

## Essential Tennis Podcast #86

Welcome to the essential tennis podcast.

If you love tennis and want you improve your game, this podcast is for you. Whether it's technique, strategy, equipment or the mental game-- tennis professional Ian Westman is here to make you a better player, and now here's Ian!

Ian: Hi and welcome to the essential tennis podcast. Your place for free expert tennis instructions that can truly help you improve your game.

Today's episode of the essential tennis podcast is brought to by [summersetsportsperformance.com](http://summersetsportsperformance.com).

Thank you very much for joining me today on the show and today's show is going to be all about tennis gear and equipment. We're going to have master racket technician Jeremy Plumly on the show with myself, and we're going to be answering questions from listeners of the podcast.

Before we get started, i just want to remind you guys about a very special feature of [essentialtennis.com](http://essentialtennis.com), and that is the podcast archives.

We've now done eighty six episodes of the essential tennis podcast and all of them are available for free in the podcast archive-- that's over forty hours of free tennis instruction. If you we're to take forty hours of instructions from me privately at the club where I teach, it would cost you two thousand four hundred dollars. So two thousand four hundred dollar value, for free. Obviously, it's not the same as private instruction but you got the idea, very valuable stuff at the archive all for free, so definitely go to [essentialtennis.com](http://essentialtennis.com).

Go to the podcast page and sign up and you can access all those shows for free. Alright, let's get down to business. Sit back, relax and get ready for some great tennis instructions. [noise] music [music]

My guest today on the essentialtennis podcast is master racket technician Jeremy Plumly. Jeremy welcome back to the show.

Jeremy : Hey, thank you for have me back. It's been a long time.

Ian : Yeah, it has been awhile and Jeremy is back by popular demand, somebody I can't remember who was, but somebody in the forums was asking where you were at and wanted you back on the show, and so I asked for some questions from our community on the forums, and got a lot of feedback. So people have definitely been waiting for you to come back on the program. Glad to have you.

Jeremy : Well, you know my mom's really happy that you hear me on the podcast, so all the money that I paid her to blah was worth it I think.

Ian : Well, I've just one question for you before we get started. How does it feel to be a certified master at something?

Jeremy : [laughter] You know what? It does feel pretty good. It doesn't give me any more you know, say at home or anything, but people in tennis sports seen to respect my authority.

Ian : Alright, well, better than nothing but it's a good start.

Jeremy : [laughter] I'll take what I can get.

Ian : Alright, so today Jeremy and I have taken several questions out from those that were submitted and I apologize to those people whose questions weren't chosen, we didn't, we definitely don't have enough time to get everybody's questions here in the show, so just picked out a couple that we thought would probably be most interesting, and our topics are going to range from grip size to string types.

Rackets stiffnesses, straining techniques-- all kinds of stuff. And Jeremy is going to share his wisdom with us and all things gear related. So let's go to our first question asker, and that is Jeremy and I have been discussing the pronunciation of your name and I apologize if I mispronounce your name, but but the best guess is Remullo in Brazil.

And he says I live in Brazil I've been playing tennis for three years now, I just bought a pair of new rackets, two Wilson K-Blade 98s . I'm something around a 3.5 to 4.0 player, I have really big hands and no matter the size of the grip I still have to increase it. So, the three things that I want to ask are, and he's got three questions for you about grip sizes and these are going to relate definitely to many people listening who have question about what grip size they should be using.

His first question is because of this, I use the sigma grip build up, its a thermal plastic that shrinks with heat, you probably already know what I am talking about so that grip build up.. . put something like an extra six grams on the handle of weight. What is the effect of that weight on the equilibrium of the racket? The balance of the racket. Jeremy what kind of effect does that buildup have on the overall balance?

Jeremy : It's not going to have a lot , the swing weight increases more when you add weight up at the tip of the frame. When you add weight down at the bottom you have to add a significant amount for it to really make a difference . And the five or six grams that the build up leaves adds to it wont effect your swing rate very much .

About the only thing that will build up the size of the grip is you might notice a more damp ened feel because there will be that little layer of polyurethane or whatever it is, between the handle and the grip and your hands. So it might be a good idea if you're suffering from a little bit of tennis elbow, to throw one of those one their two just for the dampening effect. As far as balance goes, it's not a lot.

Ian : OK. Moving on to his second question, he said that, the grip size on his K-Blades is an L4 and Jeremy is that, for those of us in the U.S. , is that a 4 and 5 8ths grip?.

Jeremy : No. An L4 is actually a 4 and a half.

Ian : Ahh OK. He says he bought an L4 which is 4 and a half inch grip.. He said that if he buys an L5, which I would assume then is a 4 and 5 8ths. He thinks that it's almost impossible to sell it later , however, with the L4, with the 4 and a half inch grip, and the buildup, and a cushion over the grip, he says my ring finger is only 1 centimeter from his hand and he is talking about the kind of general rule of thumb with grip size where when you grip the racket, you should be able to put a finger between the heel of your hand and the tips of your fingers. For those of you who aren't familiar with that and he says that he's only got a centimeter between the tips of his fingers and the heel of his hand even with this build-up and the extra grip etc.

And his question is, should he increase the grip size even more or is that enough? What do you think Jeremy?

Jeremy : It's really a personal preference at that point. A lot of pros nowadays are using smaller grips. So the trend is to kind of go with the smaller grip , people feel they can get a little bit whippier with their strokes, you know if they used a small er grip. Nadal I think uses a quarter or maybe even an eight on his grip, and he's a pretty big dude so that's one thing.

The other thing is if he wants to go bigger with those [inaudible], you can put two of them on the existing

pedal on the racket without really rounding it out too much. With two of the buildup grips, you can still feel the levels pretty well . I wouldn't go more than that, so I would say try it with one buildup sleeve, maybe put an over grip on top of that and see how it feels and if you kinda like how that feels, that go with that. But if it still feels too small, if you feel you are squeezing the racket too tight then we can put together buildups.

Ian : Sounds good. And yeah, I'll echo just the first thing that you said there Jeremy. Ramulla, it definitely comes down to personal preference.

I mean there are old rules of thumb for a lot of different things in tennis but when it comes to equipment, and stuff like this, especially with grip size. . . Whatever you are most comfortable with is what Jeremy and I are going to tell you to go with most of the time for sure.

Alright let's go to his third and final question here , and he says that, he used to be using a Wilson K-Factor 6195 and that's what he was using before he switched to the K-Boyd 98 and he said the 6. 1, he was using a 55 pound string tension and he wants to know with the K-Blade , being at a 98 square inch head, a little bit bigger, what pressure should he be using? What tension should he be using on those strings to get about the same feel . What do you think?

Jeremy : Umm just having the head sizes be 3 square inches isn't a huge difference as far as hitting area. I would say two, three pounds on the increase. A lot depends on obviously if you use the same strings that makes it easier. A lot of times, the stiffness of the frame , the frame geometry and what the composition is will give you a different effect.

Something else going for that is the K-Blade 98 is a 18 by 20 string pattern and since he doesn't say what the string pattern was on his 6195. I'm assuming it's the 16 by 18. They do make that 18 by 20 as well. If he was using the 16x18 and the 61, he probably doesn't need to jump up the tension, the extra strings will probably make it feel a little bit tighter as it is. Because if you're going from the 18x20, 61 to the 18x20 K-Blade 98, then he should probably increase it [inaudible] .

Ian : OK, alright. Good stuff. Well, let's move on from Brazil to tropical Northern Illinois where we have Nick, and Nick's question is.. " my question is about racket shape. Yonex and Dunlop have long oval shapes where as [inaudible] and Wilson have a more round shape. Are there advantages for both shapes or is it all marketing or theoretical speculation? I like that phrase, theoretical speculation. What are your thoughts about that Jeremy?.

Jeremy : You are throwing around terms like theoretical speculations. . you're obviously not a tennis pro by nature. You know some of it is marketing hype.

A lot of people will tell you the [inaudible] will give you more spin and [inaudible] tend to market themselves as the spin racket. I haven't noticed a huge increase in my spin when I've used the Yonex. Well I will say that, normally if the racket is wider, typically three o'clock to six o'clock, you've got a little bit more you know, hitting area there so in theory, [inaudible] could possibly get more spin because the ball has a little more space to work with there, but I don't know of any studies that have proven that, I think it's maybe it just personal preference among players.

I will say that if your main strings are longer, you get more power, that's why those racket ball racket a lot of times the main strings will go all the way down to the grip and all the way up, because the longer the string is, the more elasticity you would get, the more power you'll get. But I don't know about that necessarily.

Ian : Okay, is this kind of a personal preference slash feel type thing with the different shape and geometries that these racket manufacture?

Jeremy : Yeah. I would say it's more of a personal preference, because even if you look at for example the

Head extreme that has a very rounded hand. When you compare that to a more oval shape head, it's not really that big of a difference. So I don't really know how much extra you will get from that minor difference. You know some people feel more confident with it so it's really just a personal preference.

Ian : Alright so Nick it sounds like we're more on the side of theoretical speculations for this one. Nick has a second question as well and that is as a 3.0 player where should I have my string tension for good control without making my arm fall off?

Jeremy : [laughter] Making your arm fall off, I've never seen a racket strung that tight. Again I'm going to go with the personal preference argument again. What you should do is start out in a medium tension.

See how that goes. Normally, medium tension promotes a racket that's going to be 60 pounds. If you feel like you don't have enough control with that one, start it up to 3 pounds, unless you're using a really large over size racket, you'd probably wouldn't go much about 65. At that point you'll probably started feeling a little bit in your arm, especially if you have a big preexisting injury. Being the level player that you are doesn't really effect your tension of your string, but it might effect a little bit of what type of string you might want to go with. But it's more your playing style rather than your actual level .

Ian : Yeah I would venture to say here Jeremy that this is a very individualized thing based on like you were talking about pre-existing injuries, you know certain people they tend to be more prone to injury maybe that they're little bit older, maybe they swing a little bit differently and it's kinda lending their bodies more towards injury and the arm falling off department. So I like your suggestion there Jeremy. Kinda start there in the middle and maybe working his way up where its, what do you think... Maybe two or three pound increments from there and just kinda trying things out?

Jeremy : Yeah, I think two or three pounds. That way you'll start feeling the difference. The other thing to remember, you know, a certain string say like a [inaudible] or a [inaudible] , so it's gonna feel different at 60 pounds than a polyester string like [inaudible] which feels like 60 pounds. Use the string that you use most of the time. Start with that in the middle and then work your way there.

Ian : Alright. Good stuff. Now let's go from Northern Illinois to even farther North to Howard in Canada and he's got three different questions here having to do actually with arm-falling off injuries . And he wants to know about a couple different rackets specifications and tennis elbow slash arm problems. And his first question for Jeremy is "if you have elbows slash arm problems, should you be looking for looking for a stiff or a flexible racket. How would you define each category if you were using the Babolat RDC rating?"

Jeremy : Wow.

Ian : Pretty detailed.

Jeremy : Yeah, very detailed.

First off, whenever you have an elbow or arm issue you want to go with a more flexible racket. The stiff rackets normally because of their stiffness will give your arm more feedback-- more shock. And that will continue to build on that injury.

They feel great because they are really light and you can get a lot of power about swinging a lot with them . However, there just isn't as much material there to absorb the shock when the ball hits. So you definitely want to go with a more flexible frame. As far as you know, stiffness really the RDC will give you a rating between zero and one hundred ... Wow.

Mid sixties to seventy is a pretty stiff racket, however there are some heavy rackets out there. The [inaudible] K-Factors tend to be a little bit stiffer. There in around that upper 60s limit and they are OK for tennis-elbow

because they've got substantial mass to them .

I would really , I'd say in that mid 60s range . If you want it lower than that you'd have a really flexible racket which might be a little heavy. Which might be a little uncomfortable at first with an elbow injury until you build up a little more strength. But basically I would just try the more control oriented rackets to the tweeners. Try and stay away from the cross [inaudible] and the vocal power arms.. The real thick super light-weight rackets. Stay in a weight range between 9 and a half and probably 11 ounces.

Ian : OK. And his question number two here you kinda just answered a little bit but maybe you want to reiterate just for clarification in case you think you missed anything. The second question was assuming the same elbow slash arm problems , do you look for a head heavy or a head light racket.

Jeremy : Umm well just by the way the market is, the lighter rackets tend to be head heavy so I would stay with the head light racket. Maybe if you don't want something really head-light stay in the evenly balanced category. If you go two or three points head-light or even up to 2 points set heavy, you'll be fine.

Ian : OK. And lastly, the arm slash elbow issues, he asks, how do you pick the right multifilament string to protect yourself and how tight would you string it?

Jeremy : Any of the multifilaments are going to be pretty soft. The only thing that I would say to avoid would be , and I love the string, however I think for tennis elbow purposes, some of the gamma live wire technology strings. The live wire professional and the live wire revelation tend to give a little bit more feedback in the arms than similar multifilament strings . [inaudible] sells very good , Wilson and XT as well. Also the Wilson S ensation which is a little lower price point is a good one too.

I don't think it's a true multi but I think there is a solid core there. But another one if you are having a lot of elbow issues and you need something really soft, have protector strings is very good and the best thing for arm injuries, honestly, is natural gut. It's the [inaudible] you can get out there. It's expensive but it's not something you have to use for the rest of your life. As your arm gets stronger, you can go back with synthetic string . But if you are really suffering with an elbow problem, I'd give natural gut a try.

Ian : Yeah Howard, if you've never tried a racket strung with all-natural gut, there is really no other feeling like it. I personally like really stiff string-bed so I steer away from even a multifilament synthetic that I really don't like. Sorter strings at all. But hitting with a racket full of natural fut, really feels pretty cool. It's a very different feeling from any kind of synthetic string .

I'd recommend trying that out if you have the financials to actually be able to use that in your racket. It lasts longer to so that kind of helps defray the costs. And then he also asks Jeremy what about tensions? Using that multifilament strainer may be a natural gut string. What type of string tension range should he be looking at for arm injuries?

Jeremy : Depending on how bad the injury is, it's something that you are really suffering with, probably the mid to maybe up to about 57 pounds depending on how soft the string is. I wouldn't go much above 58 if you do have an existing injury. But you don't want to go too low with those because they are so soft that you'll really almost feel like it's a dead string bed just because you aren't going to get a lot of spring off of it.

Ian : Alright good stuff. And Howard has one other question, and I'm curious to see what your answer is going to be to this one Jeremy. He says "how do you figure out if rackets that are based on the YouTech or similar technologies are either stiff or flexible.

Jeremy : Well it's pretty easy, right now all of our YouTech rackets are pretty flexible as far as the market dynamics go. They haven't put the YouTech technology into their power rackets yet .

And the other thing is, the D3A technology is in the throat. So you're getting a little bit of flexibility there and well the technology will either stiffen or loosen up depending on how fast you are swinging. But a lot of the flexibility in the racket is going to be up in the hoop so they are pretty flexible rackets .

The radical, the YouTech radical feels a lot more flexible than its predecessor the Microgel and actually the flexpoint radicals as well. I was speaking with our local head rep about a week and a half ago at demo day and I asked him if he feels if the YouTech radical is more flexible than the Microgel and he said yes. Absolutely-- it's got a much more flexible feel and that's definitely been the general consensus among people who have hit with them both.

Ian : OK . Alright good stuff and we'll shift our geographical focus from north and move somewhere else completely different to Affinity in Saudi Arabia and his 1st question is... As a player improves, does he or she have to change his or her strings as well. Pretty general question, but what is your answer to that Jeremy?

Jeremy : Personal preference. That's kind of my buzz word for today. You don't have to change your strings. If you like one particular string and you feel that it fits your game well, then you can stay with it from the day you pick up the racket til the day they put you in the ground .

There are advantages to some strings that others don't. For example, if you are swinging really fast, a polyester string might be good for you so you can help control it. But there is no reason why you can't [inaudible] use natural gut.

Really it just kinda depends on your personal preference and ya, if you start swinging faster you might look at a different string or if you feel like you need a little bit more power you might go for a more powerful string. But there is no definitive answer of yes you need to change your strings once you get to be 4. 5 you can no longer use regular synthetic guts. It's really up to you .

Ian : How bout if as you improve or as a player improves they starts to break strings much more regularly.

Jeremy : Well that's again, if you know you don't mind to having your racket restrung three times a week then you can stay with the strings, but yeah, as you do start breaking strings more you're probably going to want to look to more durability and the more durable family of strings, thepolyesters, biting my tongue.. Kevlar .

Ian : Yes, Kevlar.

Jeremy : We do wanna make sure that they are right for your game and you know most of the time if you are breaking strings, because you are starting to swing f ast, you are starting to use a lot of spin, then y eah polyester string is good. Ke vlar or polyester would work well for you. So, durability would be a good reason to switch.

Ian : All right, good stuff and final question for today's show. And this should be kind of a fun topic for you and I to discuss for a couple of minutes here Jeremy.

Affinity also asked: "I have a neighbor who has a dropway straining machine. Some members of our group don't like to have our rackets strung by him. According to them, it has a allegedly caused them tennis elbow and all sorts of other injuries. Is there some truth in to this?"

Jeremy : [laughter] I hope they weren't talking about knee injuries and something like that.. .

Ian : Yeah right..

Jeremy : You know that is one of the things, when you are a stringer, right after the racket, the strings and the stringer are the next things to get blamed if you're having a bad day, all right?

Ian : And know this by personal experience, don't you?

Jeremy : Oh, yes, yes. You know stringers, particularly master racket technicians, tend to have pretty fix skin when it comes to that. You can assess with them... Many of the times when I come back in the office yelling about somebody complaining about their strings.

Ian : Yeah?

Jeremy : I don't think that the machine itself would be a reason for an arm injury. Now, maybe if the stringer, the person actually doing the job, strung it too tight or something like that I guess technically it could cause him an injury.

I really don't think that the stringer itself can do that. Even if the racket was strung 10 pounds tighter than you were used to. It think you would notice that before you had an injury and you'd probably ask him to change it.

A drop-weight machine does tend to give you a different string bed than a lock out or a hang crank machine with because it does constantly pull the tension during the string job. But it wouldn't be such a huge increase and it wouldn't be any more than top of the line electronics stringer would. You could possible argue and I've given an argument to people about a drop-weight machine that's stringing at even tension throughout the whole racket. So, if you could question the consistency of the string job but not really causing an injury.

Ian : So, bottom line, would you avoid if you were a player and you had the knowledge that you do now as a master racket technician. Would you ever avoid a stringer and his services just because he had a drop-weight stringing machine. .

Jeremy : I would not refuse to use him because of his machine. If he takes care and does a good job, takes his time, don't try to rush through, you can get a very good... You can get a very good job done with drop-weight machine if you know how to use it.

I would make sure that I only get one rack at the first time just to make sure how it turned out and make sure that you know it is a consistent string build. The same thing can be said for somebody who uses any type of machine.

Honestly I'd take a guy who's done 500 rackets on a \$150 machine rather than the guy who's done 5 on a \$5,000 electronic. So much stringing is really consistency as a stringer. Some machines make it easier to be consistent, but once you get good at something on a particular machine, you're going to be able to duplicate those result time and time again and that's what string is all about.

Ian : All right. So, Affinity wants to look for a strainer who has a lot of experience with their type of machine. Who has a lot of experience stringing rackets in general. That's gonna be much more the qualification you want to look for rather than how good of a machine they have and I guess good as in quotation marks.

Jeremy : Yeah, I mean give the guy a chance. He strings it and if you like how it feels, then keep going with the guy and you know and if he gives you a racket that doesn't feel as good as you know, maybe one that he had done for you earlier. Let him know. You know, if you don't get any feedback from your customers, you don't if you're doing a good job or a bad job. And you know most people figure that if they don't hear anything, that they are going to do a good job.

Ian : OK. So, just to be clear, we're going to go ahead and call four on the drop-weight stringing machine causing injuries, correct?

Jeremy : Yes, yes. I'm going to call foul on that.

Ian : Alright.

Jeremy : and as a stringer I would take a little bit of offense that we would cause an injury with a drop-weight machine or any machine.

Ian : All right, well that brings our questions to a close for today and Jeremy would you mind at some point, you know it doesn't have to be right away, but the members who took the time to write questions on the forums. Would you mind giving them quick answers and answering their questions on the forums?

Jeremy : Absolutely yes. I'll get over there and try and do that as soon as I can and we'll try to get as many of those questions answered as possible.

Ian : Awesome..

Jeremy : Some of them might be a little duplicated but I'm happy to do it .

Ian : Awesome. Well, Jeremy thank you very much for your time. Myself and the Essential Tennis Podcast Community definitely appreciates the input that you're giving us and thank you very much for your expertise.

Jeremy : Thank you so much for having me. [noise]

Ian : All right, that's brings the Essential Tennis Podcast number 86 too a close. Thank you very much for joining me today and hopefully what you heard was helpful to you.

Real quickly before we wrap up the show, I wanna do a couple shout outs and my shout outs today are going to be to our three most recent forum members and these guys are all joined within the last week since the last podcast and this is where you guys really want to be if you want to be the most involve as possible in improving your tennis game.

Everybody who posts on the Essential Tennis forums are very, very passionate about tennis-- they are very enthusiastic. They love supporting each other and helping each other as they continue down the path towards trying to become better tennis players.

And today's podcast was only possible because of the enthusiasm on the forums. All the questions that we answered today were posted by members of the Essential Tennis forum. So, you guys should definitely check it out if your a listener and have not checked it out yet.

So, our most recent three members and I think all of these guys actually posted in the thread where I was asking questions for Jeremy, but beatren, Ramodo and SAK are our three most recent members on the Essential Tennis Forums.

So, when I give those three guys a shout outs. All right? That brings today's show to a close. I will talk to you all next week. Until then take care and good luck with your tennis. [noise] [noise] [noise]