

The Code of Tennis

Colonel Nick Powell, 1 January 1992

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1. Before reading this pamphlet you might well ask yourself: Since we have a book that contains all the rules of tennis, why do we need a code? Isn't it sufficient to know and understand all the rules?
2. An answer to these questions could come from this hypothetical situation. Two strangers, A and B, are playing a tightly contested tournament match without officials. On one of B's shots A says: "I can't be sure if it was in or out; therefore, the point is yours." Three games later on one of A's shots B says: "I'm not sure how it was; let's play a let." In two identical situations there are different decisions. If no one else is in favour of a code that works the same on both sides of the net, you can be sure that A is!
3. There are a number of things not specifically set forth in the rules that are covered by custom and tradition only. For example, everybody knows that in case of doubt on a line call your opponent gets the benefit of the doubt, but can you find that in the rules? Further, custom dictates the standard procedures that players will use in reaching decisions. These, then, plus some other similar ones, are the reasons why we need a code, the essential elements of which are set forth here.
4. One of the difficult aspects of tennis is that when a match is played without officials the players themselves have the responsibility for making decisions, particularly line calls; but there is a subtle difference between their decisions and those of an umpire or a linesman. A linesman does his best to resolve impartially a problem involving a line call with the interests of both players in mind, whereas a player must be guided, in this case and in all other cases, by the unwritten law that any doubt must be resolved in favour of his opponent.
5. A corollary of this principle is the fact that a player in attempting to be scrupulously honest on line calls will find himself frequently keeping in play a ball that "might have been out" and that he discovers -- too late -- was out. Even so, the game is much better played this way.
6. In making a line call a player should not enlist the aid of a spectator. In the first place, the spectator has no part in the match and putting him in it may be very annoying to an opponent; in the second, he may offer a call even though he was not in a position to see the ball; in the third, he may be prejudiced; and in the fourth, he may be totally unqualified. All these factors point decisively toward keeping out of the match all persons who are not officially participating.
7. **It is both the obligation and prerogative of a player to call all shots landing on, or aimed at, his side of the net, to help his opponent make calls when the opponent requests it, and to call against himself (with the exception of a first service; see par. 32) any ball that he clearly sees out on his opponent's side of the net.** If A just got to B's shot, hitting it several inches above the ground, and there is a question whether A's shot went directly over the net or bounced over, the best determinant is the presence or absence of forward roll on A's shot, with the presence of forward roll being an almost certain sign that A's shot bounced over. In a case like this, B has the prerogative of decision. (For calling service lets, see par. 32.)
8. The prime objective in making line calls is accuracy, and all participants in a match should cooperate to attain this objective. **When a player does not call an out ball (with the exception of a first serve) against himself when he clearly sees it out -- whether he is requested to do so by his opponents or not -- he is cheating.**

9. All players being human, they will all make mistakes, but they should do everything they can to minimize these mistakes, including helping an opponent. No player should question an opponent's call unless asked. When an opponent's opinion has been requested and he has given a positive opinion it must be accepted; if neither player has an opinion the ball is considered good. Obviously, aid from an opponent is available only on a call that terminates a point. In accordance with the laws of parallax, the opinion of a player looking down a line is much more likely to be accurate than that of a player looking across a line.

9.1. When you are looking across a line don't call a ball out unless you can clearly see part of the court between where the ball hit and the line. This means if you are half a court or so away and a ball lands within two inches of a line it is almost impossible for you to call it with accuracy. A player who stands on one base line and questions a call concerning a ball that landed near the other base line is probably being ridiculous.

9.2. Unless you have made a local ground rule designed to save chasing balls that are obviously going out, when you catch in the air a ball that is in play you have lost the point, regardless of whether you are inside or outside the court.

10. Any call of "out", "let", or "fault" must be made instantaneously; otherwise, the ball is presumed good and still in play. In this connotation "instantaneously" means that the call is made before either an opponent has hit the return or the return has gone out of play. Most important: a ball is not out until it is called out.

11. The requirement for an instantaneous call will quickly eliminate the "two chance" option that some players practice. To illustrate, C is advancing to the net for an easy putaway when he sees a ball from an adjoining court rolling towards him. He continues his advance and hits the shot, only to have his supposed easy putaway fly over the baseline. C then makes a claim for a let, which is obviously not valid. C could have had a let had he stopped when he first saw the ball rolling towards him, but when he saw it and then continued on to hit the easy shot he forfeited his right to a let. He took his chance to win or lose, and he is not entitled to a second one.

12. Another situation eliminated by the instantaneous call requirement is that in which a player returns the ball, at the same time yelling: "I don't know." This sort of call constitutes a puzzle which should not be thrown at any opponent.

13. In living up to the instantaneous call requirement it is almost certain that there will be out balls that are played. On a fast first service, for example, sometimes the ball will be moving so rapidly that the receiver has hit the ball and it has gone into play (maybe for a placement) or into the net before an out call can be made. In such cases, the receiver is considered as having taken his chance, and he is entitled to only one, whether he made a putaway or an error. Likewise, when the server and his partner thought to be out the ball which was good and didn't play their opponents' return, they lose the point. The purists' argument that a ball that is out cannot be played under any circumstances falls before the practicality of the player's responsibility to make calls. Otherwise, after a point involving a long rally had been concluded a player could discover an out mark made at the beginning of the point and ask that the point he had just lost be awarded to him. It is only fair that any time you cause your opponent to expend energy he should have a chance to win the point; and when you fail in your duties as a linesman you pay by letting an out ball stay in play. From strictly the practical view, the instantaneous call rule will eliminate much indecision and unpleasantness.

14. Any ball that cannot be called out is presumed to have been good, and a player cannot claim a let on the basis that he did not see a ball. If this were not so, picture your opponent at the net ready to tap away a sitter. As he does so your back is to him. Can you ask for a replay because you didn't see where his shot landed? If you could, the perfect defence has been found against any shot that is out of reach: close your eyes before it touches the court.

15. One of tennis' most infuriating moments occurs when after a long hard rally a player makes a clean placement and hears his opponent say: "I'm not sure if it was good or out. Let's play a let." Remember that it is each player's responsibility to call all balls landing on, or aimed at, his side of the net, and if a ball can't be called out with surety, it is good. When you ask for a replay of a point because you say your opponent's shot was really out but you want to give him "a break," you are deluding yourself; you must have had some small shred of doubt and that doubt means the point should be your opponent's. Further, telling your opponent to "take two" is usually not so generous as it might sound.

16. When time and the court surface permit, a player should take a careful second look at any point-ending placement that is close to a line. Calls based on a "flash look" are often inaccurate, and the "flash look" system has a high probability of being unfair to an opponent.

17. In doubles when one partner calls a ball out and the other one good, the doubt that has been established means the ball must be considered to have been good. The reluctance that some doubles players have to overrule their partners is secondary to the importance of not letting your opponents suffer from a bad call. The tactful way to achieve the desired result is to tell your partner quietly that he has made a mistake and then let him overrule himself. If it comes to a showdown, untactful honesty is preferable to tactful dishonesty.

18. Normally, asking for a replay of a point is a sign of weakness and of failure to exercise line calling responsibilities, and should occur only on rare occasions. One of these is as follows. Your opponent's ball -- a serve or otherwise -- appears out and you so call, but return the ball to his court. Inspection reveals that your out call, which stopped play, is in error. Since you actually returned the ball a let is authorized. Had you not returned the ball the point would have been your opponent's. (See last sentence in par. 19.) Another possible replay situation occurs when, just as C is returning A's good shot, A's overzealous partner, B calls A's shot out. If C hits a placement he wins the point; otherwise, the point should be replayed.

18.1. When you are hindered attempting to return a shot that you could not have returned even had there been no hindrance, a let is not authorized. Incidentally, a request for a let does not mean that the let is automatically granted. For example, a request for a let because you have tripped over your own hat should be denied.

19. Once an out (meaning a ball has landed outside the court), fault, or let call is made play stops, regardless of what happens thereafter. This policy is sound, though sometimes maddening. For example, with you at the net your partner serves a bullet that the receiver barely gets to the net for an easy setup which you whack away, but the receiver has yelled "fault" as he was returning the service. Inspection reveals that the service was good. You first feel that your putaway shot should count for the point. But suppose that you had missed the putaway. Your immediate cry would have been for a let because the out call distracted you and made you miss. A rule can't work one way one time and work another way another time. It is unfortunate that a miscall was made on such a good service, but you must trust your opponents' intentions to be fair, remember that since they are human they are going to make some mistakes, and realize that since they returned the service a let may be called. The validity of the principle here notwithstanding, most good players who have made a weak giveaway type of return because of an opponent's good forcing shot will give the opponent the point in spite of the out call. The important thing is that a player should not let his ineptitude as a linecaller cause his opponent to fail to win a point that he almost surely would have won had the correct call been made on his forcing shot.

20. All points in a match should be treated with the same importance, and there is no justification for considering a match point differently than the first point. Also, some players will insist that on occasion even though a ball is good they want it to be out so badly that they will unconsciously call it out, this reasoning is difficult for a strong-willed fair-minded player to accept.

20.1. All points played in good faith stand. For example, if, after losing a point, you discover that the net was four inches too high, the loss stands. If the third point of a game is played in

the ad court, there is no replay. If you lose a match using a 9-point tie-break, then discover the tournament was using 12-point tie-breaks, the loss stands.

20.2. As a general guide, when it is realized during a point that a mistake was made at the beginning, e.g., service from the wrong court, the point will not be interrupted, nor will corrective action be taken until the point is played out.

20.3. Each player is responsible for "housekeeping" on his own court. If he fails to remove stray balls and other objects he may expect to pay for the consequences.

20.4. When a player is injured in an accident caused by his opponent, it is the player who must suffer with respect to the match, not the opponent. For example, A accidentally throws his racket and incapacitates B so that B is unable to resume play within the time limit; even though A caused the injury, it was accidental, and B must be defaulted, not A.

21. As a driven ball -- in contrast to a ball dropping vertically -- strikes the ground (or asphalt or cement, but not grass) it will leave a mark in the shape of an ellipse. If this ellipse is near a line and you cannot see court surface between the ellipse and the line, the ball is good. If you can see only part of an ellipse on the ground this means that the missing part is on the line or tape. Some players will call a ball of this kind out on the basis that all of the mark they can see is outside the line; this thinking is fallacious. An ellipse tangent to a line literally, touching the line at only one point) still represents a good ball; this is tantamount to saying that a ball 99% out is 100% good.

22. Notwithstanding the ellipse theory, on courts which have tapes for lines, occasionally a ball will strike the tape, jump an inch, then leave a full ellipse. This is frequently the case with a hard service when the server will see a clear white spot appear on the service tape, only to have the receiver call "fault" and point to an ellipse an inch back of the line. To attain accuracy in such situations is difficult. The best that the receiver can do is to listen for the sound of the ball touching the tape and look for a clean spot on the tape directly between the server and the ellipse; if these conditions exist he should give the point to his opponent. Sometimes sound alone can be misleading, particularly when the hearer is some distance -- across the net or otherwise -- from the sound. Also, an inch and a half is about the maximum that a ball will jump off the tape.

23. In returning service the partner of the receiver should call the service line for him, with the receiver calling the centre line and the side line, although either partner may make an out call on any shot (service or other) that he clearly sees out. It is difficult for the receiver, who is looking across the service line, to call with accuracy a shot that lands near that line. This is the reason why in singles a receiver will frequently find himself unsure of a serve and put it in play even though later it is determined that it was out.

24. Returning a service that is obviously out (accompanied by an out call) is a form of rudeness, and when the receiver knows that in making these returns he bothers the server it is gamesmanship. At the same time it must be expected that a fast service that just misses the line will frequently with justification be returned as a matter of self-protection, even though an out call is made. The speed of deliveries is such that if the receiver waited for a call before he started to make a return he would be overpowered. Probably the most difficult shot in tennis to call accurately is a hard flat service, aimed directly at the receiver, that hits within an inch of the service line in a grass court singles match.

24.1. Returning a first service that is obviously out without an out call in an attempt to catch an opponent off guard is cheating. At the same time, if the receiver in good faith gives the server the benefit of the doubt and returns an out ball, the server is not entitled to refuse the benefit of the doubt and ask for a let on the basis that since he saw the serve out the return caught him by surprise.

24.2. When the server causes a delay between the first and second serves, he has one serve to come. When there is a delay between serves that interrupts the natural flow of the match and when the delay is caused by the receiver or outside interference, the server has two serves to come. The receiver determines whether the delay has interrupted the natural flow of the match.

25. A USTA rule interpretation authorizes the receiver or his partner to call footfaults on the server after the server has been warned once and a request for an umpire has failed. This call should be made only when the caller is absolutely certain, with the footfaulting being so flagrant as to be clearly perceptible from the receiver's side of the net. While in doubles the partner of the receiver may be in a fair position to call a normal footfault, in either singles or doubles the receiver himself would be able to make this call only in flagrant cases.

25.1. When you feel that your opponent, a netrusher, is footfaulting but his violations are not sufficiently flagrant for you to be sure and to call, the situation can be irritating. Compliance with the footfault rule is very much a function of a player's personal honour system. The plea that he only touches the line and doesn't rush the net is not acceptable. If he doesn't footfault when there is an umpire but does when there is no umpire, the time has come for him to examine his own sense of fair play to see if he is the type of person who will cheat provided he thinks he can go undetected or unpunished, and, if he is, to try to make a change. Habitual foot faulting, intentional or careless, is just as surely cheating as is making a deliberate bad line call.

26. Even if no ethics were involved, from the practical view it behoves a player to avoid footfaults. It is not uncommon in a match having officials for a chronic footfaulter to become so upset by the frequent footfault calls against him that his whole game disintegrates.

27. A player who hits a weak shot and then, when the ball is moving towards his opponents' court, utters an exclamation such as "back, partner!" has violated the ethics of good play. His opponent, provided he does not play the ball because of the exclamation, is entitled to the point on the basis of having been hindered. However, if the opponent goes ahead and plays the ball and misses, the "two chance" rule holds. There is such a thing as the exclamation coming forth just as the opponent is making his shot. It is then properly a matter for the opponent to determine whether or not he is entitled to a let, for only he can judge if the hindrance came before his shot, after it, or simultaneously with it. If he is going to request a let he should try to make the claim before he sees the outcome of his shot, though this is not always possible. A certain type of player will wait and request a let if he has made an error, but will forget about the let if his shot has turned into a freak placement; this practice is not ethical. The main thing is that if the opponent was hindered, then had an option to stop or to make the shot, then attempted the shot, whether he missed it or not is immaterial, he is considered to have played the ball and there is no basis for a let.

28. In general, any conversation between partners while the ball is moving toward their opponents' side of the net is taboo; once either you or your partner has hit the ball, don't say anything until an opponent has hit it. Even when a ball is moving toward two partners conversation between them should be minimized, with about the only words permitted being such exhortations as to try hard for a ball ("run!") or to let one pass ("out!"), etc. Incidentally, "out" as advice to a partner to let the ball drop does not suffice for the normal "out" call necessary when a ball has landed outside the court.

29. With respect to a player moving when a ball is in play or about to be in play, in general he is entitled to feint with his body as he wishes. He may change position on the court at any time including while the server is tossing the ball to serve. Movements or sounds that are made solely to distract an opponent, such as waving the arms or racket, stamping the feet, or talking are prohibited.

30. A ball from your court going into an adjoining court or a ball from an adjoining court coming into your court can provide the basis for a let. In handling these balls here are some things to remember. When play is in progress don't go behind another court to retrieve a ball

or hit a loose ball to that court; this may mean holding a ball for several seconds while a point is being finished. Don't ask for one of your balls until the point in play on the adjoining court has stopped. In returning a loose ball to another court don't hit it aimlessly as if you didn't care where it goes as long as it leaves your court. Instead, pick up the ball and hit it so that it goes directly to one of the players on the other court, preferably the server, on the first bounce; this might be termed "Rule One" of court etiquette. As a corollary to this rule, except when so doing will delay play unnecessarily, collect the match balls that are on your side of the net and either give them to the next server or place them on his baseline.

31. In the general area of common courtesy and consideration for others violations are too frequent. Some players in loud tones have a post mortem on each point, to the dismay of the players on the adjoining courts. Some players complain of the type of shots an opponent hits (e.g., too many lobs); what he hits are his business as long as they are legal. Don't embarrass a weak opponent by being overly gracious or condescending. Don't spoil the game for your partner or opponents by losing your temper and using vile language or throwing your racket. After losing a point don't slam a ball in anger; a ball boy once lost an eye from this sort of action. And don't sulk when you are losing; instead, praise your opponent's good shots. Above all, try to make tennis a fun game for all participants.

31.1. Be neat in your dress, and wear proper tennis clothing; no blue jeans, loud sport shirts, or jogging shoes. If you are going to a strange club with whose rules you are not familiar you can never be wrong dressing in all-white. Carry a spare racket; if one breaks you are not allowed a delay to find a replacement, but instead must continue with what you have courtside, broken or not. If you break a string and change rackets, practice shots with the new racket are not permitted. And don't place towels or clothing over the net or on the court.

31.2. If there is a clothing, shoes, equipment or racket malfunction during a point, the point will be finished before any corrective action is taken. After the point is over a reasonable delay may be allowed for a player to leave the playing area to repair or replace shoes, clothing, and equipment, but not rackets.

32. As mentioned in paragraph 7, **neither the server nor his net man should make an out call on a first service even though he thinks it is out**, because the receiver, not being sure of the ball, may give the server the benefit of the doubt and then hit a placement. In this instance the prerogative of the receiver to give the benefit of the doubt and make a return should not be usurped. However, either the server or the net man should volunteer a call on any second service he clearly sees to be out for his call terminates the point. In doubles the net man is usually in the best position to hear a service touch the net, though custom supports the calling of a let in singles or doubles by any player who hears an otherwise good serve touch the net. For a call of a service let to be valid, it must be made prior to the return of serve either going out of play or being hit by an opponent.

33. Calls involving a ball's touching a player, a player's touching the net, a player's touching his opponent's court (invasion), hitting an opponent's return before it has passed the net, and a double-bounce, can be very difficult to make. Any player who becomes aware that he has committed a violation in one of these areas should announce the violation immediately in order to avoid unnecessary expenditure of energy by his opponent.

33.1. In all of the above areas the prerogative of decision belongs to the player or team involved. To illustrate, A thinks B's shot is a double-bounce, catches B's shot and claims the point. B, however, feels sure there was no double-bounce; since B has the prerogative of decision the point is B's. On occasion even though B thinks there was no double-bounce he will defer to A's judgment because A was in a better position to see what happened.

33.2. After a point has been finished A might give B an opportunity to admit, for example, a double-bounce that was not called during the point. If B accepts A's thinking he should give him the point, even at that late time. The decision, of course, is still B's. A better example would be where A thinks that B has invaded A's court, but B hasn't called the invasion. After

the point is over, if A can point out half of one of B's footprints under the net it would be difficult for B to refuse to give A the point.

33.3. Done without deliberation and with one continuous forward swing of the racket, a double-hit and a carry are legal shots. When done with deliberation, or when there is a definite 'second push' of the racket, each of these shots is illegal, with consequent loss of point that the striker, who has the prerogative of decision, should call promptly on himself.

34. Some players confuse "warm-up" and "practice." While it is not mandatory, normally a player should provide his opponent five minutes (ten minutes if there are no ball persons) of warm-up, making a special effort to hit his shots directly to his opponent. Five minutes warm-up is adequate even on a chilly day, although it may not be adequate for him to practice his shots as much as he would like. If he wants to practice more than five minutes he should do it prior to the match. Courtesy dictates that you not practice your service return when your opponent practices his serve. Incidentally, even a windy day does not justify taking warm-up serves from both ends of the court. If partners want to warm each other up (at the same time their opponents are warming up), they may do so.

34.1. Many players want to practice or to warm-up their serves just before they serve the first time, even though the match is then one game or more old. Once a match has started there is no basis for further practice or warm-up. It would be just as logical to hit practice serves before the tenth game as it would be to hit them before the second game.

35. If you feel that you, as a receiver, are being victimized by a server who serves without hesitation (frequently, a server who serves when you are getting ready rather than when you are ready) the person to blame is most likely yourself. This is true because in any discussion over whether a receiver was ready or not the sole criterion is the receiver's own statement, and if he wasn't ready a let is in order. In reality, while there are unsmart receivers, there is no such thing as a quick server.

36. The receiver should make no effort to return a serve when he is not ready if he wishes to maintain valid his right to a let. On the other hand the server is protected from the "two chances" receiver under the same rule, this rule states that if a receiver makes any attempt to return a service he is presumed to have been ready.

37. A recent USTA Comment under Rule 12 provides that once the receiver has indicated that he is ready he cannot become unready and claim a let-- anymore than he could become unready during a point-- unless there is some outside interference. This negates the gamesmanship practice some receivers have had of indicating ready, then, just as the server starts to serve, announcing that they are unready in an attempt to upset him.

38. When the receiver has indicated that he is ready and the server serves an ace, the receiver's partner cannot claim a let because he (the partner of the receiver) was not ready. The receiver's indication of being ready is tantamount to indicating that his team is ready. While no server should serve if he sees either of his opponents is not ready, he is not expected to check both opponents before each serve. It is the receiver's responsibility to signal ready only when both he and his partner are ready. Likewise, the server should check his partner's readiness before he serves, for his serving is an indication that his team is ready.

39. When a server requests three balls to be in his hand prior to each point he is to serve the receiver should comply with this wish when the third ball is readily available. Since only two balls are normally needed for a service, the receiver should not be required to get the third when it is some distance away, nor, under the continuous play rule, should a server during a game be permitted to retrieve a distant third ball himself. The distant balls should be retrieved at the end of a game. When a tournament specifies a new can of balls for a third set, it is mandatory that the new balls be used unless all the players agree to use the old balls.

40. In any argument about facts it should be remembered that the position of each side has equal weight. For example, regardless of how sure you are that the score is thirty-fourty, your opponent may be just as sure that it is forty-thirty (or five games to three versus four games all). The preferred, but not mandatory, method of settling a scoring dispute is to count all points and games agreed on by the players, with only the disputed points and games being replayed. Another method is to go back to the last score on which there was agreement, then resume play from that point. If no agreement can be reached in a dispute, whatever the disagreement may be, it should be settled by tossing a racket. Certainly, it would be undesirable to have the players depart in a huff.

40.1. To eliminate arguments about the score the server should announce, in a voice audible to the players and spectators, the set score (e.g., 5-4) prior to his first serve in each game, and the game score (e.g., thirty-fourty) prior to serving each point. This is important.

40.2. No matter how obvious it may be to you that your opponent's shot is out, it may not be obvious to him. He is entitled to a prompt hand signal or call; give it to him.

41. You have had contact with the primary form of stalling when your opponent in an official match purposely arrives 25 minutes late, hoping that those 25 minutes will have provided you with ample opportunity to tense up. Some opponents attempt an excessively long warm-up to achieve the same result. Another form of stalling is provided by the player who walks and plays at about one-third his normal rate, thereby, among other things, taking much of the fun out of the match. Another form is the excess time taken between games when the authorized delay is doubled due to extra towelling, drinking, taking of pills, and sitting down. Another form is the taking of time at the end of a 6-4 first set; the rules say play shall be continuous except for specified breaks, which do not include one at the end of the first set that ends on an even number of games. Another form is the server's waiting at the net -- instead of going to the baseline -- while the receiver is retrieving a ball to give to him. Another form is taking more time than the authorized ten minutes break at the end of the second set in a three-set match. Another is the starting of a discussion to permit a player to catch his breath. Another is the action of the receiver in clearing an out first service that doesn't need to be cleared, such as one that ends up six inches from the backstop. Another is bouncing the ball ten times before each serve. These are some of the more common forms of stalling, a type of gamesmanship aimed at upsetting an opponent. What is the answer to the problem? Again, like footfaulting, it is a matter of a player's personal honour system. From a practical view, if you try to outstall a staller you may upset yourself even more, and from an ethical view you may damage your own reputation. With it all, you can be firm in waiting for a late opponent only a reasonable period (as you interpret the meaning of the word under the circumstances involved) before departing, and in other cases refusing to continue play without an official. The best players are not known as stallers.

41.1. If your opponent is a chronic footfaulter or makes a larger number of what you feel sure are bad calls, what should you do? There is only one answer: calmly call for an umpire and refuse to continue until the umpire arrives. While normally a player may not leave the playing area during a match, an expeditious visit to the referee to request an umpire is authorized. Incidentally, also authorized is a bona fide toilet visit.

41.2. Grunting (or other loud noises) can be the basis for a let or loss of point, and should be avoided. Fortunately, a player can usually adjust to his opponent's grunting so that it does not become a distraction; unfortunately, grunting can be an annoyance to players on an adjacent court.

41.3. Don't enter a tournament and then withdraw when you discover some tough opponents have also entered. Don't be a cup hunter and search for tournaments where all the entrants will be of a much lower calibre than yourself. If you must default a match notify the referee at once so that your opponent may be saved a trip. If you withdraw from a tournament don't expect the return of your entry fee unless you withdrew before the entries closed.

42. When your serve hits your partner stationed at the net is it a let, fault, or loss of point? Likewise, what is the ruling when your serve before touching the ground hits an opponent who is standing back of the base line? The answers to these questions are obvious to anyone who knows the fundamentals of tennis, but it is surprising the number of players who don't know these fundamentals. All players have the responsibility of being familiar with the basic rules and customs. Further, it can be distressing to your opponent when he makes a decision in accordance with a rule and you protest with the remark: "Well, I never heard of that rule before!" Ignorance of the rules constitutes a delinquency on the part of a player and often spoils an otherwise good match.

43. What has been written here constitutes the essentials of "The Code," the summarization of procedures and unwritten rules which custom and tradition dictate all players should follow. No system of rules will cover every specific problem situation that may arise, but if players of good will follow the principles of The Code they should always be able to reach an agreement, at the same time making tennis a better game and more fun for all participants.

If you have a question concerning The Code, or if you have a suggestion for improvement, send full details, enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope, to: USTA Officials Department, 70 West Red Oak Lane, White Plains, New York 10604, and you will be sent a prompt reply.