

SHOULD TENNIS ABOLISH THE SERVICE LET?

“Truth is the proper and sufficient antagonist to error and has nothing to fear from the conflict, unless by human interposition, disarmed of her natural weapons, free argument and debate.” – Thomas Jefferson

“Nothing is more terrible than activity without insight.” – Thomas Carlyle

When will they ever learn? Never, it seems.

Defying past experience and abundant evidence, the Association of Tennis Professionals Board of Directors recently approved the elimination of service lets on the Challenger Tour for the first three months of 2013. ATP Executive Chairman Brad Drewett said the board believes “a trial at the ATP Challenger level will be a good way to test this initiative in a competitive environment and get feedback from players before deciding if it could be adapted more broadly.”

Attempts to eliminate the sensible and necessary service let go way back. In a September 1954 *World Tennis* column, “The Silliest Rule in Tennis,” C. Alphonso Smith wrote, “In 92 percent of the hundreds of cases observed, the ball continued in its flight without appreciable change in speed or direction, generally merely flicking the net.” Anyone who has ever played or watched tennis knows Smith’s claim is absurd. We see serves hit the top of the net and ricochet unpredictably the vast majority of times. In 1968, the World Championship Tennis (WCT) circuit’s short-lived experiment with abolishing service lets ended because the players objected.

A far more famous advocate, Billie Jean King, resumed this fervent but misguided campaign. Tennis’ Joan of Arc, when she pioneered the women’s pro tour in the early 1970s, has long harbored new visions of our sport. If revolutionized her way, tennis would replace the traditional scoring system with

no-ad, put coaches on the court during matches, and abolish the service let. “Tennis is the most antiquated, backward-thinking sport,” she contended back in 1998. “The only change in 75 years has been the tiebreaker. We need to be innovative, on the cutting edge. Tennis has got to make some huge changes, especially in the United States.”

Fortunately, the World Team Tennis league that King created, has experimented with those and other major reforms for several decades. So we can fairly judge her laboratory. By any criteria—such as attracting top players, big crowds, international venues, stable franchises, significant prize money, sponsors, and TV and print coverage—the month-long WTT season has proved a small success, at best. And few of even its most ardent fans have clamored to change the main game into the image of WTT.

Nonetheless, the irrepressible King along with John McEnroe and Martina Navratilova—both great champions and respected TV tennis analysts—staunchly advocate abolishing the service let. The International Tennis Federation debated the rule change at its 1998 annual general meeting and withdrew its controversial proposal following further research and consultation. After a 16-year obsession with this issue, the ITF prudently gave up the bad fight.

Origin of Service Let

The All England Croquet Club formulated the traditional service let rule in 1880, six years after Major Walter Clopton Wingfield patented “Sphairistike,” the earliest version of modern lawn tennis. Impassioned but polite debate followed the game’s public introduction, and articles and letters analyzing the new game’s controversial rules frequently appeared in *The Field*, *The Country Gentleman's Newspaper*, a popular journal.

Henry Jones, alias “Cavendish,” didn’t fancy Rule 16 of the May 24, 1875 “Laws of Lawn Tennis—Revised by the M.C.C.” that decreed, “It is a good service or return although the ball touch the net or either of the posts.” Jones, a physician who regularly had articles published in *The Field*, was *the* 19th-century authority on games, and it was he who suggested the staging of the first Wimbledon tournament. Dr. Jones had perceptively pointed out in his November 21, 1874

piece that “Such a stroke [service let], it seems to me, must nearly always be a fluke. No one would play for it intentionally, and in a game of skill I am not inclined to grant more favour to flukes than can be possibly helped.”

The following major arguments and rebuttals show why the traditional service let rule—which has stood the test of time so fairly and efficiently since the AECC heeded Dr. Jones—should *not* be abolished.

ARGUMENT 1 — The service let rule—which require serves that hit the net and land in the service box to be replayed—both slows down the match and increases its length.

REBUTTAL — Service lets are *very* infrequent, and the delays they cause are quite minimal. A survey taken during the 1982 US Open revealed only 1.83 let serves per hour of play. At the 1996 US Open, precisely 5.0 service lets per match occurred in 45 senior matches surveyed. In the 1990s, an ITF study of 715 matches reported an average of only 4.1 service lets a match. Therefore, it’s fair and reasonable to conclude that eliminating the service let—especially when ball kids are on duty—would have a negligible effect on speeding up tennis.

However, we can easily speed up the game without tampering with the rules by enforcing the present time limits between points, during changeovers and whenever arguments threaten to violate the “play shall be continuous” rule. We can also re-examine rules for bathroom breaks and medical time-outs.

ARGUMENT 2 — Since play continues after net cords (when the ball hits the top of the net and then lands in the court) *during* the point, why not continue play after service lets that *start* the point? What’s the difference anyway?

REBUTTAL — Here, a Ralph Waldo Emerson maxim and a simple baseball analogy are appropriate to sort things out. “A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds,” Emerson wrote in his classic essay, *Self-Reliance*. Emerson meant that while consistency has its virtues, if applied uncritically or taken to mindless extremes, consistency is counterproductive.

You can apply Emerson’s wisdom to the rules for baseball’s foul ball, which is quite analogous to tennis’ service let and an integral part of the duel between the pitcher and the batter. An unplayable (not caught on the fly) foul ball counts for the

first two strikes, but *not* for the third strike *unless* it's an unsuccessful bunt attempt. Baseball people rightly do not consider this inconsistent or illogical, but rather a brilliant piece of rules-making and also a time-tested and beneficial tradition. It's impossible to imagine baseball's lords ever doing away with third (and successive) foul balls—which, incidentally, often add to the tension—merely to “speed up the game.”

Many tennis people feel the same way about the service let. They correctly maintain that since the service let *starts* the point—and the server usually starts with an advantage—and the net cord happens *during* the point, the two situations differ considerably in this crucial sense.

ARGUMENT 3 — Abolishing the service let, some proponents claim, would push athletes to a higher level of performance.

REBUTTAL — The contrary is true. Playing without the service let actually *lowers* the caliber of play for *both* the server and receiver. Why? How? The two criteria for evaluating a serve are quality—viz., its power, depth, accuracy, effective spin, and variety—and consistency. Allowing the flukish service let rebounds—balls that dribble meekly over the net, pop straight up, or carom wildly after hitting the top of the net—diminishes serving quality as well as inadvertently and wrongly increases consistency. And that reduces the importance of a sound and effective return of serve and thus further encourages mediocrity.

Andre Agassi, formerly world No. 1 and a superb service returner, after experimenting with the no-let at the Nike Cup in 1996, noted: “It’s ridiculous. It just makes the game a lottery.” Even worse, it makes tennis a *dangerous* lottery. Returners could powerfully smash high-popping service lets from inside the service box directly at serve-and-volleyers in singles and at both opponents in doubles. That would inevitably cause injuries and animosity.

In fact, exactly that happened when the Czech Tennis Association tested no-let at junior tournaments 15 years ago. “Patrolling the net turned out to be pretty dangerous with the no-let rule,” recalls Ctibor Coufal, a former nationally ranked player and teaching pro. “Returners in doubles approached the very short and high let serve and hit opponents in the stomach area. Fortunately, they decided to abandon the no-let rule after some serious injuries.”

ARGUMENT 4 — Since service lets are unpredictable and often bizarre, legalizing this element of luck would add spice to the sport. “It just makes for more drama,” says King.

REBUTTAL — Tournament tennis and national team events, such as the Davis Cup and Fed Cup, are and should remain wonderful tests of skill and will. The present rules offer a fair test of superiority, a *sine qua non* of any athletic competition. The odds are excellent that the more skillful and stronger-willed player will eventually prevail. This is not to say that luck plays no role. Net cords, mis-hits, bad bounces, bad line calls, and bad weather can all make things rather interesting without materially (except rarely) affecting the outcome.

However, any rule change as drastic as abolishing the service let would clearly debase the game’s intent, beauty, quality, and fairness. As Stefan Edberg, former world No. 1 in singles and doubles, averred: “It’s crazy. If the ball hits the net and drops [barely] over, it’s an ace? It would be a matter of luck. It’s totally unnecessary.” And, it is important to stress, when such unnecessary and excessive luck occurs on game points, set points, and match points, its unfairness and foolishness are magnified.

ARGUMENT 5 — “The only thing that concerns me is that the tensions of the nets would have to be standardized,” says Stan Smith, who favors abolishing the service let. “At Wimbledon, the nets are loose so balls hit the net and trickle over. At some indoor tournaments, the net is like a cable and net cords bounce the ball up into the air and turn into overheads for the receiver.” So, just standardize net tensions and all will go well.

REBUTTAL — Not so fast! Since we presumably don’t want balls that trickle over the net for undeserved aces *or* balls that pop high into the air for undeserved overheads, what exactly are we striving to achieve here? The relatively rare “neutral” service let? As McEnroe used to say, “You cannot be serious!”

Besides being absurd, Smith’s so-called solution isn’t feasible. Throughout the world, many nets and net posts are antiquated and damaged and lack net straps and certainly aren’t adjusted daily—or even capable of being adjusted—for a precise net tension. In America, for example, 72 percent of our tennis is played on public courts, and many of these courts are in mediocre to deplorable condition.

Navratilova blithely declares, “You have to adjust [to playing service lets]. And the better athlete will adjust to it.” I doubt Navratilova or other service let abolitionists have even begun to consider how adversely this proposed rule change would affect the millions of recreational players around the world. They certainly aren’t top athletes, and the game is difficult enough for them already. The ITF and its 210 member national associations should care profoundly about how this (and every) rule change affects *amateur* players—unless they foolishly envision *entirely different* rules for the pros and the masses.

ARGUMENT 6 — “It [the no-let rule] doesn’t really give anyone advantages, the server or the receiver,” claims Navratilova.

REBUTTAL — This claim is preposterous! Aside from rare “phantom” (viz., hard to detect) service lets, service lets consist of 1) balls that dribble a few inches into the court and would be certain aces if the rule were changed; 2) balls that pop up high into the air asking to be put away either by overheads or powerful groundstrokes; 3) balls that lose some speed and thus help the receiver; 4) balls that, due to spin, swerve in an unpredictable direction and thus help the server.

King, in fact, concedes these all-important points: “It [the service let] is just like a net cord during the rally. I mean, that’s not fair, either. What if the serve hits the top of the [net] tape and bounces up for the person who is returning? He or she has a much better opportunity to do some damage.” King apparently doesn’t care that the “damage” is “not fair” to the server—as if two service let wrongs somehow make a right.

ARGUMENT 7 — Arguments between players and chair umpires about whether a service let was called and should not have been, or vice versa, are unwanted distractions and slow down play.

REBUTTAL — Since service lets occur infrequently—averaging only about four to five times a match—and the overwhelming majority of them are extremely obvious, disputes have been rare and almost always short-lived, especially when compared to disputes about line calls and other controversial rulings (even though Cedric Pioline was kicked out of the 1998 Nottingham Open for using an obscenity in arguing that a service let should have been called).

Disputes have become even rarer this century because of electronic sensor clips attached to the net. These electronic sensors are now used for all main draw matches at ATP tournaments, Grand Slam events, Davis Cup (for all World Group ties), Fed Cup, the Olympics, and some ITF pro circuits.

“They detect vibration caused by impact,” explains Gayle Bradshaw, ATP Executive VP & Administrator of Regulations. “They can distinguish between movement of the net by wind, for example, versus a ball strike.”

To avoid the rare “phantom let”—when a bullet serve causes air turbulence to make the sensor react—Tennis Channel analyst Jeff Tarango, a former Tour player, recommends, “The sensor setting should be reduced from 8 to 5½ to make it less sensitive.”

The ITF decided to use electronic sensors “to improve the accuracy of the net calls and avoid problems with net judges being hit,” says Enric Molina, ITF Head of Officiating. “It has been a success because with the introduction of the technology, players are accepting it almost all of the time.”

ARGUMENT 8 — As noted earlier, King averred, “Tennis is the most antiquated, backward-thinking sport. The only change in 75 years has been the tiebreaker. We need to be innovative, on the cutting edge.” The thinking apparently goes something like this: since rule changes are good, we should welcome, even embrace them.

REBUTTAL — As neither a hidebound traditionalist nor a rabid reformer, I would merely offer the truism that we should favor sensible and fair traditions *and* reforms—and oppose bad traditions *and* bad reforms. Second, I would suggest to King that certain other sports may actually *need* several major rule changes, while tennis does not. Furthermore, those who talk of “growing the sport” and “borrowing from other sports” and “making tennis a team sport” need to appreciate that tennis will never be the National Basketball Association or Major League Baseball in the U.S., nor soccer in the rest of the world. If tennis tries to be all things to all people, it will lose its brilliant uniqueness and end up being nothing much to anyone.

Third, King should understand that many proposed tennis rule changes—such as abolishing the service let—are seriously flawed and thus should be rejected.

Attacks on the motives and acumen of service let supporters reflect seeming frustration rather than the free argument and debate that Thomas Jefferson wisely championed.

A Non-Solution

Summing up, the no-let rule is not only a non-solution to a non-problem. It's also detrimental to the game. Tony Trabert, the world's top amateur player in 1955 and a former TV tennis analyst, said, "It's foolish to even consider abolishing the service let." Steffi Graf ridiculed it as "stupid." Jimmy Connors criticized it as "nitpicking." Boris Becker warned, "It's not a wise change." Pete Sampras blasted it as "ridiculous." And Agassi, fearing that the proposed rule change would exacerbate the huge advantage explosive servers already have, called it "horrific." They are right.

In 1999, Patrick Rafter and other pro players vowed to boycott the Australian Open if the ITF abolished the time-tested service let rule. The ITF backed down. These players deserved praise and support for their sound judgment and unflinching courage. Today's players should protest the ATP's current no-let rule on the Challenger Tour just as vigorously.

Mary Carillo, the authoritative CBS, NBC, and Tennis Channel analyst, put the service let and other tennis rules into their proper perspective. "I have never understood the need to change this rule," Carillo said. "Is it a way to reward luck? Why would that be a good thing?"

"Is it an effort to speed up the game? There are far more time-wasting scenarios than service lets," Carillo rightly pointed out. "And unlike the let, they are intentional: excessive toweling off, ritualistic ball bounces, long walks behind the baseline and other abuses of the continuous play rule, suspiciously timed calls for the trainer, the Player Challenge Mosey To The Mark Routine ... the list goes on.

"To change a time-honored rule of tennis instead of honoring and enforcing those being ignored, broken, and manipulated makes no sense whatsoever."

THE END

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WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT THE SERVICE LET RULE

Mary Carillo, ESPN, Tennis Channel and CBS tennis analyst: “I have never understood the need to change this rule. Is it a way to reward luck? Why would that be a good thing? Is it an effort to speed up the game? There are far more time-wasting scenarios than service lets, and unlike the let, they are intentional: excessive toweling off, ritualistic ball bounces, long walks behind the baseline and other abuses of the continuous play rule, suspiciously timed calls for the trainer, the Player Challenge Mosey To The Mark Routine ... the list goes on. To change a time-honored rule of tennis instead of honoring and enforcing those being ignored, broken and manipulated makes no sense whatsoever.

René Stambach, President, Swiss Tennis: “A potential advantage [where is it?] of this change of rule is, by far, not outweighing the downside. Swiss Tennis cannot support it at the time being and has no intention to do so in the future unless new and strong elements would come up.”

Pete Sampras: “I think that's [the proposed abolition of the service let] ridiculous.”

Stefan Edberg: “It’s crazy. If the ball hits the net and drops over, it’s an ace? It would be a matter of luck. It’s totally unnecessary. How can they make decisions like that without consulting the players?”

Tracy Austin, Tennis Channel commentator and former two-time US Open champion: “I don’t love it [the no-let rule]. From what I heard, they did it in college because so many of the guys—and maybe the gals as well—were calling lets on good serves, maybe going over the net by six inches. It’s [actually] an ace, they [returners] say ‘Let.’ Of course, then they have to replay it because there’s no umpire on every court. It’s a ploy used in juniors [tournaments] as well. My son played against a kid who called 17 lets in a match. They aren’t 17 lets in two weeks! So that’s one of the reasons why it [the service let rule] was changed. World TeamTennis uses it [the no-let rule]. In doubles, if there’s a [service] let, either player can hit the ball.”

Leif Shiras, Tennis Channel commentator and former world-class player: “When you hit the ball in a rally and it hits the net and it goes over, it’s considered good. I used to be totally against it [the no-let rule]. I actually think there’s something to it. It might be fun, it might be interesting, a little bit of drama here and there. Traditionalists will say: ‘What happens on atch point at Wimbledon, and there’s a let to win the match on the serve?’ Does that detract from something? I don’t think so, necessarily.”

Tony Trabert: “It’s foolish to even consider abolishing the service let.”

Andre Agassi: "If you play [service lets], I think you’re just throwing in a whole other element. It just seems so random, almost somewhat lucky. A lot of times in crucial serves, you’ll see a let. Sometimes a couple of them in a row. I don’t think they should ever play it. I think that’s ludicrous.... It would be a horrific change in the game.”

Darren Cahill, formerly an Australian Davis Cupper and Andre Agassi’s coach and now ESPN tennis analyst: “I’m open-minded about the trial. I’ve never been

involved in WTT, so I'm yet to really experience how a no-let match would play out. I think a trial at the Challenger level is worthwhile. It is also one of the few areas of our game where technology maybe doesn't work quite as well as the old style of having a person sitting court side with a finger touching the net. Windy and gusty conditions have played havoc with the electronic device at times. I also understand the reason for going to the electronic device as it is somewhat dangerous for a linesperson to sit court side at the net, and it also helps to staff an event with one less linesperson per court. There are other more important areas of our game that we could be addressing, but, in principle, I'm fine with it and look forward to the results of the trial."

Dennis Van der Meer, USPTR Founder/President: "Why increase the luck factor in the most critical stroke in tennis?"

Robbie Koenig, Tennis Channel analyst: "I'm a big fan of getting rid of service lets."

Boris Becker: "It's not a wise change. I don't understand why they don't stick with the old rules."

Cliff Drysdale, former world top-10 player and current ESPN-TV tennis analyst (1998): "The players' reaction to that suggestion was so negative at the [1993] Lipton International Players Championships that I bet they're going to drop it. And they should!"

Cliff Drysdale (2011): "If you made me take a position, I would like to get rid of let serve. But before dealing with that, I'd rather focus on issues like servers bouncing the ball and installing a game clock to speed up play and cutting down on the players' squawking and squealing. So changing the let serve would only be No. 4 on the list."

Steffi Graf: "It [the proposed rule change] sounds very silly. Who thinks about these things. The 'let' doesn't disturb anybody."

Jimmy Connors: “Let’s do something right for the game instead of nitpicking around. Whether the let should be abolished, that’s nitpicking. My little girl who’s seven years old knows that. That has no effect on the game whatsoever.”

Fred Stolle, a 1960s star and current ESPN-TV tennis analyst: “The service let rule should be at the bottom of the list of possible rule changes. Some areas of our game are traditional and have a purpose. The service let is one of them.”

Jim Courier: “What’s the big deal about playing a let? I’ve never felt there was a problem with the way it is now, so I don’t see any particular reason to change it.”

Harold Solomon, 1976 French Open finalist and former world No. 5: “It’s ridiculous to change this rule. It will not add any drama, and besides, there are many things about tennis that are unique and should be celebrated and preserved which sets tennis apart from other sports. People sometimes just want to change for the sake of changing. Billie Jean is so wrong on this, and her [World TeamTennis] version of tennis has been a very minimal success. This change is for people that have nothing better to do than think of non-consequential issues that don’t further the game. Let’s continue to work on better camera placements, on easier-to-see balls and courts. These things will make the game more viewer-friendly.”

Daniel Nestor, former No. 1 in the world in doubles: “I am little indifferent on this topic. One reason is that a lot of the tournaments we play have different net tensions, some tight some loose so the let can dribble over or shoot off. To me that variance should kill the argument because I think it would just be silly to have the ball either dribble over for an ace or shoot up and be a sitter for the returner. If there is a set tension by which the outcome would be playable by just a normal reaction to a different spin, so to speak, then I would favour the implementation of a new rule. In my opinion, the most important rule change that makes the most sense and would add further excitement to growing sport is No-Ad scoring.”

Chris Lewis, 1983 Wimbledon finalist and now a coach and teaching pro: “Along with No-Ad scoring and four-game sets, the no-let rule is just another down-

leveling, lowest-common-denominator suggestion that shifts the game further towards luck at the expense of skill. My only interest in it is seeing it receive the near-universal ridicule it richly deserves.

Ray Moore, former ATP President and world-class player: “I think the men would greet such a move with derision. If you did research on let services, it would probably be less than one percent. To focus on anything like that would be a waste of time.”

Gabriel Sánchez Sierra, Presidente, Federación Colombiana de Tenis: “In a few words, I totally agree with Mary Carillo, “Is it a way to reward luck? Why would that be a good thing?”

Ivan Lendl: “I would be for the change because the let call is the most controversial and because it would speed up the game. But they would have to standardize the nets. At Wimbledon, the ball just falls over the net so it is an advantage to the server. At the U.S. Open, the ball stands up and asks to be hit.”

Nick Bollettieri: “[Changing] the service let rule deserves no thought or consideration at all. Let’s concern ourselves with important matters, such as standardizing the ball and racket technology, which has drastically increased the power in the game.”

Kevin Curren, 1985 Wimbledon finalist: “It’s difficult to return serve as it is, especially on grass. Imagine how it would be if you had the net cord in there as well. It would be even more difficult to break serve.”

Ron Bookman, former ATP Director of Communications and sports editor: “WCT [World Championship Tennis] experimented with abolishing service lets in 1968. The experiment didn’t last long because the players objected. I don’t know what we would gain by abolishing service lets, so I would have to say I am against

it, too.”

Jacques Dorfmann, veteran French Open umpire and Davis Cup referee: “I don’t see the point of this proposed change. Why try to fight a tradition more than a century old when arguments about service lets are quite rare?”

Jim Entink, longtime referee at the Australian Open, Davis Cup and Federation Cup: “There is nothing wrong with the present rule, so why change a rule that has stood the test of time? If you want to speed up the game, reduce the time between points to 20 seconds and to 60 seconds for the changeover. The time lost on service lets is minimal. Disputes on service lets are no different from line disputes and can easily be dealt with under the Code of Conduct.”

Ellsworth Vines, a 1930s star: “To change the service let would be asinine. If a change were to be made, the receiver would be put in the position of trying to return, most likely, a fluke serve, and it would then become a matter of luck. There’s enough luck in the game as it is—net cords, blind linesmen, etc.”

Hunter Delatour, Jr., former USTA president: “I heartily agree with your rebuttals to all of the arguments. As you say, ‘Let the Service Let Stay Put.’ ”

Stan Smith, a former Wimbledon and US Open champion: “It [the no-let rule used at the 1996 U.S. Open senior event] was pretty weird, but I think I’m in favor of it. The only thing that concerns me is that the tensions of the nets would have to be standardized. At Wimbledon, the nets are loose so balls hit the net and trickle over. At some indoor tournaments, the net is like a cable and net cords bounce the ball up into the air and turn into overheads for the receiver.”

Alex Corretja, then president of the ATP Tour Player Council: “I don’t like the electronic net cord [service let detector]. It’s confusing. I prefer a net judge, and I think most players would agree with me.”

Virginia Wade, former Wimbledon and US Open champion: “It [the no-let rule

at the 1996 U.S. Open senior event] is awful.”

Peter Bodo, veteran *Tennis* magazine writer: “There’s absolutely no reason to see or call a let-cord serve any differently than you do a let-cord groundstroke, smash, or drop shot. I’m not sure, but I suspect that the let serve is a vestige of the polite game that demanded that if you got lucky because of the net before the rally was even underway, the least you could do was play the serve over out of courtesy to your opponent.”

Fermin Perez, president of the Venezuela Tennis Federation: “I believe wholeheartedly that the service let rule should not be changed.”

John Beddington, former director of the Canadian Open: “That anybody should bother to take a look at this [service let] rule at this stage of the development of the sport is totally ridiculous.”

Dr. Heiner Gillmeister, sports historian and author of *Tennis: A Cultural History*: “I consider the abolition of the let rule absurd and contrary to the very principles of modern sport which did away completely with the gambling spirit so characteristic of medieval sport.”

Brad Patterson, executive director of the Tennis Industry Association: “Your arguments on abolishing the service let rule are right on the mark. It is silly to even consider fooling around with abolishing it.”

Kevin Anderson, in the *Daily Mail* (UK): “I was big on the no let rule. Playing college tennis, I thought it was great. I think also that it’s really tough sometimes, you hit great serves and it barely clips the net, nobody can even tell. We gave it a try last year, it didn’t really work out but that was something I would have liked to see.”

Bob Brett, who coached Boris Becker and Goran Ivanisevic: “For tennis to be a great draw, we need suspenseful matches, like the unforgettable matches Connors

used to play at the US Open. It has nothing to do with the service let. All those people cramming the aisles weren't concerned with the service let and these other rule change proposals that are out in left field."

Bill Kellogg (USA, 2012): "I have talked to a number of men's college coaches on this topic, as well as collegiate players. NCAA Division I play has used the "no let's" system for several years. From talking to coaches, I learned that in previous years, the traditional let rule was being used in collegiate play as a strategic weapon by receivers. Whenever the matches got tight and one player had a dominant serve, the receiver would simply call lets to neutralize aces. Elimination of lets made a very positive difference in collegiate sportsmanship and is now considered normal by the vast majority of collegiate players using the "no let" system. In talking to the players themselves, I learned that it took a little time to adapt to not calling lets, but now it is second nature to them. In their minds, there is absolutely no difference between service lets and balls that hit the net during a rally. A number of these players will soon be making their way onto the professional tour and will feel right at home if the satellite circuit continues to use the "no lets" rule. This is a rule that SHOULD be changed, and I applaud the pro circuit for giving it a try."

Allison Danzig, the distinguished *New York Times* tennis writer from 1923–1968: "I am for letting the let rule on the service stand."

John Lloyd: "That one rule I'd like to do away with—the [service] let."

Vic Braden, noted coach, researcher and author: "I'm against a rule change where the result can be affected by anything other than the *intentional play* of the two participants."

Larry Scott, then Chief Operating Officer of the ATP Tour: "Everyone's scratching their heads. Why this rule change now, when there's no tangible benefit."

Andre Agassi: “I’d like to see the let serve be a fault. The big serve is a big part of the game. You can’t say you should have one serve only, but less serves. You should be good enough not to hit the net on your serve.”

Butch Buchholz, former world top 10 player who briefly played with the no-let experiment on the WCT Tour: “We shouldn’t abolish the [service] let. The time gained is irrelevant. This rule change doesn’t serve any purpose and will probably cause more harm than good. This whole thing sounds like someone groping just to make a change. And if you make a change, let’s make a significant change.”