

How's your Ground Stroke?

By Quentin Reynolds

PHOTOGRAPHS BY IFOR THOMAS
Collier's Staff Photographer

It's just as easy, so the experts say, to play tennis right as to play it wrong. And it's a good deal more fun. Get out your racket and see for yourself. Here are the rules

IT IS getting so that a man can hardly turn around without bumping into a tennis court peopled with enthusiastic but inept racket wielders. They are building tennis courts everywhere except on penthouse terraces and as soon as the present penthouse dirt-farming fad dies down the tennis court will no doubt replace the radish bed on the rooftops of our large cities.

Not that there is any valid objection to this sudden increase in tennis, although I do think it would be a better game if you could play it while sitting in a rocking-chair. The objection concerns the fact that although more tennis is being played in these United States than ever before—most of it is very bad tennis. So let's attend to that right away.

Not long ago Karel Kozeluh, once a great tennis player, now a great tennis teacher, was watching Cliff Sutter and Sidney Wood playing a practice match.

"Those two players," Kozeluh said, "are the best advertisement we professionals have. They are both great stylists and both learned their game from good professionals. They know all of the strokes, they don't depend upon sheer power and strength—but only upon their tennis."

Now if you wanted to learn to box you wouldn't go to Jack Dempsey, who in the long run always depended upon his tremendous stamina and punch. You'd go to Gene Tunney, who really knew his trade. In tennis there's no use going to Stoefen or Shields because, like Dempsey, they too rely on power. Go to Sutter or Wood and you'll really learn about this game. So let's trot along to see Sutter, Number 4 on the National list, who incidentally is one of the few tennis players who earn a living by working in an office eight hours a day five days a week.

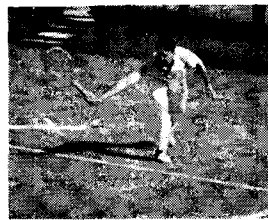
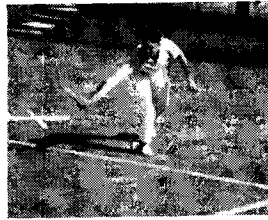
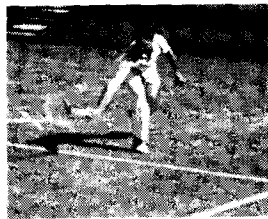
More Fun if You Know How

"There is no excuse," says Mr. Sutter, "for bad tennis being played at all. There's nothing mysterious about tennis—there's a right and a wrong way of playing and the right way is just as easy as the wrong way. Go out into the public parks of any large city and what do you see?"

I knew the answer to that one: "Signs that say 'Keep Off the Grass,' squirrels, people pushing baby carriages, trees . . ."

"Nonsense." Tennis to Mr. Sutter is a very important subject. "You see hundreds of youngsters playing tennis. You see them banging the ball all over the place and having a lot of fun. But they'd have so much more fun if they only knew how to play."

"Well, let's teach them," I suggested brightly.



Cliff Sutter, No. 4 in national tennis ranking. At the left, he demonstrates the proper form for the backhand. Chalked X marks the spot to which the beginner should teach himself to return after each stroke



The Eastern grip (left) may be easier for the beginner. You just "shake hands" with the racket (below). For the Western grip the racket is picked up from a flat surface (right)



"Now the chief fault of the ordinary tennis player (and we're here considering him and not the expert) is his insistence upon murdering the ball," Sutter began. "He murders it before he has learned how to hit it properly. You see boys hitting a forehand or backhand shot while facing the net. That is absurd. When Babe Ruth gets up to bat he plants his feet and turns his hip to the pitcher. That's what a man should do when hitting a forehand shot in tennis. He should turn his left hip toward the net, face the right sideline and hit the ball. He should follow through. When you do that your whole body gets behind the stroke—not just your arm."

"Like in golf?"

"Exactly." Mr. Sutter seemed surprised at that gleam of intelligence. "Follow through as in golf when you hit a forehand drive. And you should lock your wrist so that the strain of the drive is distributed through your arm. A beginner might look at a picture of Fred Perry finishing his drive. His right arm is across his body. He has followed through. His form is perfect. Now at the beginning a player shouldn't try to put too much loop on the ball while driving."

"What do you mean by loop?" You've got to watch these experts. As soon as you look the other way they turn technical on you.

Learn the Easy Ones First

"Loop," Mr. Sutter explained, "is topspin. Young players are always trying to put top-spin on the ball or trying to 'cut' it. They should first perfect an ordinary flat drive. If a flat drive is good enough for Tilden it ought to be good enough for them."

"I'll bet you say that to all the girls," I suggested, but Mr. Sutter ignored my pleasantry. He was well warmed up now.

"The same thing is true of the backhand stroke, which should be learned next. A beginner ought to watch Jack Crawford hit a backhand stroke. His right hip is facing the net. He himself is facing the sideline. His feet are well planted and he's all set to hit that ball. First, of course, the beginner should concentrate on getting himself an accurate backhand. Afterwards he can fool around with spins."

"All this time he should be experimenting with his grip. There are different ways of gripping a tennis racket. There is the Eastern grip used by Tilden. There is the Western grip used by George Lott, and the Continental grip used by Perry and most of the European players. A beginner would do well just to go up and shake hands with the racket."

"That's the basis of the Eastern grip. Place the racket on the ground, not face down but with the head perpendicular to the ground. Then just shake hands with the racket. Hold it just like that in hitting a forehand shot. When you shift to a backhand you want to grasp the handle of the racket firmly with your left hand and then, still maintaining that 'shake hands' grip, twist your right wrist one quarter turn to the

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Reunion

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By Frederick Skerry

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE HOWE

THE Legion parade was nearing its end; the blare of bands, too closely spaced, still merged discordantly; the throngs that pressed upon the line of march still cheered the delegations which offset a belated appearance with exaggerated enthusiasm; but spectators had begun to anticipate the crush of dispersion, which might be heralded at any moment by the ragtag and bobtail that marks the end of a procession.

Even a satiated throng, however, could still be provoked to laughter by capering comedians, and the successful whimsicalities of one prancing jester caused a man to pause on the fringe of the crowd from which he had extricated himself. From comparative freedom he looked back to see what evoked the roars of laughter and, turning again, smiled into the wistful face of a man whom he was about to pass. But with the man's responsive gaze his smile faded. Under the spell of a mutual recognition the packed crowd melted away, the laughter and cries died out, and these two men faced each other as they had faced each other once before in a never-to-be-forgotten silence.

Both were held as if their stares were chains. Each was the last one the other would wish to meet, yet they were joined by an attraction at once hateful and unbreakable.

"Oh—hello!" the first said weakly, and wished he had passed unseeing.

Smiling wryly, the other said, "How are you?"

No friendly clasping of hands warmed their greetings.

Nevertheless, strangely in accord, they moved away together, avoiding the disintegrating mass about them. Neither knew the other's name, nor wished to know it, and in the mind of each that ignorance was somehow a mitigating circumstance. It was enough to remember former rank. But now rank had no bearing on their relations; the former second lieutenant was no better than the former private—and no worse.

"Do you belong here?" the lieutenant asked, as they turned into a side street.

"Yes." A question hung unspoken.

The lieutenant answered it. "I don't. Came last night on business. How about having something to eat?" Not that he looked for any pleasure in the other's presence, but he was hungry, and with his hunger, like another self, now marched the necessity for this man's company.

"All right with me," his companion replied. "Dutch, though," he added, as if in extenuation.

"If you insist," shrugged the lieutenant.

"Well—I'd rather. I know a place where we can get good beer—imported." And presently they were seated in the place he knew.

Yet, though they ate and drank together, more than the table divided them. Paradoxically, that which drew

them together also kept them apart despite the singular unanimity of purpose that animated them, as it had animated them once before. Aimlessly they talked of everyday affairs, of anything but the subject uppermost in their thoughts: their first, and last, time actually under fire; that was the hidden warp and weft which their unexpected meeting overlaid with ornamental patterns of words.

THE private never recalled having had any definable fear of death on that day, so long ago yet so vivid in his memory. He supposed his excitement, his quickened senses, to have excluded fear, as he ran forward with the others to the half demolished village that the Germans had evacuated. Even the sight of still khaki heaps in the single wide street, the first killed he had seen, had not inspired fear. But falling men advertised the need for caution, and plain common sense, not fear, prompted him to take cover in the ruin of a house.

There, comparatively safe, he took stock of his situation. In some miraculous way he had come unscathed through that deadly street. To risk again the aim of some unseen marksman, to offer again a resting place for some gratuitous bullet, would be worse than madness. Why should he not profit by his good fortune?

If current rumors could be believed, this war could not last much longer. One way or another his life could not affect the result. He was quite collected about it. Unless the general advance had gone far beyond this point—and the deadly fire that raked the street seemed to prove the contrary—the Germans would retake the village. Well, let them. And let them take him prisoner. Better that than to be like one of those quiet heaps out there. Ended. Finished.

The village, a cautious peep apprised him, remained quiet, empty, as a spot shunned by all but death. Reassured, he climbed the ladder-like stairs to the loft. There he sat himself down, his back against the wall.

The night was long. Fitfully he dozed, starting awake to hear the rumble of distant guns, to see jagged roof timbers silhouetted against a lighted sky, to feel himself alone with the dead.

Yet in a tumbled dwelling across the street another watched through the night; another filled with the same design and speculation as

himself, except for fear. For the other was afraid of death. And in his shattered retreat he prayed vainly for deliverance from his shame. He had not faced those bullets that had sprayed the street, but, separated from his men, had crept through the darkness to this precarious refuge. He, too, loved life. But

he feared death more. Anything, he resolved, any living condition, rather than another day such as yesterday.

Thus these two, a dozen paces apart, watched, waited. Day dawned upon the desolate scene, dragged into forenoon. If one of those figures in the street had but shown a sign of life, if by the lifting of one of those hands humanity had but beckoned these two away from themselves! But nothing interfered in their behalf. Only an unwonted slackening in the thunderous noise distracted their thoughts. And suddenly the lull became absolute silence, a silence that terrified, that bombarded the eardrums.

The private scrambled down his steep stairs. He thought he had been deafened. As he stepped through the doorway a lieutenant crawled from the wreckage opposite, and the two stared into each other's eyes. Breathless, the private waited for a question, a command. None came. Then the dreadful silence was broken by cheering, shouting, and as the two men looked towards the enemy's lines, men in field gray rose out of the earth, to come shouting, singing, waving their arms. In another minute Germans surrounded the waiting and bewildered pair, clapped them on the back, hugged them, shouted at them. And out of the hubbub, out of the broken phrases, came the news that the war had ended. But somehow, to these two men, triumph was an empty shell.

AND now the two, having this dinner together, were silent.

"You never joined the Legion?" the lieutenant ventured.

The other shook his head. "I never took a bonus either. I didn't need the money."

"Same here."

"Well"—the private broke another long silence—"I think I'll be moving."

"Me too."

In the street no handclasp bridged the awkwardness of their "Well, be good!"—"So long!"

And thus they parted, each saying to himself, "The only one who knows!"

Out of the hubbub, out of the broken phrases, came the news that the war had ended

