

Dear All

I am sure some of you must have followed the Wimbledon tennis tournament. It's one of the most prestigious tournaments in the world. I have been to Wimbledon (I used to play tennis in college) a few times and have learnt about the tournament from various people. Here are some learnings for your benefit:

1. You would have noticed the 100 year / centenary logo or discussion. Wimbledon is not 100 years old; the current location and Centre court is 100 years old, that's the centenary celebration. Wimbledon the tournament started in 1877. Wimbledon is the oldest and most prestigious tennis tournament in the world. There is a staff of 6000 people who make this happen every year. It was originally a tournament for amateurs, professionals started playing in the main draw in 1968.
2. The center court which is the main attraction at Wimbledon has a seating capacity of 14900. The tournament attracts close to 40,000 people every day over 14 days and have a British viewership of 10 million people, roughly 16 % of the British population. The British start playing tennis for the two weeks at their local tennis courts every year when Wimbledon comes along.
3. Tennis is a British invention, invented by Walter Clopton who called it, believe it or not .. "sphairistike", in Greek that means "the art of playing ball"
4. Wimbledon telecast has been on since 1937, a record in itself.
5. 250 ball boys and girls are selected from about 1000 applicants. They do this for free. They are selected from about 27 schools in and around Wimbledon. There are close to 54,250 tennis balls used in the tournament for the 14 days. They undergo a test and one of them is to stand still for 3 minutes.
6. The tennis balls are from Slazenger, for as many years one can think of. The balls were originally white, but when color television came in and the popularity grew, they switched to yellow balls in 1986 because it was easy to pick on television for the viewer. You can buy olde tennis balls, 3 for 2.5 pounds after the tournament.
7. The grass is maintained through the year and is at 8 mm height for the tournament.
8. Wimbledon has a pure white dress code, even the soles of the shoes need to be white. This year they made an exception for the Ukraine player to put the flag on her T shirt. The pure white code was first introduced for women because it wasn't proper for women to perspire and that to be seen through colored clothes!
9. Wimbledon is watched by a billion people globally.
10. Wimbledon is the only tennis tournament played on grass. If I am not wrong Australian open used to be played on grass as also the US open years ago, but now it's only Wimbledon.
11. Wimbledon has its own hawks, named Rufus and Pollux, whose sole job is to scare away the pigeons every morning. Rufus has 10,000 followers on twitter.
12. Strawberries and cream are a favorite at Wimbledon. Typically, about 30 tons of strawberry and 10,000 liters of fresh cream are consumed every year.
13. Charlotte Dod at 15 years and Becker at 17 years were the youngest to win Wimbledon.
14. Wimbledon is very finicky about sponsorship. Mark McCormack took the CEO of Rolex to watch Wimbledon and that's how the Rolex scoreboard came to be.

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