



Singles Tennis Rules

1. The Court

The Court shall be a rectangle 78 feet (23.77 m) long and 27 feet (8.23 m) wide. It shall be divided across the middle by a net suspended from a cord or metal cable of a maximum diameter of one-third of an inch (0.8 cm), the ends of which shall be attached to, or pass over, the tops of two posts, which shall be not more than 6 inches (15 cm) square or 6 inches (15 cm) in diameter. These posts shall not be higher than 1 inch (2.5 cm) above the top of the net cord. The centres of the posts shall be 3 feet (.914 m) outside the Court on each side and the height of the posts shall be such that the top of the cord or metal cable shall be 3 feet 6 inches (1.07 m) above the ground.

When a combined doubles (see Rule 34) and singles Court with a doubles net is used for singles, the net must be supported to a height of 3 feet 6 inches (1.07 m) by means of two posts, called "singles sticks", which shall be not more than 3 inches (7.5 cm) square or 3 inches (7.5 cm) in diameter. The centres of the singles sticks shall be 3 feet (.914 m) outside the singles Court on each side.

The net shall be extended fully so that it fills completely the space between the two posts and shall be of sufficiently small mesh to prevent the ball passing through. The height of the net shall be 3 feet (.914 m) at the centre, where it shall be held down taut by a strap not more than 2 inches (5 cm) wide and completely white in colour. There shall be a band covering the cord or metal cable and the top of the net of not less than 2 inches (5 cm) nor more than 2 inches (6.35 cm) in depth on each side and completely white in colour. There shall be no advertisement on the net, strap, band or singles sticks.

(See Rule 34 for a doubles court.)

USTA Comment:

The following is an approved method for obtaining proper net tautness. First, loosen the center strap. Next, tighten the net cord until it is approximately 40 inches above the ground, being careful not to overtighten the net. Finally, tighten the center strap until the center of the net is 36 inches above the ground. These measurements should always be made before the first match of the day.

The lines bounding the ends and sides of the Court shall respectively be called the base-lines and the side-lines. On each side of the net, at a distance of 21 feet (6.40 m) from it and parallel with it, shall be drawn the service-lines. The space on each side of the net between the service-line and the side-lines shall be divided into two equal parts called the service-courts by the centre service-line, which must be 2 inches (5 cm) in width, drawn half-way between, and parallel with, the side-line. Each base-line shall be bisected by an imaginary continuation of the centre service-line to a line 4 inches (10cm.) in length and 2 inches (5 cm) in width called the "centre mark" drawn inside the Court, at right angles to and in contact with such base-lines. All other lines shall be not less than 1 inch (2.5 cm) nor more than 2 inches (5 cm) in width, except the base-line, which may be not more than 4 inches (10 cm) in width, and all measurements shall be made to the outside of the lines. All lines shall be of uniform colour. If advertising or any other material is placed at the back of the Court, it may not contain white or yellow. A light colour may only be used if this does not interfere with the vision of the players.

If advertisements are placed on the chairs of the linesmen sitting at the back of the court, they may not contain white or yellow. A light colour may only be used if this does not interfere with the vision of the players.

ITF Note 1:

In Davis Cup, Fed Cup and the Official Championships of the International Tennis Federation, specific requirements with regard to the space behind the baseline and at the sides are included in the respective Regulations for these events.

ITF Note 2:

At club or recreational level, the space behind each baseline should be not less than 18 feet (5.5 m) and at the sides not less than 10 feet (3.05 m).

2. Permanent Fixtures

The permanent fixtures of the Court shall include not only the net, posts, singles sticks, cord or metal cable, strap and band, but also, where there are any such, the back and side stops, the stands, fixed or movable seats and chairs round the Court, and their occupants, all other fixtures around and above the Court, and the Umpire, Net-cord Judge, Footfault Judge, Linesmen and Ball Boys when in their respective places.

ITF Note:

For the purpose of this Rule, the word "Umpire" comprehends the Umpire, the persons entitled to a seat on the Court, and all those persons designated to assist the Umpire in the conduct of a match.

3. The Ball

Balls that are approved for play under the Rules of Tennis must comply with the following specifications:

- a. The ball shall have a uniform outer surface consisting of a fabric cover and shall be white or yellow in colour. If there are any seams they shall be stitchless.
- b. The ball shall conform to the requirements specified in Appendix I (Regulations for making tests specified in Rule 3.), Section iv (in 2001 Friend at Court) for size and be more than 1.975 ounces (56.0 grams) and less than 2.095 ounces (59.4 grams) in weight.
- c. The ball shall have a bound of more than 53 inches (134.62 cm) and less than 58 inches (147.32 cm) when dropped 100 inches (254.00 cm) upon a flat, rigid surface, e.g., concrete. The ball shall have a forward deformation of more than .220 of an inch (.559 cm) and less than .290 of an inch (.737 cm) and a return deformation of more than .315 of an inch (.800 cm) and less than .425 of an inch (1.080 cm) at 18 lb. (8.165 kg) load. The two deformation figures shall be the averages of three individual readings along three axes of the ball and no two individual readings shall differ by more than .030 of an inch (.076 cm) in each case.
- d. For play above 4,000 feet (1219 m) in altitude above sea level, two additional types of ball may be used. The first type is identical to those described above except that the bound shall be more than 48 inches (121.92 cm) and less than 53 inches (134.62 cm) and the ball shall have an internal pressure that is greater than the external pressure. This type of tennis ball is commonly known as a pressurised ball. The second type is identical to those described above except that they shall have a bound of more than 53

inches (134.62 cm) and less than 58 inches (147.32 cm) and shall have an internal pressure that is approximately equal to the external pressure and have been acclimatised for 60 days or more at the altitude of the specific tournament. This type of tennis ball is commonly known as a zero-pressure or non-pressurised ball.

e. All tests for bound, size and deformation shall be made in accordance with the regulations in Appendix I (see 2001 Friend at Court).

f. The International Tennis Federation shall rule on the question of whether any ball or prototype complies with the above specifications or is otherwise approved, for play. Such ruling may be taken on its own initiative, or upon application by any party with a bona fide interest therein, including any player, equipment manufacturer or National Association or members thereof. Such rulings and applications shall be made in accordance with the applicable Review and Hearing Procedures of the International Tennis Federation (see Appendix III in 2001 Friend at Court).

ITF Note 1:

Any ball to be used in a tournament which is played under the Rules of Tennis must be named on the official ITF list of approved balls issued by the International Tennis Federation.

ITF Note 2:

From 1st January 2000 until 31st December 2001 two further types of tennis ball may be used on an experimental basis.

The first type is identical to those described in paragraphs a. to c. above except that the ball shall have a forward deformation of more than .195 inches (.495 cm.) and less than .235 inches (.597 cm) and return deformation of more than .295 inches (.749 cm) and less than .380 inches (.965 cm). This type of ball shall be described as Ball Type 1 and may be used in either a pressurised or non-pressurised form.

Another type is identical to those described in paragraphs a. to c. above except that the size shall be more than 2.750 inches (6.985 cm) and less than 2.875 inches (7.302 cm) in diameter as determined by ring gauges and detailed in Appendix I, Section iv (See 2001 Friend at Court). This type of ball shall be described as Ball Type 3 and may be used in either a pressurised or non-pressurised form.

All other types of ball defined by Rule 3 shall be described as Ball Type 2.

For the purpose of tournaments played under this experiment:

1. Ball Type 1 (fast) should only be used for play on court surface types which have been classified as Category 1 (slow pace) (see Appendix I).
2. Ball Type 2 (medium) should only be used for play on court surface types which have been classified as Category 2 (medium/medium-fast pace) (see Appendix I in 2001 Friend at Court).
3. Ball Type 3 (slow) should only be used for play on court surface types which have been classified as Category 3 (fast pace) (see Appendix I in 2001 Friend at Court).

For non-professional play any ball type may be used on any surface type.

USTA Comment:

Professional play refers to tournaments conducted under the regulations of the ATP Tour, ITF, and WTA Tour. This includes Satellite, Futures, and Challenger tournaments.

USTA Comment:

For non-professional play, any ball type may be used in sanctioned tournaments if the ball has been approved by the ITF and the USTA. Matches played with any approved ball type shall be considered for ranking.

4. The Racket

Rackets failing to comply with the following specifications are not approved for play under the Rules of Tennis:

a. The hitting surface of the racket shall be flat and consist of a pattern of crossed strings connected to a frame and alternately interlaced or bonded where they cross; and the stringing pattern shall be generally uniform, and in particular not less dense in the centre than in any other area. The racket shall be designed and strung such that the playing characteristics are identical on both faces. The strings shall be free of attached objects and protrusions other than those utilised solely and specifically to limit or prevent wear and tear or vibration, and which are reasonable in size and placement for such purposes.

b. The frame of the racket shall not exceed 29 inches (73.66 cm) in overall length, including the handle. The frame of the racket shall not exceed 12 inches (31.75 cm) in overall width. The hitting surface shall not exceed 15 inches (39.37 cm) in overall length, and 11 inches (29.21 cm) in overall width.

c. The frame, including the handle, shall be free of attached objects and devices other than those utilised solely and specifically to limit or prevent wear and tear or vibration, or to distribute weight. Any objects and devices must be reasonable in size and placement for such purposes.

d. The frame, including the handle and the strings, shall be free of any device which makes it possible to change materially the shape of the racket, or to change the weight distribution in the direction of the longitudinal axis of the racket which would alter the swing moment of inertia, or to deliberately change any physical property which may affect the performance of the racket during the playing of a point.

The International Tennis Federation shall rule on the question of whether any racket or prototype complies with the above specifications or is otherwise approved, or not approved, for play. Such ruling may be undertaken on its own initiative, or upon application by any party with a bona fide interest therein, including any player, equipment manufacturer or National Association or members thereof. Such rulings and applications shall be made in accordance with the applicable Review and Hearing Procedures of the International Tennis Federation (see Appendix III in 2001 Friend at Court).

Case 1. Can there be more than one set of strings on the hitting surface of racket?

Decision. No. The rule clearly mentions a pattern, and not patterns, of crossed strings.

Case 2. Is the stringing pattern of a racket considered to be generally uniform and flat if the strings are on more than one plane?

Decision. No.

Case 3. Can vibration dampening devices be placed on the strings of a racket and if so, where can they be placed?

Decision. Yes; but such devices may be placed only outside the pattern of crossed strings.

Case 4. In the course of play, a player accidentally breaks the strings of his racket. Can he continue to play with the racket in this condition?

Decision. Yes

USTA Comment:

If after play has begun it is discovered that a player has been using an illegal racket or an illegally strung racket, all points played stand. The player must find another racket immediately. If the discovery occurs after the match is over, the match still counts.

5. Server & Receiver

The players shall stand on opposite sides of the net; the player who first delivers the ball shall be called the Server, and the other the Receiver.

Case 1. Does a player, attempting a stroke, lose the point if he crosses an imaginary line in the extension of the net,

- a. before striking the ball
- b. after striking the ball?

Decision. He does not lose the point in either case by crossing the imaginary line and provided he does not enter the lines bounding his opponent's Court (Rule 20(e)). In regard to hindrance, his opponent may ask for the decision of the Umpire under Rules 21 and 25.

Case 2. The Server claims that the Receiver must stand within the lines bounding his Court. Is this necessary?

Decision. No. The Receiver may stand wherever he pleases on his own side of the net.

6. Choice of Ends & Service

The choice of ends and the right to be Server or Receiver in the first game shall be decided by toss. The player winning the toss may choose or require his opponent to choose:

- a. The right to be Server or Receiver, in which case the other player shall choose the end; or
- b. The end, in which case the other player shall choose the right to be Server or Receiver.

Case 1. Do players have the right to new choices if the match is postponed or suspended before it has started?

Decision. Yes. The toss stands, but new choices may be made with respect to service and end.

USTA Comment:

The toss shall be made before the warm-up. Choices should be made promptly after the toss and are irrevocable, except when the match is postponed or suspended before the start of the match.

7. The Service

The service shall be delivered in the following manner. Immediately before commencing to serve, the Server shall stand with both feet at rest behind (i.e. further from the net than) the base-line, and within the imaginary continuations of the centre-mark and side-line. The Server shall then project the ball by hand into the air in any direction and before it hits the ground strike it with his racket, and the delivery shall be deemed to have been completed at the moment of the impact of the racket and the ball. A player with the use of only one arm may utilize his racket for the projection.

USTA Comment:

There is no restriction regarding the kind of service which may be used; that is, the player may use an underhand or overhand service at his discretion.

Case 1. May the Server in a singles game take his stand behind the portion of the base-line between the side-lines of the Singles Court and the Doubles Court?

Decision. No.

USTA Comment:

In singles, the server may stand anywhere in back of the baseline between the imaginary extensions of the inside edge of the center mark and the outside edge of the singles sideline.

Case 2. If a player, when serving, throws up two or more balls instead of one, does he lose that service?

Decision. No. A let should be called, but if the Umpire regards the action as deliberate he may take action under Rule 21.

8. Foot Fault

The Server shall throughout the delivery of the Service:

a. Not change his position by walking or running. The Server shall not by slight movements of the feet which do not materially affect the location originally taken up by him, be deemed "to change his position by walking or running".

b. Not touch with either foot any area other than that behind the base-line within the imaginary extensions of the centre-mark and side-lines.

USTA Comment:

The key to understanding this rule is to realize that the Server's feet must be at rest immediately before beginning to serve. Immediately thereafter, the delivery of the service begins with any arm or racket motion and ends when the racket contacts the ball (or misses the ball in attempt to strike it).

A player commits a foot fault if after his feet are at rest but before he strikes the ball, either foot touches:

- the Court, including the baseline;
- any part of the imaginary extension of the center mark; or
- beyond the imaginary extension of the outside edge of the sideline.

There can be no foot fault if the Server does not attempt to strike at the ball. As long as the Server makes no attempt to strike at the ball, it is immaterial whether he catches it in his hand or his racket or lets it drop to the ground.

USTA Comment:

This rule covers the most decisive stroke in the game, and there is no justification for its not being obeyed by players and enforced by officials. No official has the right to instruct any umpire to disregard violations of it. In a non-officiated match, the Receiver, or his partner, may call foot faults after all efforts (appeal to the server, request for an umpire, etc.) have failed and the foot faulting is so flagrant as to be clearly perceptible from the Receiver's side.

It is improper for any official to warn a player that he is in danger of having a foot fault called on him. On the other hand, if a player asks for an explanation of how he foot faulted, either the Line Umpire or the Chair Umpire should give him that information.

9. Delivery of Service

a. In delivering the service, the Server shall stand alternately behind the right and left halves of the Court beginning from the right in every game. If service from a wrong half

of the Court occurs and is undetected, all play resulting from such wrong service or services shall stand, but the inaccuracy of station shall be corrected immediately it is discovered.

b. The ball served shall pass over the net and hit the ground within the Service Court which is diagonally opposite, or upon any line bounding such Court, before the Receiver returns it.

10. Service Fault

The Service is a fault:

- a. If the Server commits any breach of Rules 7, 8 or 9(b);
- b. If he misses the ball in attempting to strike it;
- c. If the ball served touches a permanent fixture (other than the net, strap or band) before it hits the ground.

Case 1. After throwing a ball up preparatory to serving, the Server decides not to strike at it and catches it instead. Is it a fault?

Decision. No.

USTA Comment:

As long as the Server makes no attempt to strike at the ball, it is immaterial whether he catches it in his hand or his racket or lets it drop to the ground.

Case 2. In serving in a singles game played on a Doubles Court with doubles posts and singles sticks, the ball hits a singles stick and then hits the ground within the lines of the correct Service Court. Is this a fault or a let?

Decision. In serving it is a fault, because the singles stick, the doubles post, and that portion of the net or band between them are permanent fixtures. (Rules 2 and 10, and note to Rule 24.)

USTA Comment:

The significant point is that the part of the net and band "outside" the singles sticks is not part of the net over which this singles match is being played. Thus, such a serve is a fault under the provisions of subparagraph c. above. By the same token, this would be a fault also if it were a singles game played with permanent posts in the singles position. See Case 1 under Rule 24 for difference between "service" and "good return" with respect to a ball hitting a net post.

11. Second Service

After a fault (if it is the first fault) the Server shall serve again from behind the same half of the Court from which he served that fault, unless the service was from the wrong half, when, in accordance with Rule 9, the Server shall be entitled to one service only from behind the other half.

Case 1. A player serves from a wrong Court. He loses the point and then claims it was a fault because of his wrong station.

Decision. The point stands as played and the next service should be from the correct station according to the score.

Case 2. The point score being 15 all, the Server, by mistake, serves from the left-hand Court. He wins the point. He then serves again from the right-hand Court, delivering a fault. This mistake in station is then discovered. Is he entitled to the previous point? From which Court should he next serve?

Decision. The previous point stands. The next service should be from the left-hand Court, the score being 30/15, and the Server having served one fault.

12. When to Serve

The Server shall not serve until the Receiver is ready. If the latter attempts to return the service, he shall be deemed ready. If, however, the Receiver signifies that he is not ready, he may not claim a fault because the ball does not hit the ground within the limits fixed for the service.

USTA Comment:

The Server must wait until the Receiver is ready for the second service as well as the first, and if the Receiver claims to be not ready and does not make any effort to return a service, the Server's claim for the point may not be honored even though the service was good. However, the Receiver, having indicated he is ready, may not become unready unless some outside interference takes place.

13. The "Let"

In all cases where a let has to be called under the rules, or to provide for an interruption to play, it shall have the following interpretations:—

- a. When called solely in respect of a service that one service only shall be replayed.
- b. When called under any other circumstance, the point shall be replayed.

Case 1. A service is interrupted by some cause outside those defined in Rule 14. Should the service only be replayed?

Decision. No, the whole point must be replayed.

USTA Comment:

If the interruption occurs during delivery of the second service, the Server gets two serves.

Example: On a second service a linesman calls "fault" and immediately corrects it, the Receiver meanwhile having let the ball go by. The Server is entitled to two serves on this ground: The corrected call means that the Server has put the ball into play with a good service, and once the ball is in play and a let is called, the point must be replayed. Note, however, that if the serve is an unmistakable ace—that is, the Umpire is sure the erroneous call had no part in the Receiver's inability to play the ball—the point should be declared for the Server.

If a delay between first and second serves is caused by the Receiver, an official, or outside interference, the whole point shall be replayed. If the delay is caused by the Server, the Server has one serve to come. A spectator's outcry (of "out," "fault," or other) is not a valid basis for replay of a point, but action should be taken to prevent a recurrence.

Case 2. If a ball in play becomes broken, should a let be called?

Decision. Yes.

USTA Comment:

A ball shall be regarded as having become "broken" if, in the opinion of the Umpire, it is found to have lost compression to the point of being unfit for further play, or unfit for any reason, and it is clear the defective ball was the one in play.

14. The Let in Service

The Service is a let:

- a. If the ball served touches the net, strap or band, and is otherwise good, or, after touching the net, strap or band, touches the Receiver or anything which he wears or carries before hitting the ground.
- b. If a service or a fault is delivered when the Receiver is not ready (see Rule 12).

In case of a let, that particular service shall not count, and the Server shall serve again, but a service let does not annul a previous fault.

15. Order of Service

At the end of the first game, the Receiver shall become Server, and the Server Receiver; and so on alternately in all the subsequent games of a match. If a player serves out of turn, the player who ought to have served shall serve as soon as the mistake is discovered, but all points scored before such discovery shall stand. A fault served before such discovery shall not stand. If a game shall have been completed before such discovery, the order of service shall remain as altered.

16. When Players Change Ends

The players shall change ends at the end of the first, third and every subsequent alternate game of each set, and at the end of each set unless the total number of games in such set is even, in which case the change is not made until the end of the first game of the next set.

If a mistake is made and the correct sequence is not followed the players must take up their correct station as soon as the discovery is made and follow their original sequence.

17. The Ball in Play

A ball is in play from the moment at which it is delivered in service. Unless a fault or a let is called it remains in play until the point is decided.

USTA Comment:

A point is not decided simply when, or because, a good shot has clearly passed a player, or when an apparently bad shot passes over a baseline or sideline. An outgoing ball is still definitely in play until it actually strikes the ground, backstop, a permanent fixture (other than the net, posts, singles sticks, cord or metal cable, strap or band), or a player. The same applies to a good ball, bounding after it has landed in the proper Court. A ball that becomes imbedded in the net is out of play.

USTA Comment:

When a ball is hit into the net and the player on the other side, thinking the ball is coming over, strikes at it and hits the net he loses the point if his touching the net occurs while the ball is still in play.

Case 1. A player fails to make a good return. No call is made and the ball remains in play. May his opponent later claim the point after the rally has ended?

Decision. No. The point may not be claimed if the players continue to play after the error has been made, provided the opponent was not hindered.

USTA Comment:

An out call on A's shot to B's Court must be made before B's return has either gone out of play or been hit by A. See Case 3 under Rule 29 regarding this situation in an umpired match.

18. Server Wins Point

The Server wins the point:

- a. If the ball served, not being a let under Rule 14, touches the Receiver or anything which he wears or carries, before it hits the ground;
- b. If the Receiver otherwise loses the point as provided by Rule 20.

19. Receiver Wins Point

The Receiver wins the point:

- a. If the Server serves two consecutive faults;
- b. If the Server otherwise loses the point as provided by Rule 20.

20. Player Loses Point

A player loses the point if:

- a. He fails, before the ball in play has hit the ground twice consecutively, to return it directly over the net (except as provided in Rule 24(a) or (c)); or
- b. He returns the ball in play so that it hits the ground, a permanent fixture, or other object, outside any of the lines which bound his opponent's Court (except as provided in Rule 24(a) or (c)); or
- c. He volleys the ball and fails to make a good return even when standing outside the Court; or

USTA Comment:

A ball hitting a scoring device or other object attached to a net post results in loss of point to the striker.

- d. In playing the ball he deliberately carries or catches it on his racket or deliberately touches it with his racket more than once; or

USTA Comment:

Only when there is a definite "second push" by the player does his shot become illegal, with consequent loss of point. The word "deliberately" is the key word in this rule. Two hits occurring in the course of a single continuous swing are not deemed a double hit.

e. He or his racket (in his hand or otherwise) or anything which he wears or carries touches the net, posts, singles sticks, cord or metal cable, strap or band, or the ground within his opponent's Court at any time while the ball is in play; or

USTA Comment:

Touching a pipe support that runs across the Court at the bottom of the net is interpreted as touching the net. See USTA Comment under Rule 23 for a ball which hits a pipe support.

f. He volleys the ball before it has passed the net; or

g. The ball in play touches him or anything that he wears or carries, except his racket in his hand or hands; or

USTA Comment:

This loss of point occurs regardless of whether the player is inside or outside the bounds of his Court when the ball touches him.

h. He throws his racket at and hits the ball; or

i. He deliberately and materially changes the shape of his racket during the playing of the point.

Case 1. In serving, the racket flies from the Server's hand and touches the net before the ball has touched the ground. Is this a fault, or does the player lose the point?

Decision. The Server loses the point because his racket touches the net whilst the ball is in play (Rule 20(e)).

Case 2. In serving, the racket flies from the Server's hand and touches the net after the ball has touched the ground outside the proper court. Is this a fault, or does the player lose the point?

Decision. This is a fault because the ball was out of play when the racket touched the net.

Case 3. A and B are playing against C and D, A is serving to D, C touches the net before the ball touches the ground. A fault is then called because the service falls outside the Service Court. Do C and D lose the point?

Decision. The call "fault" is an erroneous one. C and D had already lost the point before "fault" could be called, because C touched the net whilst the ball was in play (Rule 20(e)).

Case 4. May a player jump over the net into his opponent's Court while the ball is in play and not suffer penalty?

Decision. No. He loses the point (Rule 20(e)).

Case 5. A cuts the ball just over the net, and it returns to A's side. B, unable to reach the ball, throws his racket and hits the ball. Both racket and ball fall over the net on A's Court. A returns the ball outside of B's Court. Does B win or lose the point?

Decision. B loses the point (Rule 20(e) and (h)).

Case 6. A player standing outside the service Court is struck by a service ball before it has touched the ground. Does he win or lose the point?

Decision. The player struck loses the point (Rule 20(g)), except as provided under Rule 14(a).

Case 7. A player standing outside the Court volleys the ball or catches it in his hand and claims the point because the ball was certainly going out of court.

Decision. In no circumstances can he claim the point:

- i. If he catches the ball he loses the point under Rule 20(g).
- ii. If he volleys it and makes a bad return he loses the point under Rule 20(c).
- iii. If he volleys it and makes a good return, the rally continues.

21. Player Hinders Opponent

If a player commits any act which hinders his opponent in making a stroke, then, if this is deliberate, he shall lose the point or if involuntary, the point shall be replayed.

Case 1. Is a player liable to a penalty if in making a stroke he touches his opponent?
Decision. No, unless the Umpire deems it necessary to take action under Rule 21.

Case 2. When a ball bounds back over the net, the player concerned may reach over the net in order to play the ball. What is the ruling if the player is hindered from doing this by his opponent?
Decision. In accordance with Rule 21, the Umpire may either award the point to the player hindered, or order the point to be replayed (see also Rule 25).

Case 3. Does an involuntary double hit constitute an act which hinders an opponent within Rule 21?
Decision. No.

USTA Comment:

"Deliberate" means a player did what he intended to do, although the resulting effect on his opponent might or might not have been what he intended. Example: a player, after his return is in the air, gives advice to his partner in such a loud voice that his opponent is hindered. "Involuntary" means a non-intentional act such as a hat blowing off or a scream resulting from a sudden wasp sting.

22. Ball Falls on Line

A ball falling on a line is regarded as falling in the Court bounded by that line.

USTA Comment:

In a non-officiated match, each player makes the call on any ball hit toward his side of the net. If a player cannot call a ball out with certainty, he should regard it as good. In doubles, normally the Receiver's partner makes the calls with respect to the service line, with the Receiver calling the side and center lines, but either partner may make the call on any ball he clearly sees out.
The Rules of Tennis

23. Ball Touches Permanent Fixtures

If the ball in play touches a permanent fixture (other than the net, posts, singles sticks, cord or metal cable, strap or band) after it has hit the ground, the player who struck it wins the point; if before it hits the ground, his opponent wins the point.

USTA Comment:

A ball in play that strikes a pipe support running across the Court at the base of the net is treated the same as a ball landing on clear ground. See USTA Comment under Rule 20(e) for a player who touches a pipe support.

Case 1. A return hits the Umpire or his chair or stand. The player claims that the ball was going into Court.
Decision. He loses the point.

24. A Good Return

It is a good return:

- a. If the ball touches the net, posts, singles sticks, cord or metal cable, strap or band, provided that it passes over any of them and hits the ground within the Court; or
- b. If the ball, served or returned, hits the ground within the proper Court and rebounds or is blown back over the net, and the player whose turn it is to strike reaches over the net and plays the ball, provided that he does not contravene Rule 20(e); or
- c. If the ball is returned outside the posts, or singles sticks, either above or below the level of the top to the net, even though it touches the posts or singles sticks, provided that it hits the ground within the proper Court; or
- d. If a player's racket passes over the net after he has returned the ball, provided the ball passes the net before being played and is properly returned; or
- e. If a player succeeds in returning the ball, served or in play, which strikes a ball lying in the Court.

USTA Comment:

Paragraph (e) of the rule refers to a ball lying on the Court at the start of the point as a result of a service let or fault or as a result of a player dropping it. If a ball in play strikes a rolling or stationary "foreign" ball that has come from elsewhere after the point started, a let should be played. See Case 7 under Rule 25 which pertains to an object other than a ball that is being used in the match.

ITF Note:

In a singles match, if, for the sake of convenience, a Doubles Court is equipped with singles sticks for the purpose of a singles game, then the doubles posts and those portions of the net, cord or metal cable and the band outside such singles sticks shall at all times be permanent fixtures, and are not regarded as posts or parts of the net of a singles game.

USTA Comment:

In doubles this would be a "through"—loss of point.

A return that passes under the net cord between the singles stick and adjacent doubles post without touching either net cord, net or doubles post and falls within the court, is a good return.

Case 1. A ball going out of Court hits a net post or singles stick and falls within the lines of the opponent's Court. Is the stroke good?

Decision. If a service: no, under Rule 10(c). If other than a service: yes, under Rule 24(a).

Case 2. Is it a good return if a player returns the ball holding his racket in both hands?

Decision. Yes.

Case 3. The service, or ball in play, strikes a ball lying in the Court. Is the point won or lost thereby?

Decision. No. Play must continue. If it is not clear to the Umpire that the right ball is returned a let should be called.

USTA Comment:

A ball that is touching a boundary line is considered to be "lying in the Court."

Case 4. May a player use more than one racket at any time during play?

Decision. No. The whole implication of the Rules is singular.

Case 5. May a player request that a ball or balls lying in his opponent's Court be removed?

Decision. Yes, but not while a ball is in play.

USTA Comment:

This request must be honored.

25. Hindrance of a Player

In case a player is hindered in making a stroke by anything not within his control, except a permanent fixture of the Court, or except as provided for in Rule 21, a let shall be called.

USTA Comment:

See Rule 13 and its USTA Comments regarding lets.

Case 1. A spectator gets into the way of a player, who fails to return the ball. May the player then claim a let?

Decision. Yes. If in the Umpire's opinion he was obstructed by circumstances beyond his control, but not if due to permanent fixtures of the Court or the arrangements of the ground.

Case 2. A player is interfered with as in Case No.1, and the Umpire calls a let. The Server had previously served a fault. Has he the right to two services?

Decision. Yes. As the ball is in play, the point, not merely the stroke, must be replayed as the Rule provides.

Case 3. May a player claim a let under Rule 25 because he thought his opponent was being hindered, and consequently did not expect the ball to be returned?

Decision. No.

Case 4. Is a stroke good when a ball in play hits another ball in the air?

Decision. A let should be called unless the other ball is in the air by the act of one of the players, in which case the Umpire will decide under Rule 21.

Case 5. If an Umpire or other judge erroneously calls "fault" or "out", and then corrects himself, which of the calls shall prevail?

Decision. A let must be called unless, in the opinion of the Umpire, neither player is hindered in his game, in which case the corrected call shall prevail.

Case 6. If the first ball served—a fault—rebounds, interfering with the Receiver at the time of the second service, may the Receiver claim a let?

Decision. Yes. But if he had an opportunity to remove the ball from the Court and negligently failed to do so, he may not claim a let.

Case 7. Is it a good stroke if the ball touches a stationary or moving object on the Court?

Decision. It is a good stroke unless the stationary object came into Court after the ball was put into play in which case a let must be called. If the ball in play strikes an object moving along or above the surface of the Court a let must be called.

Case 8. What is the ruling if the first service is a fault, the second service correct, and it becomes necessary to call a let either under the provision of Rule 25 or if the Umpire is unable to decide the point?

Decision. The fault shall be annulled and the whole point replayed.

26. Score in a Game

a. If a player wins his first point, the score is called 15 for that player; on winning his second point, the score is called 30 for that player; on winning his third point, the score is called 40 for that player, and the fourth point won by a player is scored game for that player except as below:

If both players have won three points, the score is called deuce; and the next point won by a player is scored advantage for that player.

If the same player wins the next point, he wins the game; if the other player wins the next point the score is again called deuce; and so on, until a player wins the two points immediately following the score at deuce, when the game is scored for that player.

b. Optional Alternative Scoring System

The No-Ad System of Scoring may be adopted as an alternative to the traditional scoring system in paragraph (a) of this Rule provided the decision is announced in advance of the event.

In this case, the following Rules shall be effective:

If a player wins his first point, the score is called 15 for that player; on winning his second point, the score is called 30 for that player; on winning his third point, the score is called 40 for that player, and the fourth point won by a player is scored game for that player except as below:

If both players have won three points, the score is called deuce; one deciding point shall then be played. The receiver shall choose whether he wishes to receive the service from the right-half of the court or the left-half of the court. The player who wins the deciding point is scored the game.

Doubles

In doubles a similar procedure to that for singles shall apply. At deuce the Receiving Team shall choose whether it wishes to receive the Service from the right-half of the court or the left-half of the court. The team who wins the deciding point is scored the game.

Mixed Doubles

In mixed doubles, a slightly different procedure will apply as follows: At deuce, with the male player serving, he shall serve to the male player of the opposing team irrespective of which half of the court he is standing, and when the female player is serving, she shall serve to the female player of the opposing team.

USTA Comment:

In a non-officiated match the Server should announce, in a voice audible to his opponent and spectators, the set score at the beginning of each game, and point scores as the game goes on. Misunderstandings will be avoided if this practice is followed.

USTA Comment:

USTA Regulation I.V.II. authorizes the Referee to switch to No-Ad scoring before the start of any round without prior notice in all tournaments other than national junior championships after inclement weather or other factors cause the tournament to fall behind its published schedule.

27. Score in a Set

- a. A player (or players) who first wins six games wins a set; except that he must win by a margin of two games over his opponent and where necessary a set shall be extended until this margin is achieved.
- b. The tie-break system of scoring may be adopted as an alternative to the advantage set system in paragraph (a) of this Rule provided the decision is announced in advance of the match.

In this case, the following Rules shall be effective:

USTA Comment:

USTA Regulation I.V.3. requires that a Set Tie-Break be played in all sets. The Set Tie-Break is the tie-break game described in Rule 27(b).

The tie-break shall operate when the score reaches six games all in any set except in the third or fifth set of a three-set or five-set match respectively when an ordinary advantage set shall be played, unless otherwise decided and announced in advance of the match.

The following system shall be used in a tie-break game.

USTA Comment:

USTA Regulation I.V.4. authorizes the use of the Set Tie-Break or the Match Tie-Break in lieu of the third or final set in selected tournaments.

Singles

- i. A player who first wins seven points shall win the game and the set provided he leads by a margin of two points. If the score reaches six points all the game shall be extended until this margin has been achieved. Numerical scoring shall be used throughout the tie-break game.
- ii. The player whose turn it is to serve shall be the Server for the first point. His opponent shall be the Server for the second and third points and thereafter each player shall serve alternately for two consecutive points until the winner of the game and set has been decided.
- iii. From the first point, each service shall be delivered alternately from the right and left Courts, beginning from the right Court. If service from a wrong half of the Court occurs and is undetected, all play resulting from such wrong service or services shall stand, but the inaccuracy of station shall be corrected immediately it is discovered.
- iv. Players shall change ends after every six points and at the conclusion of the tie-break game.
- v. The tie-break game shall count as one game for the ball change, except that, if the balls are due to be changed at the beginning of the tie-break, the change shall be delayed until the second game of the following set.

Doubles

In doubles the procedure for singles shall apply. The player whose turn it is to serve shall be the Server for the first point. Thereafter each player shall serve in

rotation for two points, in the same order previously in that set, until the winners of the game and set have been decided.

Rotation of Service

The player (or pair in the case of doubles) whose turn it was to serve first in the tie-break game shall receive service in the first game of the following set.

Case 1. At six all the tie-break is played, although it has been decided and announced in advance of the match that an advantage set will be played. Are the points already played counted?

Decision. If the error is discovered before the ball is put in play for the second point, the first point shall count but the error shall be corrected immediately. If the error is discovered after the ball is put in play for the second point the game shall continue as a tie-break game.

Case 2. At six all, an advantage game is played, although it has been decided and announced in advance of the match that a tie-break will be played. Are the points already played counted?

Decision. If the error is discovered before the ball is put in play for the second point, the first point shall be counted but the error shall be corrected immediately. If the error is discovered after the ball is put in play for the second point an advantage set shall be continued. If the score thereafter reaches eight games all or a higher even number, a tie-break shall be played.

Case 3. If during a tie-break in a singles or doubles game, a player serves out of turn, shall the order of service remain as altered until the end of the game?

Decision. If a player has completed his turn of service the order of service shall remain as altered. If the error is discovered before a player has completed his turn of service the order of service shall be corrected immediately and any points already played shall count.

Alternative scoring methods approved until 31 December 2001 can be found in Appendix II.

28. Maximum Number of Sets

A match can be played to the best of 3 sets (the player/team needs to win 2 sets to win the match) or to the best of 5 sets (the player/team needs to win 3 sets to win the match).

29. Role of Court Officials

In matches where an Umpire is appointed, his decision shall be final; but where a Referee is appointed, an appeal shall lie to him from the decision of an Umpire on a question of law, and in all such cases the decision of the Referee shall be final.

In matches where assistants to the Umpire are appointed (Linespersons, Net-cord Judges, Foot-fault Judges) their decisions shall be final on questions of fact except that if in the opinion of an Umpire a clear mistake has been made he shall have the right to change the decision of an assistant or order a let to be played. When such an assistant is unable to give a decision he shall indicate this immediately to the Umpire who shall give a decision. When an Umpire is unable to give a decision on a question of fact he shall order a let to be played.

In Davis Cup matches or other team competitions where a Referee is on Court, any decision can be changed by the Referee, who may also instruct an Umpire to order a let to be played.

The Referee, in his discretion, may at any time postpone a match on account of darkness or the condition of the ground or the weather. In any case of postponement the previous score and previous occupancy of courts shall hold good, unless the Referee and the players unanimously agree otherwise.

USTA Comment:

See fourth USTA Comment under Rule 30 regarding resumption of suspended match.

Case 1. The Umpire orders a let, but a player claims that the point should not be replayed. May the Referee be requested to give a decision?

Decision. Yes. A question of tennis law, that is, an issue relating to the application of specific facts, shall first be determined by the Umpire. However, if the Umpire is uncertain or if a player appeals from his determination, then the Referee shall be requested to give a decision, and his decision is final.

Case 2. A ball is called out, but a player claims that the ball was good. May the Referee give a ruling?

Decision. No. This is a question of fact, that is an issue relating to what actually occurred during a specific incident, and the decision of the on-court officials is therefore final.

Case 3. May an Umpire overrule a Linesman at the end of a rally if, in his opinion, a clear mistake has been made during the course of a rally?

Decision. No. An Umpire may overrule a Linesman only if he does so immediately after the mistake has been made.

USTA Comment:

Examples of questions of fact include whether a ball is in or out, whether a ball touched a player, whether a ball bounced twice, and whether the server's foot touched the baseline before hitting a serve. Examples of questions of tennis law include whether an act was a hindrance; whether a player should have been assessed a code violation for his conduct; and the procedure for correcting errors in serving order, serving and receiving position, and ends.

USTA Comment:

See Rule 17, Case 1, regarding non-officiated matches.

Case 4. A Linesman calls a ball out. The Umpire was unable to see clearly, although he thought the ball was in. May he overrule the Linesman?

Decision. No. An Umpire may overrule if he considers that a call was incorrect beyond all reasonable doubt. He may overrule a ball determined good by a Linesman only if he has been able to see a space between the ball and the line; and he may overrule a ball determined out, or a fault, by a Linesman only if he has seen the ball hit the line, or fall inside the line.

Case 5. May a Linesman change his call after the Umpire has given the score?

Decision. Yes. If a Linesman realises he has made an error, he may make a correction provided he does so immediately.

Case 6. A player claims his return shot was good after a Linesman called "out." May the Umpire overrule the Linesman?

Decision. No. An Umpire may never overrule as a result of a protest or an appeal by a player.

30. Continuous Play & Rest Periods

Play shall be continuous from the first service until the match is concluded, in accordance with the following provisions:

a. If the first service is a fault, the second service must be struck by the Server without delay. The Receiver must play to the reasonable pace of the Server and must be ready to receive when the Server is ready to serve.

When changing ends a maximum of ninety (90) seconds shall elapse from the moment the ball goes out of play at the end of the game to the time the ball is struck for the first point of the next game.

However, after the first game of each set and during a tie-break, play shall be continuous and the players shall change ends without a rest period.

At the conclusion of each set, there shall be a set break of a maximum of one hundred and twenty (120) seconds from the moment the ball goes out of play at the end of the game to the time the ball is struck for the first point of the next game.

The Umpire shall use his discretion when there is interference which makes it impractical for play to be continuous.

The organisers of international circuits and team events recognised by the ITF may determine the time allowed between points, which shall be a maximum of twenty (20) seconds from the moment the ball goes out of play at the end of one point to the time the ball is struck for the next point.

b. Play shall never be suspended, delayed or interfered with for the purpose of enabling a player to recover his strength, breath, or physical condition. However, in the case of a treatable medical condition, the Umpire may allow a one-time three minute suspension for that injury.

USTA Comment:

The 20-second rule applies only to certain international circuits and team events recognized by the ITF. When practical, in USTA sanctioned tournaments using a certified official in direct observation of the match, the time which shall elapse from the moment the ball goes out of play at the end of the point to the time the ball is struck shall not exceed 25 seconds.

c. If, through circumstances outside the control of the player, his clothing, footwear or equipment (excluding racket) becomes out of adjustment in such a way that it is impossible or undesirable for him to play on, the Umpire may suspend play while the maladjustment is rectified.

USTA Comment:

If equipment other than a racket becomes unusable through circumstances outside the control of the player, play may be suspended for a reasonable period and the player may leave the Court to correct the problem. If a racket or racket string is broken, Rule 30 does not permit play to be suspended. A player who leaves the Court to get a replacement is subject to code violation(s) under the Point Penalty System.

USTA Comment:

Loss of, or damage to, a contact lens or eyeglasses shall be treated as equipment maladjustment. All players must follow the same rules with respect to suspending play, even though in misty but playable weather, a player who wears glasses may be handicapped.

d. The Umpire may suspend or delay play at any time as may be necessary and appropriate.

e. After the third set, or when women take part the second set, either player shall be entitled to a rest, which shall not exceed 10 minutes, or in countries situated between latitude 15 degrees north and latitude 15 degrees south, 45 minutes and furthermore, when necessitated by circumstances not within the control of the players, the Umpire may suspend play for such a period as he may consider necessary. If play is suspended and is not resumed until a later day the rest may be taken only after the third set (or when women take part the second set) of play on such a later day, completion of an unfinished set being counted as one set.

If play is suspended and is not resumed until 10 minutes have elapsed in the same day the rest may be taken only after three consecutive sets have been played without interruption (or when women take part two sets), completion of an unfinished set being counted as one set.

Any nation and/or committee organising a tournament, match or competition, is at liberty to modify this provision or omit it from its regulations provided this is announced before the event commences. With respect to the Davis Cup and Fed Cup, only the International Tennis Federation may modify this provision or omit it from its Regulations.

USTA Comment:

When a match is resumed after a suspension of more than ten minutes, it is permissible for the players to engage in a re-warm-up that may be of the same duration as that at the start of the match. The preferred method is to warm-up with other used balls and then insert the match balls when play starts. If the match balls are used in the re-warm-up, then the next ball change will be two games sooner. There shall be no re-warm-up after an authorized intermission or after a suspension of ten minutes or less.

USTA Comment:

When there are no ballpersons, this time may be extended to 10 minutes.

f. A tournament committee has the discretion to decide the time allowed for a warm-up period prior to a match but this may not exceed five minutes and must be announced before the event commences.

g. When approved point penalty and non-accumulative point penalty systems are in operation, the Umpire shall make his decisions within the terms of those systems.

h. Upon violation of the principle that play shall be continuous the Umpire may, after giving due warning, disqualify the offender.

31. Coaching

During the playing of a match in a team competition, a player may receive coaching from a captain who is sitting on the court only when he changes ends at the end of a game, but not when he changes ends during a tie-break game.

A player may not receive coaching during the playing of any other match. The provisions of this rule must be strictly construed.

After due warning an offending player may be disqualified. When an approved point penalty system is in operation, the Umpire shall impose penalties according to that system.

Case 1. Should a warning be given, or the player be disqualified, if the coaching is given by signals in an unobtrusive manner?

Decision. The Umpire must take action as soon as he becomes aware that coaching is being given verbally or by signals. If the Umpire is unaware that coaching is being given, a player may draw his attention to the fact that advice is being given.

Case 2. Can a player receive coaching during an authorised rest period under Rule 30(e), or when play is interrupted and he leaves the court?

Decision. Yes. In these circumstances, when the player is not on the court, there is no restriction on coaching.

USTA Comment:

Coaching is not permitted in the USA Adult and Senior League Program except during authorized rest periods.

USTA Comment:

No player may receive coaching during a toilet visit.

ITF Note:

The word "coaching" includes any advice or instruction.

32. Ball Change

In cases where balls are to be changed after a specified number of games, if the balls are not changed in the correct sequence, the mistake shall be corrected when the player, or pair in the case of doubles, who should have served with new balls is next due to serve. Thereafter the balls shall be changed so that the number of games between changes shall be that originally agreed.