

Dear Glen,

I have noticed that as I have aged, my tennis game has deteriorated. Back in the day, I played high school tennis and played pretty well. Is this just a process of getting older? Aging quickly

Dear Aging,

This is a great topic. Being from the Baby-Boomers generation, we wanted it all and got it all. This was the beginning of the fitness generation and the tennis boom of the seventies. Having personally played for over 35 years, I can tell you my findings.

There are a number of factors that took place from the different times of your life. When I was in the juniors and on my college team, we only had to worry about grades and how we were playing tennis. We had a trainer for our college team and he taught us how to be stronger and faster. The team used training logs and documented that we consumed 5,000-8,000 calories per day. Upon finishing college, I immediately gained twenty pounds. My eating habits had to change dramatically as I have had to improve my diet as I have aged. One of life's lessons.

After college family and job commitments consumed my time for the next fifteen years. At the age of thirty-five, I reengaged in competing and had a high sectional ranking as well as being nationally ranked in the top 40 for five years. This took a tremendous amount of time to maintain. About age 40, the players that had just turned thirty-five were dusting me in the national events. I found that they were hitting the ball harder than I had ever experienced.

Ten year later, these are my observations that I have made of my playing career. Players that compete have to be very self-driven and have to be committed to the process. I still enjoy playing tennis several times per week but have yet to re-engage in the competitive arena. This may never happen because of my enjoyment of my grandchildren, traveling with my wife, and mentoring of teaching professionals. Times and focus have changed.

Some observations that I have made over the years are that even though I don't play as well as I have in the past, many aspects of my game have improved. Fitness is a key and has been one of the reasons that I haven't had a lot of injuries. I run 15-18 miles per week, lift weights, and do my sit-ups and pushups daily. Years ago, I purchased a juicer and have found that it gave me a good energy level if I maintained its use.

The good news about competing is that the USTA has age categories and level of play categories. The age categories are every five years and National tournaments sites are in different venues, which is quite exciting for the traveling buff. The USPTA has tournaments for teaching professionals which I find of interest. It has always been difficult competing when you teach tennis for a living so these events level the playing field. I watch several players, who are in their seventies, that still enjoy playing against each other. They have been competing against one another since they played at FSU. I wish you that kind of success!

Dear Glen,

I have been watching the players on Tennis Channel and wonder how I should be hitting the ball when I want to transition to the net to put the ball away. I have found it hard to get to the net with my approach shots. Is it different in my doubles verses my singles game?

Jason

Dear Jason,

The strokes can be different in their effectiveness. The approach shot needs to be hit early to cut the reaction time of an opponent. Personally, I try to drive my approaches away from my opponents in singles to beat them with the speed of the ball. In doubles, I tend to hit the ball with backspin and come to the net. This keeps the ball low and gives me time to get to the net to volley.

There are several different philosophies as far as approaching the net but I believe it has more to do with how your opponents reacts to your shot selection. A complete player can hit numerous types of approaches to exploit an opponent's weakness.

Dear Glen,

My friend told me that your pro shop is now carrying demo racquets. After seeing your article on the longevity of tennis frames, I thought it was time to "Buck-up". What do you think about the racquets that Nadal and Federer are using? Any suggestions?

Dear Player,

Demo racquets are the way to go as far as finding the best racquet for you. It is much like buying a car where you need to test drive the car before purchasing. As far as Nadal's and Federer's racquets, these models are quite good but most tennis players can't take advantage of the racquets characteristics. But, why not try them out. When Jimmy Connors was using the "Mono" racquet, I just had to have one!

Dear Glen,

When I serve, I produce a lot of strain on my lower back. My serve is very effective, but leads to a lot of back pain due from tossing the ball behind my head. Should I change my service motion? Do you have any other ideas how to play pain free?

Marcus

Dear Marcus,

This is very common among tennis players that try to add additional rotation to the ball. First, I would recommend having your teaching professional take a look at your stroke. He or she can make a couple of small adjustments that could make a big difference. Second, strengthening your stomach muscles to support the back in turn to create a good foundation for a balanced and resilient body. And third, tossing the ball out in front can kinetically create a better serve.

Dear Glen,

I would like to donate some old racquets to your program. Are you accepting racquets and where do they go?

Dear City Patron,

Yes, we are accepting donated tennis racquets. We plan to create a tennis program at as many community centers as can be accommodated. There has been a very strong response in our community to teach our youth the sport of a lifetime. Thank you in advance for your generosity.

Dear Glen,

My weekly singles opponent and I have some very intense matches. My issue is that she tosses the second ball away when the first serve goes in. This is very distracting. Is there anything I can do to remedy this distraction to my game?

Dear George,

According to the USTA rules 26.4; the receiver should ask the server to stop discarding the ball. If your opponents continue this habit, this would constitute a deliberate hindrance, and the server would lose the point.

If it is a friend, a friendly comment on the changeover would probably suffice.

Dear Glen,

I'm relatively new to Tallahassee and would like to get involved in a tennis league. I played in high school (several years ago) but don't know anyone in the local area who plays. What options are available for newcomers to the community who may be a little "rusty"?

Dear City Patron,

Take a look at the Tallahassee Tennis Association website and this should help you find a league. The other option is to call the front desk at Forestmeadows Athletic Center and they will be happy to give you the league coordinator for your level. If you are looking to find people to play tennis, go to the Talgov.com website and sign up for "Gamefinder". One other option is to attend one of the City tennis round robins. On average, 40-50 tennis players attend these events and find this is a great way to meet players that want to find a match. The next social round robin will be during the Memorial Day weekend.

Dear Glen,

Last night, I was playing a USTA match. My partner was serving and I was the net man. He served a ball that was close, but looked like it caught the line. The receiver tried to play the ball; his partner initially called the serve out, and then asked me what I thought. I said it looked good to me.

Since there was some doubt on their part, I thought we should have gotten the point. Instead they gave us two more serves.

I didn't make a big deal out of it, but what's the correct call if the opponent makes a call one way and then reverses his decision?

Skip

Dear Skip,

The team receiving the serve makes the call on the serve. The call is made immediately and is either in or out. A let should not be played. If there is doubt between the receiver and their partner, the doubles team should get together to make a call verses getting the other team involved. If there is still doubt, the point goes to the serving team. In the true spirit of the game, you made a good decision not to make an issue of the call.

Dear Glen,

I've been playing off and on for about 3 years and have recently got my wife to start playing as well. Are there any leagues or tournaments in town that are geared towards the beginning players? We are both playing in the adult clinics but want to increase our tennis exposure.

Dear City Player,

There is a lot of interest in players re-engaging in the sport. There are mixed doubles leagues in the City. Friday night at Forestmeadows is a very busy night for this activity. Look at the Talgov website to see the upcoming tournaments for all levels of play. As an alternative idea, hit on the ball machine with your wife and take turns picking up the balls.

Dear Glen,

The grip on my racquet is too small. I was wondering what could be done to build up the grip? I know it used to be the rule of thumb that you use the largest grip possible when playing. Is this still the norm for grip size?

Richard

Dear Richard,

Small buildups can be made with an overgrip. If you wrap the grip too many times, the grip will become rounded. We have plastic inserts at Forestmeadows that can professionally keep the bevels sharp on your racquets. We also have a full line of grips and overgrips at the desk. There has been some interest in stocking tennis balls and other supplies at Winthrop Park and Tom Brown. We hope to carry limited supplies at those two sites in the near future.

The standard that is followed with grip size is playing with a comfortable size grip. If the grip is too big or small, there is a chance for injury to the arm. The trend has actually been to go toward the smaller grips due to the semi and full western grips.