

TENNIS

The modern sport of tennis developed out of various games that involved hitting a ball with a racket or the hand dating back to ancient times. Lawn tennis was developed in 1873 in Wales by Walter C. Wingfield (1833–1912). It is based on the older sport of Real tennis (French for Royal tennis), which was itself based on earlier forms of racket sports. Tennis gained popularity across Great Britain, and the first world tennis championship was held just four years later at the All England Croquet Club at Wimbledon. This tournament evolved into the famous Wimbledon Championships, which remain the most prestigious tennis titles to this day. A women's championship was added at Wimbledon in 1884. Over the next several years, tennis spread across many parts of the British Empire, becoming especially popular in Australia.

Tennis arrived in the United States early on in this process. A tennis court was set up in Staten Island, New York, in about 1874. The first National Championship in the United States—for men only—was held in 1881 in Newport, Rhode Island. A women's championship was added six years later. The National Championship moved to Forest Hills, New York, in 1915, where it remained under various names for more than sixty years. Now known as the U.S. Open, the event has been held at the National Tennis Center in Flushing, New York, since 1978.

The Development of Professional Tennis

As tennis spread around the British empire early in the twentieth century, national federations were formed in countries where the sport caught on. These federations eventually joined forces to form the International Tennis Federation (ITF), which was the worldwide sanctioning authority for tennis. International competitions between national teams soon arose, the most important being the Davis Cup tournament, founded in 1900, and the Wightman Cup, an annual competition between women's teams from England and the United States, founded in 1923.

Most sports turned professional during the first half of the twentieth century, but tennis remained primarily an amateur endeavor, largely a pastime for wealthy country club members. By the late 1920s it became economically feasible for a top player to make a decent living on the professional tour, but it meant giving up the sport's most prestigious, amateur-only events, such as those at Wimbledon and Forest Hills. The move toward professionalism accelerated after Will T. Tilden II (1893–1953), the best player of his time and a winner of seven U.S. singles championships and three Wimbledon titles as an amateur, turned professional in 1931. Over the next few decades more and more top players trickled into the professional ranks, but the professional tour was not glamorous and the money was mediocre. The ITF fought hard against the professionalization of tennis. In 1968 the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club decided to open Wimbledon to professional players, thus ushering in the "open era" of tennis in which professional players are allowed to compete in the sport's biggest tournaments.

About this time women players became frustrated at the gender disparity in tennis prize money. Women winning a tournament often received a mere fraction of what the men's champion in the same tournament took home. In 1971 a women-only professional tour was formed to address these inequities. This new Virginia Slims Tour was an instant hit. It made Billie Jean King (1943–) the first woman athlete in any sport to earn more than \$100,000 in a single year.

Men's Professional Tennis

Men's professional tennis is coordinated by the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP), which organizes the ATP Tour (the principal worldwide tennis tour), and the ITF, which coordinates

international play including the Davis Cup and the Grand Slam tournaments. The ATP was originally formed in 1972 as a sort of trade union to protect the interests of male professional tennis players. The organization assumed its role as the chief coordinating body of the professional tour in 1990. The most important professional tennis tournaments are those that comprise tennis's Grand Slam: the Australian Open, the French Open, the U.S. Open, and Wimbledon. Only two men have ever won the Grand Slam of tennis: Don Budge (1915–2000) in 1938 and Rod Laver (1938–) in both 1962 and 1969. Total prize money for Wimbledon in 2007 was approximately \$23 million, with the men's and ladies' singles champions each receiving a prize of \$1.4 million.. According to the U.S. Open, the tournament offered a payout of \$19.6 million, with possible bonuses bringing the total to about \$22 million. The ATP also operates the Challenger Series, a second-tier professional circuit in which many top players have started their professional careers.

Table 1.1

Event	Location	Scheduled time
Australian Open	Melbourne	Last fortnight of January
French Open	Paris	May/June
Wimbledon	Wimbledon, England	June/July
U.S. Open	Flushing Meadows, Queens, New York	August/September

Women's Professional Tennis

Women's professional tennis is coordinated by the Women's Tennis Association (WTA, which is to the women's game what the ATP is to the men's game). The WTA runs the premier professional women's tour, which in 2005 became known as the Sony Ericsson WTA Tour. In 2007 the Sony Ericsson Tour involved more than fourteen hundred players representing seventy-five nations and competing for \$62 million in prize money at sixty-two events in thirty-five countries. Women also compete in the same four Grand Slam events, governed by the ITF, as do the men

The WTA was born in 1973, initially, like the ATP, as a professional organization to protect the interests of the players. The tour itself, which started out as the Virginia Slims Tour, was originally formed out of protest at the disparity between the prize money for men and women. At the dawn of the open era (1968), when professionals were first allowed to compete in Grand Slam tournaments, the male singles winner sometimes received as much as ten times what the female champion was paid. By 1980 more than 250 women were playing professionally all over the world in a tour consisting of forty-seven global events, offering a total \$7.2 million in prize money. The tour remained under the governance of the Women's Tennis Council, an umbrella agency run by representatives from the ITF, the tournament promoters, and the players, into the 1990s. The WTA Tour in its current form was created in 1995 through the merger of the WTA Players Association and the Women's Tennis Council. Several sponsors have funded the tour over the years, including Colgate, Avon, Toyota, Kraft General Foods, and Sony Ericsson.