

Anyone For Tennis? ...by William J. Gaydos of Orwigsburg...

So you want to hit a homerun with the bases loaded? Try playing tennis.

So you want to strike out that batter in the 9th inning and save the game? Try playing tennis.

Did you say you wanted to be the next Michael Jordan and play for the NBA Chicago Bulls? Then start playing tennis.

How about kicking the soccer ball for a game winning goal while thousands of fans are screaming your name? Then start playing tennis.

Whatever your favorite sport, tennis will help make you a better player, and I'll show you why.

Tennis is played on a rectangular court 78 feet long and for single matches 27 feet wide. We'll talk about doubles matches later on, but just for your information, the court is a little wider in doubles at 36 feet wide. The best way to learn tennis is to start playing singles. Doubles is another game that you can learn once you know the basics of tennis. A tennis court is divided across the middle by a net which is 3.5 feet high but at the center is held down by a strap so the net is only 3 feet high. Smart players hit the ball over the lower part of the net.

All you need to play is a tennis racquet, a pair of sneakers, a can of tennis balls, and one opponent. This is not a sport for sissies or wimps! If you ever watched tennis professional Andy Roddick hit his tennis serve at 147 miles per hour right at your body, you would know that. A major league baseball pitcher is really good if his fastball can reach 90 miles per hour. A professional tennis match can last over 2 hours of almost nonstop action with little rest between points. In professional tennis, a player is allowed only 20 seconds between points and when players change sides they are allowed 90 seconds. Tennis is a game of action so you better stay on your toes or that ball will go past you faster than you can blink your eyeball.

If you ever become a top ranked professional tennis player, you can make a lot of money. More important than money, tennis is a game you can play all your life. Those other sports are played when you're young and then never again. "Come on, let's go out to the court. You can use my other racquet, and I'll hit a few to you". If you score the first point on me the score is "love-15". I'm serving and you really get lucky and get the second point. The score changes to "love-30". I get the next point and the score is "15-30 favor you". How did you hit that fantastic shot by me for the third point which now makes the score 15-40? You're ahead. If you get the fourth point the game is over and you win. But now I'm fighting mad, and I don't like to lose. If you really get lucky and win six games, that's called a set in tennis, but I can't let that happen. After all, what will my tennis coach Bob think of me?

Ten Good Reasons for Learning to Play Tennis

10. Tennis is fun and you can meet boys and girls your age.
09. It's a fast moving game, so keep on your toes.
08. Tennis will improve your eye-hand coordination so you can hit those homeruns.
07. With good instruction you can learn the game of tennis in a short time.
06. Tennis makes you think, and you just might become one of the smartest kids in your class.
05. You need only one other person to play singles, for doubles you can pick Roger Federer, the World's #1 Ranked Tennis Player as your partner.
04. Tennis is a sport that doesn't cost a whole lot of money and that will make your parents happy.
03. The high school tennis coach will be begging for you to come out for the team.
02. You'll move those feet in tennis like a basketball star.
01. Tennis will keep you away from playing golf and that's the best reason of all.

See you on the court and please stay away from those golf clubs! Sorry, I just had to say that!

Note: Bill Gaydos has taught in the Pennsylvania Public School System for 35 years. During that time he served as a Speech and Language Therapist and more recently as a teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing with Schuylkill Intermediate Unit #29. Since his retirement in 2005, Bill has written some poetry and children's books. He has won awards in photography and enjoys playing tennis with his instructor Bob Wakiyama. His poetry about Flight 93 has appeared on TV in documentaries made for PBS and WBRE. Bill would like to see more young people take up tennis as a life-long sport.

(Photo titled Bob Wakiyama and Bill Gaydos is being sent electronically.)