



# The Roving Eye

## FOOT FAULT: An Official's View

**In our latest installment of The Roving Eye, our expert tennis official, Tony Hernandez, gives us his take on the foot fault. This is what Tony has to say:**

Foot faults are usually the result of an errant toss where the server “chases” a poor toss, and steps on the line, usually producing a weaker than normal serve that is rarely advantageous to the server. The foot/shoe is touching the baseline or even inside the court when the racquet contacts the ball. In recreation tennis, something that some folks look for, and can see, but not a big deal.

In adult league and most high level competition, foot faults become an issue when the server is gaining an “unfair” advantage by constantly setting up or stepping onto the baseline or inside the court, AND making aces or service winners, almost every service game. If someone is regularly

foot faulting in a competition, and missing many 1st serves and/or double faulting, I doubt that their opponent would complain or ask for help to stop those foot faults. But, what if your opponent is hitting many aces and service winners, AND you can see that they are foot faulting? What is the rule? In the Code, SERVING – 24. Calling Foot Faults. The receiver or the receiver’s partner may call foot faults only after all reasonable efforts, such as warning the server and attempting to get an official to the court, have failed and the foot fault is so flagrant as to be clearly perceptible from the receiver’s side.

This rule is packed with iffy words, such as reasonable, warning, attempting,

perceptible.... What if there is no official available, or the player stops foot faulting when the official is at the court, but starts again when the official leaves? How can you remain polite on the changeover to “remind” the opponent that they should NOT be foot faulting, without it sounding like sour grapes, especially if you are down in that set? And, realistically, how much attention should you pay to the foot/line connection when you know there is a red hot serve coming, and you had better be preparing to make a brilliant return?

My best advice, lean on the best part of our game, old fashioned sportsmanship. I have

been in that position before, and told my opponent that he has a very strong serve, especially at our level, but if he continues foot faulting to increase this advantage, it is not respecting the game or our competition.

Players that already have a strong service game, usually don't need to foot fault to keep an advantage when they are serving. Hopefully, they will adjust their foot positioning, and accept their responsibility for being a good sport, someone that you would want to play with or against in the future.