

BBC Learning English

Talk about English

Live webcast - Wimbledon

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About this script

Please note that this is not a word for word transcript of the programme as broadcast. In the recording process changes may have been made which will not be reflected here.

Jackie: Hello, you're listening to Talk About English. I'm Jackie Dalton.

Callum: I'm Callum Robertson.

Jackie: And we're broadcasting to you live from the Wimbledon tennis championships in London with our special guest, former British Champion Christine Truman. Lots coming up in the programme, including: the language of tennis – idioms and expressions, one of the world's top players on his experience of Learning English...

Callum: And the chance to win an mp3 player.

All: (talk about atmosphere at Wimbledon)

Jackie: We'll be talking about Wimbledon and tennis throughout this programme.. This week's competition is tennis-related – it's for an mp3 player. You'll have to answer these three questions, and get all of them correct:

- Christine:** Question 1 – What is lob?
Question 2 – What is a let?
Question 3 – What's the minimum number of games that need to be won for a man to win a match at Wimbledon?
- Callum:** Those questions should now be appearing on our webpage if you want to look again – you might have to refresh the page. Email your answers to talkaboutenglish@bbc.co.uk. The first correct answer wins an mp3 player.
- Jackie:** We're very lucky to have Christine Truman here today – Wimbledon semi-finalist aged just 16, and winner of the French and Italian championships, ranked in the world's top ten for six years and Wimbledon finalist in 1961. Do you still remember that moment, or is it a bit of a blur?
- Christine:** (responds)
- Jackie:** We've had a question in from Sarah in Canada who wants to know what is it that makes Wimbledon such a big tennis event? Why is it so special?
- All:** (discuss what makes Wimbledon special)
- Jackie:** Well, these are some of the things that make Wimbledon special. William has been having a wander around the courts talking to people who've come to watch the matches. What do they think?
- William:** (responds)

Interviews with Wimbledon visitors

Jackie: Here at Wimbledon we're of course surrounded by tennis stars. Well-established names, like Andre Agassi, Venus Williams, Martina Hingis.

I spoke to a couple of young tennis players Jack and Andrew who are hoping that they might be the Boris Beckers or Roger Federers of the future. They live in Switzerland and are taking tennis lessons. First we're going to hear from Jack. We'll look at some of the language he uses afterwards. As you listen to him, try to answer this question: Who is Jack's favourite tennis player?

Jack

Jackie: Did you get the answer to that question Callum?

Callum: Jack's favourite tennis player is Rafael Nadal.

Jackie: Indeed, do you have a favourite player?

All: (answer)

Jackie: So Jack talked about a slice, Callum, can you just recap on what that is?

Callum: (Explains - when you skim your tennis racquet under ball, so it spins etc.)

Jackie: Now Jack also has a question which he'd like to put to Christine.

Jack's question

How do they come back when they're losing 6-0 in a tennis match.?

Christine: (Answers).

Jackie: Now let's hear from Andrew, who's also a young tennis player. The question we'd like you to answer this time is: Did Andrew start playing tennis because his parents made him, or because he wanted to?

Andrew

Jackie: Andrew used some nice vocabulary there, just to recap: 'forehand', which is hitting the ball with the flat part of your hand facing forward – the opposite of back hand, which is when your arm crosses your body and the palm of your hand is facing backwards.

Jackie: top spin

Callum: It's when you hit the ball in a way that makes it spin forward very fast so it's harder for the opponent to hit.

Jackie: Andrew also said watching tennis helps him pick up some 'tactics'. Tactics – ways to help you beat your opponent, they might be little tricks, like putting a top spin or a slice on the ball.

All: (Discuss how watching other players is helpful, the importance of a positive attitude.)

Jackie: Well, anyway, good luck to Jack and Andrew and hopefully we'll see them on the courts of Wimbledon in a few years time, bringing glory to Switzerland or maybe England....which brings us to another matter that often comes up when the British talk about tennis. Why are there

so few outstanding British tennis players? Callum you've been talking to a tennis coach about this.

Callum: Yes, I spoke to Robby Sukhdaeo, he trains tennis players and is also planning to set up a new tennis centre in a park in London. He talks about problems with not enough people playing tennis because of bad facilities – facilities...

Jackie: For example, the court, the equipment.- the things you need to play.

Callum: Yes, so what does Robby think should be done to get better British players?

Robby

Jackie: So Robby thinks there should be tennis courts in parks and so on, so more people can learn to play, even if they don't have enough money to join the expensive clubs. We've had a message from Richard in the Dominican Republic: Tennis is one of those sports that I can't afford, however I like tennis.

All: (discuss reasons why there aren't many tennis players)

CHALK DUST - THE UMPIRE STRIKES BACK MUSIC

Jackie: Coming up next: a top player on learning English, but first it's time for some music, and inevitably it's a tennis song today. This is called Chalk Dust – the Umpire Strikes Back. The Umpire?

Callum: (explains 'umpire')

PART THREE

Jackie: You're listening to Talk About English. We're broadcasting live from the Wimbledon tennis championships. I'm Jackie Dalton, I'm joined by Callum Robertson and Christine Truman. In that song we just heard, there was an umpire's voice announcing tennis scores at the beginning, and what I've always wondered is why, in tennis, when we mean zero, do we say love?

Callum: (explains)

Jackie: We'll look at some more tennis related language in a moment, but first of all, we caught up with one of the favourites to win the men's singles at Wimbledon after Federer, and he's actually beaten Federer in the past, so you never know. He's 22, he's Croatian, his name is Mario Ancic and he's been learning English since he was very young. He spoke to our reporter Phil Williams. As you listen to him, answer this question: Does he think it's important for international tennis players to speak English or not?

Mario Ancic

Jackie: Well Ancic said English becomes his first language on the tour – it's the language he speaks most. So it is important to be able to speak English as an international player. He also said the language comes naturally to him. 'Comes naturally'?

Callum: He doesn't really have to try. Christine, did playing tennis come naturally to you?

Christine: (answers)

Jackie: One issue that's causing a bit of controversy around Wimbledon is pay and the difference between men and women's pay. Callum, can you explain what's going on?

All: (talk about prize money gap between men and women)

Jackie: On my way to get some strawberries and cream here at Wimbledon earlier on, I saw a couple of familiar characters. It seems Helen and John from our online soap opera *The Flatmates* are also down here...what are they up to?

Flatmates

John: Oh Helen! Fancy bumping into you at Wimbledon!

Helen: And I was having such a nice time too.

John: Bet you're here on one of those cheap afternoon tickets, aren't you?

Helen: Yeah, for a fiver they're such a bargain.

John: I wouldn't know. I've been here all day – in the Centre Court posh seats – not much change from fifty quid. Well, I won't keep you. I need to eat my horrendously expensive strawberries and cream before they get warm.

Helen: Oh, look out!

John: Arrghh! I'm covered in strawberries and cream!

Man: I'm so sorry, I wasn't looking where I was going.

Helen: Look on the bright side John. At least with all that red and white, you look

Callum: Well Helen didn't finish that sentence...you get to decide what she says next, you can do this by going to bbclearningenglish.com/flatmates.

Jackie: Where you'll also find more help with vocabulary on the language of tennis.

Jackie: Sports have lead to the birth of a lot of interesting words, and also some idioms that have entered everyday use. We're going to look at a couple of these now.

The ball's in your court,

To keep your eye on the ball

Play the game

To be a sport

A sportsman's bet

Jackie: When we talk about tennis, we tend to focus on the players, but there are all kinds of things going on behind the scenes, many of them very interesting. Now Callum, you spoke to a line judge.

Callum: Yes. The line judges are there to watch to see if balls land out of the court. They make important decisions which sometimes make the players very angry but they don't get paid for this – they are volunteers.

Veronica Mwendela is one of these volunteers. We caught up with her on the Centre Court to find out more about what's involved in being a line judge or lines' person. First we asked her why she wanted to do the job.

VERONICA

Why did I want to become a lines' person? Well simply because I love tennis and I used to play a lot of tennis when I was younger. I quickly realised that I was never

going to make the grade to play on Centre Court and so I thought the only way to get to Centre Court is to be a lines person and I have got on Centre Court

Callum: Veronica used to play tennis but she said that she was never going to make the grade. To make the grade. This expression means to be good enough to do something successfully. She realised that she wasn't good enough to be a top professional player but could still get to centre court by being a line judge.

Veronica has made it to centre court as a line judge, officiating at a quarter-final on Centre Court. So apart from having good eyesight and knowing the laws of the game what qualities do you think it takes to be a line umpire?

VERONICA

The qualities that you need as a line umpire, you need to hold your nerve, sometimes it can be intimidating especially when a player is unhappy with your call and you need to be confident about your call so you need to have a loud confident voice and if a player is unhappy you need to hold your nerve. So it's all about confidence really.

Callum: Being a line umpire is all about confidence Veronica says. You have to have a loud confident voice, be confident about your call and importantly, you also have to 'hold your nerve'. To hold your nerve – to be strong and not change your mind if a player disagrees with your call. It can be intimidating at times, she says, you can feel a lot of pressure – but you have to hold your nerve.

Walking out on to the centre court at Wimbledon is an experience not many of us have had or are likely to have – so what's it like? How does it feel?

VERONICA

You know when you walk out on to centre court and the people begin to clap and you're waiting for the players to come and that feeling you can never get used to it. Centre Court Wimbledon is really special and every time you walk out on court it feels like a special time, I don't think I'll ever tire of walking out on to Centre Court. You do feel nervous and you feel the excitement, you feel a little tension. It's only when the first ball is hit that you begin to sort of get into it and also when you make your first call, especially if it's a fault or out call because you've got your voice out there and then you get into the match.

Callum: Veronica describes it as a very special feeling, one she will never tire of, she'll never get bored of it – it's very special. There are nerves and excitement but once the first ball is hit and particularly once you've made your first call – when you shout that the ball was out or the service was a fault, that's when you begin to 'get into it', to feel involved and more relaxed.

Of course sometimes the players argue with the line judges when they think they have made a mistake. Has Veronica ever made a mistake? This is what she said when we asked her.

VERONICA

(Laughs) Of course I have, but I won't tell you which ones!

Jackie: Christine, before the end of the programme, can you tell us what it was like stepping out onto centre court at the Wimbledon finals?

Christine: (answers)

Jackie: Well, that's all for this week, it's time to get some more strawberries and cream. Thank you very much for joining us.