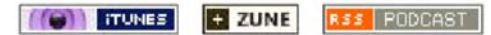




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## Friday Mailbag: The Vanishing Stencil; Recycling Racquets; Dissecting Dunlop

05/07/2010 - 11:01 AM

TENNIS.com gear editor Bill Gray and his technical advisors will answer your equipment questions every Friday. [Click here](#) to send one of your own.

*“Every time I stencil the Head logo on my polyester strings, the ink wears off after a couple sessions of play and makes a mess of the balls in the process. I’ve never seen the pros have this problem. How do these guys make the ink stay on their racquets?”*

—Sam

We did some checking, Sam, and as it turns out those guys *do* have the same problem. Apparently, the polyester strings that most pros use don’t hold paint well because they’re as slippery and non-stick as Teflon. As you might suspect, the mounting cases of “disappearing ink” have serious business implications for their racquet sponsors, who pay big bucks to turn their signed players into running billboards for the TV cameras. They’ve tried to remedy the situation with an upgraded ink, which, “sticks a little better, but it still comes off pretty quickly,” says Head’s Roger Petersman.



So if you see your favorite player switching racquets during a match these days, it may not be a problem with the strings; it could just be from the wear-and-tear on the stencil, caused by the non-adhesive polys.

Also: We don’t know why you feel compelled to put racquet advertising on your strings, Sam—you could just leave the space blank, which is what the pros do when they’re between endorsement deals. But if you feel the need to stencil, our suggestion is to get creative. There’s nothing in the rules of tennis that prohibits players from making a personal statement with your strings. Radek Stepanek once put his initials on his strings (see picture above) and former South African tour player Christo van Rensburg stenciled a smiley face on his. We recommend [racquetart.com](http://racquetart.com), which sells custom racquet-face stencils, from smiley faces (the most popular among women, says owner Mike Waroff), to skull-and-crossbones (the men’s favorite). The most unusual request? A Chinese dragon stencil.

*I’ve changed racquets recently and now I have a bunch of old sticks. Is there a more environmentally responsible way of disposing of them, other than bronzing them for posterity?*

—Carlo

It’s tough, maybe even impossible, to make a biodegradable racquet that will stand up to millions of high-speed hits, which is why frames are made of durable carbon composites. Your best bet, according to the folks at [greenslam.net](http://greenslam.net), a sports environmental initiative led by Billie Jean King, is to recycle your old sticks. They suggest donating them to Boys and Girls Clubs, local schools and YMCAs.

*I’m getting back into tennis after 25 years and am looking for a Dunlop racquet—I played competitively in high school with the Max 200G. But there are so many different Dunlop models today and the numbers confuse me. What do the 100, 200, 300 and 500 designations mean?*

—Tommy Miller

Nobody, including the people at Dunlop in the U.S., seems to know why the brand designates its models by even hundreds, from 100 to

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700. (To make things even more confusing, there is also a “550” racquet, but no “600.”) But it’s a numbering system Dunlop has been using for years. The best way to break down the Dunlop line is by head size, beam size and weight. The lower the number, the more demanding the racquet is in head size, beam width and stationary weight—which generally means it’s for the better player.

You probably need to hit like a tour pro to get the most out of the 100, which has the smallest head size (90 square inches), the heaviest stationary weight and the thinnest beam; it’s also very difficult to handle. From there, the next series in the line is the 200 (95 square-inch head size), the 300 (98 square inches), the 500 and the 550 (100 square inches) and the 700 (108 square inches). (There is also a 400 series, but it’s not sold in the U.S.). Since you haven’t played in 25 years, our guess the current 200 might be too much for you to handle. We suggest you use it as a benchmark, but playtest the 300 and 500. All the contemporary Dunlop racquets have Aerogel and 4D braiding technologies, which are quantum leaps in comfort and stability from your old 200. Let us know how you make out.

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