

WEIRD AND QUIRKY TENNIS ROUTINES

by Noel Callaghan

Some of the world's biggest tennis icons, such as Rafael Nadal and Maria Sharapova, are known for their supernatural skills and success on the court. But this is the golden age of the QUIRK, and the odd routines and superstitions now seem part of the higher mental components to their match. .

Djokovic typically starts by bouncing the ball on the ground with his racket before shifting the ball to his left hand, sometimes he bounces the ball up to 27 times before his serve.

Nadal's list of rituals includes only crossing the court lines leading with his right foot, adjusting his sock height so that they match, and the placement of his water bottles. His water bottles have to be placed on the ground in front of him with their labels facing the court, and he can be seen meticulously arranging them when he takes his seat.

Nadal also never drinks from the same water bottle twice in a row. He carefully places his hair behind each ear before he serves and above all plucks his undies out of the seat of his shorts, when reporters once tried to get to the bottom of the habit, Nadal said the problem was actually his bottom. "A little bigger than usual," he explained.

Marion Bartoli, now retired, would spend so much energy jumping around after the point had finished with her hopping and jumping and dry air-swings for groundies and serves.

Federer is a racquet twirler and also flicks his hair to the side before his serve or after he hits a winner.

French Pro Richard Gasquet demands to use the same "lucky ball" he uses each time he wins a point.

Maria Sharapova will talk to the wall and face away from her opponent and play with her strings before each point. She never walks on court lines, and when she is the one serving she picks strands of hair out of her face, does a few hop-skips, stares her opponent down, and bounces the ball once before serving.



Serena Williams will walk around the opposite side to her opponent when changing ends after the first game of each set. She will bounce the ball five times before the first serve and two times before the second. It's pretty well known around the professional tennis circuit that Serena does

something pretty funky with her socks—she doesn't change them. That's right, from the first round to the last round, Serena wears the same pair of socks.

Tsonga punches the air after winning a point.

Andy Murray doesn't shave during an entire tournament. Five-time winner Björn Borg similarly began every campaign clean-shaven before fetching up in the finals like some bristly John the Baptist.

Current Grand Slam rules, not strictly enforced, stipulate that players have 20 seconds to put the ball in play after the previous point has ended. With the current player's rituals, the gap can often extend to 30 seconds or beyond.