

How tennis became a power game

Until the 1970s virtually all tennis rackets were made of wood with leather grips – now space-age materials have transformed the game. Stiffer, lighter rackets with head sizes almost double those of their wooden forerunners have enabled powerful hitters with heavy topspin to dominate the game



■ **1880s:** Experimental racket with diagonal stringing. Strings made from sheep gut – six sheep required for manufacture of each set of strings

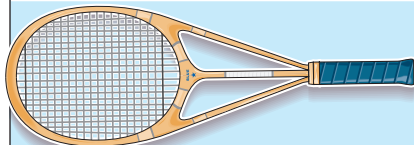


Leather-faced lawn tennis racket. Frames made

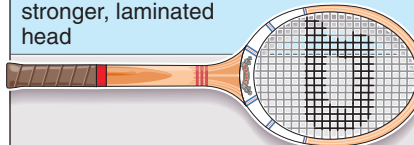
mainly from ash because of its strength, and ability to be bent to shape



■ **1900s:** *Slazenger Demon*. Fishtail wooden handle, *combed* to improve grip

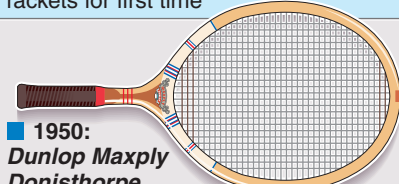


■ **1930s:** *Hazel Streamline Blue Star*. Traditional solid ash frame replaced by lighter, stronger, laminated head

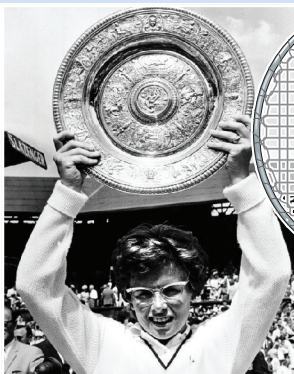


■ **Late 1930s:** *Dunlop Maxply*. Classic wooden racket. Power gained by reducing string tension and building heavier frame. Extremely small *sweet spot* – point on racket that gives maximum power and control for minimum effort

■ **1946:** Cow gut adopted for strings. Longer gut permits single-string rackets for first time



■ **1950:** *Dunlop Maxply Donisthorpe*. Oversize head provides more power



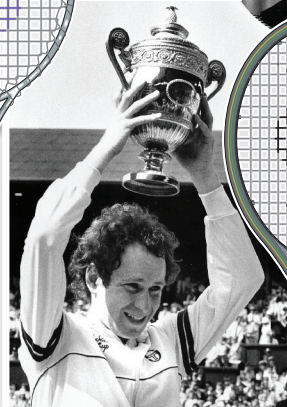
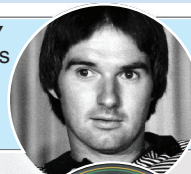
■ **1967:** *Wilson T2000*. First successful steel racket, designed by French “musketeer” *René Lacoste*, who solves problem of stringing by passing strings around metal wires looped to frame. Stronger and lighter than wood, T2000 is used by *Billie Jean King* to win 1968 *Wimbledon Ladies Singles* title

■ **1970s:** Lightweight aluminium rackets offer more power and control. First synthetic strings introduced

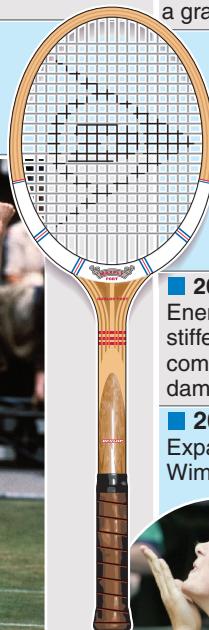


■ **1981:** “*You cannot be serious*”. *John McEnroe* becomes last man to win Wimbledon using a wooden racket, beating legendary five-time champion *Björn Borg*

■ **1982:** *Jimmy Connors* wins 2nd and last Wimbledon with T2000



■ **1983:** *Dunlop Max 200G*. McEnroe becomes first man to win Wimbledon using a graphite racket



■ **1980-90:** *Ergonom* graphite and *Inova* double-handed racket

■ **2003:** *Head Intelligence*. Energy from impact of ball stiffens piezoelectric composite in frame to dampen vibration

■ **2006:** *Prince O3*. Expanded sweet spot. 2004 Wimbledon champion *Maria Sharapova* is currently using an O3 White

