

Ask Glen – February through March 2010

Dear Glen,

I noticed on Saturday that a coaching clinic was taking place with short courts and large foam balls. In my efforts to teach my wife to play tennis, this seemed like something she could do. Was that equipment geared only for juniors or could it be used for adults?

Tommy

Dear Tommy,

These foam balls are the perfect formula for improving your wife's tennis. The balls are slower, bigger and don't impose themselves on the player. We have been using these balls in some of our adult programs and have noticed an increase in productivity. One of our City's teaching professionals pointed out that their students were more able to see the spins of the balls. These balls can be purchased in the proshop at Forestmeadows.

Dear Glen,

Where should I toss the ball for more spin? I am interested in learning a "kick serve", but have had some back problems in the past. Is it an essential element that I must toss the ball behind myself to create the right effect?

Dear Player,

If there is a history of back problems, the body's core needs to be strengthened in the weight room. If you were really serious about perusing this, it would be my recommendation to get a trainer. As far as hitting the shot, the kick serve has evolved somewhat in the past thirty years. In the past, the toss was placed behind the server and this added to the stress that was placed on the back.

These days, the toss is out in front and to the left of the body for a right-handed server. This will put forward and upward force on the ball. I would hire a qualified teaching professional to videotape your stroke as well as helping with the specifics of the stroke.

Dear Glen,

What is more important, to drill or to play games?

Dear Player,

It depends what goal is being set. If you would like to be a ranked player in the State of Florida, a combination of drills and game play would be advised. If you were trying to perfect a skill or gain consistency, drilling would be the prescription. Yesterday, Steve LeRoy and I hit an hours worth of crosscourt groundstrokes. It was not only very enjoyable, but our consistency improved dramatically. Score can also be kept with drills to improve a specific stroke or sequence. It is of utmost importance that whatever phase you are working on, always have fun.

Dear Glen,

It was great watching Rafael Nadal play doubles at the Indian Wells tournament finals this past weekend. I did notice that he played a lot of formations where both players played from the backcourt as well as one up and one back. What do you think about that?

Dear Doubles Player,

It was a great contrast in styles. You take the number one doubles team in the world against a shot maker (Nadal) who is arguably one of the best that has ever played the game. Rafa's ball is so heavy and is not the typical ball that doubles teams usually see. The one interesting thing that took place tactically was you are usually only as good as the weakest player on the team. On that day, the Spanish duo was in the zone. One commonality that I tend to keep mentioning is that the winning team seems to be having fun the entire match.

Dear Glen,

This happens in our league play all the time and I'm not sure how to deal with the problem. When my partner serves the ball long and our opponents hit the faulted ball into the net, they slowly walk up to get the ball. After a delayed time, I finally get to serve the second ball. When they serve and we go up to get the faulted ball, they request a "let". This really takes the fun out of the game due to the dictation of play by our opponents. Do you have any recommendations?
A league player

Dear player,

The rules of tennis are quite clear in that play shall be continuous. There is a reasonable amount of time that is allotted to pick up an errant ball. If any player is intentionally stalling to get an advantage, this is gamesmanship and is not in the true spirit of the game. I would start with talking to the team on the changeover or show them in "The Friend at Court" what is acceptable.

Dear Glen,

I have noticed that many World Class players keep their tossing arm really straight when going through the motion of tossing. Does this help with the consistency of the toss?
Willard

Dear Willard,

I have made the same observation in the past six months. Several of the players start with a straight tossing arm and extend their arm up to get a very consistent toss. My view is that it looks very tight but the results of consistency on the toss are phenomenal. This is something that I will be experimenting with in the upcoming months.

Dear Glen,

Why is it that the tennis balls seem dead this time of year? I would also be interested in knowing the best way to store tennis balls when not in use.
Sally

Dear Sally,

We have had an exceptionally cold winter and this causes the tennis balls to have a lower bounce. I would recommend getting your eyes down to the level of the ball to see it better. In addition, I believe you will need to move to the ball verses allowing the ball to come to you because of the lower pressure of the ball. As far as storage, the balls need to be kept in a warm area. And lastly, if they are left in your car, expect the tennis balls to have very bad playing characteristics.

Dear Glen,

Since league play is really cranking up, I have noticed that there seems to be a lot of conflict with partners overruling partners on line calls. I know the rule is that both players can make the call, but the issue is when there is a difference in the sighting of the call.

Any insight would be appreciated.

Jen

Dear Jen,

This is a very tricky area because of relationships and past history of playing against specific opponents. Due to certain player's personalities, there is "no holds bar" on overruling a partner. They can do this but it isn't always good for a partnership. I would recommend that a team get together in huddle to determine the call. If your partner is not willing to do this, there are two options: 1. Get a thicker skin, 2. Get a new partner.

Dear Glen,

I just moved from Colorado and have heard a lot of great things about tennis in Tallahassee. My family is very active in the game and I am interested in a number of different activities that you have to offer. Where is a good resource for this information?

Dear Players,

Tallahassee is a great place to live and a better place to play tennis. We have a complete array of leagues that are coordinated through the USTA league coordinators and the TTA for adults. There is Junior Team Tennis that is coordinated by Ida Thompson in Tallahassee. The City, private entities, and the Tallahassee Tennis Association run many special events. These can be found at the Talgov.com and ttatennis.org.

As far as the sanctioned tennis tournaments, these can be seen online at the [USTAFlorida](http://USTAFlorida.com) website. I am sure you will find many of your needs at the Parks & Recreation portion of the Talgov.com website. In addition the sites shows location of parks, lessons, and features a "gamefinder" site.

Dear Glen,

I really like playing doubles with a bunch of different partners. The problem is that my one partner always gets down when he's losing. This really takes away from the fun of the game. Any suggestions on dealing with a partner like this?

Dear Frustrated Player,

There's nothing that you can say to change his or her perspective during a match. I would recommend going to lunch and talking out the situation. The player may not be aware of

this behavior and how it is adversely effecting the situation. If the behavior doesn't change, than you need to decide whether the partnership is worth continuing.

Dear Glen,

I really hate playing "pushers". Being that I don't have a good winning percentage against dinkers, can I get some insight into how there could derive any enjoyment from hitting the ball like that? On the other hand, how do I beat them?

Dear Bob,

The simple answer is, "Winning is a lot of fun". Most pushers win a majority of their matches because they stay within their own limits. There are a couple of things that you may want to try. First, I would suggest adding more spin to your game. This will give you more control. And second, one of my former mentors told me, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." This means to push until there is an opportunity to play your game.

Dear Glen,

I would like to donate time to teach in the community. What is the best way to make this a reality? I don't have any experience, but really like working with kids.

Dear Future Coach,

You are in luck! On March 20th, there will be a Recreational Coaches Workshop at Forestmeadows. This is a 6-hour class that should give you a starting foundation for coaching tennis. I have hired numerous coaches from these workshops in the past. It is more important for me to find the right personality verses a 5.0 level tennis player. Call or stop by Forestmeadows Athletic Center for an application.

Dear Glen,

I know that there are a number of projects that are taking place at the City's tennis courts. Could I get an update on Tom Brown and Winthrop Park? I play on league at Tom Brown and miss hitting on the wall in my neighborhood in Winthrop Park.

Dear City Patron,

This is a great question and I am glad that you asked. The first Tom Brown courts (5-8) are completed. Many have played on them and found them to be the best hard courts in the City. The second set of courts (1-4) are under construction with the first layer of asphalt already been laid down last Friday. Another layer of blacktop is put down than a curing of at least 21 days will take place. At that point the courts will be color-coated and the nets will be installed. Barring any bad weather, a realistic due date would be April 1st.

As far as the hitting wall at Winthrop, the concrete will be poured in the next week. At that point, a block mason will be hired and the wall will be built. A time schedule has not been set due to all the projects that are underway.

Dear Glen,

What is the right amount of interaction from a parent to his child when they start playing tournaments? Is there any information that I can access?

Dear Parent,

If it isn't already hard enough to raise a child, you are going to assist your junior in their competitive endeavors. In most cases, the player is very capable of managing his game in tournaments. It has hard to split the roles of coach and parent. The line becomes blurred and the junior doesn't know which giving direction. There is a parent download on the USTA High Performance page if there is interest in the specifics. Remember, junior players don't care what you know until they know that you care.

Dear Glen,

Watching the Australian Open over the past two weeks, I noticed that many of the players hit a topspin volley. I this only for pro level players or is this something that I can add to my game?

John

Dear John,

Many of the players on the tour use this shot due to it being a higher percentage hit. They can hit the ball as hard as they want and the spin assist bringing the ball in the court. This allows a player to bet an opponent with the speed of the ball. In most cases, not a lot of backswing, but a complete finish.

Dear Glen,

How do I practice a half volley? Ever since I started playing more doubles and attacking the net in singles, more balls are hitting my feet. This is very discouraging. Any thoughts on how this shot could be improved?

Dear Player,

As I have mentioned with several of the other shots that would like to be improved, it comes down to sheer numbers. Standing at the service line and having the baseline hitter aim the feet of the half-volleyer can accomplish this. If this is practiced regularly, I believe you will find that your shots will start having directional intent as well as the ability to hit away from an opponent. If you are a doubles player, the drill should be practiced on the crosscourt to get used to the diagonal hit.