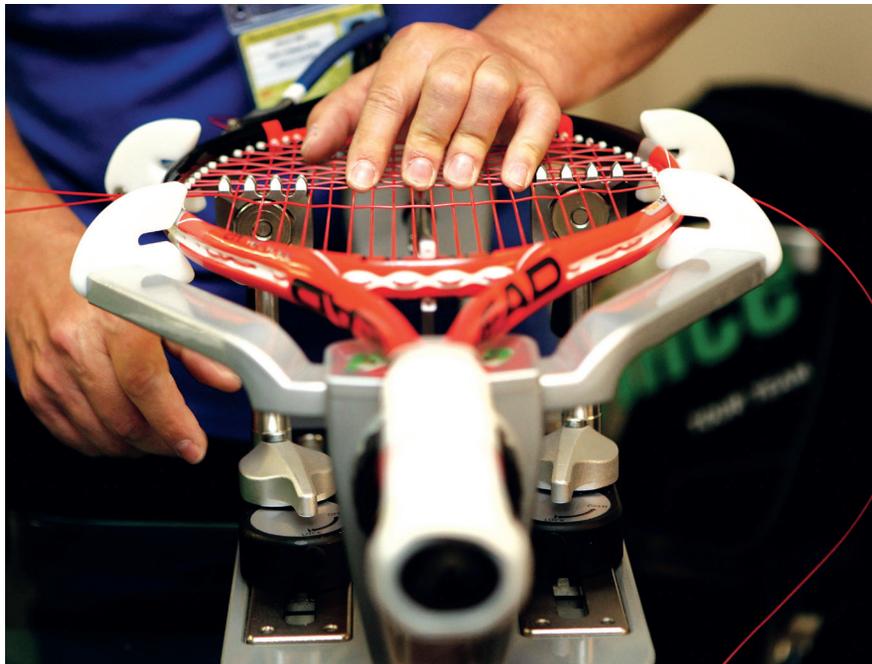


Racquet Tech



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Simple But Significant

There are important factors to consider when deciding whether to use one piece of string or two.

BY BOB PATTERSON

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It seems like a simple choice when stringing: Do you want to use one piece of string for both mains and crosses, or cut the string into two pieces, using one for the mains and the remainder for the crosses?

Unless there is a compelling reason to use one or two pieces of string, then it is the choice of the stringer to decide what would be best.

In the case of hybrid stringing, the decision is made for you. Over the last 10 years or so, hybrid stringing has become very popular, in which case you'll need

to use two different strings for customers looking for such a set-up.

Otherwise, it is up to you, but there are plenty of considerations. On frames where the mains end and tie off at the throat, then the cross-string installation would start at the throat and be installed bottom to top if using the one-piece method. The USRSA highly discourages this practice, though, even if the manufacturer allows it. Installing cross strings in this manner puts much more stress on the frame than installing them from the top down. In fact, some manufacturers, including Head and Yonex, warn that

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installing crosses from the bottom up will void the racquet's warranty.

There are other considerations for using two pieces rather than one. For instance, if you are using a delicate string, such as natural gut, two pieces will save a lot of wear and tear on the cross strings, since that portion will only be handled during cross installation.

Many stringers consider a two-piece job to be more consistent, since both sides of the mains are installed in the same manner. I have heard the argument that one-piece string jobs are superior since there will be less loss of tension with two knots instead of four, but if you are tying a good knot, the tension loss is minimal, and is uniform with both sides.

In my early days as a stringer at pro tour events, the use of two knots was prevalent and often asked for by players. As a result, several variations of “box” or “around-the-world” (ATW) patterns were developed by stringers to facilitate the players' requests and still install the crosses from the top down. These requests, of course, diminished greatly in the last decade with the popularity of hybrid stringing. But I was genuinely surprised this past summer when I worked the Atlanta Open to hear most pro players requesting four knots, even if they didn't use a hybrid.

There are a few patterns that require bottom-to-top stringing. Many badminton frames are designed this way and will actually fatigue or collapse if the crosses are installed starting at the top. Some racquetball and squash racquets with unique patterns also call for bottom-up stringing for various reasons.

The bottom line, though, is to follow the directions provided in the USRSA Stringer's Digest, and if the pattern provides a choice of either one-piece or two—and the one-piece shows crosses starting at the throat and working up to the top—then go with the two-piece. ■