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Routledge Handbook of Tennis

History, Culture and Politics

Edited by Robert J. Lake

Routledge Handbook of Tennis

Tennis is one of the world's most popular sports, as levels of participation and spectatorship demonstrate. Moreover, tennis has always been one of the world's most *significant* sports, expressing crucial fractures of social class, gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity – both on and off court.

This is the first book to undertake a survey of the historical and socio-cultural sweep of tennis, exploring key themes from governance, development and social inclusion to national identity and the role of the media. It is presented in three parts: historical developments; culture and representations; and politics and social issues, and features contributions by leading tennis scholars from North America, Europe, Asia and Australia.

The most authoritative book published to date on the history, culture and politics of tennis, this is an essential reference for any course or program examining the history, sociology, politics or culture of sport.

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Contents

Illustrations

Figures

Images

Tables

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1

Introduction to the history and historiography of tennis

Robert J. Lake

Few sports have undergone the marked developments that have characterized tennis over the past century and a half. While a handful of the world's most popular team and individual sports have experienced comparable international growth and the commercialization and professionalization of their players, competitions and governing associations, few have seen also such marked changes to how and by whom the game is played, in the technologies, tactics and playing styles employed, and in the broad and various demographics of participating players. In this regard, contemporary 21st century tennis, while not entirely unrecognizable from its earlier antecedents, has nevertheless undergone a remarkable and extensive transformation.

Adopting a broad perspective incorporating various methodologies and different theoretical and subject lenses, this edited collection aims to examine and comprehensively cover key aspects of the developing history of tennis, focusing in particular on the many connections with wider societal culture and politics. This present introductory chapter aims to provide a brief overview of key developments in the sport's history, effectively laying the foundations for the more nuanced and detailed analyses provided in the chapters that follow. It also provides a brief discussion of the sport's developing historiography, thereby locating this present edited collection within the expanding field of tennis research.

From garden game to global sport: a brief history of tennis

Throughout the sport's historical development, from when it emerged as a genteel garden-party pastime exclusive to the English upper and upper-middle classes in the early 1870s until now, in its highly professionalized, commercialized and internationalized form, important aspects of its culture have undergone rampant change. This has helped shift it from an exclusive, niche pastime to a popular, mainstream sport played in almost every corner of the world, and by all genders, classes and races. Of course, historically inveterate ideologies related to gender, class and race remain entrenched in the sport, continuing to color much of how and by whom the sport is played, watched, reported and assessed. This makes the sport's history highly nuanced, blending old traditions and deep-rooted ideologies with new value systems and contemporary social movements.

The sport's initial exclusivity partly stemmed from the fact of its connections to earlier racket games, particularly Real Tennis, which was played extensively among the European nobility and

royalty at its heyday in the 16th century (Gillmeister 1997; Lake 2009).[1] In Britain, numerous versions of what came to be known as "lawn tennis" were created and tested by members of the landed gentry throughout the 18th and 19th centuries in their attempts, amidst the burgeoning rational recreation movement, to recreate "tennis" in an outdoor setting (Lake 2015; Walker 1989). Available records suggest that almost all were short-lived – possibly because play was not particularly dynamic and the short rallies tiresome – and so it took the new mid-19th-century inventions of vulcanized rubber, the lawn mower and the garden roller to ensure more consistent and good bounces on grass, and therefore longer rallies and more interesting play between players (Todd 1979).

When Major Harry Gem and J.B. Perera in 1859 and Major Walter Clopton Wingfield in 1873 first played their own versions of lawn tennis, in Edgbaston and Nantclwyd respectively, exclusivity or at least respectability remained an important concern. While Gem publicly protested against Wingfield's claims to have invented lawn tennis (see *The Field* 21 November 1874), as he claimed that he and his Spanish friend Perera had been playing their own version of the game over a decade earlier and had formed the world's first lawn tennis club in Leamington Spa, they did not make attempts to extend its popularity beyond their small group of playing acquaintances (Holland 2011). Wingfield did, however, though his advertisements in *The Field* and *Vanity Fair* suggest that he was pitching it as a form of conspicuous consumption, to wealthy ladies and gentlemen players with a suitably sized patch of land upon which to lay their own court, and not, presumably, to the masses. That as a rule all players should be amateurs was widely assumed and, at this stage, unsaid.

While lawn tennis most closely resembled Real Tennis when it was first played, it is certainly the case that the new sport borrowed important structural and social aspects from numerous games preceding it, including also rackets, badminton, croquet and cricket. From Real Tennis was lent the sport's exclusive clientele, the scoring system (15, 30, 40, game; six games to win a set) and the initial rackets, with long handles and bent heads; from rackets was lent an alternative scoring system (games up to 15 points) that Wingfield recommended before the Real Tennis method became standard, alongside some of the sport's first players; from badminton was lent the high drooping net, which was lowered in 1882 to its standard 3.5 foot at the sides and 3 foot in the center;[2] from croquet was lent the sport's social (garden-party) settings, smooth manicured lawns and mixed-sex play; and from cricket was lent the all-whites clothing and club aspects (Alexander 1986). Interestingly, as golf emerged in Scotland and rapidly spread southward into England and beyond the British Isles, the two sports came to share more social aspects and, particularly in the US, both enjoyed popular presence within the country clubs springing up throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Baltzell 1996; Rader 1999).

Early play remained conditioned by prevailing norms in relation to social class and gender, as etiquette demanded restrained play and sportsmanship and in the case of men playing with/against women, also chivalry (Lake 2011; 2012). In time, playing styles became more dynamic as the edifice of amateurism slowly crumbled amidst the increasing competitiveness of players across all levels of competition. The social enterprise of earlier lawn tennis gatherings, especially in garden-parties, was soon replicated in exclusive, members-only clubs, which had the same purpose: to provide opportunities to spatially separate from the masses and mingle only with status equals. The mixed-gender component of the sport – a fairly staple feature in many settings from early on – also offered opportunities for romance, alongside more formalized efforts of parents to marry off sons and daughters with suitable partners from families of comparable social status (McCrone 1988).

The club aspects of British lawn tennis were replicated internationally and with impressive consistency. Spa towns and seaside resorts throughout Europe, especially in Germany, the

Netherlands and Italy, became popular tennis destinations for the British stationed or travelling abroad, and in particular the French Riviera rapidly became the most fashionable location for lawn tennis play among wealthy British tourists, including the famous Renshaw brothers who made Cannes their winter training hub (Little 2014). The sport soon became a favourite for European elites, including, among others, the eminent King Gustav of Sweden, who constructed tennis courts and, as early patrons, hosted tournaments to satisfy increasing demand. When the sport initially arrived in the US some months after Wingfield's first boxed sets for Sphairistike went on sale – though debate remains as to exactly where and when lawn tennis was first played across the Atlantic (see Alexander 1974; Baltzell 1996; Gillmeister 1997) – the exclusive following remained as the game was adopted among the affluent, Eastern-seaboard elites and made its way into Harvard among other Ivy-League universities. The sport had evidently remained a form of conspicuous consumption, and America's private country clubs served similar function to their British equivalents, but often dwarfed them in size and opulence (Baltzell 1996). That early US National Championship matches were played at the opulent Casino in Newport, RI hints at the socio-economic status of the clientele who immersed themselves in lawn tennis culture. In Australia and New Zealand, despite the rhetoric of more democratic, free and less status-hierarchical societies, tennis clubs here also retained their social exclusivity and staunchly middle-class following (Falcous & McLeod 2012; Kinross-Smith 1987; O'Farrell 1985).

The effects of European colonization in particular helped spread the game rapidly throughout the world, as it became, much like cricket, a force for globalization. Lawn tennis established itself comfortably in many of Britain's overseas territories and dominions, but, unlike cricket, it often initially failed to galvanize the local indigenous populations so that it remained for some time a preserve of the white upper-middle classes. In fact, many new lawn tennis courts were laid in cricket clubs in South America and the West Indies (Reay 1951). Similarly, in India and South Africa, lawn tennis clubs were locations for white settlers to separate themselves from the locals, though in time the indigenous populations began forming clubs and holding tournaments of their own (Odendaal 2003; Pal 2004). By the end of the 19th century, lawn tennis clubs, tournaments and associations had become established in six continents, but the tennis nations that were considered to wield the most power in international governance and host the most prestigious tournaments, namely Great Britain and the US, continued to set the tone for how the sport developed throughout the rest of the world. Their players and officials helped to characterize where, by whom and how the sport should be played, and largely determined the social character of clubs and tournaments.

The gradual development of inter-club play began as friendly social occasions rather than competitive affairs, and clubs proved just as enthusiastic about outdoing their neighbours in the opulence of their facilities and surroundings, and in attracting the highest-status patrons and members, as they were about actually winning (Lake 2015). The growth of local and national tournaments in Britain and elsewhere facilitated changes to the prevailing norms of how players should approach the game. This had a trickle-down effect, as elite-level players like brothers Reggie and Laurie Doherty from England and then later Norman Brookes and Tony Wilding from Australia and New Zealand respectively set the standards of more competitive play, while still retaining their flawless "gentleman amateur" personas. The rising status and international media coverage of Wimbledon and the US National Championships, along with the emergence of the Davis Cup competition, in which American players immediately set out with a more ruthless will-to-win mentality, brought international players increasingly into the spotlight in the early 20th century (Eaves & Lake 2017).

As international sporting competitions took on heightened, quasi-political relevance after the Great War, due in part to rising nationalist sentiments attached to sporting competitions

generally, the number of overseas competitors at Wimbledon, particularly in the men's draw, and the number of nations entering the Davis Cup increased rapidly (Smart 2007). In the last Wimbledon Championships before the Great War, in 1914, 102 players from eight different nations (88 from Britain) entered the men's draw and 51 from just three nations (47 from Britain) in the women's, but growth and expansion throughout the inter-war period saw a huge rise in the number of players from overseas. Thus, by 1939, 128 men from 24 different nations (56 from Britain) and 96 women from 15 nations (68 from Britain) competed in the Singles Championships. The largest number of nations to compete in the Davis Cup before the war was eight in 1913, but in the 1920s the number grew steadily from six at the start of the decade to 29 at the end. Indeed, before the inaugural football World Cup in 1930, tennis was arguably the most international of sports, and the Davis Cup was competed for by more nations than any other sporting event, outside of the Olympic Games (Smart 2007). Indeed, as Lake and Llewellyn (2015) have argued, one of the key reasons the International Lawn Tennis Federation (ILTF) were unwilling to compromise with the International Olympic Committee on matters related to the inclusion of tennis in the Olympics, which ceased after the 1924 Games, was because tennis had the Davis Cup and was in such a healthy state generally that it did not need the Olympics as a key platform to showcase its star players. By the end of the 1930s, the Davis Cup in particular took on greater political significance, adjudged perhaps most famously by Adolf Hitler's attempts to use the possibility of German success against the US in the 1937 Inter-zone final for political expedience (Fisher 2009).

The inter-war period also witnessed the marked encroachment of national cultures upon the sport. In the 1920s, French cultural representations, in particular, expressed through fashion and the *joie de vivre* exuded by many of their players – notably Suzanne Lenglen, the sport's first true global superstar, and the "Four Musketeers": Jean Borotra, Rene Lacoste, Henri Cochet and Jacques Brugnon – influenced tennis culture in profound ways. Artistic representations proliferated as aspects of the sport stretched into other areas of social life in many nations (Holland 2011). The quasi-political stand-off between Bill Tilden and the US Lawn Tennis Association (USLTA) over his alleged journalistic endeavours made front-page news (Carvalho 2009), and when the US was due to compete against France in Paris in the 1928 Davis Cup final with a threat of a Tilden ban hanging over their heads, political ambassadors and even, possibly, the US President Calvin Coolidge intervened to smooth out the kinks of international diplomacy (Deford 2004).

By this stage, the sport had its first true professionals, as Lenglen and the American number-one-ranked male player Vincent Richards, alongside a handful of lesser-known American and French players, signed contracts with promoter C.C. Pyle to tour major cities in the US and Canada in late 1926. Before this momentous move, many of the most sought-after amateur players lived fairly comfortably off their tennis talents; they asked for and duly received first-class travel and accommodations and claimed inflated "expenses" from tournament organizers who were desperate to fill their stands, but this was all done "under the table" (Jefferys 2009; Wilson 2014). Lenglen kick-started a trend of the top amateur players – as typically judged by Wimbledon or US National Championship success – leaving the high-status but less lucrative amateur circuit to cash in on their talents for a few years of professional touring. Alongside Tilden in the 1930s were Henri Cochet, Fred Perry and Don Budge, all of whom made their mark as amateurs before deciding to forgo the associated perks and prestige. So began a trend that, except for a brief period during the Second World War, would not cease until the late 1960s, when tennis officials internationally were forced to adapt and come to terms with the shifting realities of tennis players. No longer were players drawn exclusively from the wealthy upper-middle class, who approached tennis as a carefree pastime and could, therefore, support

themselves. Players were increasingly drawn from lower down the social scale; they approached tennis as a full-time vocation and sought fair reimbursement for their efforts, especially given that they were attracting fee-paying spectators in their thousands to tournaments internationally (Baltzell 1996; Jefferys 2009).

The commercialization of tennis continued after the Second World War, and by the late 1940s the "sham-amateur" or "shamateur" player collecting "under-the-table" appearance fees became an increasingly normalized, and even rationalized, figure within elite-level tennis (Jefferys 2009; Lake 2015). Also expanding were opportunities for the top amateurs to sign professional contracts. Most were from the US and Australia. The American player Jack Kramer, winner of six doubles and three singles championships, including Wimbledon in 1947 and the US National Championships in 1946 and 1947, followed his compatriots Don Budge and Bobby Riggs and left amateur tennis to pursue a professional career. By 1951, he had taken charge of the main professional circuit and begun recruiting heavily from the amateur ranks, often signing new talent before they had reached their playing peaks. This pitched Kramer's pro tour diametrically against the main amateur circuit, which led Kramer to be regarded as an antagonist and threat to amateur tennis (Kramer 1979). Indeed, a Wimbledon or US Nationals championship remained the ticket to a professional contract, and the majority of male players, and a handful of female players, achieving this objective left the amateur circuit shortly thereafter. Between 1946 and 1967, ten of the 15 world-number-one male players signed professional contracts. In time, the repeated defection of top talent diluted the amateur pool and, inevitably, lowered the relative competitive standards of the leading amateur tournaments, including the four "grand slams" and the Davis Cup, which turned these tournaments into, essentially, qualifying competitions for the pro tour (Lake 2015). This was undoubtedly one of the main reasons why the Wimbledon Championships committee began to press for open tennis from the early 1960s, as a way of ensuring their tournament remained not only the most prestigious but also inclusive of the world's best players.

In the two decades prior to the eventual turn toward open tennis in 1968, the key sites on the men's professional tour, mostly ramshackle indoor arenas in American cities, became the prime location to witness the world's best male players. There was often stern resistance to professional tennis among amateur associations and their affiliated clubs. In Britain, upon joining the pro tour, former amateur champions typically lost all perks associated with the clubs and tournaments where they previously were successful, including honorary memberships, and in many places they became, in effect, *personae non gratae* (Jefferys 2009). At the request of the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA), many amateur clubs declined to host professional tour events, despite the potentially lucrative payouts from gate receipts and sponsorship. Even more dogmatic were the Lawn Tennis Association of Australia (LTAA), which issued various bans on professional players, including a rule that forbade their affiliated clubs from allowing professionals to play within them (Fewster 1985). Mainstream media and the dominant tennis press at the time typically ignored their performances, as Kramer (1979, p.53) reflected: 'Pro tournaments were never part of the records. … We played and we kept score, but somehow it wasn't considered worth remembering'.

According to the dominant narratives produced by those who played in it, the pro tour system itself was a physically exacting test of mental strength and stamina. Kramer (1979, p.192) spoke of the exhausting and repetitive match schedule, the tiresome travelling and incessant pressures to fill arenas and avoid getting ripped off by local promoters. Such was the fragility of his own mental health that, toward the end of his 123-match tour with Pancho Gonzales in 1949–50, he 'cracked' during a match, started 'belting balls over the fence' and repeatedly screamed, 'I'm losing my mind!'. The Australian sensation Lew Hoad (1959) also wrote of how the repetitive

grind had made him a 'worried, hurt, moody figure, entirely lacking in confidence'. At times, when balancing multiple responsibilities – to endorse products, promote the tour, write articles for the press and conduct radio and television interviews – the uncomplicated amateur circuit must have seemed a far cry from his new life on the road. Spurred by the prospects of riches, nevertheless, numerous other Australians were to follow in his footsteps, in what became a long production line of amateur champions.

After decades of development in a system seemingly more egalitarian and inclusive than in Britain, or even America, Australian tennis realized its destiny in the 1950s and 1960s as the top-ranked tennis nation. In every Davis Cup competition staged between 1938 and 1968, Australia reached the final and, from 1950 to 1967, won it 15 times from 18 attempts. In the four major national championships from 1946 to 1969, Australian men and women posted a phenomenal record of winning 85 of the total 192 singles events contested; this represents an Australian victory in over 44% of all major championships during this time. Margaret Court, winner of 24 major titles during her career, remains, as of early 2019, the most successful player in history of either sex – if not also one of the most controversial, given her newly adopted role as an outspoken anti-gay-rights campaigner – but given the nationalist sentiments expressed through the Davis Cup, it was Australian male players who generated the greatest public interest. When teenaged Davis Cup newcomers Lew Hoad and Ken Rosewall defeated the experienced Americans in 1953, for example, Fewster (1985, p.52) reported: 'the Kooyong crowd erupted, throwing thousands of seat cushions into the air in a most un-Australian display of emotion'. Not only were Davis Cup matches typically 'played in a strongly nationalistic climate, with national flags, uniforms, anthems and civic receptions', but 'success in the Davis Cup was taken by many Australians as representative of much more than a mere sporting achievement. The victories seemed to symbolize Australia's recent shift away from Britain and outward to the world in general' (Fewster 1985, p.62). Therefore, alongside cricket, naturally, and the 1956 Melbourne Olympics in which the Australians achieved an impressive medal haul, Davis Cup tennis during this period was a key political platform to satisfy Australia's desire for international recognition and social, cultural and political independence from their colonial masters. As the spotlight was shone on Australian sporting practices and coaching methods, explanations proliferated among players and officials for their remarkable success, which ranged from their favourable climate and relatively low casualty numbers in the war, to the general standard of their facilities and more flexible amateur rules (Fewster 1985; Kramer 1979). Success seemed to breed success for the LTAA, as playing in the Davis Cup Challenge Round constituted a 'financial bonanza' with profits soaring to over £30,000 in the late 1950s (Fewster 1985, p.55), which allowed them to send their most promising players on international tours to America and Europe, and pay generous expenses for a full-time coach, Harry Hopman.

Aside from the indomitable Margaret Court and the majestic and graceful Brazilian Maria Bueno, a swathe of American women dominated the game during the 1950s and 1960s, achieving great success at Wimbledon and the US and French National Championships.[3] The Wightman Cup, inaugurated in 1923 to pitch the best British and American female players against each other in an annual seven-match team competition, highlighted the two nations' relative ranks fairly accurately. In the 17 competitions held during the inter-war period, the British won four. However, from 1946 the Americans did not lose a single cup over the next twelve years, winning seven of them by a clean-sweep. American women also dominated at Wimbledon, winning the first thirteen successive post-war singles championships. Severely hampered by the effects of war, it is certain the British were unable to divert or generate the resources necessary to develop talent at a comparable pace, but once the government's austerity measures had been entirely dropped in the early 1950s and British economic growth recovered, it was clear that broader

societal issues were only part of the problem; central was the fact that the LTA, and many of the clubs and schools affiliated to it, seemed unwilling to shed their amateur emphasis and commit wholeheartedly to the pursuit of developing talent (Lake 2016a). This had long-lasting consequences deep into the 20th century, if not beyond.

Despite their apparent backward and conservative approach to developing talent during the post-war period, leading British administrators – within both the LTA and All England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC) – showed themselves to be remarkably progressive when they led the global movement toward open tennis in the 1960s. Pressed by the need to reverse the decline of their own Championships and regain administrative control over the sport, officials from the LTA and AELTC campaigned internationally throughout the 1960s to remove the amateur/professional distinction and hold "open" tournaments (Lake 2015). After several failed attempts to gain the necessary two-thirds majority needed in ILTF meetings to alter the rules, the AELTC risked expulsion from the ILTF and decided to hold an "open" Wimbledon in 1968 without official backing; they were supported by their own LTA, alongside the USLTA and other national associations, and many of the world's top players. Their efforts were buoyed by the growing profits accrued through television broadcasting, upon which they were to increasingly rely, and the public's apparent acceptance of professionalism in tennis, which was demonstrated the previous year when the British Broadcasting Corporation sponsored an end-of-season professional tournament at Wimbledon, featuring Rod Laver, alongside Hoad, Rosewall and Gonzales, which showcased a higher-quality standard of play than that seen at Wimbledon a few weeks earlier and drew large and receptive crowds (Barrett 1986). Despite the risk of becoming ostracized from the international tennis community, an emergency meeting just three months before the Championships in 1968 finally gave official sanction to the Wimbledon committee, thus ushering in what became known as "open tennis".

The first few years of the "open era" were tumultuous. In 1970, leading female players brought the politics of gender into tennis by boycotting ILTF/USLTA tournaments, because of the comparatively paltry share of prize-winnings directed toward the women. They established their own separate tournament circuit, led by Billie Jean King's efforts to recruit corporate backing from Gladys Heldman (editor of *World Tennis* magazine) and Joseph Cullman (from Philip Morris tobacco) to create the Virginia Slims tour. By 1974, they had grown to such an extent that the ILTF was forced into a merger that precipitated the marked increase in prize-money for women (equal at the US Open from 1973 onwards) and the emergence of the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) to act as a player's union (Spencer 1997).

The men's game was progressing through an equally turbulent period. Arguably, the ILTF's sanctioning of open tennis did not go far enough in removing the amateur-professional distinction, which allowed professional tour operators to retain control over their contracted players and demand appearance fees for their participation in amateur tournaments (Evans 1993). This led to several boycotts of the major championships in the early 1970s, and the creation of the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) as a player's union. The ATP was immediately called into action when, in 1973, the Yugoslav player Nikki Pilic was ordered by his national association to play in a Davis Cup match despite him being contractually obliged to compete in another tournament. Pilic was suspended by the ILTF due to his absence from the Davis Cup. Matters came to a head when the ILTF refused to drop its ban on Pilic competing at Wimbledon, and so the ATP ordered a mass walk-out. In all, 79 male players declined to participate in the 1973 Championships (including 13 of the top 16 seeds), and the ATP survived its first major political power struggle against an increasingly undermined ILTF.

The 1970s also brought racial politics to the forefront of attention with the efforts of Arthur Ashe – 1968 US Open champion and 1975 Wimbledon champion – who worked to shed

a spotlight on South Africa's apartheid regime (Hall 2014). Despite him suffering what he described as "the black man's burden" – essentially, being expected to represent all African-Americans and use his privileged status as a public figure to campaign for social justice – he nevertheless worked tirelessly to raise awareness of racial issues in sport and wider society (Thomas 2010). Certainly, the performances of black tennis players in the US had a long history, but players were undermined by overt racial discrimination and the fact their tournaments and successes were not reported by the mainstream (i.e. white-owned and controlled) press. Since the early 1890s, tennis had been played in historically black colleges and universities in the US, but African-Americans were excluded from obtaining membership in many white clubs and competing in amateur tournaments sanctioned by the USNLTA. It was not until 1916 that black leaders therein helped form the American Tennis Association, which had as its remit to promote the sport among African-Americans through tournaments and increased media exposure (Harris & Kyle-DeBose 2007). Despite marked growth in participation numbers and tournaments, however, it was not until Althea Gibson showed potential to defeat the best white players were she and others of her color afforded opportunities to compete at the US Open, alongside Wimbledon and other ILTF/USLTA-sanctioned tournaments. Inevitably, it took Alice Marble, four-time US Nationals champion in the late 1930s/early 1940s, among other white players and officials, to collectively utilize their white privilege by publicly supporting Gibson's inclusion and sway the USLTA on the matter. These pioneers, to which you can also add the Australian aborigine Evonne Goolagong and Frenchman Yannick Noah, blazed the trail for the likes of Venus and Serena Williams, James Blake, Gael Monfils and Jo Wilfrid Tsonga from the turn of the 21st century. In the US, as of early 2019, black players now occupy a position at the forefront of women's tennis. Indeed, in the 2017 US Open, three of the four semi-finalists (and both finalists) were of African-American descent, none of whom had the first name Serena.

By the late 1970s, the image of a millionaire superstar tennis player had become an accepted thing, as endorsements for the top players not only supplemented their prize-money but became their chief form of income. This has been the case for the top male and female players, but the greater publicity and media attention that women's tennis enjoyed from the 1970s onwards, alongside their successes in achieving guarantees for equal prize money at the major championships, did not necessarily align female players equally with their male counterparts across all aspects of tennis. Into the 21st century, the most lucrative product endorsement deals remain the preserve of the female players most able to match their on-court successes with "traditional" (i.e. white, heterosexual) ideals of femininity in tennis, which has also, over time, become increasingly hyper-sexualized (Schultz 2014). Anna Kournikova and Maria Sharapova are the two most obvious examples, but only the latter matched her success in obtaining endorsements off the court with tournament wins on the court. As an aside, their successes are also indicative of the ascendancy of female players from former Eastern-Bloc nations, especially the Soviet Union/Russia and Czechoslovakia/Czech Republic. The production-line of talent developing out of Eastern Europe has been enhanced by the willingness of many owners of tennis academies in the US, such as the IMG Academy in Bradenton, Florida (formerly owned and operated by Nick Bollettieri), to house and develop these players.

Other than the ways in which both male and female players are represented in the media, advances in the strength, stamina and agility shown by players, the speed of play itself and changes in the dominant playing styles, are possibly the most glaring visual differences between early and modern versions of tennis. Alongside developments in talent identification, coaching and training that have had the cumulative effect of increasing the average size (height and weight) of the top male and female players, racket technology has also advanced to such an extent that new tactics and styles of play have evolved as players have learned to hit the ball

harder, more cleanly and with more top-spin, and to utilize an increasing variety of strokes and shots to deceive or overpower their opponents. The standards and precision applied to the perfection of balls and court surfaces have also become reduced to matters of science, and hawk-eye and other forms of 21st-century on-court technology allow play to be measured and calculated to the greatest extent (Wilson 2014). Yet despite these advances and the encroachment of science into the sport, the aesthetic of human movement has remained integral to spectator enjoyment of the game. Though such views are highly subjective, it has been argued that players like Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal are as enchanting to watch as those of the inter-war "Golden Age" (Wilson 2014), and the rivalries of top female players like Serena Williams, Maria Sharapova and Angelique Kerber arguably come close to matching the excitement of the classic matchups involving Suzanne Lenglen after the Great War.

From ace to academia: a brief historiography of tennis

Just as tennis has developed and grown, so too has its recognition and appeal as a subject of academic interest and value. Scholars internationally have come to appreciate the sport as an interesting site to examine wider society and the politics of identity in areas such as gender, social class, race and nationalism. Given the marked developments witnessed within the sport, scholars have also recognized its value as a subject to examine shifts in the amateur/professional status and ethos of its players and officials, alongside its globalization, commercialization, commodification and politicization that have collectively altered much of how tennis is played, watched, organized, funded and reported. Such marked changes have also brought interesting developments in terms of how the sport is represented in the arts and media, and few sports have enjoyed as much attention, collectively, in literature, poetry and artwork. This is particularly so in England where the sport occupies a unique and deep, historically-rooted cultural position.

This book is an edited collection of chapters authored by many of the leading, contemporary scholarly writers on tennis in the social sciences. The breadth of contributing authors comprehensively represents the scope of how the sport has developed in these ways, though it is imperative to note that tennis has historically not enjoyed the immense and long-standing popularity as a scholarly subject compared to the team sports of soccer, baseball, cricket, rugby, American football, ice hockey and basketball, which have tended to occupy hegemonic positions as far as scholarly writing on "Western" sport cultures is concerned. This is possibly due to the inveterate cultural position that these team sports occupy in our modern societies, due in no small part to the processes of colonization, globalization and Americanization that, have over the last two centuries helped spread these North American/European cultural representations internationally, to the exclusion of other, perhaps more regionalized sport forms. The rampant and unremitting commercialization, professionalization, politicization and mediatization of these well-known team sports has brought them into popular consciousness in ways that more locally organized and niche sports have been unable to do.

As individual sports go, however – and tennis is principally an individual sport except when played in the Olympics and Davis Cup/Fed Cup (even doubles players are ranked as individuals) – tennis now compares well as a scholarly subject against other leading, predominantly individual sports such as golf, track-and-field/athletics, skiing, martial arts/combat sports, swimming and gymnastics. Part of the reason for this is that, like golf but unlike many other individual sports, the key foci for competition – and also, therefore, media attention – are its four annual major (grand slam) events and annual team competitions (Davis/Fed Cup, and Ryder Cup for golf); this is instead of relying on the quadrennial Olympic Games as its principal showcase,

which is not only less frequent but also saturated by coverage from dozens of other sports competing for attention. The international spread of tennis is further boosted, when compared to golf in particular, by the fact that each of the four majors is played in a different country (Wimbledon, French Open, US Open, Australian Open), rather than three of the four played in the US (USPGA Tour, Masters, US Open) as in golf, and its highest profile and revenue-generating international men's team competition limited to players from just the US and Europe, as is the Ryder Cup.

Moreover, what tennis offers above all other individual and, indeed, team sports, is the (near) equal representation of women in the upper echelons of wealth/income-generation, international fame and recognizability. Tennis sits proudly and inarguably atop the list of global, professionalized sports offering the smallest gap between male and female players in terms of salary/prize money and media attention, and it has done since the early 1970s, if not the inter-war period when Suzanne Lenglen and Helen Wills achieved comparable, indeed if not even greater, fame than Bill Tilden and Fred Perry. In the 2010s, Serena Williams and Maria Sharapova enjoy comparable recognizability and wealth as Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal, much as Steffi Graf compared to the equally dominant Pete Sampras in the 1990s, and Billie Jean King, Chris Evert and Martina Navratilova compared to Arthur Ashe, Jimmy Connors and John McEnroe in the 1970s and 1980s. Tennis was brought further into the limelight as a consequence of its role, and that of its star players like Billie Jean King, in the broader second-wave feminist movement. This coincided with the "tennis boom" of the 1960s and 1970s that witnessed the escalating popularity of the sport, as clubs and school/university campuses constructed courts and held tournaments as an outcome of its democratization. These combined elements helped develop tennis into arguably the highest profile, most comprehensively international, and most gender-equitable individual sport – i.e. rather than team sport – in the 21st century.

These facts alone can account to a great extent for the growing attention paid to the sport by writers and journalists over the last forty or so years, as the 1970s and 80s witnessed a marked increase in the number of tennis-related books, including coaching guides, biographies/autobiographies and first-person journalist narratives being published (Lake 2016b). However, the historiography of tennis has revealed that a similar boom in scholarly writing on tennis has not followed the same path or trajectory. Alternatively, it could be said that the scholarly boom *has* occurred but is 20–30 years behind the participation boom, which perhaps is accounted for by the fact that historians do not tend to touch events until they have lost some of their immediacy. Aside from a spattering of scholarly books and journal articles from a small handful of writers, it is only since the mid/late 2000s that the sport has enjoyed increasing popularity as a subject matter of serious scholarly interest across the social sciences. Indeed, one aim of this book is to highlight the breadth of different types of scholars – those in the subjects of history, sociology, media studies & communications, leisure studies, sport management, philosophy, economics & business, politics, and gender studies – who have made important contributions to the subject matter in the last decade, as many of them are featured as authors/contributors in this book.

That we are currently witnessing a "boom" in scholarly works in tennis within the social sciences is supported by statistical evidence. Taking into account the fact that the number of English language scholarly journals – and therefore also the number of journal articles being published – in the social sciences of sport has at least doubled since 2000, a very rough calculation of articles in the twenty of the most relevant scholarly journals in the areas of sport sociology, sport history, sport philosophy, sport media/communications, leisure studies, sport management, and sport and politics that mentioned the word "tennis" in their titles or abstracts has still shown a remarkable increase. Grouped by decade, the 1960s saw not a single article on tennis, but there were three published in the 1970s, 13 in the 1980s, and 14 in the 1990s.

Thirty-seven peer-reviewed journal articles mentioning tennis in their titles/abstracts were published across the top twenty journals in these fields in the 2000s, and in the 2010s, as of December 2018, an impressive 89 articles have so far been published. This marked growth in the scholarly interest in tennis can be observed in Table 1.1.

Clear trends and themes are recurring in this burgeoning field of research. British and American tennis stands at the forefront of scholarly attention, and possibly for good reason, but to the neglect of tennis scholarship related to other geographical areas. At least in English-speaking academic journals, the wonderfully compelling history of tennis in France is largely neglected, bar a handful of articles on Lenglen and the Four Musketeers. Australian tennis enjoyed a noticeable increase in scholarly attention in the 1980s, but the leading researchers in this area have either retired or moved away from tennis, leaving this story of its early features, and the fascinating rise to prominence of Australia in the early post-war period in need of attention. African and Asian tennis history, alongside aspects of its culture and politics, are conspicuous in their absence from scholarly attention, as is work on Canada, Mexico and much of Central and South America. While Heiner Gillmeister has done excellent work on German tennis, other parts of Europe have been overlooked, particularly in the East.

Beyond geographical imbalances, the subject matters of class, gender and race have been given greater attention – though the latter much more recently developed than the former two – and also increasingly national identity, but there are noticeable gaps in other areas. The structures of religion, disability and sexuality (broadly) remain woefully under-researched in tennis scholarship, and the appreciation of the need for "intersectional" analyses across all of these outputs is only just beginning to burgeon. Tennis within the realm of "sport for development" also needs attention, as do numerous other political or quasi-political aspects. Critical analyses of deviance, doping, corruption, match-fixing and other scandalous events and acts are needed, particularly to provide a more balanced exposé to complement, if not challenge, the work of tennis reporters and journalists who are always the first to cover these stories and thus shape the dominant narratives.

While tennis media, both traditional and contemporary, has enjoyed considerable attention, particularly in relation to gendered representations, the arts has only recently been embraced as an area deemed worthy of critical examination. There is still much to do, and while commercial aspects have featured in analyses of sponsorships and various management matters, we are arguably only scratching the surface of interesting, relevant and impactful tennis-related research here. These areas highlighted are just a few of the many gaps in the literature, and as a consequence, this book must, inevitably, be considered more a point of departure for new research rather than a comprehensive synopsis of existing work in the field. Relative to other sports, and likely

Table 1.1 Articles published in twenty leading journals across various subjects in the social sciences of sport mentioning 'tennis' in its abstract by decade, 1960s–2010s

	1960s	*1970s*	*1980s*	*1990s*	*2000s*	*2010s*
Articles published mentioning 'tennis' in its abstract	0	3	13	14	37	89

Sources: International Review for the Sociology of Sport, Sport in Society (Sport, Culture and Society), Sociology of Sport Journal, Journal of Sport and Social Issues, European Journal of Sport and Society, Sport in History (The Sports Historian), International Journal of the History of Sport, Sporting Traditions, Sport History Review (Canadian Journal of Sport History), Journal of Sport History, Journal of the Philosophy of Sport, Sport, Ethics and Philosophy, Communication and Sport, International Journal of Sport Communication, Journal of Sports Media, Leisure Studies, Journal of Sport Economics, Journal of Sport Management, Case Studies in Sport Management, and *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics (International Journal of Sport Politics).*

because of its late blossoming as a field of critical analysis generally, the field of social-scientific research on tennis is still in a fairly rudimentary, rather than advanced, stage. However, I argue that this fact, proudly and excitingly, represents a call-to-arms for researchers to fill these gaps and expose the sport – its players, officials, institutions, practices, ideologies and cultures – to the academic community and public as the fascinating and research-worthy subject matter it truly is.

How this book is organized

The remainder of this book comprises 44 chapters, which are loosely divided into three main parts, attending to various aspects of tennis history, culture and politics. The authors chosen were afforded considerable flexibility in terms of their approach and focus, and so the content of the chapters provides insights into how the various subjects intersect and overlap. Some chapters adopt a broad view, outlining major developments over time and space, while others offer a case study approach that is contextualized within broader themes and developments. This mix of approaches reflects the inherent complexities of the subject matter and highlights the different lenses to understand and analyse the processes through which a garden game became a global sport.

Part I examines historical developments in tennis, related chiefly to its commercialization, professionalization and globalization, and the emergence of tennis celebrities as an outcome. Brad Hummel and Mark Dyreson adopt a broad view and examine the important role of tennis patrons, commencing in the Middle Ages with Real Tennis before going on to examine the sport's contemporary financial backers. Contextualizing their work within the broader commercialization of the sport, their chapter sets the tone for one of the key developments that influenced the sport's trajectory particularly over the last century. Joyce Kay also examines leadership, in her discussion of grassroots tennis in the late 19th and 20th centuries and the important role of clubs and works' associations in fostering the game at a recreational level. Robert J. Lake, Dave Day and Simon J. Eaves then discuss developments for coaching-professionals during this same time period in Britain, particularly in terms of the practice of coaching itself alongside the improving status of coaches as individuals in traditional amateur club and tournament environments. Their achievements and struggles are set in the broader context of the sport's gradual professionalization and ongoing resistance to it from governing bodies like the LTA.

The inter-war period remains a key era, when noticeable aspects and features of what might be termed "modern" tennis began to emerge, and Elizabeth Wilson examines the rise of female players as celebrities, especially Suzanne Lenglen who was arguably the first tennis "superstar" that transcended the sport. John Carvalho and Mike Milford build on this narrative of the interwar tennis celebrity in their analysis of Bill Tilden, focusing in particular on his struggles with the USLTA over his off-court journalistic activities. Kevin Jefferys examines the first major British tennis celebrity of this period, Fred Perry, and contextualizes his difficulties experienced merely in fitting into the British tennis establishment within wider class struggles of the time.

The professionalization of tennis, and the concomitant decline of amateurism, continued to be a key feature of the sport's historical development throughout the post-war period, and Kristian Naglo's detailed analysis of the great German tennis celebrities, Steffi Graf and Boris Becker, provides interesting insights into their marked differences and similarities as they became global superstars in the 1980s and helped shape a new German national identity. The subsequent analysis of Li Na, by Steve Bien-Aimé, Haiyan Jia and Chun Yang is also particularly revealing of the dual challenges of representing both a sport and an entire nation, and highlights, generally speaking, some of the continued struggles for female athletes in Asia.

The focus of the part then moves beyond some of the traditional hotbeds of tennis to examine, firstly, the sport's globalization. Barry Smart weaves us through the sport's spread

internationally to expose the developing global tennis landscape in the context of its professionalization and commercialization. The spread of tennis to France – discussed in the chapter by Patrick Clastres – examines early clubs and associations before locating the insurgence of French tennis in the interwar period, internationally, within the broader contexts of French culture more broadly. Lenglen, again, is a key focus as are the "Four Musketeers". Irish tennis has a rich history, but one punctuated with extreme highs and lows. Simon J. Eaves and Tom Higgins explain how Irish players in the 1890s were some of the world's best, and the Irish Lawn Tennis Championships second only to Wimbledon in international prestige, yet the decline of this tournament amidst broader socio-political developments precipitated the general decline of Irish standards internationally before the Great War. Arnošt Svoboda and Dino Numerato then discuss the impressive rise of tennis in Czechoslovakia and, more contemporarily, in the Czech Republic. Set in a Cold War context – before and after the "Velvet Revolution" in 1989 – the story reminds us how pivotal broader politics can be, and indeed has been, in efforts to develop talent and expose nationalistic regimes. Robert G. Rodriguez then examines the spread of tennis to Latin America, and his focus on Argentina provides rich insights on the politics of identity for, especially, their star players Guillermo Vilas and Gabriela Sabatini. Suvam Pal investigates the spread of tennis to India and focuses on the rise of India in the Open era as a powerhouse in the doubles game and the impact of colonization on key aspects of tennis culture in the Indian subcontinent. Mahfoud Amara's chapter exploring the social, political and business significance of tennis in the Middle East serves as another reminder of how great the need is to expand our analyses of tennis history outside of North America and Europe, especially given the notable recent rise of this region in global sport development and mega-event hosting.

Part II builds on the broader contexts introduced in the first section, especially the commercialization, professionalization and politicization of tennis to examine key aspects of culture and representation, covering gender, race, class, the arts and media. Suzanne Rowland commences the section with an examination of changes in tennis dress, dealing with primarily the shifting boundaries of class and gender throughout the interesting pre-First World War period. These were, especially for females, so vividly contrasted through the appearances (and play) of Dorothea Lambert Chambers and Suzanne Lenglen. Janine van Someren and Stephen Wagg then expand this discussion of gendered aspects of tennis culture in their biographical analyses of four leading post-war female British players. Helen Ditouras then provides a more contemporary view of how the feminine tennis body is celebrated and commodified but also sexually objectified in her examination of the phenomenon that is (or was) Anna Kournikova.

The masculinity of Bill Tilden – as close to a true enigma in interwar tennis as you could find – is then given specific treatment by Nathan Titman, who examines the interesting and various ways that the media represented him throughout his career. This is compelling reading in the context of Tilden's homosexuality and infamous incidents with younger male players that subsequently tarnished his image. Stephen Wagg then takes this discussion of masculinity in tennis forward from the 1930s to the early 21st century by examining challenges and contradictions related to the sustained "gentlemanly ethic" according to which male players are expected to behave. John Vincent's chapter provides an overall analysis of gendered media representations of female tennis players – focused, primarily on the last two decades – and highlights their sustained marginalization. Travis R. Bell and Janelle Applequist then go into the specific ways in which the WTA, which formed in the early 1970s, works to sexualize female players as a means of enhancing the apparent commercial value of women's tennis as a commodity. Their focus on a 2012 ad campaign entitled "Strong is Beautiful" highlights the contradictory representation of female players as both sexualized commodities and empowering athletes.

Race and social class then feature as key factors in the next two chapters. José M. Alamillo's analysis of how Latino/a players, in particular Pancho Gonzales and Rosie Casals, have been racialized in the post-war period. Robert J. Lake then discusses developing playing styles in the broader contexts of class and gender, and within a set of parameters that worked to marginalize playing strokes and tactics which, before the Second World War, were deemed to exist outside the behaviour ideals of the hegemonic white, upper-middle class authorities.

The section moves on to examine historical representations of tennis across numerous different mediums. Alexis Tadie provides two chapters here: the first is an examination of literary discourse, positioning tennis as an interesting focal point for mainstream writing; and the second continues in this vein and positions tennis within the history of literature and the visual arts more broadly. Jeffrey O. Segrave also analyzes tennis in mainstream literature to uncover cultural meanings of the sport, focusing in particular on the interesting interplay of tennis depicted as both "a game of love" and a highly professionalized and corporatized sport. Ann Sumner provides a rich analysis of how tennis has been depicted and portrayed in art throughout Europe and North America since the Victorian era, highlighting developments in cultural and social approaches to the sport.

Robert J. Lake and Simon J. Eaves then examine the history of journalism in tennis, commencing on the early role of journalists in the game's incipient development in Britain, before examining some of the challenges experienced by key figures reporting during the inter-war and post-war periods. Nadina Ayer and Ron McCarville provide an interesting analysis of tennis culture as seen through an online tennis community, and explore the day-to-day uses and representations of tennis in the online forum. Katie Lebel and Karen Danylchuk take a broader look at the role of social media in the representation of top male and female players in the 21st century, and examine the interesting role of Twitter in particular as a creative marketing and public relations tool for contemporary players.

Part III focuses on politics and various social issues that have featured in critical discussions of tennis, particularly related to governance, nationalism and identity, and to race, gender, class and disability. Robert J. Lake commences by providing an historical overview of tennis governance as it developed, focusing particularly on the roles of the most powerful associations, namely the USLTA/USTA and LTA, alongside the ILTF/ITF. Alistair John and Brent McDonald conduct a case study analysis of the Australian Open and the inherent challenges related to the role of government in selecting the site and developing the infrastructure of Flinders Park in Melbourne. Matthew P. Llewellyn and Robert J. Lake then examine the politics related to the inclusion of tennis in the Olympic Games, focusing on its first 28 years as part of the Olympic movement, its subsequent separation, and eventual return in the Open Era. Stephen Wagg pushes us to understand issues related to nationalism in tennis, with an analysis of how tennis in Britain promotes and reinforces ideals and values of English national identity, especially through the media representations of its players and the flagship event, the Wimbledon Championships. John Harris takes this a step further to examine the interesting, varied and sometimes conflicting representations of Andy Murray as both a Scotsman and a Briton, focusing on key challenges faced and his, eventual, emergence as a more mainstream figure in British sport following his first Wimbledon victory in 2013.

The politics of race are then examined by Sundiata Djata through the history of African-American involvement in tennis, commencing with an analysis of the American Tennis Association, before going on to discuss important figures like Althea Gibson and the Williams sisters among others. Eric Allen Hall focuses specifically on Arthur Ashe and his efforts and struggles as a civil rights activist in the 1960s and 1970s. The "black man's burden" he stated experiencing is particularly interesting, and his role in the anti-apartheid movement in South

Africa positions him as a pivotal figure in what was very much a global, rather than purely American, struggle. Kristi Tredway's analysis then follows, of how gender and the politics of feminism featured within the formation of the rebel Virginia Slims tour in the early 1970s, focusing on the "Original 9" women who defied convention and challenged male hegemony by signing their famous $1 contracts. Jessica Luther continues in this rich vein and focuses on Billie Jean King's specific efforts to bring about change for women in tennis, and her famous "Battle of the Sexes" tennis match in 1973 – a story recently retold in a Hollywood movie – against the outspoken chauvinist Bobby Riggs. Lindsay Parks Pieper examines another important figure in the 1970s, the transgender player Renee Richards, whose battles with tennis officials in the US to enable her to compete on the women's tour were uniquely contextualized in the broader struggles for gender equity at the time.

Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe's analysis of the Williams sisters brings together discussions of race, class and gender into this insightful chapter that highlights the need for intersectional analyses, and Linda K. Fuller's chapter on the politics of identity for people with disabilities also pushes us to acknowledge multiple systems of oppression in what is a highly nuanced field and subject matter. The final chapter by Robert J. Lake discusses the manifestation of exclusion in tennis, specifically examining tennis clubs as sites where age and class if not also (implicitly) race and religious barriers intersect to create a unique matrix of domination that has, historically, seemed to pervade many clubs.

Notes

1 Real Tennis emerged simply as "tennis", but when its offspring "lawn tennis" became known popularly as tennis, thereby superseding its antecedent, the prefix *real* was added to the original version of tennis to differentiate the two games (Shneerson 2014).
2 Wingfield suggested the net should be six feet at the sides, but the committee for the inaugural Wimbledon Championships in 1877 opted for five feet.
3 Until the late 1970s/early 1980s, the Australian National Championships/Open was often avoided by the top overseas players due in part to its geographical isolation and its lower status among the four major championships (Feinstein 1991).

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Part I

Historical developments (commercialization, professionalization and the creation of tennis celebrities, globalization and internationalization of tennis)

2

From folk game to elite pastime

Tennis and Its patrons

Brad Hummel and Mark Dyreson

Tennis emerged out of the medieval soup of European folk ball games that also produced varieties of football and bat-and-ball games such as cricket. Europe's commoners indulged in these ball games during folk festivals, holidays (in the traditional sense of *holy days*) and other popular gatherings. Serving as diversions from the grinding toils of everyday life, ball sports were especially popular among peasant boys and young men. The upper classes of the feudal system, the nobility and the clergy, served as patrons for these folk games in order to bolster the cement that bound the medieval social foundation (Carter 1992; Gillmeister 1997).

The folk traditions that spawned games such as the French *jeu de la paume* in which the common folk used their hands to hit balls off the walls of village churches, evolved into tennis as clerics adapted the games to the stone confines of their monasteries. Two versions of the game developed. While the peasants continued to enjoy their folk versions of the sport, the move from outside to the inside of monastic courtyards led the clergy to patronize a refined version that became popular among the upper classes.

By the sixteenth century, the monastic patrons of the game added another innovation as they developed racquets for the game's elite version (Gillmeister 1997; Morgan 1995), which had a different pattern of patronage to earlier versions of the game. Increasingly, the monastic orders served as both patrons and players of their version of tennis, while still on occasion supporting the peasant version to fulfil their feudal obligations to the masses. During the late medieval period and the early Renaissance, the upper-class version of the game spread from the clergy to the nobility. "Court" or "Real" tennis blossomed as royal endorsements made it an essential emblem of monarchical dominion. Patronage duties passed from the clergy to the nobility as tennis spread among the ruling classes, especially in France, England, Spain, the Italian states, the Netherlands and the Habsburg Empire. No longer a casual game contested by commoners banging balls against outdoor walls of buildings or clerics competing within monastery walls, tennis became part of the ornamentation of royal courts. The civil and genteel aesthetic cultivated by tennis persuaded the European elite that the game should be a staple of royal court life (Gillmeister 1997). In the *Book of the Courtier*, a 1528 manual by the Italian Renaissance scholar Baldassarre Castiglione (2012; orig. 1528), tennis served as the most important physical activity that the ruling classes and their retinues needed to master. The physical and mental dexterity the game required along with the conviviality it produced justified the attention and support that

noble patrons lavished on tennis. References to the game abounded in Renaissance literature and theatre (Hiller 2009). As the Renaissance revolutionized European educational practices, tennis emerged as an indispensable element of curricula designed to train ruling classes for the new monarchies that were building the foundations for the emergence of modern nation-states (Gillmeister 1997).

Court tennis shaped not only the sentiments and habits of its patrons but added new elements to the physical spaces they inhabited. The new patrons of tennis built "ballhouses" that reflected the vast pecuniary resources and the cultural tastes of tennis patrons. Between 1526 and 1529, Henry VIII constructed a ballhouse to honour his favourite advisor, the Lord Chancellor Cardinal Wolsey, at the monarch's famed Hampton Court Palace, setting a standard that other monarchs would soon emulate. Dubbed the Royal Tennis Court, with its burnished-wood interior surrounded by viewing galleries and clerestory, the building became the model for ballhouses that sprang up throughout Europe (Morgan 1995).

With royal support guaranteed and ballhouses proliferating, court tennis flourished in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As a sport identified with the power and interests of monarchies, tennis declined as the ancient regimes of the nobility shuddered and cracked under the strains of modernity. When Parliament and the Puritans triumphed over the crown in the English Civil War (1642–51) and temporarily replaced the monarchy (1649–60), tennis came under assault as a symbol of the royal order. Thereafter, as the restored monarchy's power continued to erode, tennis declined in Great Britain. The same patterns held also in other European nations (Gillmeister 1997). Indeed, the death knell for the age of the tennis patron and for court tennis, as well as for the traditions of monarchical pre-eminence in Western civilization, took place in 1789 during the French Revolution. At that moment, the triumphant forces of the masses who had overthrown the hegemony of the monarchy and aristocracy invaded the tennis court at the royal headquarters in Versailles to write a new and modern constitution for France. They chose the "ballhouse" to amplify their rejection of the old order by symbolically commandeering a space that had long signified royal dominion and issuing a "Tennis Court Oath" pledging allegiance to the new revolutionary sentiments of "liberty, equality, fraternity". The prestige of tennis patrons had reached its nadir, and court tennis became a quaint symbol of the past, an antiquarianism kept alive by a handful of modern patrons (Baker 1988).

Modern tennis emerges: the transition from patrons to sponsors

Eighty-five years after the "Tennis Court Oath", a Victorian gentleman and impresario, Major Walter Clopton Wingfield, invented a game called "Sphairistiké" (Greek for "playing ball"), which blended earlier racquet games into an outdoor version of tennis to be played on a manicured lawn. This new variant of the old game was soon renamed by the press and public "lawn tennis", and would launch a modern revival of the sport. In certain ways, Wingfield resembled the traditional patrons of sport. Born into a family with an ancient lineage and a place in Britain's landed gentry, Wingfield was a public schoolboy who via the Royal Military College went on to a sterling career in the Empire's army; he inhabited the upper echelons of British society, rubbing elbows with lords and ladies, socializing with movers and shakers in Parliament, and earning employment in Queen Victoria's court. The moribund game of "court tennis" inspired the major's invention. He moved outdoors, onto the estate lawns that served as the social centres for summertime frolics of Victorian elites. Wingfield pitched his lawn tennis parties as a beneficent venue for courtship among the well-to-do, a critical aim of elite society, and of the English social "season" in particular. In Wingfield's vision, lawn tennis would become an essential habit for the Victorian ladies and gentlemen who ruled the British Empire—the most

powerful global force in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century (Alexander 1974; Lake 2015; Wilson 2014). Wingfield thus served as a neo-patron of tennis, a benefactor who sought to use his personal influence to promote the game among his class.

Wingfield sought not only to serve as a patron but also to make a tidy profit from his invention. Outdoor variants of court tennis enjoyed popularity during the 1870s, particularly among the upper-middle classes who sought to emulate the social graces of the nobility and their traditional racquet sports. Wingfield sought to ensure that "Sphairistiké" triumphed over other versions of lawn tennis. He also wanted not only to reinforce his social position through the game but also to make money by marketing tennis to the emerging middle-class consumers in industrial Britain. In 1874, he filed for a patent that outlined basic rules for his version of lawn tennis. He then launched a manufacturing venture to produce boxed sets for garden parties, selling them not only to aristocrats but also to the aspiring middle classes who could afford the princely sum of five guineas – roughly the weekly salary of a skilled working-class artisan in 1874 (Alexander 1974; Wilson 2014). In his commitment to making tennis not only an emblem of social prestige but a commodity that could be bought and sold in the marketplace, Wingfield linked the game to an emerging consumer culture in which commercial sponsors would eventually replace elite patrons as the leading promoters of the sport.

Lawn tennis quickly dominated the British market for genteel "lawn" games, surpassing Victorian crazes for croquet, badminton, shuffleboard and various updates of bowling games. Wingfield's invention found numerous patrons in publications that catered to the British ruling classes, such as *The Field*. One contemporary commentator called it 'pleasant to play at, and pleasant to see played' (Alexander 1974, p.23). The *Army and Navy Gazette*, a magazine embedded in Wingfield's world, predicted that lawn tennis 'will become a national pastime' (Alexander 1974, p.23).

Wingfield and his fellow enthusiasts realized that lawn tennis was not only an enjoyable athletic activity, but one that could carry class distinction by exuding elegance and exclusivity historically associated with the elite. The middle-class and upper-class supporters of Wingfield's invention and other variants of lawn tennis intended the game as a "national pastime" of the ruling classes and not the labouring masses. The amateur sporting clubs of the British quickly absorbed it into their assemblage of games designed to mark the boundaries between social classes. Indeed, no sooner did Wingfield publish his first rulebook and manufacture his first boxed set than a lengthy debate ensued in the pages of the upper-class journal *The Field* concerning how lawn tennis should best be played in a manner amenable to the social purposes of the game. One of the leading patrons of British amateurism, the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), then stepped in to organize a special meeting. The MCC tried to standardize its rules and become the game's *de jure* arbiter. However, the MCC's efforts failed to satisfy all of the middle-class enthusiasts of the various strains of lawn tennis, and the role of standardizing the product fell to the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club (AELTCC). In 1877, the AELTCC established the Wimbledon Championships at its Worple Road grounds in southwest London, an event to showcase the amateur version of lawn tennis. By 1883, the MCC ceded dominion over the rules and culture of lawn tennis to the AELTCC. By the end of the nineteenth century, lawn tennis had been established as a marquee attraction in British high society (Lake 2015; Wilson 2014).

During the late Victorian era, British entrepreneurs exported lawn tennis throughout the world. These tennis promoters ensured that the sport's success was sustained into the twentieth century, but, more significantly, they articulated a strict amateur sporting structure to govern the game and restrict participation to persons of the upper and upper-middle classes. Beginning with the All England Club and expanding to clubs throughout Europe and North America, elite

social clubs such as those in Bad Homburg and Baden Baden in Germany and the Newport Casino in the United States, which hosted the US Lawn Tennis Championships from 1881, sponsored tennis tournaments for their national elites. These organizations acted as new patrons for tennis – self-sustaining vessels perpetuating the game as a social institution rather than as an amusement for the masses (Gillmeister 1997; Lake 2015). Club patronage obligated participants to adhere to a class-centric code of amateurism that, on the surface, included the refusal to accept money for tennis-related activities. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, some players sought to evade amateur strictures by trading the prizes they won at tournaments for cash. By the 1920s, clever players figured out additional mechanisms for cashing in on their tennis skills by garnering travel stipends, earning royalties for writing about tennis, and, sometimes, receiving under-the-table payments that guaranteed the appearance of top players at tournaments. This "shamateur" system, as the press of the era labelled it, privileged the upper-middle-class players who began their careers in the bosoms of clubs and maintained sterling amateur credentials when they started competing, but who also possessed the skills and education to take advantage of loopholes and earn their livings from tennis as they rose through the ranks. In fact, many of the early champions came from the upper-middle classes who inhabited the elite clubs, including the dominant doubles duos the Renshaw and Doherty brothers and Wimbledon and Olympic champion Charlotte Cooper (Baltzell 1995; Lake 2015).

The neo-patrons of lawn tennis formed governing bodies that represented the values of the clubs and their wealthy members, including the United States National Lawn Tennis Association (USNLTA) in 1881, Britain's Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) in 1888, and an International Lawn Tennis Federation (ILTF) in 1913. Collectively, these bureaucracies became stakeholders in preserving tennis as an amateur game. These federations organized and staged tournaments including the prestigious Davis Cup, but also acted as gatekeepers regarding who qualified as an amateur and under what circumstances, though the policies often lacked consistency and clarity and led to bitter wrangles between themselves and with other amateur sports bodies (Lake 2015).

In the 1920s, these agencies kept the elites in control of tennis. Still, the second prong of Wingfield's lawn tennis invention, embodied in his boxed sets designed to market the game to the middle classes, began to shift power into the hands of sponsors. These sponsors – individual entrepreneurs and corporate empires – sought to reap profits by selling the game to the masses or using it to market other consumer items – from men's dress shirts to cigarettes – many of them having nothing to do with tennis.

As the global industrial revolution entered a new phase of production for consumption, factories around the world turned out mass-produced racquets and balls that made the game available to the masses. Tennis haberdashery invaded popular fashion. Governments and social organizations, from municipal parks and recreation departments to the Young Men's Christian Association, built tennis courts that did not require exclusive memberships. A growing plebeian appetite for tennis burgeoned alongside the elite game. Indeed, the elitist history of tennis with its upper-crust patrons served to make the game and its accoutrements popular to a broad audience. If they could not join an exclusive club or expect an invitation to a society gala, the common folk could at least purchase a racquet just like the ones used by the leisure classes so that they could play on public courts. They could even smoke the same cigarettes as tennis aristocrats in mass-market advertisements. They also were interested in buying tickets to watch the best players in the world compete (Dyreson 1989; Mrozek 1983).

By the 1920s and 1930s, a growing professional counterculture had developed to challenge both the market share and the cultural hegemony of the amateur circuit. Players who achieved an exceptional degree of success in Davis Cup and at the four "grand slam" amateur

tournaments, especially Wimbledon, received offers from promoters to endorse consumer products and to join professional tennis troupes. Abandoning amateur glamour – and "shamateur" inducements –some of the leading players of the interwar period including Suzanne Lenglen, Bill Tilden, Vincent Richards, Ellsworth Vines, Don Budge and Fred Perry toured arenas and makeshift stadiums in North America and Europe in a series of one-night stands designed to generate large profits. While exhibition tours lasted many months and often included the same handful of professionals each night, they offered an opportunity to make an income without bothering with the pretences surrounding amateurism and earn rewards that were, at least in theory, greater than that of the amateurs (Baltzell 1995; Wilson 2014).

The first major tennis star to break away from the amateur system and become openly professional was the French stylist Suzanne Lenglen, who signed in 1926 with American promoter C. C. Pyle. The cunning agent capitalized on Lenglen's international stardom by creating a barnstorming tour centred on her and a handful of other professionals (Englemann 1988). Pyle's innovation initiated a perpetual cycle of professional tours that waxed and waned for the next four decades (Lake 2015; Wilson 2014) His new design signalled the transition from patronage to sponsorship as the agent sold the sport to the masses (Kastner 2007).

Although early professional tennis players gave up their opportunities to play at Wimbledon and the US Open, they entered into a network of sponsorship opportunities unavailable under the amateur code. Among the first male stars to pursue a professional career was American great William "Bill" Tilden. Throughout much of the 1920s, Tilden waged an ongoing struggle with the patrons of amateurism. He insisted on his right to earn money from the media for writing about tennis while the neo-patrons of the elite game tried to strip him of his amateur standing for that sin. The feud raged for years, until Tilden ultimately joined the professional ranks where he could make a living from his prize winnings, undertake journalistic endeavours, and endorse Lucky Strike cigarettes (Carvalho 2009; Deford 2012).

Tilden's defection opened the floodgates for tennis players to migrate from patronage to sponsorship. Beginning in the 1930s, many of the top international stars who began their careers by winning the prestigious amateur crowns at Wimbledon, and the US and French National Championships, later abandoned the amateur circuit in order to cash in on their prowess on professional tours. They became the vanguard of a more *egalitarian* class of tennis players, less entrenched in upper-middle-class amateurism and willing to accept sponsorship offers when opportunities arose. Still, between the 1930s and 1960s the elite amateur organizations battled against the professionals, banning even the greatest stars of the game such as Lew Hoad, Jack Kramer and Pancho Gonzalez from their tournaments as soon as they accepted offers from the professional tours (Wilson 2014).

The amateur-professional rift plagued tennis during these years, as an older generation of tennis leaders, who wanted to maintain the elitist class dynamics of the amateur game, increasingly came into conflict with a newer generation who wanted to create a democratized mass market. Increasingly, the top talent began to desert the traditional club tournaments for riches offered by professional promoters. In response, even the most robust defenders of amateurism such as Britain's hallowed LTA had to enlist the aid of corporate sponsors – though the LTA sought only "discreet" partnerships with corporations and government agencies to try the secure the funding necessary for acquiring top players. By the early 1960s, the Nestlé Corporation and British Petroleum had become corporate partners of tournaments sanctioned by the LTA (Lake 2015). Still, in spite of their embrace of "discrete" partnerships with sponsors, the doyens of amateurism refused to allow sponsors to pay the players directly – an increasingly unsustainable position in a thoroughly commodified tennis world. In April 1968, the four grand slam tournaments, led by Wimbledon, agreed to make their tournaments open to all comers, bringing to a close the

amateur club era in tennis and ushering in a period of unbridled commercial patronage. As tennis increasingly became a commodity, sponsors began to dominate the game.

The golden age of sponsorship

The arrival of the "Open Era" unshackled tennis from more than a century of hidebound codes designed to make the sport a preserve of exclusivity and ushered in a new ethos in which the levelling forces of mass-market consumerism increasingly dictated its evolution. Ironically, corporate sponsors were attracted to tennis precisely because its exclusive reputation made it attractive to consumer products seeking to brand themselves as luxury goods. The decision reached by the ILTF and interested parties opened new avenues for tennis stars – chief among them the Australian Rod Laver – to return to the most prestigious historic tournaments without maintaining any façade of amateurism (Lake 2015). The dawn of the Open Era signalled the final triumph of sponsorship over patronage—one of the most significant developments in the sport's history. By the 1990s, amateurism would be dead not only in tennis but also in every other bastion in which it had once flourished, including at the Olympics (Llewellyn & Gleaves 2016).

No sooner had tennis authorities admitted professionals to their tournaments, than a ready stream of financiers appeared, eager to capitalize on the opportunity to market tennis as a glamorous, mainstream sporting enterprise. Men's and women's professional tennis tours quickly developed. Corporate sponsors began to support individual athletes and the tournaments. A lucrative industry emerged to sell tennis equipment through the endorsement of professionals. The rules and structure of the events adapted to expand television exposure – a key element in peddling tennis to the masses (Lake 2015).

In this new climate, sports entrepreneurs sought to establish themselves by signing elite players to long-term contracts, which tied them to organized troupes that were managed by agents who negotiated the tournaments they would play in, their salary guarantees and travel arrangements. The two most successful early tennis tycoons were George MacCall and Lamar Hunt. MacCall, a former United States Davis Cup captain and accomplished insurance salesman, created the National Tennis League (NTL) in 1967. By the end of the following year, he had signed eight of the best men and women in the sport, including Rod Laver, Ken Rosewall, Richard "Pancho" Gonzales and Rosie Casals (MacCall 1968). He also became the first person to sign Billie Jean King to a professional contract in 1968, a deal guaranteeing the rising American star $70,000 for one year ('Billie Jean, Roy Emerson Turn Pro' 1968). Alongside MacCall's NTL was a rival ensemble organized by sports mogul Lamar Hunt, a leading figure in American professional football. In 1967, Hunt and David Dixon founded World Championship Tennis (WCT). Their early signees included such talent as John Newcombe and Cliff Drysdale – who became part of the "Handsome Eight" as the press dubbed them (Wilson 2014).

In what a *New York Times* sportswriter called 'a clandestine struggle for power,' the NTL and WCT competed directly for tournaments during the first few months of the open era, using exclusivity arrangements to prohibit players from the other "league" from playing in the same tournaments (Amdur 1968). As a result, the representatives of the NTL played at the French Open in 1969, while the Handsome Eight were absent (Wilson 2014). Discovering quickly that maintaining two competing tours was financially damaging to all parties, MacCall and Hunt searched for an equitable solution and resolved to merge their companies into a single entity (MacCall 1968). Under a 1968 proposal, the two impresarios would each share 50 percent of the new company. Hunt quickly bought out MacCall's share and developed the World Championship Tennis (WCT) brand. The WCT dominated men's professional tennis until 1990, when the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) Tour took over.

The concurrent organization of the women's elite tennis tour likewise owed its success to a few astute individuals, and perhaps more than any other entity in professional sports, a single sponsor. Not long after she had signed with MacCall, Billie Jean King spearheaded the creation of the most successful league in the history of women's sports, the Virginia Slims tour. Upset with the grossly unequal compensation for female players at the dawn of the Open Era, King, Rosie Casals and *World Tennis* magazine founder Gladys Heldman negotiated a $2,500 contribution from Philip Morris in 1970 to fund the first event in what would become a two-decade long relationship between tennis and tobacco (Bodo 1995). Benefiting from a personal relationship with CEO Joseph Cullman, Heldman convinced the Philip Morris director that women's tennis was a viable marketing opportunity for his company. In 1971, the Philip Morris' sponsorship expanded to the 24 stop Virginia Slims circuit, the definitive women's professional tennis tour which would ultimately become the WTA Tour (Bodo 1995). The slogan for the tour, 'You've come a long way, baby', sold both tennis and cigarettes, and the partnership proved critical in establishing professional tennis as an athletic vocation for women (Wilson 2014).

As a marketing device, the association of cigarettes marketed to fashionable, independent women with the newly developed women's professional circuit was successful beyond comparison. As the sportswriter John Feinstein has argued: 'Only four names had really mattered in the women's game. … Billie Jean King, Chris Evert, Martina Navratilova and Virginia Slims' (Feinstein 1991, p. 16). In a social climate in which tobacco use was increasingly discouraged and regulated, however, the connection between cigarettes and women's tennis was bound to change. In the early 1990s the WTA divorced itself from the Virginia Slims brand, but not before twenty years of sponsorship had built a sustainable tour capable of attracting eager corporate patrons (Feinstein 1991).

By the time the WTA emerged as a professional sports brand separate from its famous sponsor, numerous corporations had already seized the chance to place their names on tournaments, computer rankings and on the athletes themselves. Title sponsorship proved particularly attractive. After years of lagging viewership, the ITF sought to revive the Davis Cup by awarding title sponsor rights to the Japanese technology company NEC (Lake 2015). Tea giant Lipton signed a deal with a Miami tournament that was intended to last for thirty years (Feinstein 1991). Even the grand slam tournaments succumbed to sponsors with deep pockets. During the 1970s the French tennis federation was forced, due to declining viewership and attendances, to negotiate a title sponsor for the French Open (Feinstein 1991). Perhaps the most prevalent sponsor in tennis today is BNP Paribas. In 2017, the French multinational bank sponsored not only its home country's grand slam, as it had done since 1973, but also lent its name to no fewer than eight other elite-level tournaments including the Davis Cup, the Federation Cup and WTA Tour Finals (Association of Tennis Professionals 2017a; BNP Paribas 2017; Women's Tennis Association, 2017b).

The new methods of sponsorship revolutionized not only the tournaments but also the players. The traditional white uniforms of lawn tennis clubs became a metaphorical canvas on which to stitch sponsor logos and paint outlandish designs. In hopes of selling any conceivable product or service, sponsors offered promising players large sums of money to sport corporate logos. During the 1980s, sponsor labels proliferated on women's tennis attire and new corporate interests sought to associate their products with the game (Bodo 1995). On the men's side, players such as John McEnroe and Andre Agassi became key figures in a concerted effort to promote an "anti-establishment image", wearing Nike clothes with garish patterns destined for popularity among the young and rebellious. As historian Elizabeth Wilson (2014, p. 209) observes, apparel, shoe and racquet endorsements created 'corporate tennis', forging an extricable link between the contemporary tennis professional and the sale of consumer products, sport-related or otherwise.

While the potential to reap a bounty from endorsement deals exploded, not all of the world's top players shared equally in the spoils. Especially in the US, non-white tennis players did not have opportunities for sponsorship comparable to those afforded their white peers. Despite their success at the sport's highest level, as late as the 1990s black tennis players such as Zina Garrison often could not find a single corporate sponsor (Ashe and Rampersad 1993). Ranked as the number four woman in the world in 1990, Garrison played without a contract for shoes or clothing. Tennis officials also regularly passed over Garrison for show court assignments that would give her television exposure during major tournaments (Feinstein 1991). Such racial discrepancies continue. In 2015, Serena Williams, a twenty-three-time major champion, made $10 million less than her far less accomplished rival, Maria Sharapova (Bain 2015). Sharapova's earning power has much to do with perceptions of her femininity, which underscores the racial discrepancies that appear in the tennis world. Sponsors flock to the privileged version of "white" femininity that Sharapova sells as opposed to the less effusive mass reactions to the "black" femininity that Williams embodies. In tennis, as elsewhere, American (and global) notions of femininity are filtered by racial lenses (Schultz 2005).

Sponsorship has not only transformed tournaments and players' careers but also the fundamental rules and common culture of the game itself. The old summer swing of players through Europe and the East Coast of North America that developed in the age of neo-patrons, as Baltzell (1995) described, has given way to a laborious globe-spanning, year-round grind that takes players to nearly every continent. Increasingly, global management agencies, including Mark McCormack's International Management Group (IMG) and Donald Dell's ProServ, supervised players' careers and provided the talent for the international circuit (Feinstein 1991). Collectively, these firms brokered most of the players' public lives including negotiating media interviews and sponsor agreements, and determined in which tournaments they would appear. Often, they were tournaments owned or managed by the agencies themselves. In the 1980s and 1990s, Dell was so deeply entrenched in promoting the players he represented at tournaments he both owned *and* covered for the media that tennis critic Peter Bodo deemed him 'the grand master of conflicting interests' (Bodo 1995, p.135).

The marketing of tennis on television, a crucial element in the corporatization of the game, has since the 1960s changed rules to make the game more palatable to viewers. In 1965, the American James Van Alen II invented the tie-break to shorten the length of sets to no more than thirteen games (Fein 2002). Since then a myriad of other rules changes, both minor and significant, have redesigned tennis to the taste of its corporate sponsors and its television audience. Recently, the ATP World Tour replaced the deciding third set in doubles with the first-to-ten-points "super" tiebreaker, remedying a television ratings problem and allowing more time for scheduling lucrative singles matches (Association of Tennis Professionals, 2017b). However, the most significant recent change to tennis score-keeping is the introduction of the Hawk-Eye electronic line-calling system, first used officially in 2006. The Hawk-Eye system increased the marketability of tennis by reducing the number of erroneous line calls and providing television audiences with a dramatic replay of contested points.

Corporate tennis also sparked changes in on- and off-court decorum. In contrast to the largely assumed "manners and sportsmanship values" of the amateur era, the new ATP and WTA rulebooks laid out precise procedures for governing players and penalizing offenders (Baltzell 1995; Lake 2015). The rulebooks also require players to make themselves available for television and the media at the direction of the tournaments (Association of Tennis Professionals 2017b; Women's Tennis Association 2017a).

Since the 1960s, sponsors have become what, in earlier centuries, patrons once were – the leading forces in shaping most aspects of tennis. No longer does tennis conform to the needs

of monastic orders, royal benefactors, or the social elites. Increasingly, the game obeys corporate partners and television broadcasters who seek mass appeal. The sponsors have replaced the patrons as the arbiters of tennis culture and fashion. Global capitalism now dominates tennis the way monastic orders governed medieval tennis. Ultimately, the future trajectory of tennis – and its place in the sporting landscape – resides with the interests of its sponsors. If the last half-century of Open Era tennis serves as any indication, tennis will continue to find sponsors among the corporate interests who use the sport to enhance their own images and sell their products. Indeed, twenty-first-century tennis has become a product of its sponsors – a professionalized, televised and commercialized spectacle and a marketable product for an entertainment-consuming world.

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3

Grass roots

The development of tennis in Great Britain, 1918–78

Joyce Kay[1]

> Lawn tennis can be played and enjoyed by boys and girls, men and women, of all degrees of excellence and of all ages. … [It] flourishes in the clubs, the schools and the public parks and… can be played and enjoyed almost literally from the cradle to the grave. It is a recreational amusement played not too seriously but with just sufficient competitive interest to make it attractive. The great beauty of the game of lawn tennis is that, like cricket, it's a game for everyone.

This was the opinion of J.C. Smyth (1953), tennis correspondent of the *Sunday Times* from 1946 to 1951. Perhaps these sentiments help to explain why historical research in tennis has focused on the professional, competitive and elite aspects of the sport.

Well-respected general histories of British sport in the twentieth century have continued to emphasise the upper-middle- or middle-class roots of tennis, harking back to the days when it was played on suburban and vicarage lawns (Hargreaves 1994; Hill 2002; Polley 1998). Even when opportunities for mass participation have been acknowledged, the image of posh tennis has lingered on, together with the suggestion that snobbishness within private clubs and the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) have contributed in no small way to Britain's failure to find "stars" (see: Lake 2008; Walker 1989). However, tennis is essentially for amateurs; like golf, there are very few opportunities for individuals to make a living on a limited professional circuit. More attention is needed on the grass-roots game developed in the mid-twentieth century and the role played by a variety of clubs. As far as tennis is concerned, we are still unclear 'about the organizations of sport at levels below national bodies' (Maclean 2008, p.49).

A brief history of grass-roots tennis in the 60 years after 1918 illustrates its fluctuating fortunes. Recovering rapidly from wartime privations, it reached out into new communities during the inter-war years. This was the heyday of two under-researched sports spaces, public parks and workplaces, and 'tennis for the millions' was said to be the cry in Britain (Sheffield and District LTA, 1989, p.17). Some clubs suffered during the depression years of the early 1930s, and war ensured that others closed their gates for good. Although the immediate post-war period saw the formation of new clubs, particularly in schools, the sport was undermined from

the mid-1950s by alternative leisure opportunities and increasingly poor facilities, and was overwhelmed by indifference, escalating costs and vandalism in the 1960s. Some clubs fought to balance the books by attracting more – and younger – members, and improving both the playing and the social environment; others were not equal to the task. Local authorities failed to maintain their courts, and pleas to increase the development of public parks tennis went unheeded, while workplace sport, in general, began to decline in a changing industrial landscape. By the early 1970s there was a danger that the "everyone for tennis" optimism of the inter-war years would revert to the "anyone for tennis" model of the pre-1914 era (see Lusis 1998).

This chapter aims in part to demonstrate the scale of grass-roots involvement in tennis, but several challenges exist. These include determining accurate numbers for the membership size of clubs, given the poor records of these in any official documentation, and the number of clubs specific to a particular county as well as nationally. This includes clubs that were unaffiliated to the LTA, which in counties like Nottinghamshire in the 1920s may have been as high as 80% (Lusis 1998). Estimates suggest, nationally, that affiliated clubs numbered between 2,500 and 4,500 during the period under investigation, but these figures may have included clubs connected with schools (see: Walker 1989). It is clearly impossible to determine the how many people were playing tennis at any given point or the size of the "average" tennis club but, taking account of the substantial networks of informal organisations throughout Britain, it would seem that far more tennis was being played than we have been led to believe.

The key sources for this chapter include a combination of official and "amateur" sources, notably annual LTA handbooks and county LTA histories. Local historians, club secretaries and long-standing members have used minutes and other documents, personal recollection, interviews and newspapers to produce written accounts of their own associations, often to celebrate a centenary or important milestone. Using all of these sources together with material from company archives, this chapter demonstrates that tennis in Britain was not only for the privileged, and opportunities existed for lower-income families to play in public parks and company sports grounds in the middle decades of the last century. As these facilities were lost, low-cost options narrowed. Although the maintenance of social exclusivity may have been of paramount concern to some private clubs, it is suggested that the struggle for survival was likely to be uppermost in the thoughts of many more. Given the predominance of work that has focused on tennis in the South, this chapter will give added attention to the Midlands, the North and Scotland. An overview of grass-roots tennis in Britain from 1918 to 1978 will outline the development of the sport and attempt to quantify its changing fortunes.

Overview of grass-roots tennis 1918–78

Evidence suggests that tennis was booming throughout Britain in the 1920s. According to Lusis (1998), existing clubs in Nottinghamshire were 'bursting at the seams', and new clubs opened every year. Of the 270 for which formation dates are known, one-third were started in the 1920s. Of 51 West of Scotland clubs still in existence in 2004, 14 (27%) were founded in the 1920s, a higher number than any previous decade (Hunter 2004). Tennis "took off" in the Colwyn Bay area of North Wales in the early 1920s and the North Wales LTA was founded in 1925 (Jones 2000, p.10). The number of clubs affiliated to Surrey County LTA rose from 114 in 1923 to 'well over 200' by 1937 (Paish 1996, p.4–5), and in Durham and Cleveland, affiliated clubs increased from 23 to 71 between 1922 and 1930 (Durham & Cleveland LTA 1999).

The economic problems of the early 1930s temporarily stalled this expansion. One-off entry fees at some of the more prestigious clubs were waived, and subscriptions were widely reduced;