

Tennis Retailing



RACQUET SALES

Immediate Gratification

A club tries a unique approach to demoing racquets, and sees a nice bump in frame sales.

BY JIM RICHARDS

Retailers waiting for customers to demo racquets is a slow and tedious way to increase sales. Racquet demo days are notoriously difficult to organize, and even if you get a good turnout, most consumers don't buy a racquet immediately.

A more effective approach to selling more racquets is to give a line of demo frames to teaching pros in the local area who are sponsored by a particular company. This is what we did at Smoke Rise Country Club in Atlanta.

Wilson tech rep Alyssa Xedus and Smoke Rise Director of Tennis Suzy Ihnat organized a racquet demo week by giving the teaching pro that is sponsored by Wilson (me) a demo bag with every new Wilson model for 2019, including

multiple frames of popular models such as the Wilson Clash and Ultra.

I brought the demo bag to all of our adult clinics and team practices for two weeks. More than 60 players were able to try out the new racquets—and after the two weeks, 20 players, or about one in three, bought a new Wilson frame.

This is a successful way to sell new racquets for a variety of reasons:

- Demo bags reach a bigger market and save time. With a demo bag available for use in clinics and at team practices, multiple customers were able to try multiple racquets in a short time period, and find the racquet they liked much faster. In one case, a complete beginner chose the heaviest racquet Wilson makes. That's the power of a

large selection in a demo bag.

- Having all of the demo racquets on hand added excitement and freshness to the lessons, because something new was being offered. One member taking a clinic complained that all the demo racquets was a distraction. The way we handled this moving forward was to try to hand out racquets before the clinic started, and allowing players to switch racquets during ball pick-up times.

- Coaches can generate excitement about new products more easily in lessons, rather than letting their players go off to try the racquets by themselves. Also, coaches should be open and honest with their players about a racquet and its suitability if they have other models in the demo bag their students can try.

- Customers receive instant feedback from their coaches. For more than half of the players who bought new racquets, closing the deal was simply a matter of me reassuring them that the racquet they were thinking of buying was the best one for them, which doesn't happen when players demo a racquet by themselves.

- We combined the demo week with a \$20 coupon from CourtCraft tennis store in Snellville, Ga., with a purchase deadline. CourtCraft owner Shawn Arnette was happy to work with us.

- It of course helps if you know about the new technology, but new racquets often sell themselves since players can see how much better they play.

- Players could try out the racquets in home matches, which closed the deal in half of the time.

Rather than waiting for players to demo racquets in their own time, give a teaching pro a bag full of demo frames, then have the pro help consumers to find the right frame for their game—on the spot. ■

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