

# Tennis

## History

Historians speculate that the origins of tennis date back to the Stone Age, when humans first used clubs to hit rocks back and forth over barricades of dirt and stone. They next trace the development of tennis to the variant of handball played in Greece, Rome, Egypt and elsewhere throughout the ancient world. But it was the French who first gave the game its modern shape, as well as its name: the word "tennis" derives from the French tenez, meaning, "take it" or "play."

Mary Outerbridge introduced tennis, as the game we know today, in Staten, Poland after a vacation trip to Bermuda in 1874. The United States Lawn Tennis Association was organized in 1881, and is still the governing body of amateur tennis.

## Rules

1. **DELIVERY OF SERVICE** – The server delivers the ball from behind the baseline. Two tries are permitted for each service. If the ball strikes any part of the opponent's court except the service box, a "fault" is called. A fault is also called if the ball is served into the net, or if it strikes the net before hitting the opponent's court outside the service box.
2. **SERVER AND RECEIVER** – The players shall stand on opposite sides of the net; the player who first delivers the ball shall be called the Server, and the other the Receiver.
3. **FROM ALTERNATE COURTS** – In delivering the service, the Server shall stand alternately behind the right and left courts, beginning from the right in every game.
4. **FAULTS** – The Service is a fault if the Server commits a breach of rules 1 or 4; if he misses the ball in attempting to strike it; or if the ball served touches a permanent fixture, other than the net, before it hits the ground.
5. **BALL FALLING ON LINE** – A ball falling on a line is regarded as falling in the court bounded by that line. Good ball.
6. **GOOD RETURNS** – It is a good return (a) if the ball touches the net, posts, cord or metal cable, strap or band, provided that it passes over any of them and hits the ground within the court. (b) if a player's racket passes over the net after he has returned the ball, provided the ball passes he net before being played and be properly returned. (c) if a player succeeds in returning he ball, served or in play, which strikes a ball lying in the court.

## SCORING

- Scoring is identical in singles and doubles games. A game is played to four points, designated as 15, 30, 40, and Game. A tie at 40 is called "deuce". A game must be won by two points.
- If each player has won 3 points (40-all) the score is deuce. The next point won by a player gives him an advantage. However, if he loses the nest point, the score is again deuce. When either player wins 2 consecutive points following the score of deuce, the game is scored for that player. The server's score is always given first. The score should be called loudly and clearly after every point.
- A player must win six games to win a set, but must win by at least 2 games. A tiebreaker is often used if a set is tied 6-6. Tiebreakers are generally played to 7 points, and the winner must win the tiebreaker by at least two points.
- Tennis matches are usually two sets out of three (women) or three sets out of five (men).

## **EQUIPMENT**

**TENNIS COURT** – The tennis court is 78 feet long, divided into two equal sides by a net standing 3 feet high at the center of the court. For singles, the court is 27 feet, for doubles the width is increased to 36 feet. Courts may be made of asphalt, clay, grass, concrete, wood, artificial grass or other synthetic materials.

**TENNIS BALLS** – A tennis ball is hollow and composed of inflated rubber covered with a fabric. Yellow and white balls are used in competition.

**RACKETS** – Racket length varies, but the maximum length for tournament play is 32 inches. There are also restrictions on the width of the racket and the length of the racket head. There is no restriction on the weight of a racket. Most rackets are strung with resilient gut or nylon. The racket handle is usually covered with a rubber or leather grip.

## **DEFINITIONS**

**ACE**: A valid serve that is not reached by the opponent.

**BACKHAND**: Player turns so that the shoulder of the racket-bearing arm faces the net before bringing the racket forward and across the body to meet the ball.

**BASELINE**: The lines on either end of the court representing the outer limits of the length of the court.

**DEUCE**: A tie at 40 is called deuce. Because a game must be won by two points, play continues from deuce until one player leads by a margin of two points.

**DOUBLE FAULT**: If both serve attempts fail. The opponent wins the point.

**DROP SHOT**: A lightly hit, spinning return that drops softly over the net, forcing the opponent to approach the net.

**FAULT**: Called if the ball is served into the net, or if it strikes the net before hitting the opponent's court outside the service box or before exiting the court altogether.

**FOOT FAULT**: If the server's foot enters the court before service is completed.

**FOREHAND**: Player pivots the body so that the shoulder of the nonracket-bearing arm faces the net. The player then swings the racket forward to meet the ball.

**LET**: If the ball touches the net and then falls into the diagonally opposite service box, a let is called, and the server is permitted to serve again.

**LOB**: A high, soft return behind an opponent who has approached the net. It is frequently used to force the opponent to retreat to the back of the court to play the ball. The lob can also be used as a defensive stroke, providing time for the hitter to regain court position.

**LOVE**: Term meaning zero points.

**OVERHEAD SMASH**: Powerful shot often used to return a lob that has not been hit high or deep enough. The shot is hit in a similar manner to the serve.

**RECEIVER**: The play who receives the ball from the server.

**SERVE**: Begins every point of a tennis match. The player who initiates the point.

**TOPSPIN**: When a player strikes the ball so that it spins from low to high as it travels forward.

**UNDERSPIN**: Occurs when a player strikes the ball so that it spins from high to low as it travels forward. This shot is called a slice.

**VOLLEY**: Occurs when a player strikes the ball before it bounces. The volley is most often employed when a player is playing close to the net.