

Dear Glen,

I am going to tryout for my high school team this year and was wondering what the best way to prepare for competition. Being that I have never competed in tournaments, I'm not sure what to expect. Any ideas?

Joey

Dear Joey,

Most high school and college coaches play challenge matches for positions. It would be my recommendation to get two or three regular playing partners. This will give the diversity that is needed plus an indicator of how your game is proceeding. I would recommend playing several sets per week. Due to time restraints, starting at two all in a set could get more sets played may be a good alternative.

Dear Glen,

I am hitting the ball a lot harder than I used to. As a result, my strings are breaking quicker and my ball tends to sail. Maybe one of the "new" hybrid string jobs would help. Do you have any suggestions?

Mac

Dear Mac,

We have a lot of success with the hybrid stringing jobs at Forestmeadows. We have been using Luxilon or polyester for the mainstring and a softer string on the cross. A crossstring such as NXT, Sensation, or FXP tends to be a little kinder to the arm and the crossstring wears out about the time for a racquet restringing. Lenin Mongerie strings about 80% Hybrids and can match the right stringing for your style of play.

Dear Glen,

As a player, I have been told to attack the backhand in a singles match. Being a fairly good player that has played for over ten years, what do I do if his backhand is solid? Any thoughts would be appreciated.

Sue from Longwood, FL

Dear Sue,

There are many things that I test in an opponent before I give up on the backhand. If they have a two handed shot on that wing, I hit the ball low and short to comprimize the lack of reach. If the player is a one-hander, I hit the ball high and hard. Next, it would be recommended to make the opponent hit this shot on the run. This can be accomplished by hitting wide to the forehand, than immediately going to the backhand. This will either create an error or a short ball that you will be able to jump on. And lastly, changing speeds to the backhand may keep a player off balance.

Dear Glen,

My opponents were in a hotly contested match and at a critical time, called a let due to an errant ball behind us. We were about to put the ball away and would have won the point. They contested that it was unsafe because of where the ball was and a distraction. This was a turning point and we went on to lose the match. Any thoughts?

Nameless in Tallahassee

Dear Nameless,

According to USTA rule 23, a let is called if another ball rolls onto the court. If the opponents prior to the winner being hit stop play, the point is replayed. As far as the one point turning the match around, very rarely does one point change the outcome of a match unless the competitor allows this to happen.

Dear Glen,

I got a calf injury while playing my singles game at Tom Brown. It is my belief that I became dehydrated and that caused my calf to spasm than the calf strained. The injury seems to be getting worse with other injuries occurring to the back and upper leg. What do you think about sports massage therapy to get me on track?

Dear Player,

You are in luck! I injured my hamstring about a month ago and have been going to massage therapy for about a month. My results and recovery have been remarkable. This Labor Day tennis round robin will feature Jess Nichols, who is a licensed Sports Massage Therapist. She will be giving free massages during the tennis event. We are considering having, by appointment; massage therapy at Forestmeadows in the near future. Stop by and see Jess this upcoming Monday.

Dear Glen,

When did the yellow tennis ball replace the white ball? My dad told me that all tennis balls used to be white. Can you still get white tennis balls?

Bobby

Dear Bobby,

In about 1972, the optic yellow tennis ball was introduced into the game of tennis. Studies found that the optic yellow color was easier to see on a TV screen. Wimbledon continued for a period, but eventually changed to the yellow ball. White balls are still manufactured with companies such as Wilson and Wimbledon brand. There are vintage tennis balls on sites such as Ebay that can be purchased that have the old key and a metal can. Approximately 300 million balls are produced worldwide for tennis consumption each year.

Dear Glen,

My forehand used to be my best shot. I think a lot of the problem is those balls are hit much harder than ever before. Tennis channel had a special on the "Spanish Method" and I was considering the forehand stances they were teaching. Do you have any insight on these techniques? Are they too hard to change my old way of hitting?

Dear Player,

Many of the players on the tour use this technique when hitting the ball. The simple answer is that when hitting defensively, they hit off their back foot. When hitting on offense, the player steps into the ball in a semi-open stance. This is known as the X pattern. The foot stepping to the end of the X's to create the appropriate effect.

Dear Glen,

I tend to miss the ball completely many times when my girlfriend and I are hitting balls. Being an athlete, this is quite embarrassing. Any idea of how I could hit the ball better?

Dear Player,

Even after player for 35 years of playing the game, it is still easy to "whiff" on the ball. The key with all ball sports is to make contact in front of the body. If the ball gets close to the body, there will be a short period of time in which you will not see the ball. In addition, the stroke will be jammed and not be maneuverable. The second key is to keep the head very still at the point of contact. Watch Roger Federer hit the ball and how stationary his head is at the ball contact. The vision will not blur which in turn gives the best chance to make a solid contact.

Dear Glen,

I played in the "Wild Thing" this past weekend and found that I was wilting during my second match. By the time the third match started, the game was over before it got started. Is this a nutrition thing like you mentioned in one of your earlier articles?

Rick

Dear Rick,

There were a couple of things that needed to take place. I am pretty sure that you don't play that much on a regular basis and your court times are probably at night after work. To prepare properly, play needs to be simulated at the same extent and at the same time. When getting prepared to do a marathon, your training peaks at runs that are 20 miles in length. This is usually after six months of preparation. In addition, playing and practicing in the heat of the day will create a certain tolerance to the extreme conditions.

As far as your nutritional needs, eating a pasta dinner the night before is a good long-term fuel source. During the day, I would recommend small meals and no fast foods. Power Gel is an excellent short-term supplement that I have found to be beneficial. Finding what works best for you is the key to your personal needs.

Dear Glen,

I noticed that most of the players on the men's pro tour start in a very wide stance prior to returning serve. This is not a practice that is used by many club players. Will this help my return of serve?

Dear Player,

I have made the same observation. This is a very balanced stance that goes immediately into a split-step. One of the biggest keys to this technique is the body moving forward to the ball at impact. Give it a try and see what the results produce.

Dear Glen,

I have really enjoy your column over the past couple years. Maybe you can shed some light on how I can perform better in USTA National tournaments. My Sectional ranking is in the top two for the last couple years and top fifty in the nation. My issue is adapting to the different venues that the Nationals are

played. Adjusting to the climate and conditions is very difficult. Do you have any suggestions?

Frustrated in Nebraska

Dear Nebraska,

This is very common and I can shed some light on this subject. In former years when I competed at the National level of the 35's, it was a struggle to get used to the conditions of the court and the climate. In time, I figured that I needed to go to Nationals three or four days early to adjust to the conditions. This gave me time to peak properly verses playing poorly.

Dear Glen,

While playing a doubles match, our opponent crossed the net with his racket and hit a winner. He claims that the ball was struck on his side of the court. What is the call?

Dear Player,

According to USTA rule 25e, a player's racket can pass over the net after hitting the ball on his or her side. The ball must hit the correct court.

Dear Glen,

I would like to get more "kick" on my kick serve. Having hit this shot for better than 30 years, I am concerned about the amount of torque this shot puts on my lower back. Any suggestions or should I avoid hitting this shot?

Tommy

Dear Tommy,

The mechanics of this shot have changed a little bit since you first incorporated it into your game. In past years, the toss was placed behind and in back of the server. This created a lot of strain and load on the lower back. The modern game kick serve places the toss out in front of the body with the toss over the head. Not only do you get the upward thrust of the racket, but forward momentum that creates and aggressive kick.

In addition, the kinetic chain needs to be utilized using force from the ground up. A deep knee bend will create consistent force for this serve. Take a look at a basketball player that shoots a ball from the perimeter. It is the same effect.

Dear Glen,

The new eight freshly renovated courts at Tom Brown are awesome. This surface seems much slower than any hard court I have played on in the Tallahassee area. Where the courts resurfaced intentionally slow?

Dear Player,

I am sure you have played on many hardcourts. The surface is worn down by play and weather elements. The resurfaced court is a latexite and is mixed with sand to create a textured surface. A court can be made slower at the time of resurfacing by the use of additional sand. The Tom Brown courts are a medium slow surface and will get a little faster with time.

Dear Glen,

Who was the first black woman to ever win the Wimbledon Championship?

Dear Player,

You may have thought it was Serena or Venus Williams, but the answer is Althea Gibson. Ms. Gibson won the Wimbledon women's singles championship in 1957 and 1958. In addition, Gibson won the women's doubles tournament in 1956, 1957 and 1958.

Dear Glen,

What is the key to executing hits below the level of the net? Every time this occurs I hit the ball into the net. This happens whenever I hit groundstrokes and volleys.

Juan

Dear Juan,

The single most important common denominator is getting the eyes down to the level of the ball. This will lower the center of gravity and give the ability to see the ball better. In this position, there is a tendency to thrust the ball up, which will keep the ball out of the net. In addition, this is extremely important on volleys and can produce more consistency on a regular basis.

If you ever get a chance to look at some old footage of Jimmy Connors hitting the ball, you will notice that he was great at getting down to the level of the ball. This is probably the main reason he was so effective over the length of his career on all surfaces.

Dear Glen,

It frustrates me greatly when my court assignment gets changed on the Forestmeadows clay. When I am told a specific court assignment over the phone that is what I am expecting. Can you may sure that this never happens again?

Dear City Patron,

We truly do appreciate your business at our tennis facilities. It has been our goal to accommodate as many people and provide a quality service and product. That being said, in the interest of accommodating so many patrons and tennis activities, we are forced to move patrons around on open courts on occasion. Watering and maintenance can be an issue due to the clay surface not always adjusting to the temperature and climate.

My commitment to you is to provide the best possible playing surface and communicate better when court changes need to be made.

Dear Glen,

I still hear a lot of talk about the "Modern Game". Why was it so important to change the way tennis players hit the ball?

John

Dear John,

The change to the Modern Game came out of necessity due to the speed of the ball. The tennis ball

came faster and the traditional footwork was not adequate to deal effectively with the change in speed. The "open stance" forehand is the cornerstone of the Modern Game. Less steps and more power generated through the kinetic chain.

Most all World Class players use this shot and many club players have adopted it. Give it a try and see what happens.

Dear Glen,

My doubles partner is threatening to get another partner because of how bad I volley. My tendency is to hit my volley right back to my opponent. Is there anything I can do to speed up the process to a better volley?

Dear Player,

Sheer numbers my friend. Practicing volleying more regularly will bring it up to speed. Using the ball machine and setting target areas will train the habit of not hitting back to an opponent. If you go to the Utube sit and watch the Mike and Bob Bryan volley drill, you will see a practice hit that is not only good for your volley, but also fun to do.

Dear Glen,

I am looking for a good teaching to help me with my game. Looking at the Talgov website, I see that there are twelve different teaching professionals. What are the characteristics of a good teaching pro?

Dear Student,

I tested over 140 teaching pro applicants last year in Florida. There are a couple of criteria that I look for in a tennis pro. The amount of energy and personal interaction are some of the criteria that are good signs of a seasoned coach. Watch a teaching professional and noticing the effectiveness of their feeds and information that is taking place at the same time is also a good indicator of good pro.

On a personal note, finding a coach that you can relate to is the single most important criteria. If you like your pro and the partnership is good, than it could be a good fit. There is no long-term commitment unless you want one!

Dear Glen,

I am a female tennis player that has gotten into competing in league. The tennis clothes that I wear force me to put the tennis ball under my dress. There is a need to do this because I have a two handed backhand. Do you have any suggestions to where I could put the ball?

Dear Player,

There is a simple answer to this problem. Our proshop has a "hip-clip that attaches to the waistband. It can be adjusted to your specific needs.

Dear Glen,

My friends and I have been taking the City clinics for a couple of years and believe we are ready to do some league play. How do I go about this?

Tom

Dear Tom,

There are many new leagues that could be a possibility. The USTA league coordinators phone numbers are at the Forestmeadows desk and on our Talgov website calendar page. In addition, the TTA has leagues that are played at numerous City sites. Feel free to contact me if you are looking for a specific league.

Dear Glen,

My opponent starts his serving motion by hitting the ball off the bounce. Is there a rule against this?

GB

Dear Golden Boy,

According to USTA rule 16: The server shall stand at rest with both feet behind the baseline. The server shall then release the ball by hand in any direction and hit the ball with the racket before the ball hits the ground.

Dear Glen,

When can I take a swing at a volley? I have noticed that many good players at the club as well as pro players take swings. What do you think?

Dear Medev,

Not knowing your level of play, I can give you some guidelines. In many cases, there is not enough time to swing at the volley and this hitting pattern tends to cause problems for beginners and intermediate players.

If you are a 4.0 players or better, here are a couple of ideas. If power needs to be created for a slow moving volley, a swing may be used. The single most important key is that contact must be made in front of the body. Power can be produced by speed of the ball, speed of the body, or speed of the racquet. When swinging at a slow ball, an upward action on the ball is the ticket to keeping a hard hit ball in the court.

Dear Glen,

What is the best way to toss the ball on the service?

Dear Player,

This is the hardest part of serving. I tell my students to release the ball instead of tossing. In addition, hold the ball with three fingertips. This tends to help the server to not hold too tight to the ball.