

# 10 REASONS

by Noel Callaghan

## WHY YOU SHOULD PLAY DOUBLES

The oldest, arguably the most famous and the first Grand Slam ever played, was Wimbledon in 1877, which at the time only consisted of men's singles. As the tournament grew in popularity, it was in 1884 that Wimbledon introduced the men's doubles and also invited the women, making this the very first ladies Championships.

For about the next 120 years, all players who played singles also played doubles, and in many cases, they also played mixed doubles. Not the multi-billion dollar business it is today, there was little to no money in the game then, so they played for titles, Slams, and pride. In the Slams the men would often play a 'best of 5 singles (advantage sets, no tie-breakers)' and 'best of 5 doubles (advantage sets)' in the same day and if they were really unlucky (eg bad weather), a best of 3 set mixed as well (advantage sets).

Australia was one of a few Countries that excelled in collecting doubles titles in both men and women, which resulted in excellent Davis and Fed Cup wins as well as multiple Slam titles. In the Men's game, Aussie Legend Roy Emerson chalked up 28 Grand Slams Titles, including 12 singles and 16 in doubles. On the women's side, another Aussie, Margaret Court, is arguably the greatest player of all time amassing a ridiculous Grand Slam record of 24 singles titles, 19 doubles, and 19 mixed titles (68 total), placing her at the top of the women's list of Slams won, ahead of Czech born Martina Navratilova with 59 titles.

In the 90s, the prize money in tennis became increasingly attractive, and the game had evolved so much in terms of equipment producing much more power as well as the off-court training becoming scientifically professional, that most of the leading Pros stopped playing doubles. They decided that doubles would, therefore, lessen their chances of performing at best for their singles match the following day. Many of the top players also determined they now didn't need the doubles prize money as the singles money had become so good. Additionally, the game had grown so fast that the wear and tear on the body was becoming increasingly demanding.

In the more modern era this is how 'doubles specialists' were formed as they could now do very well in doubles without competing against the top singles players, however their own singles rankings were now suffering as they could no longer get to the next event to play singles

qualifying due to their doubles results taking them deep into the tournament. So eventually, their singles rankings became almost non-existent, forcing them to concentrate on their doubles. There were always exceptions to this rule who chose to play singles and doubles and did very well in both such as John McEnroe, Stefan Edberg and Martina Navratilova, amongst others.

For any young player coming through the ranks these days and even wanting to make a career out of tennis, it is absolutely imperative to play doubles at any opportunity. Playing doubles will undoubtedly enhance your singles game and make you a better overall player. Just the improved ability to become more comfortable with the volley will add more dimension and confidence, allowing you further growth as a singles player. With four on the court, the doubles game is played faster, forcing quicker anticipation, greater footwork, lightning reactions, fast decision making, better court awareness, and dynamic reflexes.

Predominately these days, tennis is an individual sport, so it's nice to have the opportunity to be part of a team. Support and positive response from your partner are welcomed, which promotes the banishment from your own self negative talk and will help you improve a more confident attitude, especially for those players who are hard on themselves.

Here are my top 10 reasons why you should play doubles:-

- 1) It will improve your volley
- 2) It will sharpen your footwork and reflexes
- 3) It will teach you to go looking for volleys, thus eliminating, fear of the net
- 4) An opportunity to work on your serve and volley
- 5) Great practice for your return of serve into a small area
- 6) It gets you back on court after a singles loss to make amends for what's just happened
- 7) It's the 'fun' part of tennis, experiencing a 'team sport' with less pressure and reminding you of the enjoyment of the game
- 8) As a Professional, it helps eliminate some of the lonely and downtimes on tour as you have someone to hang out with
- 9) You may get the opportunity to represent your school, college, State or Country
- 10) You might just make a career out of it, setting you up for life financially.



# DOUBLES