

Tennis

Tennis is a ball and racket game, where competitors play against one another on a court with a racket, and where the player uses different tennis strokes to hit the tennis ball onto the opponent's side of the court in order to make it difficult or impossible for the opposing player to return it. The frame of the tennis racket is made of light, synthetic material. The frame is made up of the handle, the shaft and the head of a racket. The handle is fitted with a non-slip layer called a grip. The head of the tennis racket is strung with tennis strings, which are usually made from synthetic materials. A properly strung tennis racket allows for the ball to be hit well.

The version of the game for two players is called singles, and so the version for four players is called doubles. Another form is also mixed doubles, where the two players in each team are a man and a woman.

The first rules of tennis were documented in 1875, when the game of tennis was patented. Tennis quickly spread throughout Europe, as well as elsewhere. Not only is tennis a popular recreational sport but it is also very well-known for its professional competitions. All of the world tennis events are governed by the ITF (the International Tennis Federation), which organises all the main international competitions such as the Men's Davis Cup, Women's Fed Cup and the Hopman Cup, which is a mixed doubles competition. The ITF also organises the four most famous tournaments; the Australian Open – on a synthetic hard court (Plexicushion), Wimbledon – on grass, the French Open - on clay and the US Open – on a hard court (Decoturf), all of which are called the Grand Slam tournaments. Men's professional tennis is organised by the ATP, or the Association of Tennis Professionals, and women's professional tennis is organised by the WTA, or the Women's Tennis Association.

The Czech Republic has its own long tennis history with achievements in doubles, mixed doubles, and singles. Famous names include Ivan Lendl, Martina Navrátilová, Martina Novotná, Jan Kodeš, Pavel Složil and Petr Korda among others. Currently, world tournaments involve Radek Štěpánek, Tomáš Berdych and Petra Kvitová. In 2009 our men's team got into the Davis Cup, in 2011, our women's team won the Fed Cup and in 2012, the mixed doubles team of Berdych and Kvitová won the Hopman Cup and the men won the Davis Cup in 2012, too.

The tennis court in singles is rectangular and its dimensions are 23.77 metres long and 8.23 metres wide. For doubles, it is 10.97 metres wide. The playing surfaces of tennis courts vary. The most popular and most widely used surfaces are clay, concrete, grass and asphalt. Each of these surfaces requires different tactics because the ball plays differently on each surface and bounces off them at different heights. The tennis court is divided exactly in half by a net, hung from a metal cable, which is attached to two metal poles. The lines which define the end of the court are called baselines. The lines which define the sides of the court running lengthwise for both singles and doubles are called sidelines. The service lines are at a distance of 6.4 metres from the net. They run parallel to the net and perpendicular to the centre service line, and form four equal quadrants where the ball must be served into.

Each point in a tennis match begins with a serve, which is taken from the baseline. The player throws the ball up and swings at it with the racket before it hits the ground. The player must hit the serve across the court and over the net so it lands in the service box diagonally opposite. If the first serve is a fault, the player has the chance of a second serve. When a player wins the first point, the score of the game is 15-0. After winning a second point, the score is 30-0, the third point, 40-0, and after the fourth point, the player wins the game. When the score is 40-40, it is called deuce, and then the next point won is called 'advantage'. If the player with the 'advantage' scores the next point, they win the game. If they do not, then the score returns to deuce.

After each game, the players alternate service. The player who wins six games by at least two clear games wins the set. From 1965, when the score is tied at 6-6, a tie-break is played. This is done to speed up the match and shorten the playing time. This tie-break is won by the player who scores 7 points and at the same time, leads by at least two clear points. The player who wins the tiebreak wins the set 7-6. This rule applies to all matches and

tournaments, and only in finals and certain tournaments are tie-breaks left out. The player who wins two sets wins the match. There are situations, however, where the player needs to win three sets. The Davis Cup is one example, as are the Men's Grand Slam Tournaments, where the deciding set does not have a tiebreak but is decided when a player is two games clear. In large and more well-known tournaments, one to ten tennis umpires may be seen on the court. The one who sits in the elevated chair next to the net is the head umpire. The others are called line umpires.