

MY GAME: MIGUEL ANGEL RODRIGUEZ

Miguel Angel Rodriguez, 28, made his PSA Tour debut in 2002, but did not join the Tour full time until 2005, when he finished the year 74th in the world. In 2013 he became the first Colombian to break into the top 20. Squash Player talks to the current world no.14 about his game.

What is your favourite shot?

The backhand straight drop from the back of the court. It's not that common to attack from here, but I look for a loose ball off the back, one that sits up a bit.

You can play for the nick if the ball comes out from the side, so you have an angle, but often you are trying to get it to cling. This can force an opening. I use both cut and touch, depending on the situation.

What is your favourite practice drill?

There are a lot of drills [I like], but I would say maybe the boast-and-drive and the boast-and-crosscourt.

The second one is pretty intense, as it works on diagonal movement [A boasts, B crosscourts, A straight-drives, B boasts, A crosscourts, B straight-drives etc]. It is an ideal drill for movement and control. The guy in front can hit a crosscourt, a low crosscourt or a lob and the guy at the back can look for the volley or drive.

With the boast-and-drive sometimes I work close to the back and at other times practise my recovery to the T.

What do your practice sessions involve?

I will do ghosting [court running and practising strokes] as a warm-up. Then I do five minutes straight-driving, five minutes at medium pace into the service box for control and then I work on short volleys.

At the beginning of the year I work with David [Palmer, who has an academy in Florida] on drills, ghosting, strategy and technique (a little bit). We also work with a physical trainer on circuits, weights, sprints and core exercises. I have a lot of people I can play against.

When I spend time back home [in Bogota, Colombia], I try to focus on physical training. I swim, doing 60 laps of 25 metres each twice a week. In the morning I do a workout and use my spinning bike [a static bike]

at home. I do 45 minutes four times a week. Once a week, at 6am on Sunday morning, I go hill-running, 7km up. Sometimes I rest on Thursday and maybe Saturday. It depends on how I feel.

Usually I work twice a day on squash plus fitness training. The squash involves drills and condition games, and I finish up in the gym.

What's a typical day for you?

When I wake up at home, I do spinning and have breakfast. Then I go to the club, have an espresso and train for two hours at squash. I then rest, have lunch and work on condition games. I end up in the gym or swimming.

What does your squash training involve?

Solo and pairs. I have people I can play against, so we play condition games.

The condition games are three quarters or two

quarters. The two-quarter games can be diagonal or straight.

I also use the channel game with drops. Another game is two against one, which also helps me.

Do you play a lot of condition games?

Yes. They allow you to focus on just one thing and improve that.

In condition games you have clear rules, but what do you concentrate on in your practice games?

If I am playing against a friend and he plays a boast, I may decide that every time he hits a boast, I will play a drop shot or a lob. I might do this for the first game to get familiar with these combinations.

In the second game I may try not to let the ball hit the glass [the back wall], so I have to volley. It's really hard.

The third game could be when I hit the ball from the back and it cannot hit the side wall. Otherwise, I will lose the point.

What are your key tactics?

I'm learning from David Palmer. For example, if I play a great boast, I have to go behind my opponent and look for the intercept. I am looking to structure rallies better to put my opponent under pressure and create opportunities.

What are your strengths as a player?

Strength and speed.

What parts of your game do you want to develop?

I am working on my offence. I'm practising and trying to be more confident with this.

One other thing I need to work on is my movement at the front of the court, to be able to hit a good lob and

get back to the T. Sometimes I am too fast to the front and lose balance, so my lob is not high enough.

A few years ago I was just retrieving and hitting to the back without any strategy, but now my game is improving.

