THE INFLUENCE OF SCORING FROM THE NET ON GAME RESULT IN PADEL

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INTRODUCTION: Performance analysis has been widely applied to study a variety of aspects of racket sports (Lees, 2003), since it allows identifying critical factors of the game for players’ development. Hughes and Barlett (2002) identified common performance indicators relating to net and wall games. However, information about practice requirements in padel (also known as paddle tennis) is limited. Carrasco et al (2011) found that volley strokes were the most used in padel, suggesting the importance of playing near the net. Therefore, the aim of this study was to determine whether scoring from the net increased winning chances in elite male padel players.

METHODS: In total, 2107 rallies were registered from 15 male matches (Masters Finals World Padel Tour, 2013). This competition gathered the top-16 best padel players, being the most important tournament of the world. Points were classified whether they were played in the net or not. Variables related shot effectiveness (points and errors), serve (serve and serve-return), and game result (winners and losers) were included in the analysis. A series of binomial logistic regressions were calculated to estimate main effects of shot effectiveness, serve, and game result in net points.

RESULTS: Important differences between winners and losers were found when playing near the net. Winners scored more points ($X^2(1) = 12.79; P < 0.01; OR = 1.50$), whilst losers committed more unforced errors ($X^2(1) = 3.80; P = 0.05; OR = 1.40$). These differences increased regarding serve and serve-return situations. Scoring odds from the net were three times higher for winners when they served ($X^2(1) = 47.03; P < 0.01; OR = 3.11$), whilst losers’ likelihood of committing unforced errors increased when they served ($X^2(1) = 18.85; P < 0.01; OR = 2.93$).

DISCUSSION: Results highlighted the importance of scoring from the net in padel, since it increased winning chance. It might suggest that the more time spent in the offensive zone (i.e., net zone), the more chance to scoring. Conversely, keeping a defensive location (i.e., baseline zone) for a long time will increase the likely of receiving a point. Thus, developing strategies to dominate the net zone seems to be a crucial factor in padel (Ramón-Llin et al., 2009). Moreover, best players appear to be highly consistent in the net when serving. This might be explained by a better location when approaching to the net after serving (Ramón-Llin et al., 2013). Future research might be focused on exploring game strategies to improve success when playing near the net in padel.