

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE CHAMPIONSHIPS

By Simon Briggs
THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

The Wimbledon Championships may appear to run seamlessly and effortlessly, but there are thousands of people busying themselves behind the scenes. Often working from sunrise until well past sunset, they all help to make the Fortnight a success, and are usually the best around at what they do.

The Racket Stringer

"In the early part of the tournament we are on site from 6 or 7am to midnight. Then as the draw whittles down it gets calmer. On the first Monday last year we had 370 rackets to string in a day, which was a record. That figure is bigger every year.

At peak times, we have 12 stringers working, plus three or four runners to get the rackets to and from the courts. We are based at Aorangi Park, near the players' changing area in a cabin right by



the practice courts.

Our stringing team come from all over Europe. Most run a sports shop at home or a pro shop at the club.

A lot of what they use now are monofilament polyester and co-polymers. But it gets more demanding with the top players: they often want natural gut, and it has to be pre-stretched. People request rackets to be strung on the morning of the match because there can be a loss of tension overnight.

Rafael Nadal is quite straightforward in his requests – he's not one of the finicky ones – but he does get through more rackets than anyone else. At last year's Wimbledon he had 56 restrings."

Jeremy Holt

The Signage Team

"All the courts now have electronic scoreboards, but we still print out the yellow boards that go up on the Debenture Wall at the back of the Centre Court and those near to Gate 3, where you will find an order of play and all the draws laid out.

Our staff arrive on site around 7.30am. They make sure the day's order



of play is set up before the crowd is let in. Then at 9.30am, they go and have breakfast, ready for the 11.30am start, and finish around 9.30pm, when the last results come in.

We have six people working out of the buildings near Gate 3, and they're keeping an eye on the matches, ready to print the score out as soon as they finish. We aim to have the result board ready and snapped into place on the Debenture Wall within two minutes of the umpire calling 'Game, Set and Match'."

Chalky White



The Physio Team

“The ATP (men’s tour) and the WTA (women’s tour) each supply four physios to the tournament, then we have nine local physios to back them up. We get to know the players, their niggles and ways of dealing with them. Most of us turn our hands to sports massage too.

There are no breaks to our days so we look forward to each round as more players go out. The first Sunday, Monday and Tuesday are the busiest, with all hands on deck. Or when it’s raining. Then we become the thing to do.

Most of the work happens in the locker room, so you work with your own gender. And there are different systems for women and men. Just like going to the hairdresser, the women have appointments, whereas the men tend to turn up and wait. It’s first come, first serve. Except that, as in a casualty department, an acute injury tends to be seen more quickly.

We start to turn up at 9.30am. Then we have a meeting around 10, talking about any problems that have developed and trying to establish some continuity of care. We are there ‘til 9 or 10pm most nights, though it could be later if the roof is up. We see the players last, after they’ve spoken to the press and often done a drugs test too.

Andy Murray has his own guy. He wouldn’t even use the Wimbledon staff, they’re more for the lesser-known players. All but one of the top 10 men in the world have their own physio.”

Graham Anderson



The Line Judges

“We linespeople work in shifts through the day: 75 minutes on, 75 minutes off. If the match finishes, we stay on the court and wait for the next players to arrive, then switch when our time is up.

There are nine line judges on the show courts, and seven everywhere else. The hardest role is that of the service-line judge, who has to decide whether the serve was long or not.

The Association of British Tennis Officials awards grades to judges from L4 to L1, and L1S is the highest because the S stands for “service line”. The judges receive a grade from the Chair Umpire after each match, so we don’t like to get things wrong.

We do like Hawk-Eye, though, even if it does bring more pressure to the job. If a player doesn’t like your call, he or she can challenge, and either way it puts everyone’s mind at rest.”

Sue Titley



The Honorary Stewards

“There are 190 Honorary Stewards and we are all volunteers. We have a 24-hour involvement, of which a large part is looking after the crowds outside the gates. Until noon, by which time the day-tickets have been sold, only a third of us are actually inside the All England Club. After that about three quarters of the team are inside.

I meet anyone who wants to become an Honorary Steward and warn them that it’s not just about watching tennis for a fortnight. Yes, you do see some play, and we are all enthusiasts. But you have to be physically fit because we spend a lot of time on our feet in all sorts of weather, working with the Queue, the



ticket holders, the public, the security guards from G4S and the tube stations at Wimbledon and Southfields to keep them updated as to the state of the Queue. I arrive at 6am every day during The Championships, and probably leave around 9.30pm.

Inside the Grounds we assist the visitors with any questions they may have and work with the Service Stewards on the Show Courts. The most prominent Honorary Steward is probably David Spearing who looks after the players’ box. He comes over from Abu Dhabi every year and you can identify him by his trademark black hat.”

Andrew Gairdner

