

Chapter 9 Progress in Performance

To become a better player you must play competitive games. Match play against weaker opponents enables you to consolidate and develop the work you have done in practice. Strong opponents provide you with a test of that work. If you want to know how you are progressing you must assess your performance after the match; then you can decide whether or not you are lacking in any aspect of the game. To do this you must also assess your opponent's performance, for it is what you do against each other that results in the game from which you can judge your performance. Hence you need information about your opponent as well as yourself. It makes sense, doesn't it? If you know how he plays and what you need to defeat him, then you can do something about improving your chances of winning next time you play him.

In general, most players tend to assess the game, so there is nothing new about it. Unfortunately, often it is not done very well, for an assessment of the game usually depends on how much you can remember about the game. Some players are very good at reflecting on the game and remembering lots of details about what went on in the game. Most players are not very good at this and only remember the highlights and superficial details, so they do not really obtain a good picture of what actually happened. Even if you have a very good memory and can recall the game in detail, you must still know what questions to ask about your performance and your opponent's performance in order to extract useful information from the game. It must be 'useful', for it must be an aid to improve your performance.

Thus we arrive at the following conclusion: to assess your performance in the game you require an accurate record of the game from which to obtain information about your respective performance. The problem is, quite simply, how to do this? There are several methods available. The ideal method would be to film the game using videotape linked directly with a computer programmed to give instant analysis and advice. This is a very real possibility in the future with the development of the professional game and the national prestige at stake in international team events; but, at present, it is beyond the interest and the means of most of us. What is needed is some simple, effective method of recording which could be followed up by a questionnaire to extract sufficient information to help you to improve your game and defeat the opponent. In this chapter, I shall describe such a simple system.

Badminton notation

This is a method of recording badminton using a system of symbols. Each stroke-move is recorded by a symbol. It is simple and logical, easy to learn and quite accurate.

The advantages of notation

It is a cheap and effective method of accurately recording a game. Each stroke-move is recorded as the game progresses. A complete and detailed record of a match is written down and can be studied immediately. This is a tremendous advantage compared with film, video tape or even sound recording. Even if it were possible to set up the equipment and meet the cost of such methods, it would still be necessary to record details on paper in order to examine and compare the situations and details of the game.

It would be interesting, from the historical point of view, to be able to read a notated record of some of the great players of the game: perhaps to study Hartono and compare him with Kops or Wong Peng Soon; see the stroke-moves used in certain situations, the effect of pressure, the reaction to vital stages of the match, the tactics used against different styles of player. It would certainly be useful information for the serious student of the game.

The purpose of notation

Basically the purpose is to gain information. There are many aspects of the game which are open to examination and analysis. Briefly, notation records a

match and allows the following areas of a game to be recorded:

1. It records the detail in a game.
2. It shows clearly the patterns of play and the movement behaviour of a player during a match.
3. It shows the strengths and weaknesses of a player.
4. It attracts immediate attention to a weakness and shows clearly the type of situation which causes the weakness.
5. It shows the effect of motivation or lack of it on the choice of stroke-moves.
6. It emphasises fatigue periods during a match.
7. It shows the effect of pressure on the stroke-moves used.
8. It shows clearly the movement behaviour of a player in situations of

How can this information be used?

You can gain an accurate insight into and a sound knowledge of the opponent's game. With this knowledge and insight you can work out appropriate tactics and take calculated risks in set situations. You can examine your game, identify your weaknesses and any particular set habits you may be developing. Finally, for the coach, it is of obvious advantage. It draws attention to a recurring weakness. It directs the coach towards those aspects of the game that require his attention. He obtains accurate information which enables him to plan his work accordingly. Above all, it teaches

you to look critically at the game; and if you can do that you will learn and understand more about the game.

The symbols

They derive from the three basic moves. These are:

1. To hit the shuttle past the opponent to the rearcourt. The overhead clear or the underarm clear (lob) are used to hit the shuttle over his head and down the line to get past him to the rearcourt.
 2. To hit the shuttle into the forecourt. Here the overhead drop-shot or the underarm block to the smash or net reply are used.
 3. To hit the shuttle down so that it travels quickly to the midcourt. Here the smash and the variations on the smash are used to make the move.
- The symbols below show the basic moves and their replies, with additional symbols used to show other important information.

Stroke-moves

sl = serve low
sh = serve high
s = smash
c = clear
d = dropshot
b = block
l = lob
w = whip
n = net reply in forecourt
h = hit down in forecourt

Replies

n h lw
c d s
b l w
c d s
n l h w
n l w h c
d s
s c d n
l h w
b l

Additional information

x = cross-court
fh = forehand
bh = backhand
wk = weak reply in a situation
m = miss shuttle completely
f = fail to return shuttle in court
• = in the net
O = out of court

Recording

The recording sheet

The recording sheet should contain the details of the match.

1. Name of tournament
2. Venue
3. Date
4. Event
5. Round
6. Names of players

Here are two methods of recording the play using this system of notation.

Method 1

The recording sheet contains vertical columns. Each column is divided into boxes to represent the court. Each box is divided in half across the width and along the length. The column reads from the top to the bottom and the symbols are placed in the box as if you were looking at the court from above. Thus one player is at the top end and the other at the bottom. Both players' courts are divided into a forehand and backhand side (see below, fig. 18).

A	fh	bh
B	bh	fh
A	fh	bh
B	bh	fh

Recording the stroke-moves

Each stroke is recorded as if you were sitting directly behind the player making the stroke-moves (see fig. 22).

Scoring

The score is shown on the left side of each column. The server's score is written first to ensure clarity in the sequence of stroke-moves in each rally (see fig. 22).

Fig. 18

Recording a rally

Each rally commences with the serve shown by the symbol `sl' or `sh' designating a low or high serve.

Each rally is concluded by a double line. A game is concluded by a triple line.

Each box is written in sequence of AB AB ...

When there is a change of serve, the serve commences in the box opposite the server's letter, A or B.

The final event refers to the ending of the rally and is always recorded.

It takes place in the court of the player whose turn it is to hit the shuttle whether he does so or not. For example, if A smashes and B fails to return the shuttle into the court or misses it completely then that fact is recorded.

A smashes and B misses it. The recording must show this for it draws attention to what B did or did not do in reply to the smash (see fig. 19).

A	s	
B	m	

Fig. 19

This is most important for in any analysis it helps to know how each rally was won. In fig. 19, A won the rally not because he hit the smash, but because B missed it. If B continually misses the smash then we want to look at the defence of B or his previous move in the situation that A created. In fig. 20, A lost the rally because he smashed out over B's rearcourt. In fig. 21, A lost the rally because he hit the shuttle into the net. All this information is necessary in order to make accurate judgements about performance in the game.

The symbols for `out of court' (O) and `in the net'(*) are placed as shown in fig. 20 and fig. 21. The symbol `O' is placed next to the line in the box near to the part of the court into which it failed to land.

Fig. 20

A	c	
B		O

clear hit out

Fig. 21

A	s	
B	●	

smash into the net

Learning to record

To record a game in detail is quite demanding and can be hard work. Practice in using the symbols and in concentrating for long periods is essential. Begin by recording a few details and gradually progress towards recording every detail. Here are some practical suggestions.

1. Position yourself behind the court opposite one corner. The length of the court then corresponds to the vertical column of the recording sheet. From this position it is easier to observe the game and to record.

2. Build up concentration slowly. Record only a few rallies at a time. Increase this to recording a game and finally a match.
3. Record only simple details at first. For example, record the symbol and don't worry about placing it accurately in the correct side of its box, i.e. forehand or backhand side. As you improve, place the symbol accurately, in the approximate position in the box relative to the court. Regular practice in using the symbols will improve your accuracy, speed and concentration.

Notation in operation

The example below shows a few rallies extracted from a recorded match. Player A versus player B.

Fig. 22

0-0	A	sl		A		b	A	s	A		d	A		s	A		c
	B		l	B	n		B	b	B	l		B		b	B		s
	A		d	A	w		A		A	s		A	n		A	b	
	B		n	B		c	B		B		b	B	l		B	n	
	A		w	A		s	A		A		n	A	c		A	n	
	B			B	m		B		B		l	B			B	l	
	A	c	s	2-0	A	sh	A	s	A	c		A			A	s	
	B	m		B		c	B	m	B	s		B	h		B	b	
1-0	A		sh	3-0	A	sh	A		A	f		A	m		A	n	
	B			B			B		B	sh		B			B	sl	
	A	c		A			A	c	A		c	A	n		A		l
	B		c	B	d		B		B		c	B	w		B		o
	A		s	0-3	A		A		A			A			A		
	B			B			B		B	sh		B	sl		B		
	A			A			A		A		c	A			A		
	B			B			B		B		c	B			B		
	A			1-3	A		A		A			A			A		
	B			B			B		B			B			B		
	A			2-3	A		A		A			A			A		
	B			B			B		B			B			B		

Description of play in the extract

Play begins in column 1 on the left of the sheet. Read the play from the top downwards.

Score: 1st game. Love all. Player A to serve.

0-0 Low serve
 Lob to the backhand rearcourt
 Drop to the forehand forecourt
 Net reply to the forecourt
 Whip x-court to backhand RC
 Weak clear to the forehand MC
 Smash to backhand MC
 Miss (fail to hit it). End of rally.

1-0 High serve to backhand RC
 Clear to backhand RC
 Clear to forehand RC
 Smash to backhand MC
 Block to backhand FC
 Net reply to forehand FC
 Whip to forehand RC
 Weak clear to backhand MC
 Smash to backhand MC
 Miss (fail to hit).
 End of rally.

2-0 Serve high to centre rearcourt
 Continue and try to work out the remaining rallies yourself.

Method 2 This method uses the same symbols and is easier and quicker to use. It provides you immediately with an outline of the patterns of play and the form the game is taking. However, it does not provide you with as much visual information about the situations from which the stroke-moves are made. In Method 1 it is not necessary to use the x-court symbol (x), for the direction is clearly shown within the boxes representing the court. In Method 2 this is necessary.

The direction of each stroke-move is assumed to be 'straight' unless shown by the x-court symbol. All stroke-moves are assumed to be forehands unless shown by the backhand symbol (bh).

For example: xs represents the x-court smash
 bhc represents the backhand clear

You may find the second method more desirable for the patterns of play become apparent as you record and so make subsequent analysis that much easier. This will become obvious as you study the method below.

The recording sheet

The recording sheet contains horizontal rows divided into boxes to show the sequence of stroke-moves used in a rally. Each box records the stroke-move used by each player. A rally reads along the row from left to right. The sequence of rallies is from top to bottom of the sheet (see below, fig. 23).

Score	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
0-0 A	sl	l	d	n	l	s	b●			
0-0 B		sl	l	c	d	n	l	c	dx	f

Fig. 23

The symbols 'O' (in the net) and `O' (out of court) apply as in Method 1, except that the symbol `O' is placed in the box in which the next stroke-move would be made (see fig. 24 below).

Score	A	B	A	B	A	B
0-0 A	s	c	s●`			
0-0 B		s	l	c	o	

Fig. 24

Recording a rally

You simply record the stroke-move played by players A or B in sequence in the correct box in the row. The score is written before the player's letter (A or B) to show the score before the rally commences. When the rally ends the score is written in the row below, next to the server's letter. Then you continue to record the play.

When there is a change of service remember to start recording in the box under the player who serves (see fig. 23 above).

Notation in operation

The rallies below are identical to the previous example, fig. 22.

Score	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	
0-0 A	sl	l	d	n	wx	c	s	m						
1-0 A	sh	c	c	s	bx	n	wx	c	sx	m				
2-0 A	sh	cx	c	dx	n	lx	s	bx	n	n	wx	c	s	m
3-0 A	sh	c	cx	c	dx	l	sx	b	n	lx	c	sx	f	
0-3 B		sh	cx	c	s	bx	n	l	cx	s	bx	h	m	
1-3 B		sl	n	wx	c	sx	b	n	n	l	s	b	n●	
2-3 B		sl	lx	o										

Fig. 25

Even in these few rallies shown it is possible to discern similar patterns emerging. Study them and see if you can recognise them. If not then let us try to analyse the rallies and see what we find. We can begin by asking a few simple questions.

How did A win his rallies?

How did B lose his rallies?

What did B do to prevent A winning the rallies? How did B win his rallies?

How did A lose his rallies?

Let's look at A first. What we will do, is write out the final moves of each rally that A won or lost and see if we can learn anything from that.

Score preceding rally
 Player Result of rally Final event Preceding events

Player	Score	Result of rally	Final event	Preceding events
A	0-0	won	B missed	A smash B weak clear A whip B net A drop
A	1-0	won	B missed	A smash B weak clear A whip B net A block
A	2-0	won	B missed	A smash B weak clear A whip B net A block
A	3-0	lost	A failed to return	B smash A clear B lift A net B block
A	1-3	lost	A hit in net	B block A smash B lift A net B net
A	2-3	lost	out	A lob B serve low

Fig. 26

If we trace the stroke-moves back from the final event, a distinct pattern begins to emerge. A won his rallies by hitting a smash which B did not return. But that doesn't tell us very much. Of far more interest is the fact that A created the situation to obtain a weak return from B, by bringing B into the forecourt to play a net rally. Once B played a net return to A's net stroke-move then A whipped the shuttle past B to the rearcourt, thus forcing a weak return.

By the fourth rally B had caught on and changed his tactics. Instead of playing a reply to the forecourt, B lifted to the rearcourt and forced A back to the rearcourt. In opening up the game, B prevented A from using the whip

a move from the forecourt to create a situation in which to make a scoring hit. At this stage of the game, A tended to lose the remaining rallies rather than B win them, as you can see in the analysis sheet.

Look again at the questions and you will find that we have answered them with this simple method of analysing.

What can A and B learn from this analysis? If we base our advice on what we have seen then it would seem, at this stage, that we are in a position to help B. It is clear that B's net play needs improving. Whatever he does is not sufficient to prevent A whipping the shuttle from the net to the rearcourt. It is also clear that B needs to do some work on his ability to travel and hit shuttles that get past him to the rearcourt. Or, failing that, he might send a weak clear because he tries to hit an attack clear, which he is not in a position to do successfully. It may be that he ought to use a defensive clear and hit the shuttle high and deep to the rearcourt and so give himself more time to make the move under such pressure. This stroke-move would also allow him more time to recover and perhaps be in a position to defend against the smash. At the present time, it would also appear that his defence is suspect, for he doesn't even reach the shuttle. The analysis shows patterns of play which clearly indicate possible reasons for the winning or losing of a rally. It should be apparent, that it is not sufficient to make any judgements about your performance on the basis of the final event in a rally, i.e. the winning hit or the mistake. What you want to know is how you arrived at the position to win or lose the rally.

We can now go a stage further and ask a few specific questions about the game. This takes the form of a questionnaire which can be applied to your game just as effectively as it can to your opponent's.

Questionnaire

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Serving - the opening move | <p>What situation does he create with the low serve, i.e. centre or sides?</p> <p>What situation does he create with the high serve, i.e. rearcourt sides or centre; attack or defensive serve?</p> <p>How does he recover after the serve, i.e. attack or defensive position in the midcourt?</p> <p>What do you think would be a good reply to any serve in the situations he creates?</p> |
| 2. Receiving the serve | <p>Where does he position himself to receive a serve?</p> <p>What stroke-moves does he make in reply to the low serve and the high serve; from the forehand and backhand sides?</p> |
| 3. Rearcourt stroke-moves | <p>What attitude does he adopt?</p> <p>What moves does he make from a high position; at the sides and centre?</p> <p>What move does he make from a low position?</p> |

- How does he recover after making any stroke-move?
 What is the function of his move?
 What sort of reply do you think he expects to get from you?
 What reply(ies) would be effective against him?
- 4. Midcourt stroke-moves**
- What attitude does he adopt?
 What moves does he make from a high position, i.e. sides or centre, backhand and forehand side?
 What moves does he make from a low position on the forehand and backhand side?
 How does he recover after the different stroke-moves?
 What is the function of his move?
 What sort of reply does he expect from you?
 What reply (ies) would be effective against him?
- 5. Forecourt stroke-moves**
- What attitude does he adopt?
 What moves does he make above net level, just below net level, and near the ground?
 How does he recover after a particular stroke-move?
 What sort of reply does he expect and prepare for?
 Does he cover all your possible replies?
 What replies might be effective against him in this situation?
- 6. General questions**
- What is his favourite stroke-move, if any, in a particular situation?
 What is his strongest stroke-move in a particular situation, in relation to your game?
 What is his weakest stroke-move in a particular situation, in relation to your game?
 Is there any particular pattern of stroke-moves he uses to create a situation which enhances his chances of making a scoring hit? In what situation does he make most of his scoring hits?
- 7. Deception**
- Does he use deception?
 In what situations does he use deception?
 What particular stroke-move does he use for deception?
 How does he try to deceive you?
 How does he recover after using deception?
 What sort of replies do you think he expects?
- 8. Fitness**
- Does he travel quickly between situations?
 Does he recover quickly after making a stroke-move?
 Does he attack continually?
 What is his state after a long hard rally:
 a. If he wins it? b. If he loses it?

After a long rally can he:

- a. Play another long rally?
- b. Does he try for a scoring blow before he has created the right situation?
- c. Does he make errors in his stroke production?

How does fatigue affect his travelling?

- a. Speed or reaction time
- b. Ability to travel backwards
- c. Ability to travel forwards
- d. Ability to change direction quickly
- e. His recovery

Does his state of fitness affect his attitude at different phases of the game?

- 9. Type of player** What type of situation player is he: the sort that plays within a complete framework, incomplete or badly constructed framework?
How does he react under pressure?
Does he alter his game when he is losing or winning? If so, what does he do differently?

- 10. Anything else you can think of?**

Making use of the information gained about performance in the game

There are a number of different ways this information can be used to improve your performance and enable you to become more successful in competition. They are interrelated but we will discuss each separately.

- 1. Profile of each opponent** Use the questionnaire to complete a profile on each opponent. This way it is possible to maintain a detailed record of all possible opponents and to obtain information when necessary. A study of the profile prior to the game will recall all the various aspects of the opponent's performance. It is simply a case of reminding yourself of the sort of situations you are likely to find yourself in. It gives you time to think prior to going on court. You might plan some tactics along the following lines.

What sort of moves does he make in various situations and what counter-moves can you make? Do his moves allow you to make use of them to create a situation in which to deliver a scoring hit? If so, write down the situation and the counter-moves you could make. Work out how the opponent might counter your move so you are ready to meet his counter.

- The order is: - his move -- your reply
- his possible counters
- your possible replies

With careful study it is not too difficult to develop a tactic for each possible pattern of stroke-moves that your opponent uses.

2. Practice

After analysing the game with respect to the performance of your opponent and yourself, you are now in a better position to design realistic and meaningful practices.

The questions you should now ask are:

What are your needs in the game?

How will you satisfy those needs?

Are they technical, tactical or both?

What weaknesses do you need to work on?

What strengths do you need to develop?

Write out a list of your technical and tactical needs and then design your practices. When you have done that you can get down to some hard beneficial work.

3. Mental rehearsal

The analysis of the game and the answers to the questionnaire will provide you with an adequate picture of the opponent's game. This is reinforced with the work you do in the tactical practices specifically designed to give you experience in the sort of situation you might meet against a particular opponent. Some players use this experience and insight into an opponent's game to rehearse mentally the possible contest as a final preparation before they actually play. Players have different ways of doing this all of which require a quiet period of concentration and reflection. The player uses his imagination to bring the contest to mind. He pictures himself serving, the opponent's reply and the subsequent rallies. Gradually the game takes shape as he 'sees' patterns of play emerging and he becomes familiar once again with that opponent. He need not have played his opponent previously to rehearse the contest in this way. It is possible to study and become familiar with another player's game through careful observation. Of course, it is of more advantage if you have played the opponent previously. Nevertheless, mental rehearsal does contribute to your state of readiness and your 'reading' of the game in actual play. It is worth considering as a method of preparation.

4. On planning and play

It is not intended that you do all this study and practice in order to go on court with preconceived plans which you put into operation regardless of the way the game develops. Neither are you expected, nor is it desirable, to theorise on court in the middle of a match. The whole purpose of this work is to free you from ignorance; to equip you fully to deal with any situation that arises; to enable you to create situations to your advantage; and finally to enable you to free yourself from conscious thought. You should be able to play with free use of the imagination, acting intuitively in the situations that arise in the game. You should be able to play without thought, free from any

restrictions and handicaps within your performance. A knowledge of what your opponent does has been a useful guide to designing meaningful practices. So in practice you will have learned to contend with any situation where there might have been a weakness. Now you can go on court and concentrate on playing in your own way, not having to worry about how your opponent plays. You can leave him to worry about how you play.

This is one of the considerable benefits of the hard work that you do in preparation for match play. The more you study, think and prepare yourself mentally off the court, the less mental work you have to do on the court. The more physical work you do in training getting fit, the less you need that fitness in the game. The more time that you spend on technical and tactical practices, the easier it becomes to perform strokes and create situations in the contest. Your game eventually becomes more simplified in competition relative to how much work you put in developing it in practice and training. You do more work in preparation in order to do less work in competition. If you have done the work you should be able to step on the court fully confident that you are prepared. Once the game begins you should become absorbed in the present moment, without thought for the past or for the future, and become totally immersed in the battle. You should focus all your attention and direct all your energy towards your opponent. And play with one target only. To win!