

# Tennis Profiler Blog

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## How to optimize your game on crucial points?

On the one hand, every point in a match is important because it leads you closer to the gain of the game, the set or the match. But on the other hand, there might be some important points during the game that might change the momentum of the game.

If there are any momentum points in a game, it would be nice to play your best game plan at that time right? This study will help you to recognise the key scores and to develop your own strategy at that moment.



# How to optimize your game on crucial points?

## Let's set the research!

- To make that research, 126 ATP players were analyzed. All of them are or have been at least one week in the top 100 during the period of 2015 & 2016. Between a minimum of 200 to more than 2000 games were registered per player for that analysis. **In total, this is more than 50'000 games registered for this research.** After each game, the course of the game was written. Every points played were registered like the following example: win/lose/lose/win/win/win. Based on that, every possible tennis score gave a general probability to win or lose the game.

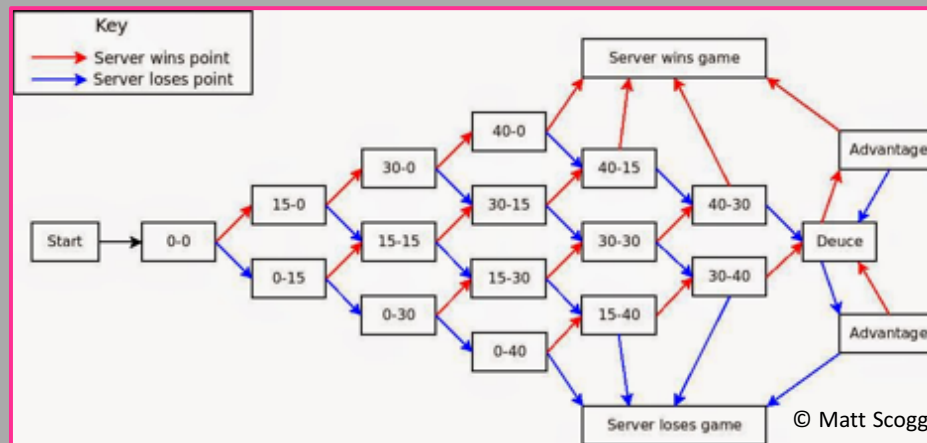


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# How to optimize your game on crucial points?

## Let's set the research! (2)



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**So what do you think?**

Every point won has the same value & importance or there are some key scores that can change the course of the game?

YES

NO

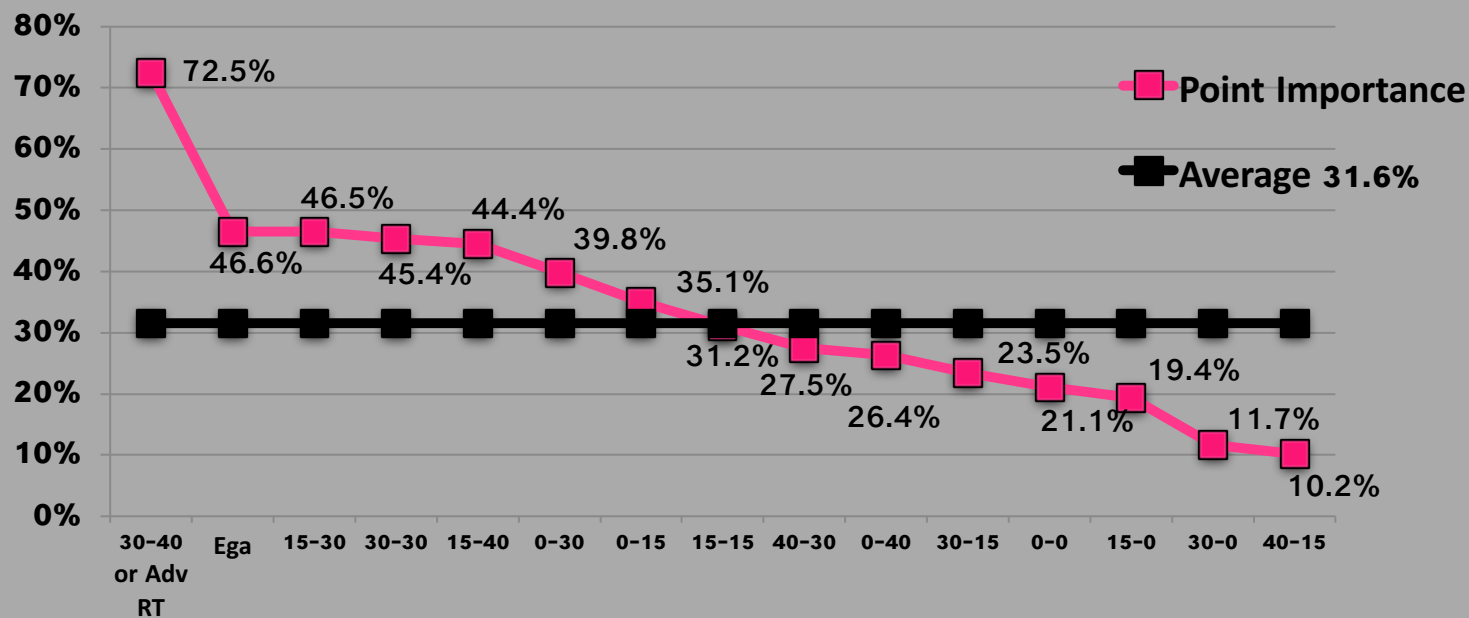
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# How to optimize your game on crucial points?

## The Chart

Difference of probability between  
winning & losing the next point



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## The Results

- According to the score, the next point to come doesn't have the same value & importance. The probability to win the game between winning or losing the next point can fluctuate from 10.2% to 72.5%. **So the answer is definitely NO!**
- We can clearly see that this is when the server is behind (or tied) that the next point to come is the most important.

72.5%



10.2%

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## How to optimize your game on crucial points?

### Let's Optimize your game on the three most important scores

- As we could see, 30-40 or advantage return, deuce & 15-30 are the three most important scores in the tennis game. Winning the point at that moment of the game can be crucial and can easily change the momentum. That's why you really want to play your best tennis at one of these scores!
- The first key to optimize your game at one of these key scores is to become aware of what is going on. **You have to deeply understand that these scores are really important and can easily turn a defeat into a victory if you deal well with them.**
- The second key is to opt for an effective game plan during these crucial moments. But before defining your own strategy, let's have a look at what does the best in the business at each of these scores.

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# How to optimize your game on crucial points?

## Gilles Müller serving at 30-40 or advantage return

- The big server Gilles Müller is one of the best in the business to come back from 30-40 or advantage return and win his service game. In STP Database, Müller has 66% of chance of winning his service game when he is down 30-40 or advantage return (5 stars).
- After the analysis of more than 30 points in these specific situations, we could see that Müller first serve dosage was different than usual. The T serve on ad court was played with more margin (first serve percentage much higher + first serve effectiveness lower than usual) and this serve was almost never used for the serve & volley. However, the wide serve on ad court had the opposite tendency (first serve percentage lower + first serve effectiveness higher than usual) and this serve was more used for the serve & volley. Playing a lefty, the rivals probably expected more the slice wide than the T at such a crucial moment in the match. Müller's used more the T serve to surprise and the wide serve for the killer and this strategy worked for him.




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# How to optimize your game on crucial points?

## Roger Federer serving at deuce

- The GOAT Roger Federer is one of the best in the world to win his service game when at deuce. In STP Database, Federer has 87% of chance of winning his service game when both players tie at deuce (5 stars).
- 
- A photograph of Roger Federer, a professional tennis player, wearing a dark blue Nike polo shirt and a white wristband. He is smiling and has his right fist clenched in a celebratory gesture, looking towards the camera. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a tennis court and spectators.
- After the analysis of more than 110 points in this specific situation, the first thing that explained such good results at that moment is the first serve percentage: usually Federer gets 65% of first serve in on deuce court but at deuce he got 70% (+5%). Besides, the first serve effectiveness was also 5% higher at deuce (51%) than usual (46%). The second factor explaining such good results at deuce for Federer is the offensive mind-set. On this study, he made 19 serve & volley and won 95% of the points. He also made 9 1-2 punch approaches on the first shot after the serve and won 100% of the points. However, when Federer had to play the baseline rallies without coming in, he won only 43% of the points (1 star, far below average). This is the forehand that let him down from the back of the court. So in Federer's case, a high concentration + an offensive mind-set explained why he got so effective at deuce.

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# How to optimize your game on crucial points?

## Novak Djokovic serving at 15-30

- Novak Djokovic is one of the best on the ATP tour when he is 15-30 down on his service game. In STP Database, Nole has 67% of chance of winning his service game in that kind of situation (4 stars).
- After the analysis of 67 points in this specific situation, the first thing that changed from his general stats is the first serve effectiveness (chances of making an ace or a service winner). His general average is 31% and in that study he got 36% (+5%). This is especially with the wide serve that he got more effective. Then, the stats showed clearly what was Djokovic's game plan on these important points. He wanted to extend the baseline rallies until the rivals miss. 50% more rallies over 8 shots were played than his usual stats. And, Djokovic won 75% of these long rallies (instead of 53% as his normal stats). So more risks with the first serve + the extension of the rallies are the main reasons explaining why Djokovic was excellent at 15-30.



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# How to optimize your game on crucial points?

## Lucas Pouille receiving at 30-40 or advantage return

- Lukas Pouille is one of the best when he has a break point opportunity at 30-40 or advantage return. In STP Database, he wins 63% of the points at one of these scores and this is far above average (5 stars).
- After the analysis of more than 50 points in these specific situations, we could see that Pouille is absolutely not afraid to go for it but he also manages to play let's say in a “clever” aggressive way. First of all, if he felt he had a chance with the backhand return or backhand down the line he went for it and got perfect results. Then, from the back of the court, he played with high tempo especially with the forehand cross and forced the rivals to miss many forehands and volleys when they came in. Eventually, if he had an opportunity, he charged the net to “win” the break. So for Pouille, what explained such good results at one of these key scores was his risky mind-set + clever high intensity.



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## How to optimize your game on crucial points?

### Rafael Nadal receiving at deuce

- When it comes to deuce, Nadal is one of the best to get the break of serve. In STP Database, he has 41% of chance to win the game when he was at deuce on the rivals' serve (4 stars).
- After the analysis of more than 150 points in this specific situation, there was almost no difference between this study and the general stats of Nadal. It means that the Spaniard didn't change a single thing in his game plan at that score. Knowing how strong Nadal mentally is, this is actually not surprising at all. He wants to win every single point of the match and gives always his 100%. Deuce or not, he plays each point with the maximum intensity as if it was his last.



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# How to optimize your game on crucial points?

## Fabio Fognini receiving at 15-30

- When Fabio Fognini reached 15-30 on his rivals' serve, he has 60% of chance to get the break according to STP Database. That makes on of the best in that specific situation (4 stars).
- Believe it or not but after the analysis of 40 points in this specific situation, the only thing that changed from this study to Fognini's general stats is the number of double faults of the rivals. In this research, 25% of the opponents' second serve were missed. The Italian must have stepped in to put extra pressure to the opponents and it worked for him. What a Fognini's way to get an extra edge!



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## How to optimize your game on crucial points?

### Let's Optimize your game on the three most important scores

- As we could see, there are several ways to optimize your game at these crucial moments. I picked up 6 players with good results for this research and the 6 showed different tendencies. Muller changed the service dosage, Federer raised his concentration & is more offensive, Djokovic took more risks with the wide serve & put as many balls in as possible to extend the rally, Pouille showed courage, cleverness & high intensity and eventually Fognini used a special trick.
- To optimize your game according to one of these key scores, as already said **you have to become conscious of the importance of the score: the match momentum can change now!** Then, you have to find your own strategy to be as effective as possible.

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## How to optimize your game on crucial points?

### Let's Optimize your game on the three most important scores

- If you want, we can build your strategy together!
  1. First of all, if you face one of these points on your service game, you need to know where you are going to serve (wide, body or T) and at which speed (full risk, normal or percentage first serve). **I would advise you to pick up the service area where you feel the most comfortable.** However, if you had the tendency during the match to serve mainly to one place, a change of direction could be a good option too. The speed of your serve depends on your own belief. **The most important is that you must be convinced of taking the right decision. Take a deep breath to relax, concentrate to be in the moment and assume your action in order to have no regret.**
  2. On the return of serve, you can be courageous & put pressure, neutral by simply blocking or defensive with the mission to put every serve back in play. **Take a decision, stick to it and don't be depressed if you lose the points** (because the server has always more chances to win the point than you on average).

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## How to optimize your game on crucial points?

### Let's Optimize your game on the three most important scores

- If you want, we can build your strategy together!
  3. From the back of the court, you can be offensive by coming in as soon as possible, aggressive by attacking with your forehand or backhand, neutral by looking for lengths & the right opportunity to take your chance or defensive & wait your rivals to miss first. **In order to take the right decision, you have to be conscious of your strengths & weaknesses.** For example, you don't want to attack with your backhand if you think this shot is weak. But maybe you want to use your forehand approach because this is your best shot. **You need to be clever (to use your strengths and not your weaknesses) and convinced of taking the right decision.**
  4. Eventually, you can use some strategies that have nothing to do with your shot like changing the serve or return position or taking extra time before serving/receiving (without extending the 25 seconds rule!).

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# How to optimize your game on crucial points?

## Yannick Dumas' Points of view

- *Yannick Dumas is a French international travelling coach specialized in ITF Junior players development. With Bertrand De Ducla, he created ITC, an international tennis academy with strong values that always goes for excellence. At the moment, he is coaching (among others) Valentin Royer (N°1 Junior of his age in France, top 200 ITF Junior) and Tiffany Lagarde (N°6 Junior of her age in Canada, top 200 ITF Junior).*
- Yannick Dumas: “I find Fabrice Sbarro’s analysis very interesting & questioning for our coaching duties. When coaching players in development, we have to deal with every aspect of the tennis: technique, tactics, fitness and off course the mental part. And a part of the mental is exactly how to deal with these key points!”



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## How to optimize your game on crucial points?

### Yannick Dumas' Points of view

- Yannick Dumas: “ To give you a example that goes in the direction of Fabrice’s article, I worked the following things with Valentin Royer this year during Roland Garros Junior. 1. Development & reinforcement of the serve/return and the first shot that follow these shots. 2. Development of mental belief, confidence & ambition. These two aspects are totally linked, they allow to optimize the performance at key points of the match (like 30-40, ad out, deuce or 15-30 as Fabrice mentioned) and change momentum. **I firmly believe that these key moments have to be taken for the players as challenges instead of stressing moments. And the more a player is trained to perform at these key moments, the better he will become for sure!**
- *If you want to know more about Yannick Dumas and ITC, check their website at [www.itc-excellence.com](http://www.itc-excellence.com)*

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## CONCLUSIONS

First of all, this article showed us that every point doesn't have the same value in a game. Scores like 30-40, ad out, deuce or 15-30 are much more important than others. Then, thanks to the analysis of some of the best ATP players at these scores we could understand that (except Nadal), they changed something (consciously or not) in their game to be more effective at these key moments.

I think that the two most important things to optimize your game at these key scores is first of all **to be aware of the importance of the moment** and then **to have a game plan according to your strengths in which you truly believe**. Yannick Dumas and ITC players totally go in that direction and I wish them all the best for the end of their season 2017!

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