

# Stringing for Juniors ~ a Parents Guide

*Many parents have very little knowledge about the 'Black Art' of stringing and how to select the correct string and tension for their son or daughter. At Top Spin Tennis, we come across many junior rackets that have been inappropriately strung. Parents can also be accused of 'going for a durable' string to reduce the cost of stringing without appreciating the potential injury impact to their child. This information sheet is designed to give some clear advice.*

So, your son or daughter is starting to break strings, and you are not sure what your options are – we can help! Before we start, here's a quick introduction to the main types of string.

- Natural Gut – made from cow's intestines (and not cat's as many people think!). This is still the premium string – it is soft to play with and provides many properties man-made strings cannot reproduce. Used by many professional players. Expensive!
- Multifilament strings are made by twisting hundreds of tiny fibers together and coating them in polyurethane or similar – a great soft and stretchy string but with a low durability.
- Nylon strings are usually made from a solid core of Nylon and then wrapped with sheets of Nylon. A harder string than a multifilament, but still quite stretchy and can be reasonably durable with a thicker gauge.
- Polyester is the most recent material on the market. It is fast to manufacture and is being made with a never ending mixture of materials. It is very durable but not stretchy and therefore a very hard string. Nearly all professionals now use a Polyester string in one form or another.

OK, so what? Young, growing children put an enormous strain on their bodies every time they are training. Their muscles and bones are developing at different rates and most programs now include stretching, strengthening and conditioning in any players schedule to help with injury prevention. So too must your child use the correct string and tension to help prevent any injuries to the arm, wrist or shoulder.

The list of strings above are ordered in best to worst for juniors, but unfortunately, in worst to best for durability!

In an ideal world, everyone would use Natural Gut, but this is very expensive and can easily be damaged and hence the durability is low. Only if you have a big budget would we suggest you select natural gut! By far the best choice to start with is a multifilament – there are lots of these on the market (for example Wilson Sensation, Babolat Addiction or Xcel). These strings will give good power, are soft on the arm and if your child has only just started to break strings, should last a while.

## *Stringing for Juniors/Cont*

Once your child is breaking a multifilament string frequently, the next stage is to move up to a Nylon string or a Nylon-Multifilament hybrid. A Hybrid is where a different string is used in the mains (the up and down strings) to the cross strings. The vast majority of 'so-called' synthetic guts on the market are Nylon strings.

Typically, with the huge amount of top spin being taught these days, the main strings have to work the hardest and hence break first. With a hybrid, the stronger string tends to be put into the mains and the softer into the crosses to help reduce damaging vibration.

The progression continues as your child gets older, stronger, and breaks more strings! So to an all Nylon restring, then a hybrid with Polyester main and a softer cross string. Only should a young player ever go to a full Polyester restring when they are strong enough and really cannot keep a softer string in their racket for long.

At the first sign of any wrist, arm or shoulder injury, the player should revert to the softest string possible.

Remember, whilst the costs of regular restringing can soon start to add up, if your child gets injured, physiotherapy appointments will soon outweigh the cost of restrings let alone a period of time with no training or even worse long term injury.

## String Tension

The tension the string is put into the racket can also have a bearing on your child's well being. Generally speaking, the lower the tension, the more power is generated by the strings and the higher the tension the more control. It is likely that your child will be needing a bit more power so stringing looser is good – also, a looser string bed is far better on the arm as the vibration on ball impact will be absorbed more. We recommend stringing at the lower end of the racket's range in most instances. Many of today's professionals are now stringing lower – there is nothing 'macho' about stringing tight!

## Green to Yellow Ball Transition

If your son or daughter is breaking many strings and they are still on Green balls, there is generally less harm using a tougher string as the Green balls are pressure-less and can absorb more of the energy upon impact and thus compensate for harmful vibration.

**WARNING!** If your child is using a strong string at Green ball level, when they move up to full Yellow ball, you should revert back to a softer string to prevent injury. Many children have incurred injuries by keeping the same string set up when they move from Green to Yellow. If they are in a transition period and are playing with both colours, then it is a good idea to have one racket strung for Green and one for Yellow balls.

This has only been an introduction and there is much to learn, but hopefully you will be a little more informed when you discuss your child's stringing options with your stringer.