2. THE GAME TODAY

2.1 The Net - Its introduction revolutionised the game.

16th Century. A length of rope was strung across the court.

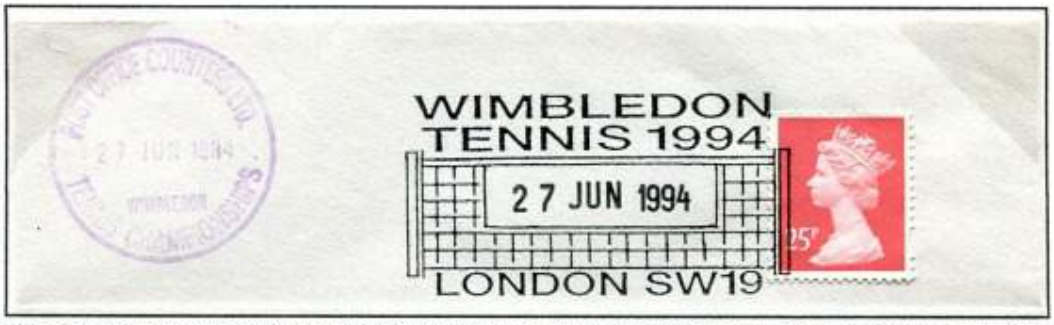
1874. Major Wingfield's tennis kit included a net 21 feet long and 4 feet high he borrowed from the game of badminton.

1882. The present day regulations were laid down.

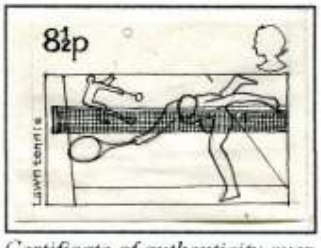
The net extends 3 feet beyond each side of the marked playing area i.e. for singles 33 feet wide and for doubles 42 feet wide.

17th Cent. A net was introduced.

Manufacturers of tennis nets, B J B Ltd., used this meter mark in its office in Sydney from 1956 to 1959.



The circular handstamp was applied by Post Office Counters Ltd. in the mobile post office stationed at the Championships. The cancelling of the stamps with the special Wimbledon postmark was done by Royal Mail in its head office in London.



Certificate of authenticity over.

Essays by designer A. Restall.

A low net!

The printing is out of alignment.

Bottom margin is not perforated.

The net post is set for singles.

The stamp as released in 1977.

2.1 The Net - The regulations set in 1882 still apply today.

The height of the net is 3 feet 6 inches at the ends and 3 feet in the middle.
The length of the net extends 3 feet beyond each side of the playing area.
The net height at the middle is adjusted to 3 feet by a tensioning band.

The net drops 6 inches to 3 feet at its centre.

The right hand net post is not shown in the correct position!

Note that the net is incorrectly set with side props for singles play and that the left net post should be set three feet beyond the tramline!

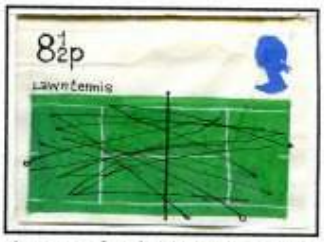
The left hand net post should be positioned beyond the tramline!

This net has no centre band and has no drop in height at its centre.

A doubles net is adjusted for singles play by supporting each end of the net with sticks 3 feet 6 inches in length positioned 4 feet 6 inches in from the end posts as seen here.

2.2 **Playing Area** - The court layout

The present dimensions of the playing area were adopted in 1875. For singles play the marked playing area is 26 yards long and 9 yards wide. For doubles the width is extended each side by a corridor of 1.5 yards. The four service areas are each 7 yards deep and 4.5 yards in width.

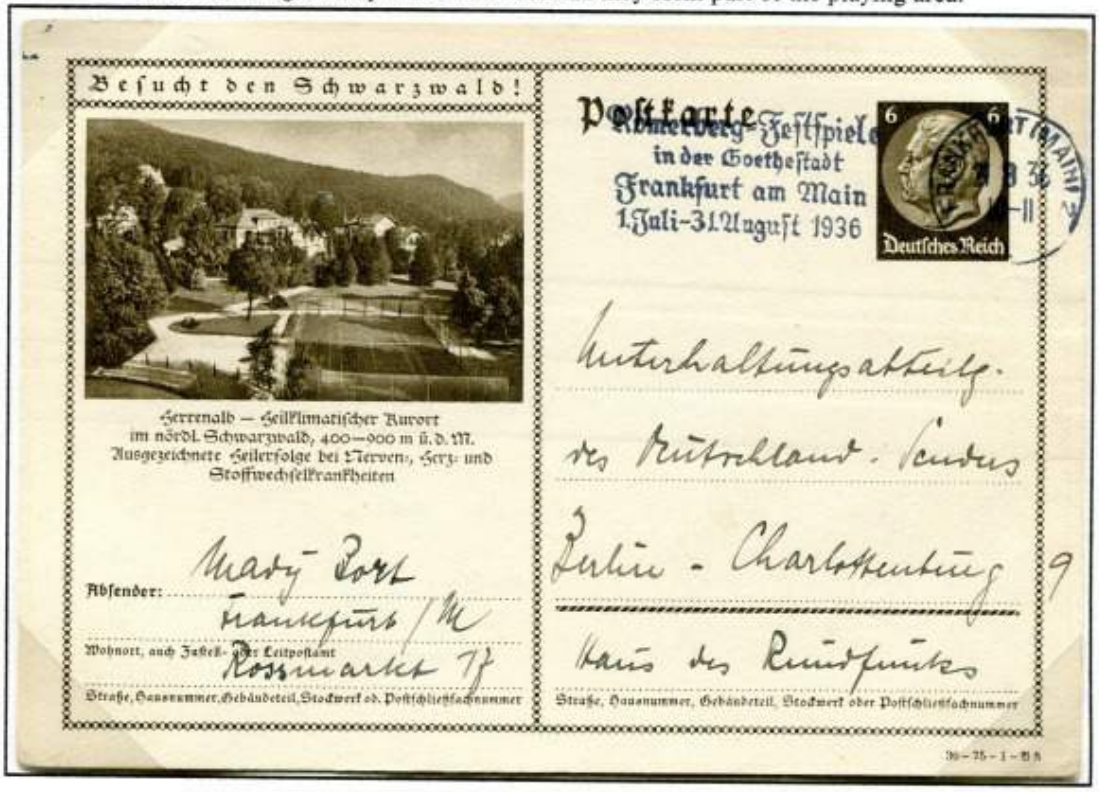


An essay by designer A. Restall for the G B stamp issued in 1977. Certificate of authenticity over.

The areas into which the service must first land.

The 'tram lines' for doubles play.

The lines are generally white in colour and they form part of the playing area.



2.2 Playing Area - Generally, fencing is needed unless the court is in an arena.

Club courts are usually surrounded by wire fencing to prevent balls from running away and to provide security, whilst allowing spectators to see the play. In arenas spectators sit on tiered seating around the court and fencing is not needed.

A fenced court.

In 1937 a series of 7.5c postal cards were issued for international use. Owing to a shortage of materials after the war in May 1940 many were overprinted with a 5 to provide 5c cards, being the national postage rate. Cards in used condition are far less common than unused cards.

Courts in arenas do not require fencing.

Wire mesh fencing

Playing Area - Stadiums have their advantages and drawbacks.

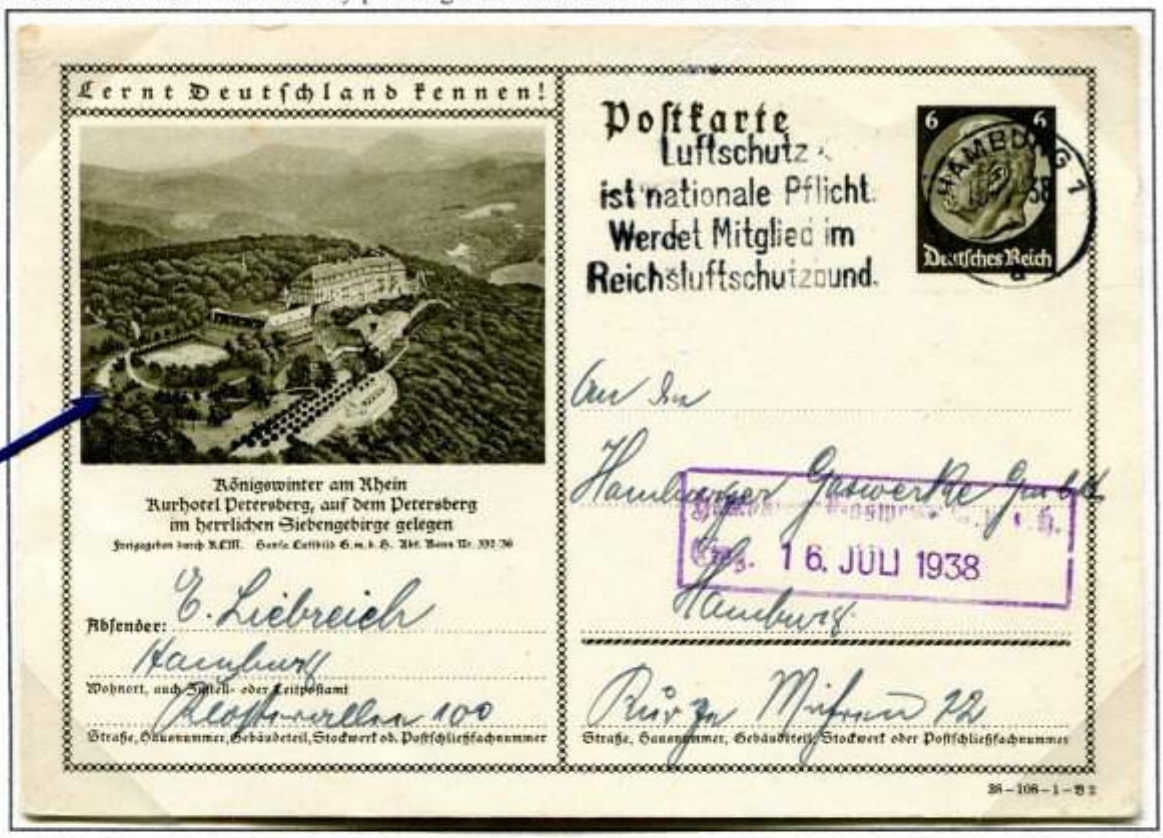
Stadiums allow more spectators but play can be effected by gusts of wind and, when partly roofed, sun and shadow can be a problem for players.

Nanba Stadium, Osaka.

A tennis stadium being used for boxing.

The National Tennis Centre, Melbourne has a retractable roof seating for and 15,000.

2.2 Playing Area - Outdoor courts benefit from some protection from wind.
The effects of wind can be minimised by planting wind breaks round the courts.



Courts are best sited where there is least exposure to wind, ideally not on mountain tops.

2.2 Playing Area - There needs to be adequate room between courts.

Courts that are not separately enclosed should be separated by at least 14 feet. Runbacks should be at least 7 yards from the base line and have a side-run of 4 yards.

Courts at the Montreal sports complex.

The courts at Sannami Ishikawa in 1988.

Courts positioned alongside each other at the Monte Carlo Tennis Club.

A machine postmark advertising the annual Monte Carlo Open 1988 on a stamp issue marking the second Games of Small European States.

The scene in 1930 at Middelkerke Sur-Mer where several courts share the same playing area.

Playing Area - Indoor courts can enjoy soft furnishings but do need a high roof.

Indoor courts generally have side string netting and end curtains.
The unobstructed height above the net should be at least 35 feet.

A typical indoor court with end curtains behind the run-back.

An outdoor court and an indoor court with its high roof.

2.3 Rackets - Early solid bats were replaced by kidney-shaped wooden rackets strung with sheep gut.

1583. Cross stringing introduced.

1870. Rackets went pear-shaped.

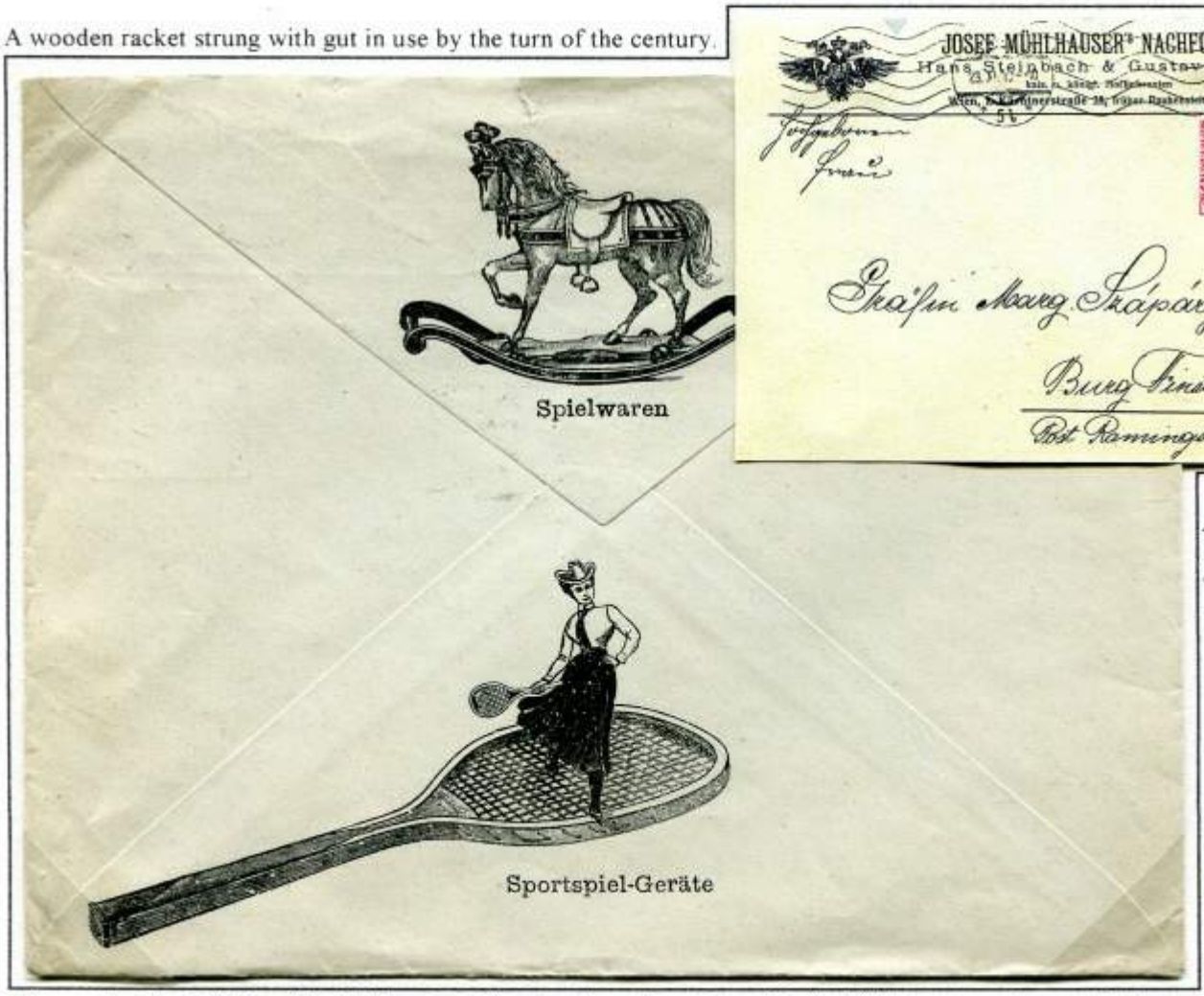
1900. Rackets evolved to a shape similar to that of today.

Strings of Gut

It took the guts from six to eight sheep to string a racket. It had a better 'feel' but not strong enough for the power game.

A standard racket in 1925

A wooden racket strung with gut in use by the turn of the century.



In use
1908 - 1910

Date stamped
23. XI. 10.

Messrs. Steinbach & Resch had their privately printed envelopes imprinted with the postage stamp which was set lower to accommodate a notice stating that they were the successors to the Joseph Mühlhauser's toys and sports equipment business.

2.3 Rackets - From 1900 the size and shape of rackets was determined by what was functional. 1900s. Wood was continued to be used by manufacturers of rackets from the turn of the century until the 1980s.

Rackets were generally made of beech or ash.

A typical wooden racket used in the 1930s.

The French post office giro service sold advertising space on its envelopes. This envelope is date stamped Paris I. IV. 38 and Bonneval the next day.

2.3 Rackets - There was little change in racket design over three decades post WW II.
1950s - 1980s. Manufacturers continued to use wood and gut.

The Dunlop wooden Maxply racket with its "non-split frame" was very popular in the 1950s and '60s.

Dunlop began making tennis rackets in Australia in 1937.

1963

1968

The postmark promoted the International Railroad Society Tennis Championships to be held in Szczecin.

1979

The Ali Trading Co. (Pvt) Ltd., Sialkot, continued to show a standard wooden racket in its meter mark in 1987.

2.3 Rackets - Gut and wood were eventually replaced by modern materials.

1900s. Wood was continued to be used by manufacturers of rackets from the turn of the century until the 1980s.

1980s. There began a technical revolution in design. Wooden rackets quickly became obsolete and were replaced by new lightweight, resilient materials that allowed greater control and gave more power with less vibration.

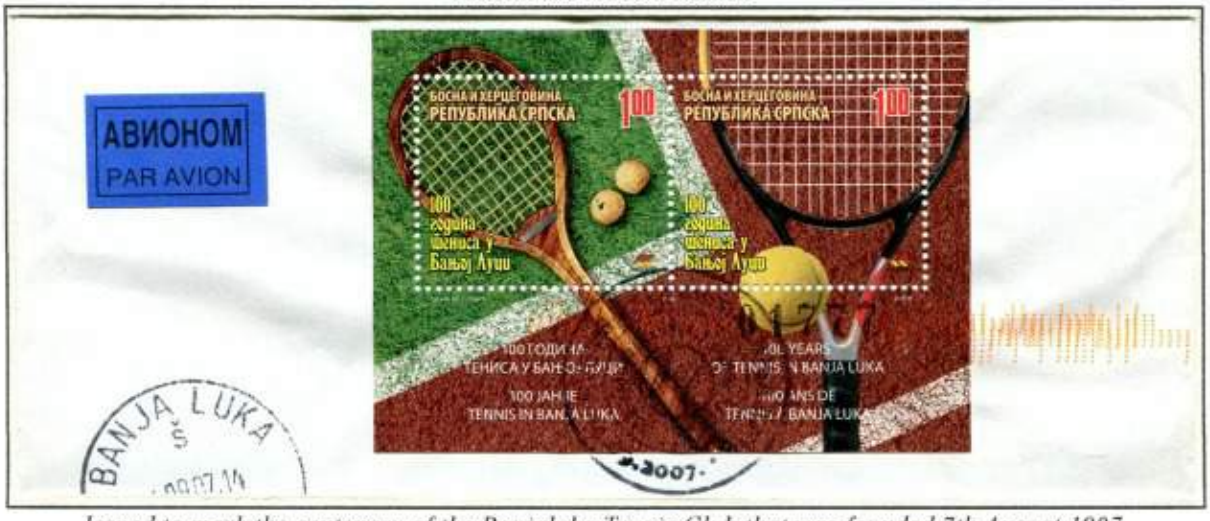
1981. Synthetic stringing became popular as it was cheaper, provided more power and could be used in all weathers.

The Dunlop Maxply wooden racket was used by more players than any other until the early 1980s.

This meter mark was used in the Dunlop's Brisbane office for about four years from 1959 but few have survived.

In 1982 Björn Borg attempted a come back using his wooden rackets but failed. Wooden rackets had been made obsolete by the new powerful synthetic rackets capable of booming cannonball aces.

Ancient and Modern Rackets



Issued to mark the centenary of the Banjaluka Tennis Club that was founded 7th August 1907.

Today, regulations govern the maximum size of rackets, length and frame and the length and breadth of the strung surface.

Synthetic Strings

More durable and less affected by rain

Carbon Fibre Composites Rackets

Stronger and provide greater power

Big Head Rackets

The 'sweet spot' hitting area is bigger

Balls – In the 16th-17th Centuries balls were made of sheep skin stuffed with wool or hair.
King Louis XI of France was largely responsible for standardising tennis balls as in 1480 he passed a law forbidding tennis balls to be made of anything but leather stuffed with soft wool.

Louis XI
(1423 - 1483)

From 1940 until about 1996, France issued new stamps with a small quantity without perforations to save production costs. This stamp was issued in 1945.

During his voyage of discovery in 1493-1496 to the Americas, Columbus saw natives playing with balls made with gum from a rubber tree. In 1876 seeds from Brazil were brought to London and used to grow plants that were then taken to Ceylon to be matured. Rubber plantations became established in the tropics, Malaya and East Africa.

Columbus makes landfall.

With a punched security hole.

In 1850 rubber from Brazil was used to make the first rubber balls.

Rubber trees thrived in humid climates.

Columbus meets the natives.

Original undisturbed gum.

The chemical symbol of rubber.
Vulcanisation of rubber allowed balls to bounce making lawn tennis possible.

2.4 Balls – White was the order of the day for 100 years.

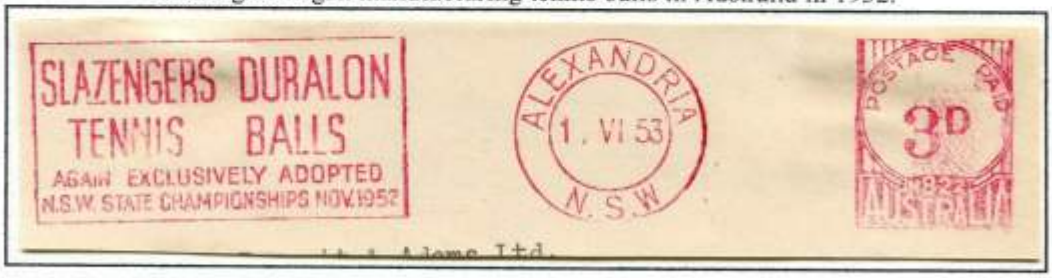
1876. Rules were adopted that provided for both weight and size of balls and stated that they should be hollow, made of india-rubber and, in fine weather, covered in a white cloth.

Tretorn, founded 1891
The Swedish company began to manufacture tennis balls in 1902.

Dunlop began its manufacture of tennis balls in France in the 1920s.

Slazengers patented waterproofing for tennis balls in 1887 in the UK
Their 'nylon-armoured brilliant white' tennis balls were introduced in 1954.

Slazengers began manufacturing tennis balls in Australia in 1932.



Regulations stipulated that balls must be white.

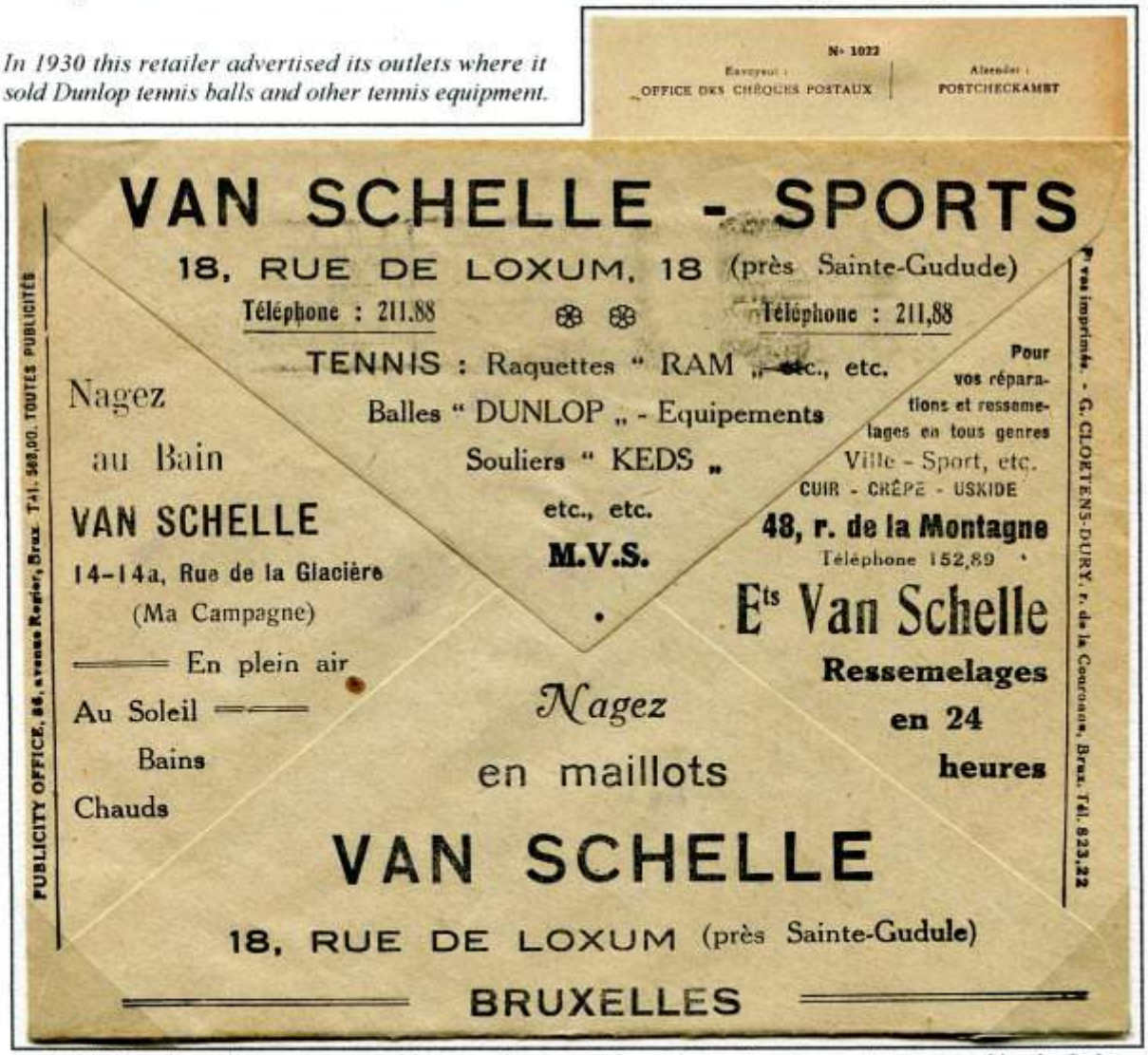
2.4 Balls - Slazenger and Dunlop have continued to maintain their market prominence.
The two companies merged in 1959.

In 1887 Slazenger took out a patent for waterproofing tennis balls.

Slazenger has provided the balls for the Wimbledon Championships in 1902.
They were made of rubber, covered with a wool cloth that was hand sewn, and no two were exactly alike.

Dunlop first manufactured tennis balls in 1920s in France and in 1925 began making them in England.

In 1930 this retailer advertised its outlets where it sold Dunlop tennis balls and other tennis equipment.



In the 1930s advertising space was sold on envelopes used by a cheque issuing service operated by the Belgian Post Office. This is one of five different adverts that refer to tennis that are to be found on such envelopes.

2.4 **Balls** - White eventually gave way to yellow.

1970s. Regulations required that balls must be white but by the 1970s yellow balls had become popular as they had better visibility.
1973. In 1973 the I. L. T. F. sanctioned the use of white or yellow balls.
1986. Once Wimbledon chose to use yellow balls they became the norm.

In 1973 the use of yellow balls was authorized.

First day postmark for the stamp issued Feb. 22nd, 1973 marking 80 years of organized tennis in Czechoslovakia.

Wimbledon kept to the traditional white balls until 1985 when in 1986 it finally went over to using yellow balls.

It was arranged for Wimbledon Museum to postmark stamped addressed covers and passed to Royal Mail for onward delivery.

Did Ivan Lendl have a problem seeing the ball?

Messrs Format printed stamps for several countries, including St Vincent. In 1989 it was taken over. The new owners then secretly produced contrived proofs and missing colours etc and sold them to dealers who unscrupulously sold them on to collectors without declaring they were not valid items from the printer's archives. Following a court case in 1992 the company went bust. The above stamp with the missing yellow ball is a contrived 'error'.

Today, there are extensive rules governing weight, diameter and bounce.