

Researchers study tennis grunting effects

2 October 2010



Maria Sharapova of Russia serves against Kimiko Date Krumm of Japan during their women's singles first round match at the Pan Pacific Open tennis tournament in Tokyo on September 27, 2010. Those loud grunts some tennis players make when hitting the ball could actually have a negative effect on their opponents by distracting them and slowing their reaction time, scientists said Friday.

You've heard them at tennis matches - a loud, emphatic grunt with each player's stroke. A University of Hawai'i at Manoa researcher has studied the impact of these grunts and come up with some surprising findings.

Scott Sinnett, assistant psychology professor at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, has co-authored a study on the potential detrimental effect that noise has on shot perception during a [tennis](#) match.

Sinnett's work is published in the October 1 online issue of *Public Library of Science ONE*. He co-authored the study with Alan Kingstone, psychology professor at the University of British Columbia, to determine if it is reasonable to conclude that a tennis grunt interferes with an opponent's performance.

As part of the study, thirty-three undergraduate students from the University of British Columbia viewed videos of a tennis player hitting a ball to

either side of a tennis court; the shot either did or did not contain a brief sound that occurred at the same time as contact.

Participants were required to respond as quickly and accurately as possible, indicating the direction of the shot in each video clip on a keyboard. The extraneous sound resulted in significantly slower response times, and significantly more decision errors, confirming that both response time and accuracy are negatively affected.

"This is the first study to look at the issue of grunting in tennis. Our current work is also looking at how advanced and professional tennis players perform, to determine if they have developed any strategies to limit the negative effects of a grunting opponent," said Sinnett.

While these findings must still be validated on the tennis court, Sinnett and Kingstone noted that these consequences on faster tennis surfaces, such as the grass courts of Wimbledon or hard courts of the Australian and U.S. Open, are likely to be profound.

More information:

dx.plos.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0013148

Provided by University of Hawaii at Manoa

APA citation: Researchers study tennis grunting effects (2010, October 2) retrieved 2 December 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2010-10-tennis-grunting-effects.html>

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