

Tennis Numbers to Amaze Your Friends



By Barbara Wyatt

The method of scoring a tennis match may have baffled you when you started playing the sport, but when the little yellow ball raced toward you, a deep organic passion compelled you to swing the racket and hit that yellow sucker with raw unbridled power ... over and over again.

Passion for the game won over the archaic scoring system. Today, you amaze your non-tennis friends when you explain the 15-30-40-ad scoring. Yet there are more numbers to amaze and bedazzle tennis neophytes and even a few tennis veterans.

How many buttocks must remain in contact with chair when playing Wheelchair Tennis?

To hold their racket up and ready, wheelchair players grasp the racket with four fingers of their dominant hand and use the heel of the hand to push a wheel rim. Their free hand pushes the other rim to race over and return the ball. All with one buttock in the chair. The answer: One buttock.

What is the highest number of tennis racquets destroyed in frustration in one match?

At the 2012 Australian Open, Marcos Baghdatis smashed several rackets in a

row as he rested between sets. His energetic racket abuse didn't help his game. He lost the match and was fined \$800 for racket abuse. The answer: Four rackets.

What is the highest number of double-faults in one match?

At the 1999 Australian Open, Anna Kournikova double-faulted more than this writer. Despite the large number of double-faults, she won the match by a score of 1-6, 6-4, 10-8. There is hope for us all. The answer: 31 double-faults in one match.

What is the most consecutive points a tennis player can lose and still win a best-of-five-sets match?

Originally posed as a puzzle question on NPR, listener Harry Hilson recommended this tennis question for the radio audience. Your set score is 2-0, game score 5-0 and the last game stands at 40-0. The sweet taste of match victory is on your lips. Your opponent claws back and wins that game (five points) and the set (24 points). Match score 2-1. Your opponent wins the next set (24 points). Match score: 2-2. In the third set, you are down 0-5 game score and 0-40 for the game. You pump your fist to the sky for motivation and win the third set (23 points). Match score: 3-2. You win the next two sets for a 5-2 win. However, you lost a whole bunch of points in a row. The answer: 76 points in a row, $5+24+24+23=76$.

What year is the first reported death due to tennis?

Louis X of France, known as Hutin the Quarrelsome, played tennis until he was exhausted. He drank wine, fell asleep and died. Death by tennis was documented by Geoffrey of Paris in verse.

*"It has been said that the kind of illness
From which he died was a stroke
Which often kills healthy people as well.
Others claimed that he played a game
which he knew well,
Namely tennis; he became so heated
at it,
And his better judgment which betrayed
him ..."*

The word for tennis in this French poem is "a la paume" from "jeu de la paume" considered the raw beginnings of tennis when it was first played with the hand rather than racquet. The answer: June 5, 1316.

Barbara Wyatt is a writer, photographer, USTA official and app developer for iKnowTennis!, the mobile app for advanced players, beginners, coaches and professionals to learn and understand tennis rules. She discovered the game of tennis about 10 years ago and is striving to hit the little yellow ball inside the white lines—in both games. She can be reached by e-mail at BarbaraW@iKnowTennis.com.