

Dear Glen,

Every winter I have issues with dry, cracked skin from tennis. This extremely painful problem plagues many of the local players as the weather becomes drier and colder. I've tried using lotion daily, but those only delay the inevitable! I have also found a wonderful new tape product that protects my thumb (Nexcare's 3M tape at CVS); however, my index finger and pinky still split on the tips. What do the pros use to stop this inconvenient problem? Should I move further south during the winter months? Where is that global warming when you need it? :-)

Thanks,
Sam

Dear Sam,

Great information for dry skin. Almost all the information I share with our readers came from much smarter people than I. As far as the cracking skin, a surgeon many years ago suggested to me to use Krazy Glue to seal the crack. This has been my saving grace over the years and allowed my fingers to heal much quicker. I actually saw the same recommendation in Men's Health magazine.

Dear Glen,

My children tried tennis but didn't like standing in lines hitting one ball every few minutes. I have read about QuickStart tennis and it sounds like it is more about kids having fun and playing right away. How can I find something like that for my kids?

Nancy

Dear Nancy,

There is a QuickStart program at Winthrop Park that is run through the TTA. Look at their website to get additional information. The City of Tallahassee uses QuickStart principles in our clinics. We don't use "cattle lines" in our clinics. Please see our Talgov.com website to see the upcoming clinics.

Dear Glen,

I have a serve question for your column. During a recent league match, my partner was serving. She hit her first serve long. The receiver elected to run to the corner to pick up the ball. When she got back in place and appeared to be ready to receive the second serve, my partner called, "Second server!". The receiver did not hold out a hand or request a few more seconds, she just stood there appearing ready to receive - so a few seconds later my partner served. The receiver missed the serve and then claimed she wasn't ready for the serve. My partner disagreed, but I encouraged her to shake it off and repeat the 2nd serve. Of course, she was so rattled by the situation, she missed her 2nd serve. What should we have done in this situation?

League Lady

Dear LL,

According to the USTA guidelines, the receiver must play at a reasonable pace. If the receiver lined up to return the ball, she was ready. It is not a bad idea to keep a copy of "Friend at Court" to manage such situations.

Dear Glen,

I am an avid doubles player and would like to hold my service game on a more regular basis. Do you have any suggestions?

Carla

Dear Carla,

I have a couple of suggestions that might improve your percentages. At the pro level, the key to winning sets is holding serve every time and breaking once. The average club player team needs to hold serve an additional time to make a difference in the outcome of the match. First, take a hopper of balls out and practice your serve. Showing up early and hitting 30 to 40 extra serves before the match can help create a better serve.

Second, most doubles teams don't have a strategy and blindly attack the net or don't stay together as a team. If you only come in on good attacking balls and move as a unit your proficiency will improve dramatically.

Dear Glen,

I have been playing a number of years and really like playing the game. My problem is that I practice like a champ, but as soon as I start playing sets in tournaments, I falter. Is there anything that I can do to take care of my nerves and become more fearless in competition?

Choker

Dear Choker,

This is not uncommon among tennis players or any athlete that competes. Most of the world classes playing professionals that try to peak for the four slam tournaments, play several events to gain their nerve through the battle of competition. Working through the adversity and triumphs are at times very hard to manage for the average competitor. These skills need to be practiced just like a forehand or backhand.

Steve Leroy and I have changed our practice regimens and have been playing sets for a soda. It is amazing how it changed the way we were competing and how we tightened up at times. Competing for something changes the dynamics of your emotional state of mind. Regularly challenging yourself is how self-improvement takes place.

Dear Glen,

After observing the finals of the Australian Open, it was amazing how Nadal ran away with the match in the fifth set. Any observations that you can make on the outcome of the match?

David

Dear David,

In looking at the statistics of the match, Roger actually had one more total point for the entire match. Federer hit 21 more winners and Nadal hit 24 less unforced errors. The

other statistics were marginally in Roger's favor. So how did Rafael win? It is my opinion that Nadal maintained his level of play during the fifth set better than Federer. The match outcome was only about a handful of points that Rafael didn't miss. As with the first statistic, Nadal made less errors and Federer hit less winners in the fifth and deciding set.

Dear Glen,

I am curious as to the proper etiquette in mixed doubles matches. The question is based on a male opponent that aims point blank at my female partner on overhead smash attempts. What is the call?

Dear tennis player,

This is not an acceptable practice in a mixed doubles match. As far as a social situation, the male player should have a conversation with the other male off the court. In a competitive situation, there are a couple paths that you can choose. Personally, I choose to take the high road and not get involved in this kind of nonsense. When I was younger, it was more of a tit for tat where you went headhunting. As soon as your female partner was targeted, all bets were off. Whatever you choose...choose wisely.

Dear Glen,

In a recent league match, one of our opponents wouldn't call or signal whether a ball was hit out. In one instance, my partner hit a shot that landed near the base line on the opponents' court. Neither opposing player signaled or called 'out' or 'long' or anything. Both my partner and I thought the shot was good. My partner was serving and for the next serve, called the score 15-Love. Immediately, one of our opponents strenuously objected to the score call. We finally realized they contended the shot my partner had hit near the base line was out. When I requested they let us know when a shot was out, one player said, "I'll tell you when they are in." Am I confused - I though the opposing team was supposed to let us know when our shots were out.

Persistent Player

Dear PP,

You are correct that your opponent needs to signal visually or audibly that the balls were out.