

# At-Home Introduction to Technical Anticipation

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April 2020



# Introduction

## Definition:

Technical anticipation is the ability to predict the **spin, direction, speed, or height** of the incoming ball *before* the opponent hits it, based on technical cues alone.

## Remember:

There are two types of anticipation: **total** and **partial**. **Total** anticipation is knowing exactly what the opponent *will* do. **Partial** anticipation is knowing only what they *won't* do.

Being able to anticipate what an opponent will or will not do is an essential skill for any high level player, as good anticipation can reduce anxiety, increase the effectiveness of your shots (by allowing you to get set up sooner), and allow you to construct points.

# Anticipating Spin

Spin is usually the first ball control you can anticipate. You can anticipate both the **type** (topspin, sidespin, underspin) and the **amount** (1000 RPM, 3000 RPM, 5000 RPM).

## **Main factors determining the type of spin:**

- Racket angle

## **Main factors determining the amount of spin:**

- Racket path
- Racket speed

We can observe any of these variables in the moments before the opponent makes contact to try to anticipate the spin.

# Anticipating Spin – Racket Angle

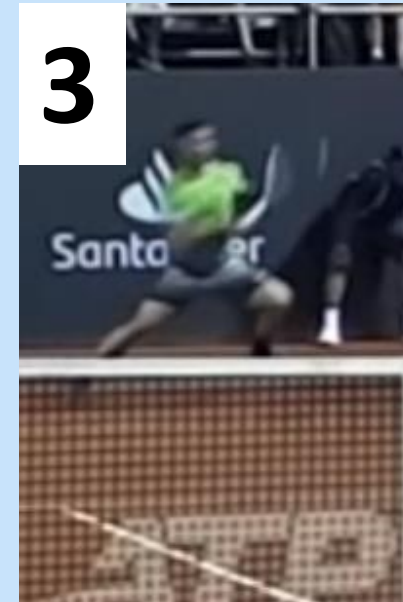
Take a look at these snapshots. What **type** of spin is each player about to hit?



- a) Topspin
- b) Underspin
- c) Sidespin



- a) Topspin
- b) Underspin
- c) Sidespin



- a) Topspin
- b) Underspin
- c) Sidespin



- a) Topspin
- b) Underspin
- c) Sidespin

# Anticipating Spin – Racket Path

Take a look at these shots. How **much** spin (approximately) is each player about to hit?



- a) 1000 RPM
- b) 3000 RPM
- c) 5000 RPM



- a) 1000 RPM
- b) 3000 RPM
- c) 5000 RPM



- a) 1000 RPM
- b) 3000 RPM
- c) 5000 RPM

# Anticipating Spin – Racket Speed

We'll look at racket speed in the speed section.

# Anticipating Direction

Direction is usually the second ball control you can anticipate. Being able to correctly anticipate the direction of the ball makes it much easier to get set up in time.

## **Factors influencing the direction:**

- Body position
- Impact point
- Wrist position

We can observe any of these variables in the moments before the opponent makes contact to try to anticipate the direction.

# Anticipating Direction – Body Position

At a high level, the tempo of the game means that it is rare that a player will have the time to fully orient their body in their intended direction. **However, on slower balls, you can sometimes read the orientation of their shoulders.**

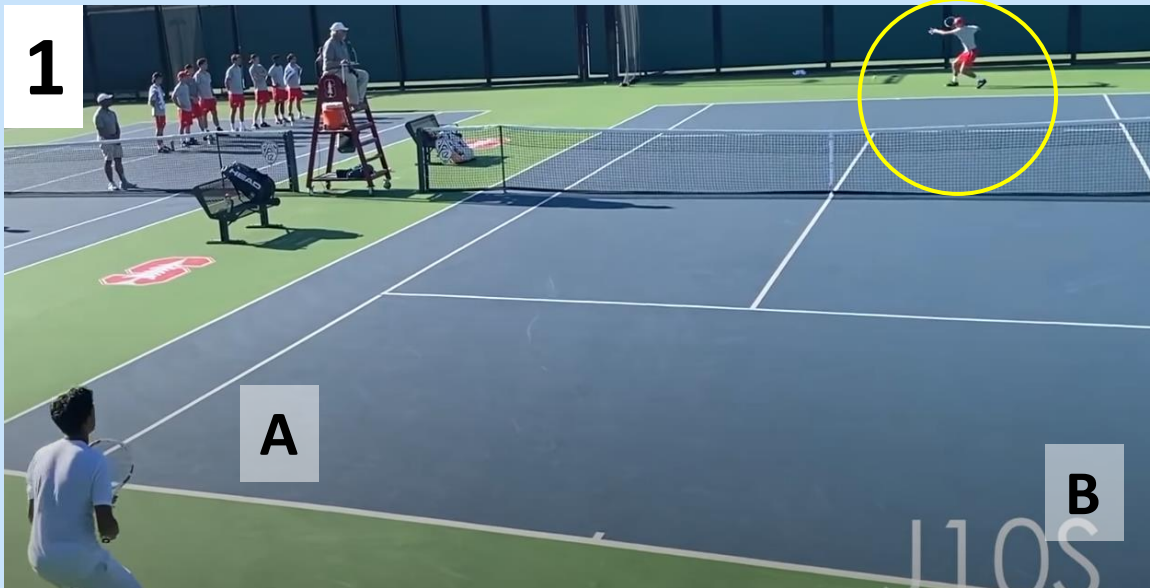
If their shoulders are more closed (more turned), there's more of a chance they will hit “away” from their body (down the line or inside-out). If their shoulders are more open, there's more of a chance they will hit “with” their body (crosscourt or inside-in).

Anticipating body position is not always possible, but it's worth being aware of.



# Anticipating Direction – Body Position

Compare these snapshots. Where is the player about to hit?



# Anticipating Direction – Body Position

Compare this snapshot (3) and the one on the next page (4). Where is the player about to hit? (Tip: flip quickly between the pages)



# Anticipating Direction – Body Position



# Anticipating Direction – Body Position

Compare this snapshot (5) and the one on the next page (6). Where is the player about to hit? (Tip: flip quickly between the pages)





# Anticipating Direction – Body Position



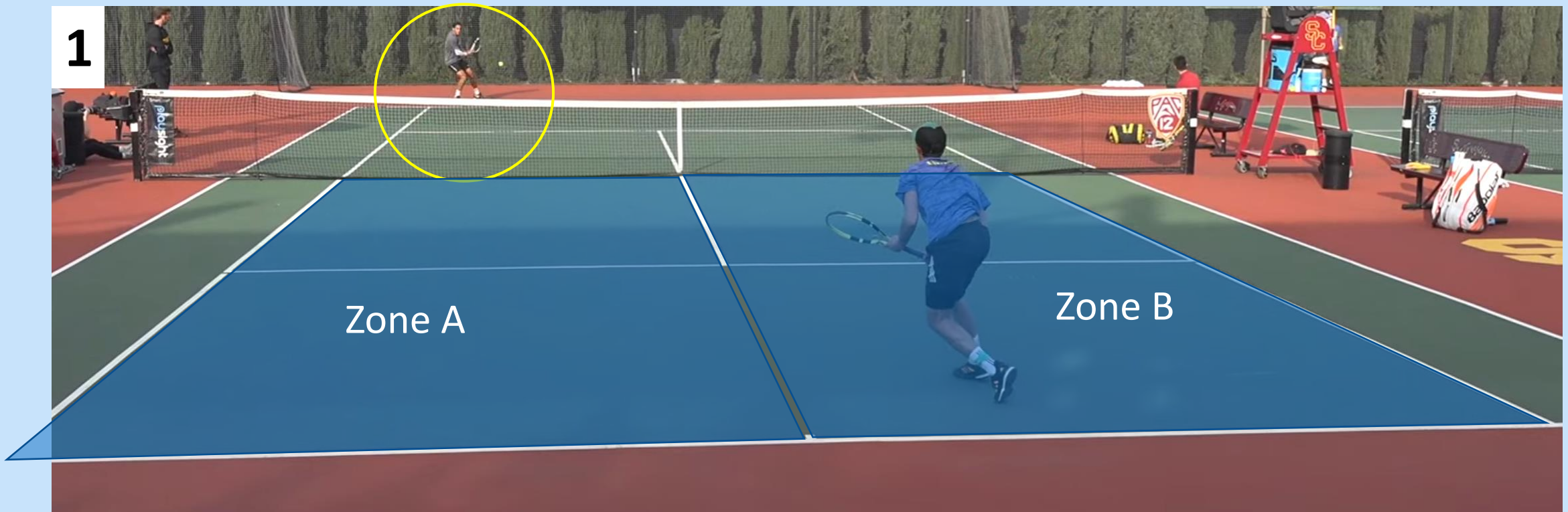
# Anticipating Direction – Impact Point

Impact point is much easier to read and is much more likely to be a “tell” than body position. There are two factors to consider when reading a player’s impact point:

- Front/Back
  - When someone makes contact more in front of them, they are more likely to hit “with their body” (crosscourt or inside-in)
  - When someone makes contact more behind them, they are more likely to hit “away from their body” (down the line or inside-out)
- Left/Right
  - When someone makes contact too close to them, they are more likely to hit “with their body” (crosscourt or inside-in)
  - When someone makes contact too far away from them, they are more likely to hit “away from their body” (down the line or inside-out)

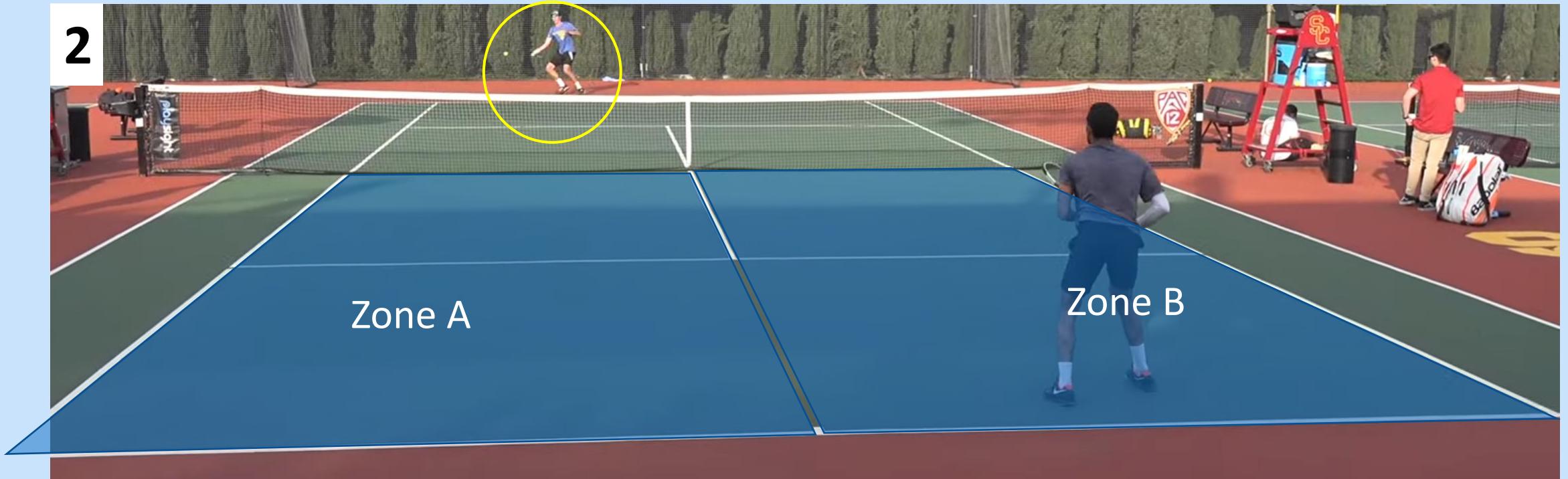
# Anticipating Direction – Impact Point – Left/Right

Take a look at this snapshot. Where is the player about to hit?



# Anticipating Direction – Impact Point – Left/Right

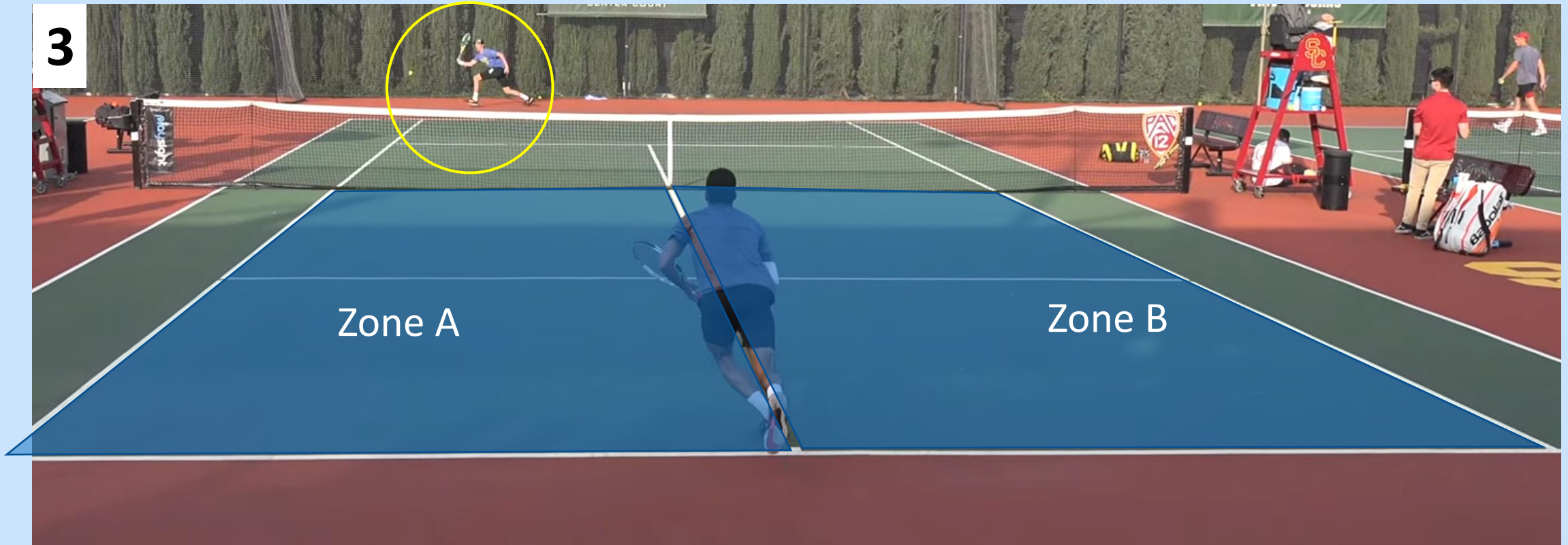
Take a look at this snapshot. Where is the player about to hit?





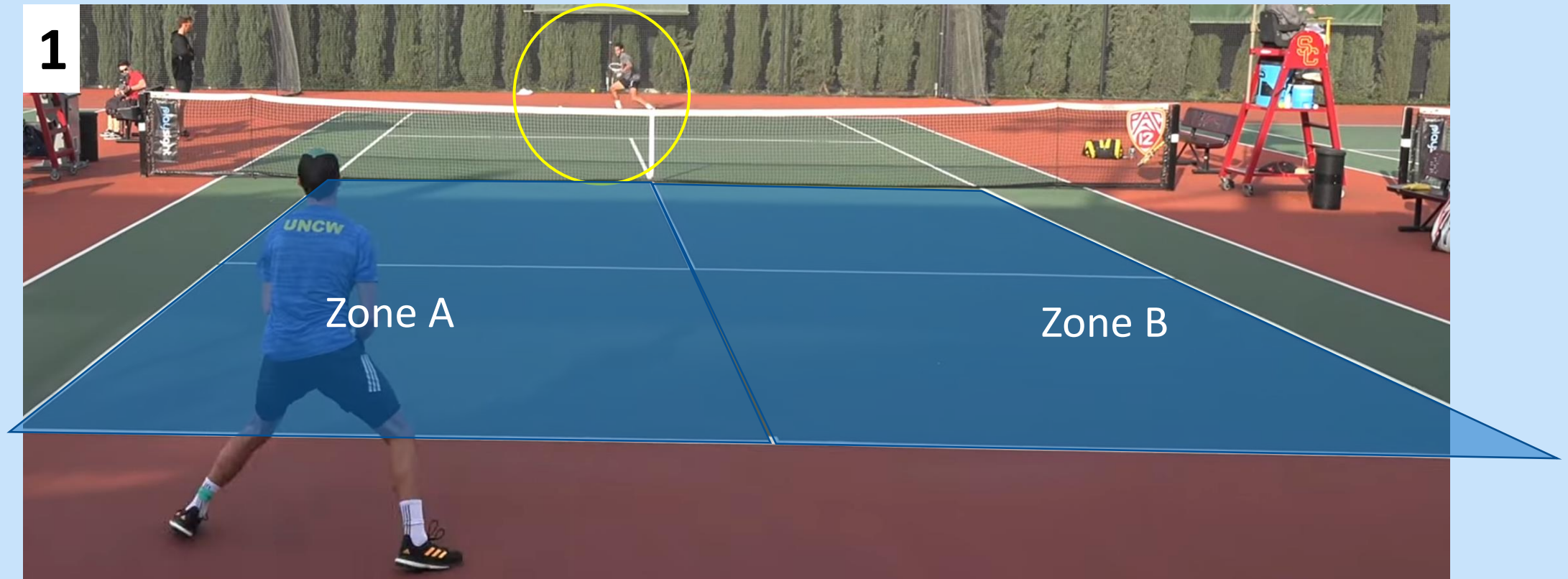
# Anticipating Direction – Impact Point – Left/Right

Take a look at this snapshot. Where is the player about to hit?



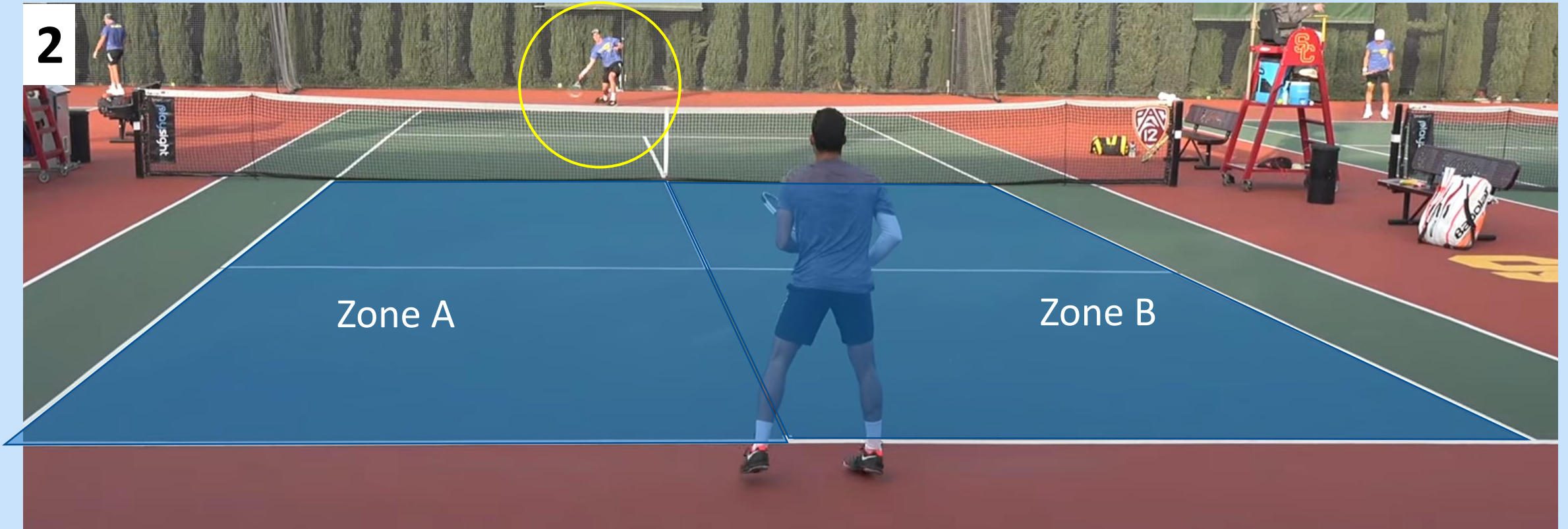
# Anticipating Direction – Impact Point – Front/Back

Take a look at this snapshot. Where is the player about to hit?



# Anticipating Direction – Impact Point – Front/Back

Take a look at this snapshot. Where is the player about to hit?



# Anticipating Direction – Wrist Position

Reading wrist position is usually as simple as looking at the angle of the strings just before contact. It is not as useful as reading the impact point but it can come in handy.



# Anticipating Direction – Wrist Position

Take a look at this snapshot. Where is the player about to hit?



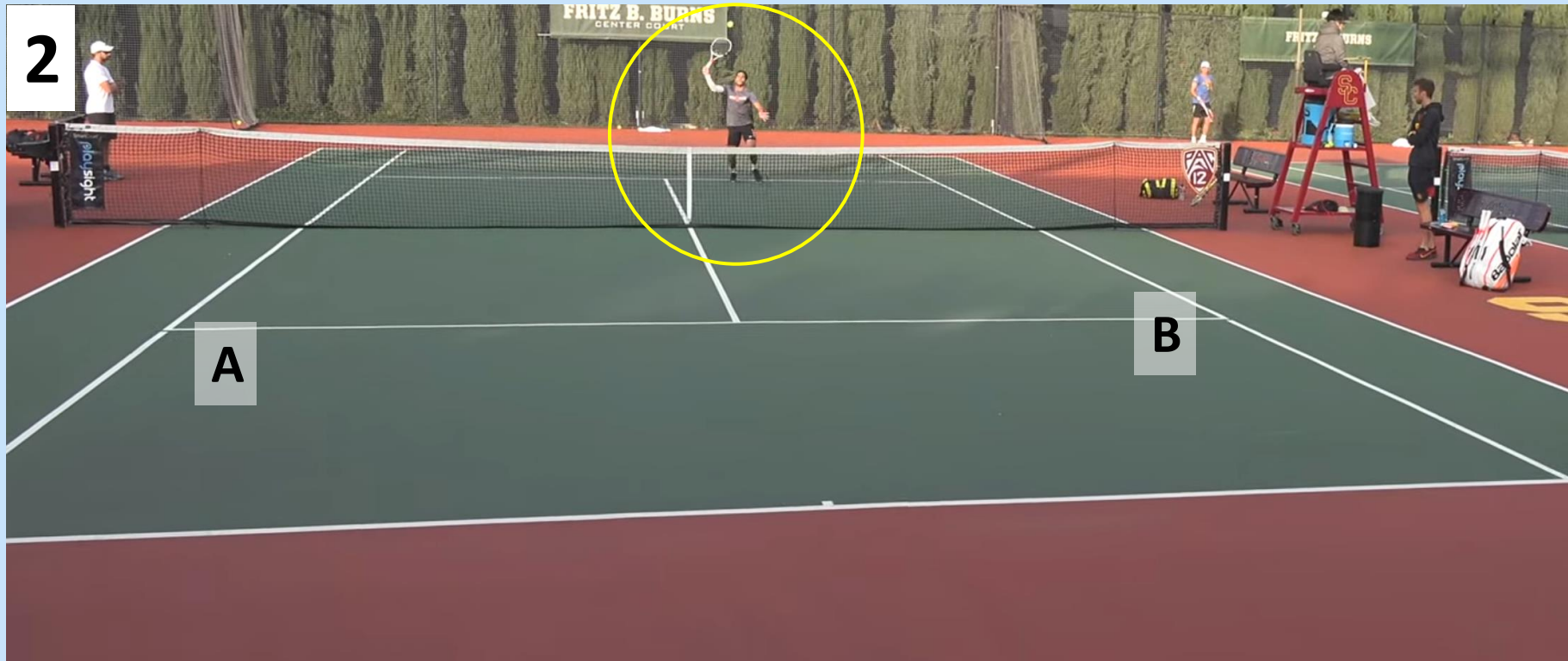
1

A

B

# Anticipating Direction – Wrist Position

Take a look at this snapshot. Where is the player about to hit?



# Anticipating Speed

Speed is usually the third ball control you can anticipate. Being able to correctly anticipate the speed of the ball can allow you to prepare for attacks or, more importantly, anticipate a weak ball.

## **Factors influencing the speed:**

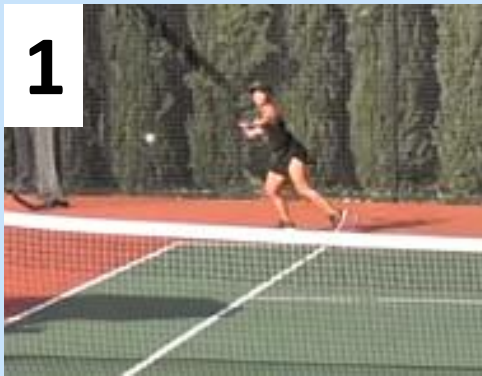
- Opponent's balance
- Knee bend
- Size of the backswing

We can look at any of these variables before the opponent hits to try to anticipate the speed.

# Anticipating Speed – Balance

Balance is usually only used to anticipate when a slower ball is coming.

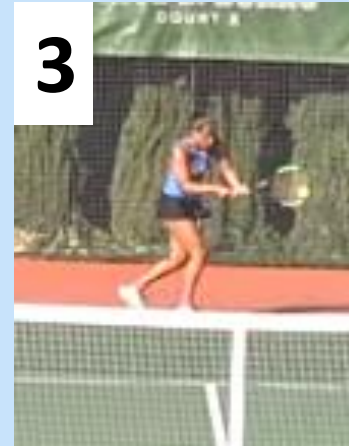
Take a look at these snapshots. Is the player about to hit a **regular shot** or a **slower** ball?



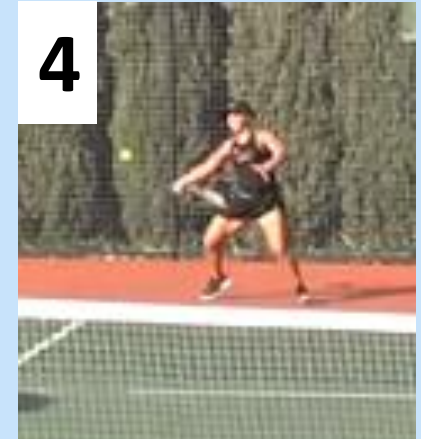
- a) Regular
- b) Slower



- a) Regular
- b) Slower



- a) Regular
- b) Slower



- a) Regular
- b) Slower



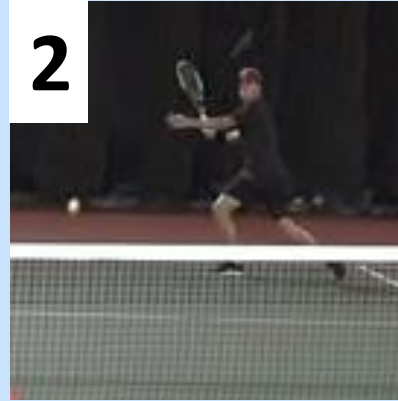
# Anticipating Speed – Knee Bend

Conversely, knee bend can tell you when a player is winding up for a faster ball.

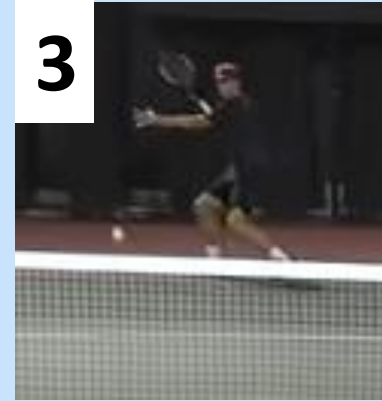
Take a look at these snapshots. Is the player about to hit a regular shot or a **faster** ball?



- a) Regular
- b) Faster



- a) Regular
- b) Faster



- a) Regular
- b) Faster

# Anticipating Speed – Size of Backswing

You can use the size of your opponent's backswing to anticipate both slower and faster balls. You can look at the angle of the racket relative to the ground (more horizontal = smaller backswing), the height of the racket, or how far back the racket goes.

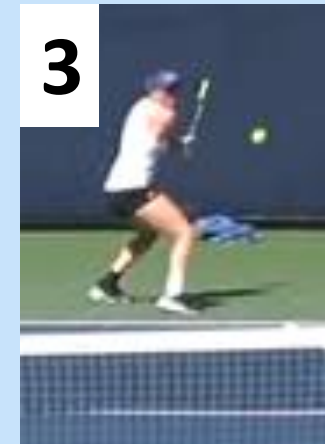
Take a look at these snapshots. Is the player about to hit a **faster** shot or a **slower** shot?



- a) Faster
- b) Slower



- a) Faster
- b) Slower



- a) Faster
- b) Slower



- a) Faster
- b) Slower

# Anticipating Height

Height is usually the last ball control you can anticipate. Being able to correctly anticipate the height of the ball is most useful when approaching the net, as you can predict when you will be lobbed.

## **Factors influencing the height:**

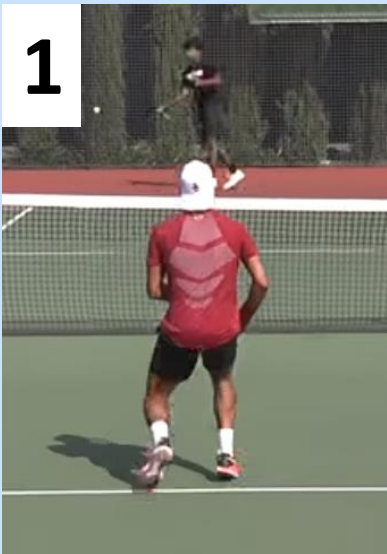
- Racket face
- Racket path

Since the two often go hand-in-hand when lobbing, we will look at them together rather than separately.

# Anticipating Height – Angle and Path

If the angle of the racket is more open, or the path is more low to high (below the ball), there is a higher chance that the player is about to lob. You can also look at a player's posture. A player leaning back is more likely to lob.

Take a look at these snapshots. Is the player about to hit a **lob** or a **regular pass**?



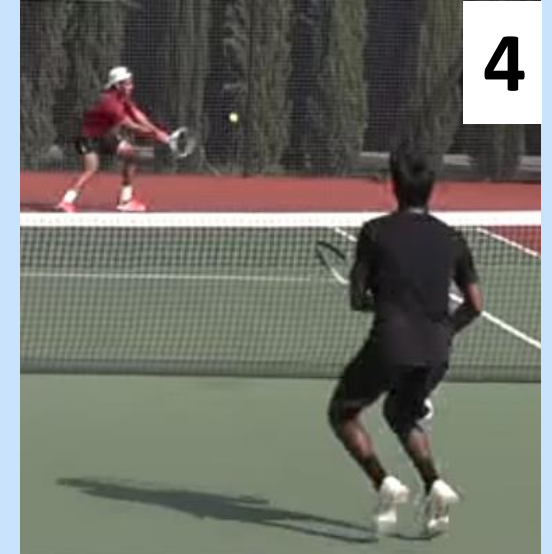
- 1
- a) Lob
  - b) Regular pass



- 2
- a) Lob
  - b) Regular pass



- 3
- a) Lob
  - b) Regular pass



- 4
- a) Lob
  - b) Regular pass

# Thanks

- <https://www.youtube.com/user/Maximagq/> and <https://www.youtube.com/user/JayK1225/> for the screenshots