

Tracking Rackets

A History of The Game of Tennis

- INFORMATION PAGE -

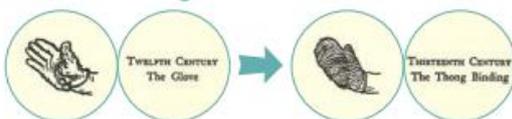
Tennis as we know it has only been played for just over 125 years. However a form of tennis called Real, Royal or Court Tennis, from which lawn tennis developed, was played centuries before.

12th Century



The first game of tennis was played by monks in France. This game was called 'Jeu de Paume' because the small, hard ball was hit over a net with the palm of the hand.

13th Century



Players of Jeu de Paume started to wear a glove to protect their playing hand. Later a simple wooden racket was developed in Italy.

16th Century

'Real Tennis' began to be played throughout Europe by Kings and their courtiers in castles and palaces. They used long handled rackets with a lopsided head. In fact Henry VIII was a very keen Real Tennis player and built a famous court at Hampton Court Palace.

19th Century

A game called Rackets in which players used a long handled racket and a small, hard, white ball became popular. This game however was played indoors and in the 1860s, two very keen Rackets players called Harry Gem and Augurio Perera, set about inventing a new outdoor version of the game which they called Lawn Tennis. The popularity of the game spread and the first Tennis Club in the world was opened in Leamington Spa in 1872.

Also around that time, a gentleman called Major Walter Clopton Wingfield, was developing a game, simpler than Rackets to be played outside. He manufactured a portable box set which included everything required to play the game which he called Sphairistike. These rackets had long, slender handles with small, pear-shaped heads. It is a combination of these two games that we know today as tennis.

Tennis rackets have changed dramatically over the years from the first Jeu de Paume game. Strings were originally made from dried, twisted animal gut but are now generally made with synthetic fibres. From the 1900s rackets were made of wood until the 1970s when oversized metal rackets became popular. Nowadays most rackets are made of light weight carbon fibre and have large heads to enable easy contact of the ball.

Some other interesting dates:

- 1877 The first Lawn Tennis Championships were held at Wimbledon. The winner was Spencer Gore.
- 1884 Ladies were allowed to compete at Wimbledon.
- 1896 Tennis was first played at the Olympics.
- 1922 The new Wimbledon grounds were opened.

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- Timeline Answers -

