Tennis Jargon Explained

You slipped on your flannel pajamas, hopped into the comforts of your bed then covered yourself with that soft blanket. It was a perfect night, and you sighed with relief. Before you finally dozed off to sleep, you turned on the television and checked out ESPN. It was a Rolland Garros tournament with two of your absolute favorite players, Andy Roddick and Rafael Nadal. Unexpectedly, Andy Roddick yelled "love." You shouted with disbelief, "Did he just say that to Rafael Nadal?"

Sounds funny but there is really tennis jargon that sounds so strange to those unfamiliar with tennis. "Love," as you may know, means zero or nothing. It is a rule in the game that when the player wins a certain round, the player would pronounce the score aloud, as in "15- love."

To educated you further, here are some tennis terms:

All-Rounder # a player with the skill to play well both offensively and defensively.

Bye # prior to the start of a tournament seeded players can be given a bye, which means they are automatically awarded a place in the second round of the tournament.

Clay Court # a court with a surface constructed of crushed shale, stone or brick. It may be red or green. The French Open is competed on clay.

Cross Slice # a shot hit with under spin, or backspin, and side spin simultaneously.

Dink Shot # a soft dipping shot that barely clears the net; used often in doubles, especially on return of serve.

Donut # if you score zero (0) games in a set this may be called a Donut.

Double Bagel # if the server falls short of serving correctly on both first and second serves, it is called a double fault. The server then loses the point.

Flat Face # when the strings of the racquet are perpendicular to the ground and the racquet contacts the ball squarely, with little spin.

Golden Set # a set of tennis which is won 6-0 without giving up a single point. Only one player in the history of modern tennis has ever achieved this, Bill Scanlon (USA). It was against Marcos Hocevar (Brazil) in the first round of the WCT Gold Coast Classic at Del Ray (Florida, United States) on February 22, 1983. Bill Scanlon triumphed in the match 6-2, 6-0.

Ground Stroke Slice # a ground stroke hit with an open-faced racquet resulting in backspin or under spin.
Hitting On The Rise # playing the ball before it has attained the peak of its bounce. Also called "taking the ball early."
Inside-Out # a forehand that requires running around the ball to take it on your forehand, even though it has been hit to you in a natural backhand position.

Kill # to "put away" the ball and finish the point.

Knockout Competition # a tournament whereby players are removed from the tournament when they lose a match. Most events are played with this set-up, except for the Masters, the Hopman Cup, the Davis Cup, or the Fed Cup.

Let # called to declare that a point is to be replayed. A common example is when a serve clips the top of the net but still lands properly on the court.

Lob # to hit the ball over your opponents head using lots of topspin. Best played when your opponent is near the net.

Lucky Loser # in some knockout tournaments, one loss does not automatically result in elimination. Beaten players have the chance to play again, if, for example a player withdrew. These players are called "lucky losers."

Moon Ball # a very high lob mixed into a baseline exchange, mostly used to change the tempo.

"No-man's" Land # the space between the baseline and the service line.

Put Away Volley # a volley sent beyond the opponent's reach.

Seeding # a graded list of the top players entering a tournament. The top players are normally "seeded" before a tournament begins. This prevents these players from being played against each other # and knocking each other out #

during the early rounds of the competition.

Serena Slam # a term coined after Serena Williams consecutively won all 4 Grand Slam events, but not in the same season. In 2002 Serena won the French Open, Wimbledon, and US Open, subsequently won the Australian Open in 2003.

Taking The Net # shifting from the baseline position to the net position.

Tennis Elbow # pain in the elbow brought about by too much play, improper technique, improper tension, or any combination of the three.

Unforced Error # where a player is not under any pressure from an opponent yet plays a shot which does not land inside the boundaries.

Vertical Face # when the striking area of the racquet is at a right angle to the ground or "on edge," as opposed to an open or a closed face.