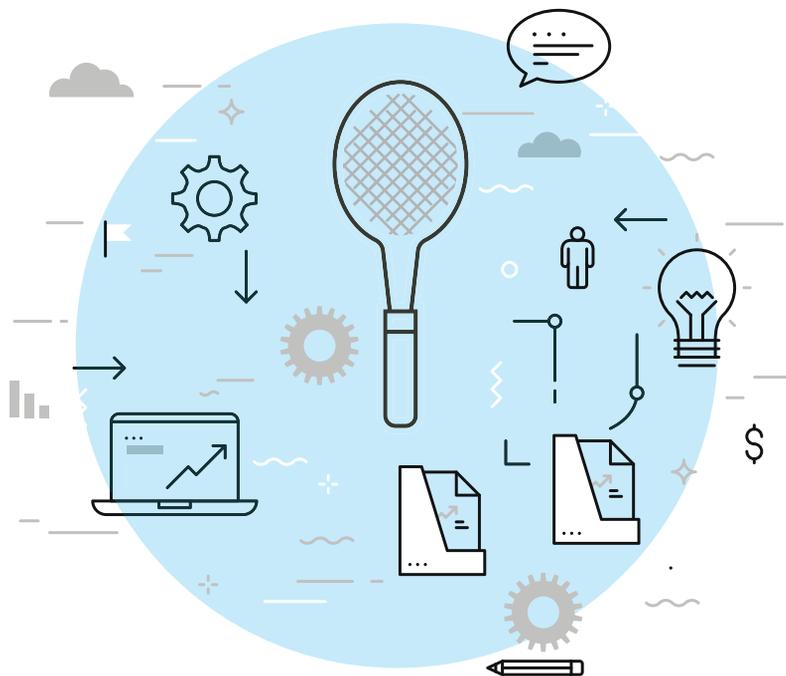


Racquet Tech



CUSTOMER SERVICE

Focus on Being the Best

Whether you are an experienced racquet technician or are just starting out, there is always more to learn.

BY BOB PATTERSON

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If you have ever heard me speak at a workshop, you've likely heard me say, "It's not rocket science, but it *is* racquet science." Whether you're a new technician or a seasoned veteran, this is something we all need to remember. Racquet service, and stringing in particular, is part science, part art and technique—and we never should stop learning.

In my nearly four decades in this business, there is not much I haven't experienced or seen. But I still have plenty of "Ah-ha!" moments. Just when

I think there is nothing that can be done to racquet design, a company will introduce a new extreme variation, which I need to learn about. Or I'll discover a new tool or technique that makes my work easier or more efficient.

I still learn every time I am at a workshop or tournament with other experienced stringers. While I might see a new technique, it doesn't mean that I will necessarily adopt it—but at least I can decide whether it would be a best practice for me or not. That's really what it's all about: being your best.

In servicing racquets, there may be

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several ways to do a particular task, such as tying a knot. While there may be plenty of bad knots, there are several correct ways to do it. What may work best for one stringer may not work for another. This is true for almost every aspect of the job.

During the practical sections of both the USRSA Master Racquet Technician and Certified Stringer exams, the tester will go through a checklist with the applicant. The USRSA does not require use of a certain knot or mandate a certain way to start the string job, but the applicant is required to simply use sound practice and techniques to get the job done. In other words, there is usually more than one way to do things correctly, but there are also many ways to do things wrong.

When I go over a failed certification test with an applicant, I often hear, "But that was the way I was taught to do it, and I have always done it that way." However, that doesn't necessarily mean it's the correct way. Unfortunately, there are less skilled technicians out there passing along bad habits and wrong techniques to others.

If you are just learning to string, or if you are preparing to become a certified stringer—or if you just want to improve—many of the USRSA's experienced MRTs offer lessons. You can find a list of these MRTs on RacquetTech.com under the Stringing Tab, then "Get Lessons." These lessons usually are one-on-one sessions with an emphasis on showing you the best way forward. Talk to the MRT about what you want. Have them observe you string a couple of racquets, then they can provide an honest critique and tips for improvement.

Whether you want to learn the correct way from the start, or just want to make sure you haven't learned bad habits, take a lesson and make sure you are always doing your best.