

Tennis Rules and Code of Conduct

I think now is a good time to remind everyone about something we should all take on the court with us, but sometimes don't. That is knowledge of the Rules of Tennis, and "The Code". There are many players in the league that are new to tennis, or have not read the rules and "The Code". For the seasoned veterans, it can't hurt to brush-up on any changes that have occurred since we last reviewed the rules and code.

In the past, I have had disagreements on the court that have resulted in hard feelings, and taken the enjoyment out of playing. If it has happened to me, I'm sure it has happened to others. In most of these instances, knowledge of the rules, and observance of the "The Code" would have resulted in quick on-court resolution of the problems. As many of my playing buds can attest to, I am sometimes in violation of "The Code" as indicated by the occasional broken racquet of mine you will see in an OW court trash can. I'm trying to get better about this, and I think I'm growing up based on only breaking two or three racquets this year, but my shrink has told me that it will likely continue into my Super Senior playing days, and Anger Management would be a waste of time & money that could be used on tennis. (My, probably flawed, justification for breaking them is that it is the only way to keep up with the latest technology!)

Here are just a few of the cases I've heard of that have caused disagreements, but could have been avoided with knowledge of the rules and "The Code"

1. Player strikes scoring device support on post with racquet while making a shot. Rule: Support is a permanent fixture, and not part of the net, point continues. However, if the player had struck the post while the ball is in play, the point is lost. Also, if the ball had struck the support and gone into proper court, the player striking the ball also would have lost the point.
2. Ball hits player's racquet hand and goes back over net and into court. Rule: Player loses point any time ball hits any part of them or anything they wear during a point.
3. Player "Thinks Ball was out and makes out call". Rule: If you are 99.99999% certain a ball was out, you must call it in because you are not 100% certain it was out.
4. Doubles partner calls serve out on far service side-line. Code: Partner should make out-serve calls on back service line, and center service line (if obvious), but not the far sideline.
5. Serving team calls first serve out, or does not play return because they thought serve was out. Rule: Serving team is not permitted to call first serve out, must play any return on first serve, but may call second serve out since it causes them to lose the point.
6. Player makes delayed out call after making a shot. Code: Out call shall be made almost instantaneously with ball contact, and definitely before ball is struck by opponent or is out of play.
7. Here is a big one that often causes problems if "The Code" is not observed. Player

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questions opponents "Out!" line-call with anything other than "Are you sure?" Code: Procedure on questionable line call is to ask your opponent "Are you sure?" If there is any delay in response, response is "I think", "I'm pretty sure", or anything other than a definitive "Yes" or "I'm sure", the ball was good, and the player/team who struck the ball receives the point. Disagreement between doubles partners constitutes uncertainty, and the shot is considered good. In doubles, if one partner is certain, and the other didn't see the ball to make the call, the out call stands. If the response is "Yes" or "I'm sure", there should be no further discussion or delay and play should continue. If on clay, it is acceptable to ask the opponent(s) "Can you please check for a mark?", in which case, the mark should be checked by the opponent and circled with the racquet. The main point here is to be courteous, and give your opponent the benefit of the doubt. It is both rude and inappropriate for an opponent to cross the net to check a mark (discretely inspect it after changeover if you must have personal confirmation).

8. Player claims point on an non-called out-ball or requests a service let not called after another shot has been hit. "Let" or "Out" must be called immediately. A player may not claim a let or call a ball out after another shot has been hit or after the ball goes out of play.

9. Player stops playing because they thought the ball bounced twice, opponent hit ball before it crossed the net, ball hits opponent or anything they wear, deliberate double hit by opponent, or the opponent had struck the net/post with their racquet while making the shot. Rule: Players must call all of these violations on themselves, and if the opponent stops playing without the player calling it on themselves, they lose the point.

10. Returning obvious faults. I see this all of the time, and "The Code" describes this as a form of rudeness. Don't do it, as it is a hindrance to the server.

11. Player calls ball out, or catches it before the ball lands out. Rule: Any "OUT!" (variations include "LONG!" or "WIDE!") call terminates the point. If the ball lands in after the call, player calling out loses point. Player catching ball before it lands out loses point. Advice: Don't call a ball out before it bounces. In doubles, warn your partner about a potentially out ball by saying "Watch it!" or "Bounce it!" If it lands in, play can continue.

12. Player attempts to return serve, then claims they were not ready. Rule: Any attempted return indicates readiness, and if you become unready between first and second serve for reasons other than to clear a ball from your own court that has changed position during the first serve, the server has two serves coming. If you are clearing a ball that came from another court, or anything else (foreign objects like a tree branch, acorn, pieces of Eddie's broken racquet) between serves, the event is a Let, and the server should get two serves.

There are tons of examples like this, and many of the situations and interpretations are given in "[The Code](#)". Since the Fall is the practice season, use it to also practice up on your knowledge of the rules and "The Code" so that everyone is on the same page, and

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there are not disagreements.

You may find the Rules of Tennis at:

http://www.usta.com/AboutUs/~media/USTA/Document%20Assets/2007/02/09/doc_13_16051.ashx

If after reading the Rules of Tennis and “The Code,” you have any rules related questions, please send them to me at AATLsecretary@bellsouth.net.

Have a Fun Season!

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