

Punching Yourself Out

**Vitas Gerulaitis d Roscoe
Tanner 3-6 2-6 7-6 6-3 6-3,
semifinal, U.S. Open, 1979**

Consider this challenge: you are facing an opponent who has one of the best serves in the game. His whole style is based on that serve and he's killing you with it. How can you beat this guy? One way is to go right at your opponent's strength and try to break it down. It may take a while, but once you crack that barrier, you've got it made.

Gerulaitis had that problem against Tanner in their Open semifinal. Vitas wanted to attack Roscoe's second serve and get to net where his quickness would give Tanner trouble. However, Tanner's serve was an endless series of knockout punches in the opening two sets and Vitas had

little chance to go after a second serve.

Your plan at this point may be to congratulate your opponent at the changeover on how well he is serving. This comment may start him thinking about his serve. The result: loss of concentration and a few missed first serves. He tries to hit even better to compensate, but loses his rhythm and a few double faults follow. That's just what happened to Tanner. Vitas kept pressing Tanner's serve, wore him down and once into the match his superior ground strokes got him the up-from-the-canvas win.

The key, then, is to go after the opponent's strong point and keep at it. You may fall behind, but eventually, once you've broken through, your foe is finished. —FRED STOLLE