

Tennis Profiler Blog

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Strengths & Weaknesses of Canadian Rising Star Denis Shapovalov

After winning Delpotro & Nadal and reaching the semi-final in the last Canadian Open, Denis Shapovalov broke through the ATP top 100 and became the new rising star.

Although the Canadian is brand new at that level, Tennisprofiler wanted to know as soon as possible his strengths & weaknesses in terms of shots effectiveness & game plans. In order to proceed, Tennisprofiler quickly gathered 798 points from Shapovalov this year to make that study.



Strengths & Weaknesses of Denis Shapovalov

THE FOREHAND ATTACKS – STRENGTHS N°1

- When compared with the direct rivals, **Shapovalov took the biggest edge with the quality of his forehand**. In that study, he made on average 70% more points but also 20% more unforced errors than the rivals with that shot. For example, if the opponents makes 10 points & 10 errors with the forehand in a match, Shapovalov will make 17 points for 12 mistakes.
- **This kind of results makes me think of Roger Federer**. Like the Swiss, Shapovalov is a dominant player from the back of the court and he is the one making the points & errors with the forehand.



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Strengths & Weaknesses of Denis Shapovalov

THE FOREHAND ATTACKS – STRENGTHS N°1

- **The shorter the rallies were, the more effective Shapovalov was with the forehand.** This is on his first forehand attack after the serve or the return that he got results far above the average of the ATP players. His best combo was by far the forehand down the line attack on his first shot after the serve. Then, in the medium rallies (between 5 to 8 shots), he still made more points than the rivals (especially on his service games) but the errors were creeping up. In the rallies over 8 shots, Shapovalov made more errors than points and he tied up with the direct rivals.
- **Shapovalov were also slightly more effective with the forehand down the line & inside out (above average)** than the forehand inside in & cross (in the average). Technically, this usually happens to players who are excellent at stretching the arm in front when hitting the forehand. Shapovalov's follow through is also a factor that can explain a better effectiveness with the down the line & inside out forehand trajectory.
- We can sum up Shapovalov's game plan like this. The Canadian is an aggressive forehand Puncher who likes to follow this shot to the net, especially on his first or second shot after the serve. This game plan gives Shapovalov excellent results in the short rallies (between 3 & 4 shots) and with the down the line & inside out forehand (which are the one he used the most to come in).

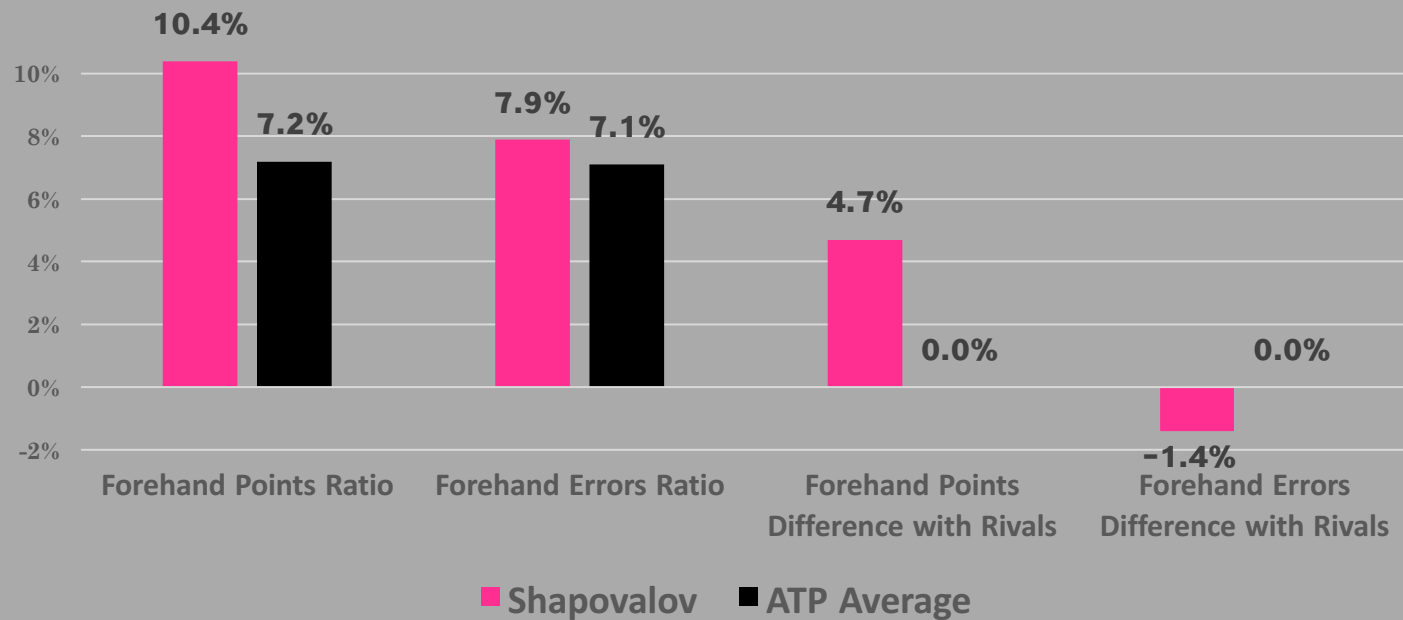
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THE FOREHAND ATTACKS - STRENGTHS N°1

Shapovalov's Forehand Effectiveness



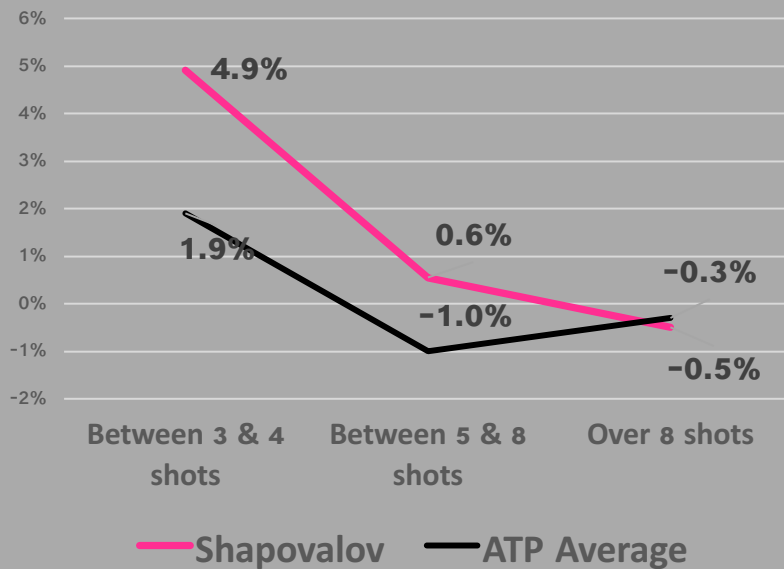
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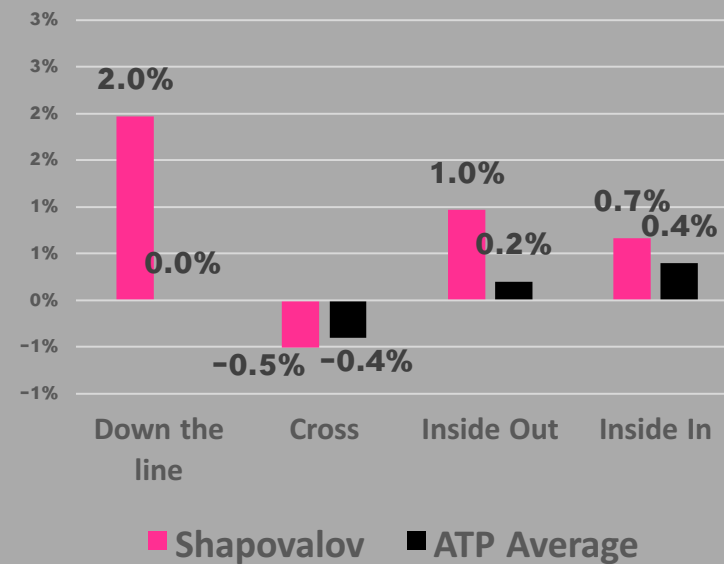
THE FOREHAND ATTACKS - STRENGTHS N°1

Shapovalov's Forehand Balance according to the rally lengths



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Shapovalov's Forehand Balance in every direction



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Strengths & Weaknesses of Denis Shapovalov

THE SERVE - STRENGTHS N°2

- After the forehand, **Shapovalov's second strengths is the serve**. However, in that study he took just a small edge against the direct rivals with the serve effectiveness.
- The first serve percentage was in the average of the ATP players (59%) but **the first serve effectiveness** (chances to make an ace or a service winner; 38%) **and the first serve won points (76%) were above average**.
- **But another strengths with Shapovalov's serve is the second serve**. Varying well every direction (wide, body & T) on both sides and taking risks with a high ratio of second serve winner & double fault, he managed to win 58% of his second serve points (far above average). It has to be said that this risky second serve game plan also forced the rivals to miss 40% more return than average.



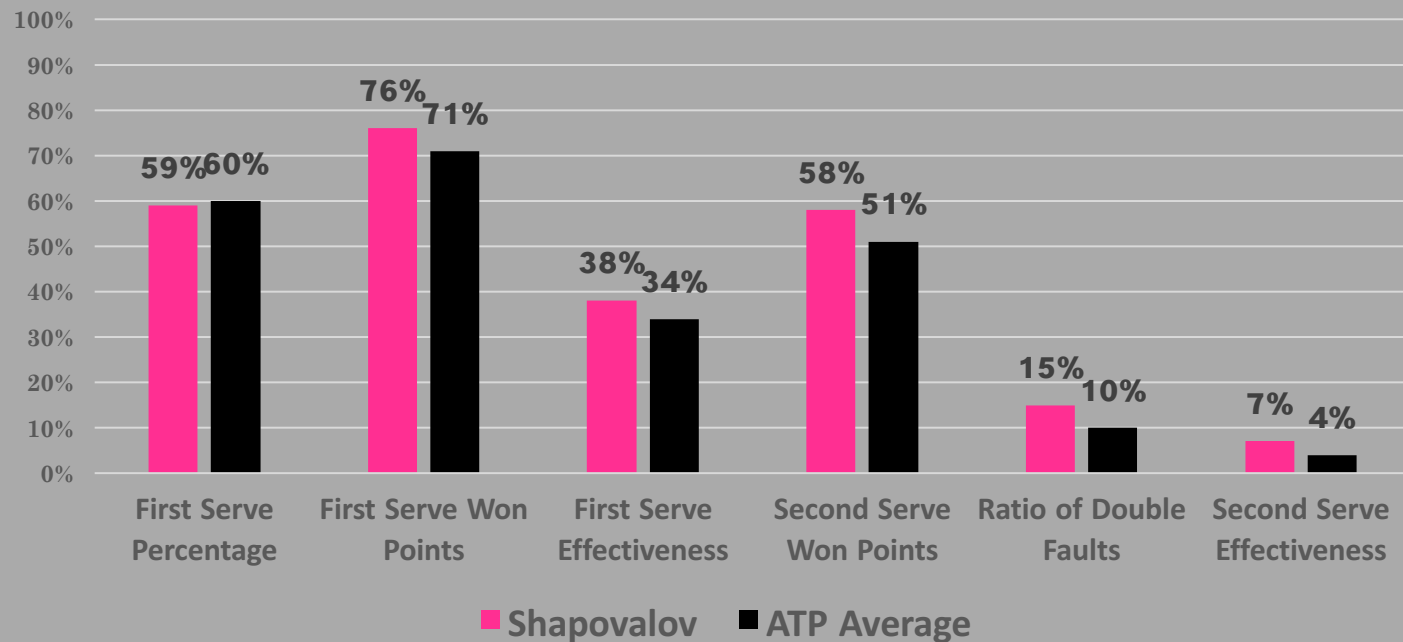
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Strengths & Weaknesses of Denis Shapovalov

THE SERVE - STRENGTHS N°2 (2)

Shapovalov's Serve Results



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Strengths & Weaknesses of Denis Shapovalov

THE QUALITY OF THE VOLLEY – ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT N°1

- It's Shapovalov's game style to charge the net with the forehand on a regular basis. This kind of game plan improved strongly his forehand results because a shot followed to the net becomes automatically more effective. Otherwise, in this study, 20% of the totality of his points were won at the net (with or without a volley to play) which is above average.
- **Although Shapovalov's Offensive game style is a strengths, the points/errors ratio with the volley was below average in this study.** In total, he made 17 points with the volley for 12 errors. And because of this high ratio of errors he couldn't take an edge against the direct rivals with the volley. **So the quality of his volley, especially on the backhand side, can be improved.**



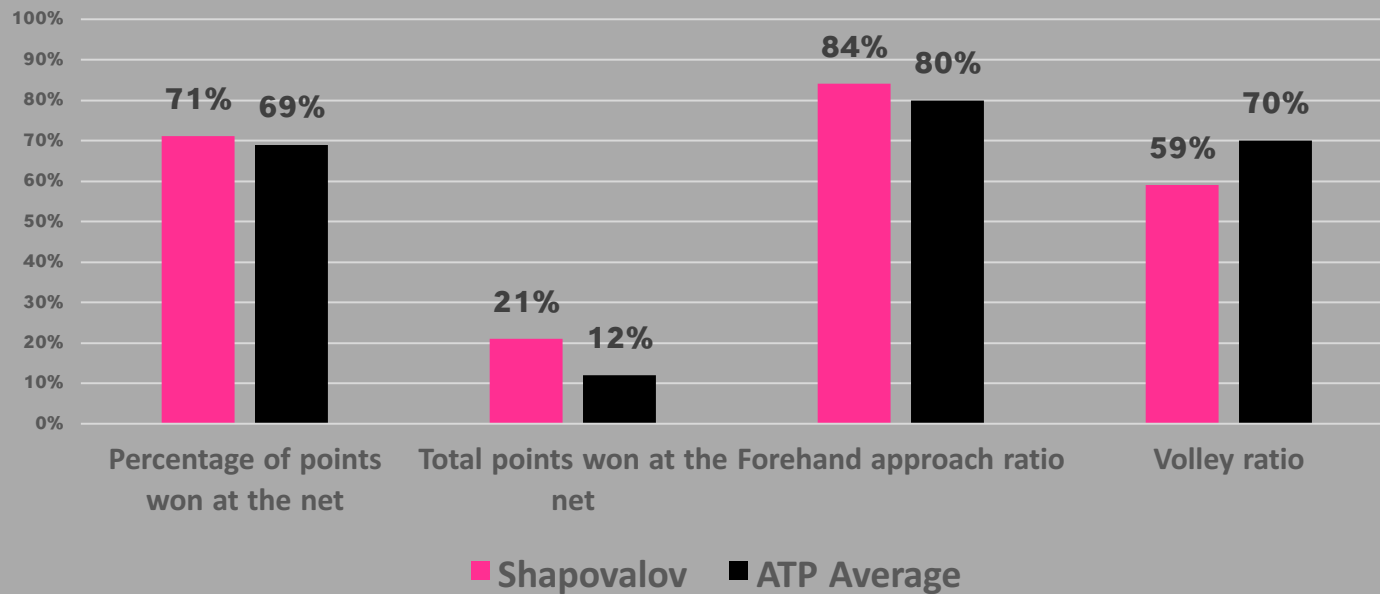
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Strengths & Weaknesses of Denis Shapovalov

THE QUALITY OF THE VOLLEY - ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT N°1

Shapovalov's Volley Results



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Strengths & Weaknesses of Denis Shapovalov

THE BACKHAND COMPARISON - ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT N°2

- **When compared with the direct opponents, Shapovalov was dominated with the backhand because of a higher ratio of errors.** In that study, he made on average 30% more points but also 50% more errors than the rivals with that shot. But surprisingly, when compared this time with the average of the ATP players, Shapovalov made less errors than this average with the backhand... So, how possible it is that a player who is dominated by the direct rivals because of a higher ratio of backhand errors makes actually less errors than average with this shot? This kind of stats tendency can only happen because of his dominant game style. **Being the one who made the points & errors during the baseline rallies, Shapovalov gave less opportunities to his opponents to miss their own backhand and as a result he got dominated on that wing.** To improve his backhand stats against the rivals, he has three options: missing even less backhands, making more points with that shot to counterbalance the ratio of errors or using more topspin with his lefty forehand cross to wear the rivals' backhand down (and increase their ratio of errors).

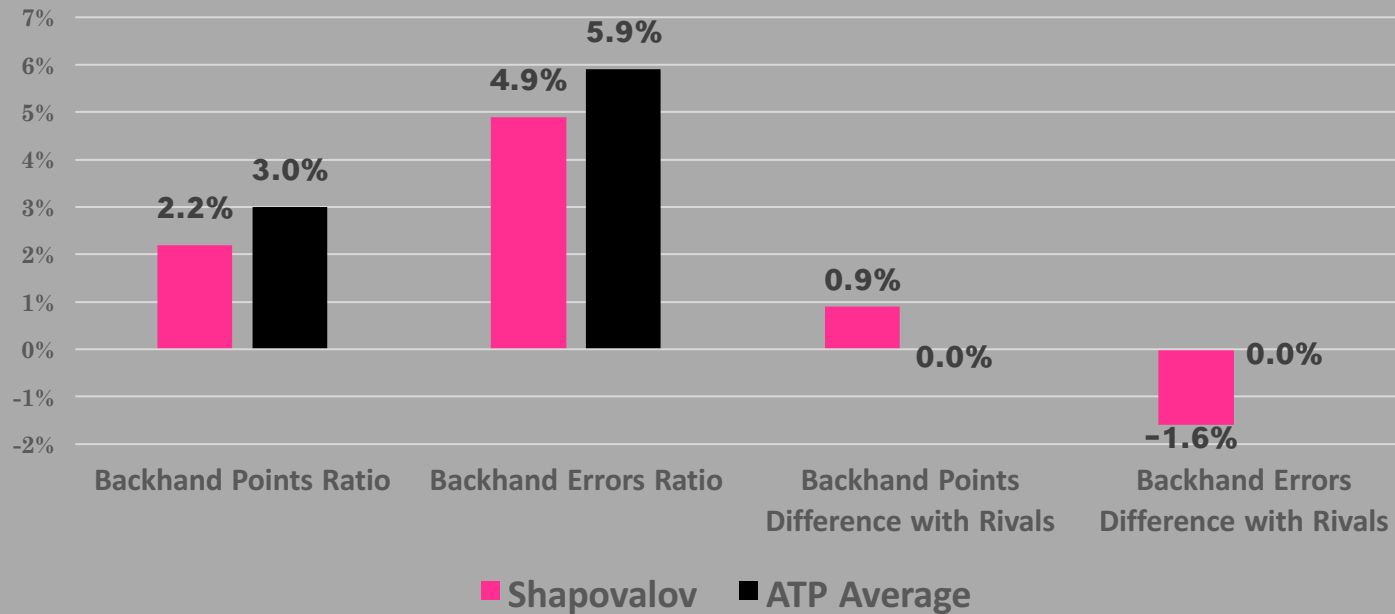
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Strengths & Weaknesses of Denis Shapovalov

THE BACKHAND COMPARISON - ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT N°2

Shapovalov's Backhand Results



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Strengths & Weaknesses of Denis Shapovalov

THE RETURN - ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT N°3

- **Globally, Shapovalov's return quality can be improved.** In that study, he got a first serve return points below the average of the ATP players (26%). Wanting to be aggressive, he went for a return position close to the baseline which allowed the rivals to get more service winners than usual. Then, Shapovalov's return balance (difference between points & errors) was far below average because he made far too many errors.
- **Nonetheless, this aggressive mind-set with the return helped Shapovalov to get a second serve return points just above average (51%).** Aggressive returners tend to get that kind of results (first serve return below average & second serve return above average).



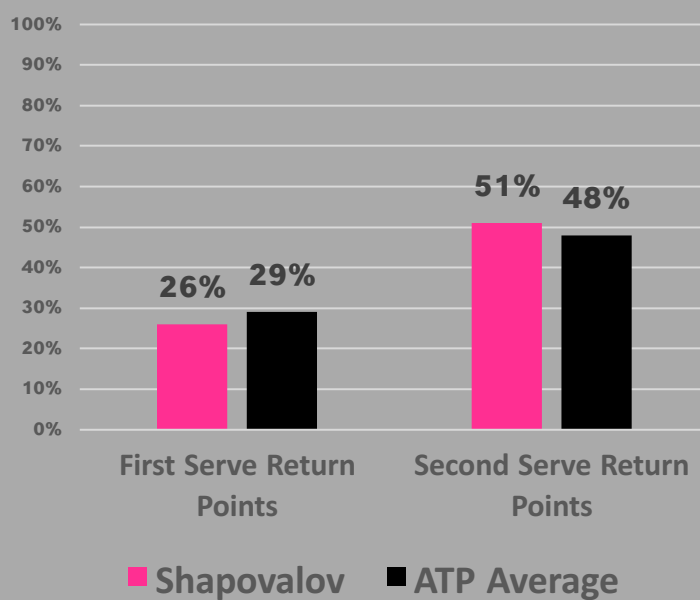
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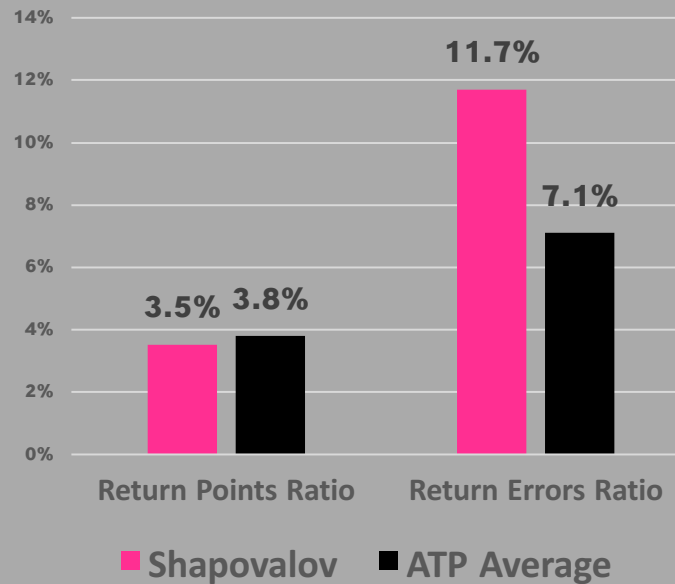
Strengths & Weaknesses of Denis Shapovalov

THE RETURN - ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT N°3

Shapovalov's Return Results



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CONCLUSIONS

With the forehand and the serve, Shapovalov have already the main weapons to reach the top. I think that in the years to come he will naturally improve the volley, backhand & return. Aging, he will become wiser with these shots and optimise them. Without the shadow of a doubt, given how similar their games styles are, the best example he can follow right now in terms of game optimization is Roger Federer.

I truly believe that Shapovalov is the next big thing in the tennis world. Playing offensively, he might replace Roger Federer at the top of the game in a couple of years. Hurray Planet Tennis is Safe!



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