

THIS CONTENT IS A PART OF A FULL BOOK - TENNIS FOR STUDENTS OF MEDICAL UNIVERSITY - SOFIA

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A brief history of tennis

1. Origin and development of the game

Ball games were popular in ancient Rome and Greece under the name of a spherical "ball game". In the 11th and 12th centuries, the games of "Jacko del Palone" and "Jaco de la Corda" were mentioned, which resembled modern tennis (Todorov 2010; Mashka, Shaffarjik 1989).

In the 14th century, outdoor and indoor courts started to be built in France, where the game of "court – tennis" was played, which was later renamed "palm game", that, dependent on being played inside or outside, was called "short tennis" and " long tennis" (Penchev 1989).

Antonio Scaino da Salò's book "Treatise on the game of the ball" (1555) describes the game instruments - a racquet and a ball - a tight ball of wool, wrapped in leather. It was struck with the palm of the hand, wrapped in a leather belt and a wooden case. A glove was used as well to protect against pain and traumas (Mashka, Shaffarjik 1989).

The "court - tennis" game became popular predominantly amongst the nobles in Europe under the name of "Jeu de paume" – palm game, played both indoors and outdoors. "Mirabo" hall, part of the famous Versailles Palace that was transformed at that time by the Sun King - Louis XIV into a main residence of the French kings, exists to this day and had served for that purpose.

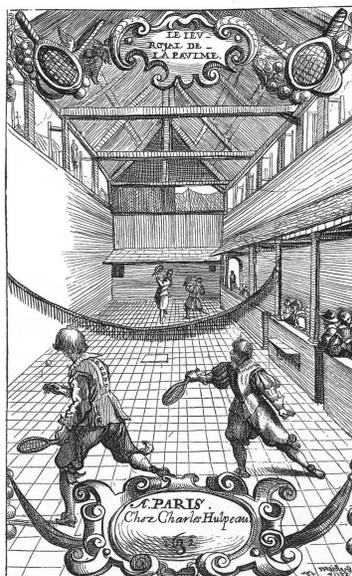


Fig. 1. *Le Jeu de Paume* - "Jeu de paume" - palm game, indoors and outdoors

There were two (or more) players in the game who played the ball over the net in a defined field. When playing indoors, the strokes were hit with the palm of the hand - "short palm", as opposed to outdoors - with the help of a racquet - "long palm". The duration of the game was 2 out of 3 or 3 out of 5 parts, each containing 4, 6 or 8 games. The goal was to earn 4 points by successive count of 15, 30, 45 and 60 as the final point of the game. This way of scoring has been preserved in the modern tennis, with 45 becoming 40, and 60 being the point of winning the game (Todorov 2010).

In England, during the time of Henry VIII, the popularity of the game grew enormously. It began to be widely practiced in society, largely by the sovereignty, which led to its name "the Kings' Game" and the winner was called "the King of the Game" (by J. Marshall - Julian Marshall, "The Annals of Tennis", 1878). Its development was influenced by the games of rackets, which was a variation of badminton, and fives, which resembled handball (Penchev 1989). Later in time, this game had developed under the name of "royal tennis", while in England - as "real tennis". At that time in England, a game looking like tennis played on a lawn, known as "lawn tennis" was popular, as well.

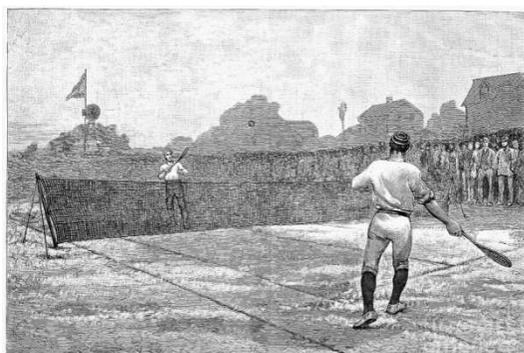


Fig. 2. "Lawn tennis"

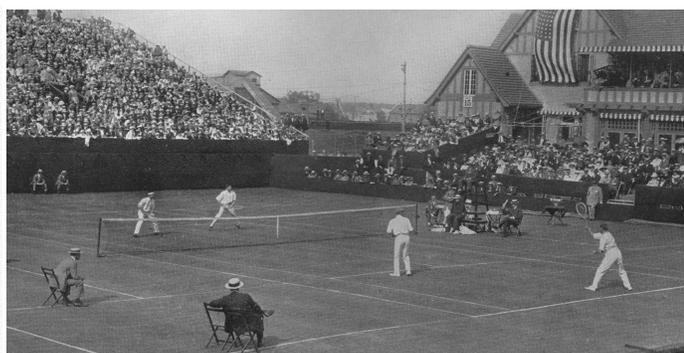


Fig. 3. International "Lawn tennis" Competition, 1914

It is believed that the word "tennis" originates from the French verb *tenir* 'hold' (sg.), whose form in imperative mood is *tenez* 'hold' (pl.).

Major Walter Wingfield, who in 1873 published in his book "Spherical or lawn tennis" the rules of the new game - "lawn tennis" and the relevant equipment for its practice - rubber balls, wooden racquets, etc., is regarded as the founder of modern tennis. At the beginning of 1874, he patented them and began production of inventory for the new game. It became widely spread and popular throughout all of England (Penchev 1989).

The subsequent development of tennis - increasing the number of players, establishing new rules and building courts, led up to the organization of the first official competitions. In 1877, the first tennis tournament takes place in Wimbledon, England, which is still, to this day, one of the most prestigious events in the world and is considered as an unofficial world championship. It follows modern rules of the game, such as a rectangular shape of the court with measures 78×27 feet, or 23.77×8.24 meters, a net height of 3 feet, or 91.44 cm, the right of two serves, a contemporary reporting of points system, etc.

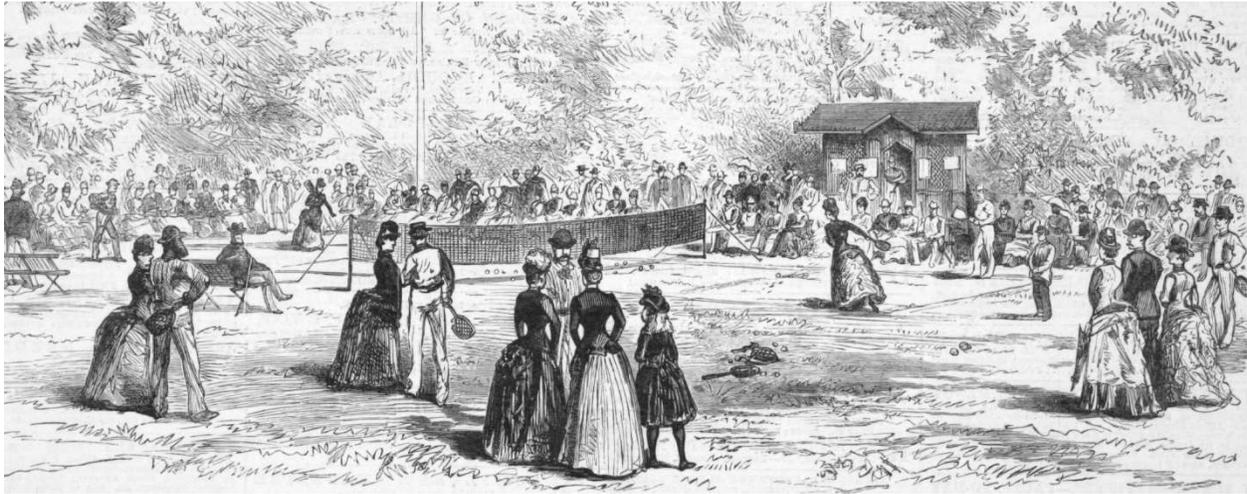


Fig. 4. First Ladies tournament at Wimbledon in 1884

2. Development of technique and tactics in tennis

After the first Wimbledon tennis tournament in 1877, the game quickly became popular in Europe and the United States. The first two academies were also established:

- **The English school** – with the same grip for the groundstrokes - forehand and backhand, as well as a smaller angle between the forearm and the handle of the racquet, which leads to a greater use of the flat and slightly slice stroke.

- **The American school** – with a different grip for the forehand and backhand groundstrokes, along with a larger angle between the forearm and the handle of the racquet, leading to the emergence of topspin shots. Specialist theoreticians like B. Tilden, who introduces targeted practices according to the conditions, the opponent, and so on, as well as athletes like S. Lenglen, who approximates female to male tennis by hitting stronger serve, use of volleys, overheads, etc., also started to appear. In the beginning, tennis was played mainly from the baseline. A lower or lateral rotational movement was transmitted to the ball (Mashka, Shaffarik 1989). In the early periods, the aim of many of the best players was to perform beautiful rallies with slow, "classic tennis" (Todorov 1967).

The third is the **Australian school** (with the emblematic figure of the 1930s Australian player – Harry Hopman) that introduces the athletic training and variety in the game.

Characteristics of the game at the different stages of its development:

- a) A monotonous-rallies game where its attractiveness is lost.
- b) Searching for new ways to execute the shots – Björn Borg's two-handed backhand, which became widely popular in the game, along with M. Bartoli's two-handed forehand trials, and others.
- c) Dynamic and combinative style of play with active offense and defense actions based on a high level of athletic speed-strength training. This approach evolves over time with the increasing speed of play, that is, the goal is to achieve simultaneously great accuracy and

power of the strokes (Gayman 1970) with the ball being hit immediately after the bounce in its upward phase and with net play.

At the different stages of development, the game is characterized with:

1. In offense: game play - "serve - net/serve and volley"; in defense: baseline - net; active attacking game from the baseline; aggressive lob - "lob - net", and so on.
2. In Defense: active play on the run – hitting a winner or hindering the opponent from any convenient spot and with high speed of the ball. In modern tennis, topspin is the most frequently used shot, along with continuous improvement of the rest. The holding of the racquet had also changed – from the predominantly "continental" to variable grips: the use of eastern with a tendency towards western grip for the forehand; eastern grip for the backhand; continental grip for shots in the air and for the serve, and so on.
3. A rapid attack and defense court movement was incorporated with a mainly open stance for both shots.
4. Specifics of sports training: a) speed endurance - a condition for a high level of athleticism in the game; b) speed, agility and precise coordination - execution of various shots from difficult situations, movement on the court, etc .; c) dynamic force - a prerequisite for the execution of serves, returns and other strokes with high speed.

3. Organizational development of tennis on an international scale

The International Tennis Federation (ITF) determines 1878 as the birth of modern tennis.

Tennis is also one of the sports that was included in the first Olympic Games when they were established in 1896. Until 1924, it had remained an Olympic sport for 7 Olympiads. As a result of an incoordination between the International Olympic Committee and the ITF, tennis was withdrawn from the Olympic Games until 1988 when it was re-entered again in Seoul.

The international sports competition also includes the organization of the four most prestigious tournaments of the so-called Grand Slam – the Open championships of Australia, France, England and the United States. The most notable tennis event among them is Wimbledon, which dates back to 1877.

A significant place amongst the world's biggest sports events also takes the World Men's Teams Tennis Championship/International team championship – “Davis” Cup (established by the 20-year-old Harvard student, D. Davis), which has been held since 1900; The World Women's Team Tennis Championship/- Fed Cup, held since 1963 (Todorov 1910), and “Hopman Cup” - the World championship of mixed doubles.

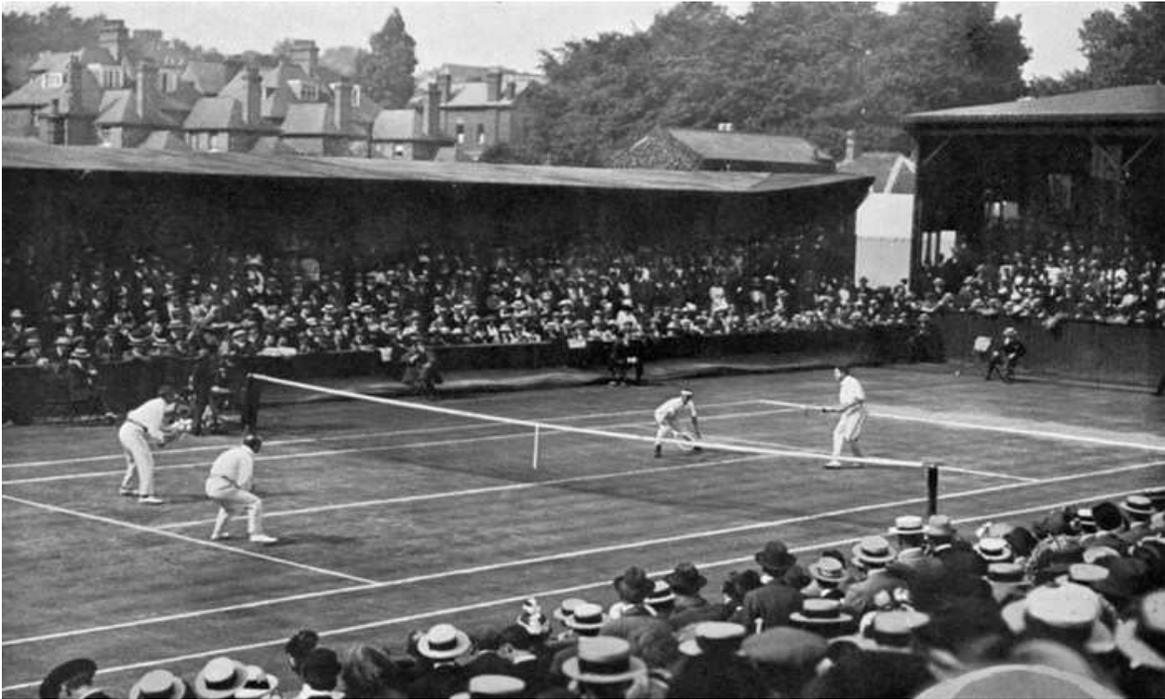


Fig. 5 The World Team Men's Tennis Championship - The "Davis" Cup

The development of tennis is divided into the following periods (Penchev 1989):

First period (1875-1890) - the basics of technique are established, together with the creation of the first tennis clubs.

Second Period (1890-1905) - the game becomes popular on an international scale; tournaments of different categories are being held via an established sports calendar.

Third Period (1906-1939) - tennis becomes popular worldwide - the International Tennis Federation is established in 1913.

Fourth period (from 1946 to 1968/1975) - tennis has improved in all aspects. The International Tennis Federation is recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and in 1968 tennis is included as a demonstrative sport at the 19th Olympic Games in Mexico. In the same year, the participation of both amateurs and professionals in the same tournaments is regulated. The Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) and Women's Tennis Association (WTA) were created subsequently in 1972 and 1973.

Fifth period (since 1975 until present) – it features exceptional dynamics in the development of the game. A system for sports competition activities is being validated/affirmed - ATP and WTA, together with competitions with significant prize pools and individual tournaments that are organized in different parts of the world. Tennis is included in the Olympic Games./and the unofficial world team championships - Men's Davis Cup, Women's Fed Cup, Mixed Doubles' Hopman Cup are also being held. In addition, the ITF organizes a series of men's and women's competitions with \$10-15,000 in prize money on various continents - "ITF Men's Circuit/ATP Challenger Tour?" and "Future Series", providing points for the world's ranking. A system for

categorizing tournaments is created according to the prize funds and points they award (ATP 250, ATP 500, the "Masters" series, etc.). The rules for gaining points and classifying for the world rankings for men and women are changing as well. A Hawk Eye tracking technology system is introduced.

4. Origin and development of tennis in Bulgaria

The outset of the development of tennis in Bulgaria is considered 1896 when the Sofia Tennis Club was founded in 1911 and was included in the created Bulgarian Sports Club. In the 1927-1933 period, the development of tennis was intense, as new clubs were formed in different cities of the country - Sofia, Plovdiv, Burgas and others. The first tennis academies are also built.

In 1930, the Bulgarian Tennis Federation was founded, as in 1932 it was renamed as the Bulgarian Tennis Union, which became a member of the Bulgarian Olympic Committee (BOC) and of the International Tennis Federation (ITF).

The first state/national tennis championships were held in 1927 and 1935 for men and women, respectively.

In the period between 1925 and 1944, tennis in Bulgaria had developed as a result of the enthusiasm, efforts and pursuit for playing the game of a limited number of tennis amateurs.

From 1945 to 1964, the game was popularized at a faster pace. In 1961, the World Student Games took place in Bulgaria and since 1972 the open international tournament "Academic" has launched as one of the most significant events of the Bulgarian tennis.

Since 1980, several Bulgarian tennis players have reached the world's top tennis. Manuela Maleeva won a number of prestigious tournaments - the U.S. Open Championship, Japan, etc., reaching No. 6 in 1984, No. 5 in 1985, No. 10 in 1986, and No. 8 in 1987 in the world rankings. In 1988 she became a bronze medalist at the Olympic Games. The international successes of her sisters, Katerina and Magdalena Maleevi, are significant as well, as they had also won a number of tournaments and found their way into the world top ten throughout the different stages of their playing careers.

A number of athletes have also achieved international successes over the years - Lubomira Bacheva became twice the European champion for Girls 14&Under in 1989 and Girls 16&Under in 1991. Milen Velev is the first Bulgarian male tennis player who had reached top 100 in the world. Other talented juniors also appeared, such as Todor Enev, who won the unofficial World Junior Championship for Boys 18&Under - "Orange Bowl" in 2000. Tsvetana Pironkova, who reached the semi-finals of Wimbledon in 2011 and was ranked 36th in the world ranking, was another successful player. In 2014, she also won her first WTA tournament title in Brisbane.

A special regard/credit should be given to Grigor Dimitrov, who became a champion of the U.S. Open and Wimbledon Junior Championships in 2008 and won four ATP tournaments - one in 2013 and three in 2014, as in the same year he reached top 10 in the world.

In 2012, the Bulgarian team, consisting of Tsv. Pironkova and Gr. Dimitrov took the elite/respected 4th place at the unofficial World Cup for Mixed Doubles "Hopman Cup".

The significant progress of Bulgarian tennis and the recognition of its growth and success were recognized by organizing the WTA Tournament of Champions in Sofia for three consecutive years from 2012 until 2014.