saying you shouldn’t use offense, or that you shouldn’t be working to develop weapons. You should be.

Sooner or later you are going to need offense to continue to advance in the game of tennis.

What I am saying is that for each and every match, you need to evaluate how much risk is needed, and how much offense is necessary to beat your opponent. If you move better than your opponent, have better technique, consistency, fitness, and stronger mental toughness, the amount of risk needed to win is very low.

If you do this evaluating, you will be able to play the highest style percentage, and be able to risk very little. --This is what pushers do so well, and what makes them so successful. Remember however, that pushers are one dimensional. A pusher that never develops any offensive weapons will never make it past a 3.5 or 4.0 level. The
stereo typical pusher will sit around the 3.0-3.5 level, and that is because they lack those offensive weapons.

Every match you need to evaluate how much risk is needed, then adjust your strategy accordingly.

**Play smart winning tennis:**

You can take the pusher’s smart savvy low risk tennis game, and turn it into a very effective game for yourself. Playing low risk, but having developed weapons that you can use, if and when necessary to put your opponent away will grant you continued success in the game of tennis. This new attitude and combination of skills will keep pushing you into more advanced levels of the game.

As always, I am here to answer any questions from you, so if you have any questions please feel free to send them to me at lan@essentialtennis.com

Thank you for reading!