

Five Rules You Must Know Before Sectionals



By Barbara Wyatt

The vast majority of tennis games are played with great sportsmanship by players who demonstrate that tennis is a game of scrupulous honesty and courteous competitive spirit.

A handful of players—and I do mean a handful—whip out a new rule interpretation that rattles the brain. I saw a player stop a match in a third set tie-break with the opponents ready to start their serve at 10-9. The player walked over to the bench, sat down, removed a shoe and massaged the foot, while quoting the 90-second time rule. Jaws dropped onto the court in astonishment. An opponent managed to stumble out, “This is not a change-over. Shoe back on.”

There are 46 rules in The Code, 31 International Tennis Federation (ITF) rules, and more than 100 pages of USTA regulations. It is difficult to know every nuance.

Here are my recommendations of the

five rules that you must know. If you haven't read USTA Friend at Court cover to cover, at least know these five rules.

- **Code 2:** Points played in good faith are counted. Sometimes, when a point is over, there is a delayed surprise as players remember the score was incorrectly stated, or teams were supposed to switch sides. The point counts. Fix the error and continue playing.

- **Code 17:** Prompt calls eliminate the “two chance option.” The “two chance option” is selectively opting to call a let after you hit the ball and dump it into the net.

Suppose you're receiving. The ball may have been out. You didn't return the ball. You didn't make a prompt call. You have a short conversation with your partner. The server has moved over to the next position. You call the ball out in an attempt to enforce the “two chance option.” Your call is too late. The ball is good.

It takes a fraction of second for both you and your partner to raise shoulders in the universal shoulder language of “I don't

know” and promptly call the ball in. Make your calls promptly, clearly, loudly, and immediately.

- **Code 31:** Server announces the score. If you disagree with your opponent's clear and audible score announcement, don't play the point. Raise your hand before the serve and clarify. If there is a dispute, walk to the net and discuss it.

- **Code 33:** Claim a hindrance as soon as possible. Opponent's shoe falls off, keep playing. Racquet slips from your opponent's hand, keep playing. If a hat, a shoe or ball rolling onto the court truly distracts you, call hindrance immediately and re-play the point. If the shoe or racquet continues to fly off, you may be awarded a point because the hindrance has moved from unintentional to deliberate.

The vast majority of tennis players follow the rules of the game and look forward to an honest competitive match. My fifth recommendation is the basic principle of tennis: Code 1: Courtesy is expected. You can expect that from the vast majority of players.

When your opponent is in that small rule-inventing minority, relax. Read USTA Friend at Court prior to your match. Have it in your bag. Ask for help from the USTA desk or roving umpire. USTA staff and referee professionals will do their best to ensure your tennis match is conducted under the fairest possible conditions.

Barbara Wyatt is a writer, photographer, USTA official, and mobile app developer of iKnowTennis!, the tennis rules app. Her poem, Ode to Tennis, an amusing poem on the joys and frustrations when learning tennis, is available at Amazon. She can be reached by e-mail at BarbaraW@iKnowTennis.com.

PSYCHOLOGY OF WINNING



“One of the nation's leading mental game gurus”

Golf Digest



Tom Ferraro, PhD.
Sport Psychology

Phone: (516) 248-7189 | Email: drtferraro@aol.com | www.drtoferraro.com | Williston Park, NY