

# Winslowe's View Courts- Carpet

## What is a Carpet Court in Tennis?

According to ITF, a carpet court consists of a “textile surface of woven or non-woven nylon, or a polymeric or rubber material, typically supplied in rolls or sheets”. What makes this more interesting is like its namesake we use at homes; it can be removed at the end of the tournament.

There were two types of carpet courts: the outdoor ones and the indoor ones.

The **outdoor carpet court** version consisted of artificial turf in conjunction with sand and was used in regions where they wanted fast courts but didn't want the hassle of maintaining grass courts. Artificial turf is a surface which is used across multiple sports including baseball, American football, field hockey, soccer, rugby and golf.

## History of Carpet Surfaces in Tennis

One of the biggest ATP tournaments which was played on carpet is the Paris Masters. That tournament was hosted on carpet for 25 years, intermittently between 1968 and 2006. Since 2006, that competition is held on indoor hard courts.

Some of the other ATP tennis tournaments on carpet include the World Championship Tennis Finals, European Community Championship in Antwerp, U.S. Pro Indoor, Kremlin Cup and Zagreb Indoors in Croatia.

While three of the Challenger tournaments on the men's circuit in 2019 and a handful of the ITF women's tournaments are still played on carpet surfaces, no competition on the ATP or WTA level is hosted on carpet anymore.

The last WTA tournament which was played on carpet was the Québec Open in Canada but its final edition was held in 2018. Carpet surfaces went out of business with the ATP even before that with the tennis authorities pulling the plug off it in 2009.

## So Why Did They Stop Playing Tennis on Carpet Courts?

### Injuries & Health

One of the biggest reasons behind the decision to stop playing tennis tournaments at the ATP and WTA level on carpet is the injuries it could cause. Some of the artificial turf could cause more friction with the skin, which in turn could be a cause of abrasions and burns.

And this is the least of the health concerns associated with artificial turf, which is one of the types of carpet court. According, to various studies and reports the health risk associated

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with playing on artificial turf arises from the recycled chemicals used to support the synthetic grass blades.

Some studies also reckon there's a higher chance of getting injured on carpet courts based on the findings around other sports.

The NFL Injury and Safety Panel revealed a study consisting of data between 2000 and 2009 and Elliott B. Hershman said in the American Journal of Sports Medicine there were 22% more knee sprains on FieldTurf than on natural grass, while there were 67% more ACL sprains as well because it was harder on the body than grass.

## **Court Speed Issues**

As mentioned earlier, carpet courts are very quick, second only to grass which led to shorter rallies and quicker points. Big servers held sway as a result and matches got over quicker than usual which made the organizers worried from a fan satisfaction point of view.

The speed of the ball and the lack of bounce on it meant players did not have a lot of time to think before returning it, and this lowered reaction time increased the difficulties associated with the returns and increase in errors.

What must also be remembered is during the times when carpet was used as a surface, i.e. in the 1980s and 1990s, tennis racquets weren't as developed as they are today, which still allowed for a few rallies. Technological advancement of these racquets ensured it became difficult for whatever little extension of a rally was possible.

Replacing carpet with hard court surfaces meant slower and more consistent bounce, adding to the rally times and therefore increasing tennis fan interest, leading to what was hoped, better ticket sales. The emergence of Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic has helped in no small way obviously but the heightened interest in the sport has led to carpets been forgotten for good.

## **So Why Do They Still Use Carpet?**

One of the reasons why carpet surface courts are still in play is to deal with the bitterly cold temperatures, in a bid to try to reduce the maintenance associated with courts. In countries where the mercury dips to lower levels and tennis still needs to continue, it might make sense to play on carpet.

What makes it even better is carpet courts are easy to replace if they get damaged. So, in some of the Challenger and women's ITF competitions, carpet courts are still in play despite the suspension of its use at the highest level.