

Dear Glen,

What is the difference in the types of tennis balls that are used? I know that the outside felt cover is thicker on hardcourt balls, but I'm not sure what the difference of tennis balls of specific manufacturers.

Dear Players,

All manufacturers create a slightly different ball. Most tennis players like a certain ball because of comfort level as well as being able to feel the ball on their racquet. Personally, I like the Penn ball because it seems to be a little heavier. Many like the Wilson ball because it is livelier. It is all personal preference of the player. Tournaments actually specify the ball they use so players can practice with that ball.

Dear Glen,

I have really enjoyed reading your column over the years and this is the first time that I have had a question. What is the best 5 minute warmup for playing a tennis match? My problem is usually that I am coming from work to play a match and always get a slow start. Anything that you can suggest would be appreciated.

Jim

Dear Jim,

The best thing that you can do for optimum performance, in a short period of time, is to jog and do dynamic stretching to get the blood flowing through the body. This is one of the best ways to avoid injuries and maximize your abilities for performing well. Take a look on Youtube and you will see numerous dynamic stretching routines that should help.

Dear Glen,

What is the best stance on the forehand to hit great shots? There are a number of different philosophies and wanted to get your thoughts on the subject.

Robin

Dear Robin,

My take on these different stances is that they are strictly situational. Depending on where the ball is hit and the amount of reaction time presented will determine the optimal way to hit the ball. Many players hit with open stance forehands that help maximize power source, recovery, deception, and efficiency of stroke. If the ball is short or more forward power is needed, a player would use either a square stance or

a closed stance. As a player, I would suggest learning all three forehands to have the right tool for the specific situation that arises.

Dear Glen,

If conditions are perfect, I seem to do well as a player. When conditions are windy, hot, cold, or unstable, I tend to perform poorly. Is this mental or is my game of the nature that it does better in optimum conditions?

Kelvin

Dear Kelvin,

It is probably mental now due to the outcome of matches you have played. Many perform poorly in these conditions due to lack of practice during these conditions. I would suggest that practice take place during bad conditions to have an answer for past frustrations.

Sometime ago, I was working with two of the best eighteen year old girls on the east coast. During the finals of a National tournament, both came off the court after the match and spoke to me. The player that lost complained about the windy conditions and how it made her play poorly. When the winner came off, I asked about the windy conditions. She said, "What wind?" The morale to the story is that the first to adapt to the conditions will be the winner.

Dear Glen,

I have been playing doubles with the same partner for couple of years. Things were really good until we started losing. Now she constantly instructs me how to play the game and has recently starting saying some things to me that are not very nice. In addition, my partner's body language drops as I miss shots which in-turn makes it worse. What do you suggest?

This has happened more times than I can count. The key was to cut it off in the beginning of the comments. When nothing was said, your partner recognized it as creative license to say whatever she wanted. Take the time to sit down, away from the match, and tell her how you feel about it behavior.

The second suggestion would be to have a doubles lesson with your pro and let him make that observation and the correction. This is probably the easiest way to save a partnership.

Dear Glen,

There are so many tennis things to do in the City. My problem is that I sometimes have trouble finding your programs on the Talgov.com website. Any ideas how I can find the latest tennis activities?

Dear Citizen,

My son is a computer tech and he is constantly telling me to open my eyes when looking for information on the internet. Information changes so quickly that it is really hard to stay up with all that is available. My suggestion would be to go to the [talgov.com](http://talgov.com) site and take a little time to explore the tennis page. There is a lot of information and downloads.

If all else fails, contact me through "Ask Glen" and I will respond back to you.

Dear Glen,

During a tennis match, if a ball hits your head and goes in the court, do you win the point?

Jerry

Dear Jerry,

According to USTA rule 24h, the player loses the point if the ball touches the player or anything that the player is wearing or carrying, except the racket.

Dear Glen,

What are the weaknesses of a player that has a semi-western or full western grip on their forehand? These are very hard players to compete against. Any information would be appreciated.

Dear Player,

Since I use a semi and sometimes a full western, this is an easy question to answer. Even though this shot is very effective on a number of shots, there are some glaring weaknesses to these forehands. The western forehands are vulnerable wide to the the forehand strike. If a players doesn't get behind the ball there is a certain vulnerability. Second, if the ball is served into the body, this tends to handcuff a western player.

And lastly, if the ball is hit short, it is hard to get under the ball with this extreme grip. All these issues can be overcome by this player if he is willing to maintain good footwork and move to each ball that is hit.

Dear Glen,

What can I do when I miss the same groundstrokes over and over during a match? It seems as though there should be some kind of corrective technique.

Dear Player,

Muscle memory is so ingrained that the body has a lot of trouble creating an alternative movement to what it regularly does. If you break your leg and walk incorrectly for three months, it can be expected to continue to walk with a limp.

My suggestion to you is to practice what the pros do on TV. After a stroke is missed, shadow the pattern correctly to engage the proper muscle memory. The other suggestion would be to hit the ball properly over to the other side of the net in between the points. Gustavo Kuerten from Brazil made this a regular habit to train the right muscle memory.

Dear Glen,

Are there advantages to getting a video lesson? I have been told that I probably don't look anything like I think I do. Beyond improving my strokes, would it help to see my game play on video?

Craig

Dear Craig,

Videotaping tennis lessons has become a major teaching tool at most tennis academies. Not only can you see when a shot is hit correctly or wrong, but a player needs to keep a running file of clips to use as a reference. Keeping a library of your strokes and play can be used to note improvement and to remind you how your strokes really look. Many times we don't look anything like we thought when hitting the ball.

Dear Glen,

We are getting toward the "sweat" season again and I do remember several suggestions from you concerning holding on to my grip. What are your thoughts?

Sue

Dear Sue,

The first thing I would recommend is to get a set of double-wide sweat bands. Most sweat comes down the arms to the grip. The sweatbands block the moisture. Second, changing the grip can make a difference with the assistance of using a towel to wipe the grip and arms. In addition, a product called PrinceGrip Plus can be applied to the hand. This product wicks the water from the hand and is carried in the Pro Shop at Forestmeadows.

It is a combination of all the above listed items that can help with a slippery grip. If anyone has any additional suggestions, please send them to me and I will post the information in coming weeks.

Dear Glen,

I am still struggling with the rule of being ready to return serve. What constitutes being ready to return serve?

Dear Player,

According to USTA rule 21, a receiver who attempts to return serve shall be considered as being ready. If it is demonstrated that the receiver is not ready, the service cannot be called a fault. I would suggest gaining eye contact with the opponent and this creates the beginning of the point after the score is called.

Dear Glen,

Wow! Winthrop looks great! My buddy and I went to play tennis last week and really appreciate Parks and Receptions efforts to make the tennis area better. I see that even the tennis wall was replaced. It had been a habit for me to go to Tom Brown to hit on a wall since it was taken down. Thank you all for your efforts!

One Happy Citizen

Dear Happy,

We are really proud of how well this site turned out. Not only do you have a "state of the art" tennis wall, but a retention wall with a grassy berm was put in to manage storm water and provide viewing for tennis fans. We aim to provide the best possible facilities we can. In addition, a cold water fountain was installed for those really hot league matches or lessons.

Dear Glen,

I was looking over your back during the Challenger and noticed that you were charting a singles match. Is this something that coaches do on the pro tour? Could I get my game critiqued during a match by one of your pros?

Dear Player,

Charting is used to show strengths and a weakness verses a specific player. Even though trends will be seen with a specific player being charted, opponent affects the outcome of these statistics due to how well they are playing and style of play.

The simple common denominators are percentage of first and second serves and their effectiveness of winning points. If they are getting 75% of your first serves in but only winning 50% of the points, the serve needs to be beefed up. Returning serves is another key. I have personally found that if I lose more than one point by not getting the return back over the net, my opponent will hold serve.

Charting is something that most all of my teaching professionals can do for you leading the information into a lesson. Give it a try and it is my belief that the information will make you a better player.

Dear Glen,

Looking at players at the Challenger last we, I noticed that several used abbreviated follow-throughs on specific balls.

Madison

Dear Madison,

You are correct in your observations. Many times it is easier to see on TV with the slow motion replay. When in distress, most world class player simplifies their racquet motion and play off the speed of the ball. The racquet is used for deflection purposes. In addition, many of the players use a little bit of a flick to add a little spin for control.

Dear Glen,

What are the rules about the chair umpire over-ruling calls on the baseline? It seems that it would be a tough call to see the ball at that speed and the angle. What do you think?

Dear Player,

I spoke to Mike Loo, USTA tournament chairman, about this and he said that the referees have to very consistent in their overruling of calls. In most cases, unless it is a flagrant miss, the chair umpire will not intercede. From what I learned in sports officiating in college, we were told as referees to as much as possible let the players play and not to impose our will as judges.

Dear Glen,

I have a 6 year old granddaughter that is just starting to play tennis. What size racquet should she use? Do you have any other tips to further her ability to play tennis?

Matt

Dear Matt,

Your daughter should be using a 21 inch racquet. This is one of the QuickStart principles to make the game fun and easier to play. I would play at home on your driveway with your daughter and just have a lot of fun. Don't tell her how to play the game. Let her have fun and let her love for tennis unfold on its own.

Dear Glen,

I have noticed that there are a number of different doubles strategies that are being used in doubles at the Tallahassee Challenger. One in particular is the server's partner starting in the center of the service box area. Is this something my partner and I should try and how do they know which way to go?

Dear Player,

This is known as the "I" formation and forces the returning opponent to try to out guess where the server's partner is going. A play is set by the serving team and determined ahead of time so both sides of the court are covered. The serving team usually doesn't move or commit till the last minute to cause indecision problems for the returning team.

The play is either set by the partners talking or signals behind the back to determine the placement of the serve and which direction the players will move. Give it a try, but only use it sparingly to you figure a system that works for your partnership.

Dear Glen,

The receiver's partners at the Tallahassee Challenger start back a lot of the times in doubles. Is the game changing to this new formation?

Robert

Dear Robert,

The receivers starting back together is out of necessity due to the speed and placement of the serves. This will take pressure off the receiver and also give the receiving team a chance to defend together from the baseline. Most players are more effective these days from the baseline so this is not a bad strategy to try against a better serving team.

This may be something that you may want to try if you or your partners are not as effective from a volley point of view. This also causes problem for the other team because they may not be used to the baseline formation.

Dear Glen,

When hitting the two handed backhand, should I straighten my arm or bend at the elbow. The follow-through of the pros is pretty consistent over the shoulder, but which arm is the dominant arm in this stroke?

Joakim

Dear Joakim,

Even though there are some players on the tour that have a straight arm two handed backhand, I tend to believe that a bent elbows on the dominant hitting arm is advisable. Any time I see a stroke that looks stiff in sports, it is my belief that tension doesn't produce consistent results. The best backhands have a slightly bent elbow that will keep the impact from going to that weak joint. We know from physics and engineering that a 90deg. has a lot more strength than a straight plane. Look on youtube and decide for yourself.

Dear Glen,

I was out at Tom Brown Park this weekend and noticed there was a tournament on the courts. Was this a new event? The junior players were really good. On another note, when the parks courts don't allow play for patrons, what are our alternatives?

Nick

Dear Nick,

This was the FL/GA USTA junior designated. The event is new and was created to offer playing opportunities to the better junior players in Northern Florida. These are some of the better players around and some have national rankings. This had an economic impact in the area of better than 100k.

As far as your question about court access, there are ten tennis court sites in the City for your tennis use. The address of these sites is on the Talgov website under Parks and Recreation. The monitored tennis sites allow you to make a reservation and the non-monitored courts are on a walk-on basis.

Dear Glen,

What do I do when my opponent hits the ball too hard and it goes in consistently? Players seem to be hitting the ball harder and harder.

Courtney

Dear Courtney,

You are correct with your conclusions. There are a couple of things that I would suggest. First, back up five to ten feet. If you notice watching tennis on TV, many of the players are hitting further back in the court. This not only gives the player more time, but the ball slows down as it travels further. Second, add more topspin to your shots. More topspin tends to keep more balls in play. And lastly, hit with more power. You need more experience with this style of player to handle them in the near future.

Dear Glen,

What do I do about volleying in pressure situations? I practice on the ball machine a lot and play like a champ. As soon as I'm in a game situation, there is no consistency to my hits. They are either in the net or out of bounds. Please give me some suggestions so I don't retreat back to the baseline...

Andy

Dear Andy,

The simple answer is that hitting with an opponent and the ball machine are two different play situations. The ball machine will give more time and is not as challenging. Reaction time is cut dramatically against an opponent. Without seeing your shot, I would guess that your racquet recovery is slow or non-existent. Bring your racquet back to the ready position and this will give you the best chance of hitting the next shot.

Dear Glen,

I just got my racquet strung and I broke it on one of my first hits. Is this a defective racquet stringing? Are your racquet stringings guaranteed?

Dear Player,

If the string is frayed, the string is usually defective or old. This would be replaced free of charge. In the case that a string has a straight break, this is usually a sign that the ball was hit near the frame. Another words, you mishit off-center and the string broke. Have your tennis pro look at your racquet and they should be able to help you.

Dear Glen,

I have noticed that all the men & lady pros on the tour have matching clothes that look great. Do they get paid to wear these clothes?

Sam

Dear Sam,

The players on the tour have contracted endorsement packages. Many players that don't have high rankings get clothes and equipment for their use. The best players in the world not only get product, but are paid fees as well as incentives bonuses. As players proceed through tournament draws and get more TV exposure, incentives bonuses are paid to players. It has been disclosed that a player that wins a Grand Slam event will make an additional ten million dollars in bonus money.

Dear Glen,

My friends have all been trying to get me to play tennis. I find the game very difficult to play. Why do people play this game?

Dear Friend,

My own view of the game is "I just love tennis". There are so many reasons why people play the game. Meeting new friends and acquaintances is at the top of the list. Many play the game for competition or getting a good workout. Tennis has also been used as a business vehicle for forming a professional relationship. On a personal note, tennis is my way of life and what gets me going in the morning. Everyone needs a passion.

Dear Glen,

I am a good singles player trying to learn how to play the game of doubles. My problem is that I struggle with my serve when playing doubles. Beyond practicing my serve more, how do I get comfortable serving with a partner?

Dear Player,

A lot of dynamics change. First, the length of the court changes due to the increase in angle. Second, the net becomes lower for serves hit wide in the service box. And lastly, due to the angle of the serve, the body gets in the way of its kinetic chain and rotation of the body.

The simple answer is to change the position of the feet and the body. Treat the angle of the serve as a straight line from point A to point B. The foot position is slightly altered to be able to step or launch and maintain balance. With the change of the body position, the toss will be slightly altered. My explanation for this concept is to get the toss, feet, eyes, and body going in the direction that you are trying to direct the serve.

Dear Glen,

My tennis pro tells me that I miss most shots because my balance is not good. Are there techniques I can use to improve my balance or watching the ball more consistently?

Leslie

Dear Leslie,

Moving completely to the ball and performing good footwork is essential to good balance. A lot of little steps as you approach the contact of the ball will improve the hit. There are devices on the market that work with keeping the head still at contact. Being that the head on your shoulders is approximately twelve pounds, if it is tilted, your balance will be off. The device I am talking about beeps if the head tilts more than 10%. In any ball sport, the head should be still at connection so that eye contact is maximized.