



Section 1.05 FENCING AND WINDSCREENS

These entries are excerpts from TENNIS COURTS, published by the USTA

Fencing

Fencing is usually constructed 10 or 12 feet high, with the 10 foot height normally adequate, more pleasing in appearance, and less expensive. However, a number of balls which could pass over a 10 foot fence would be stopped by a 12 foot fence so where this is critical, the higher fence should be used. In rooftop construction, still higher fencing is often used. In all cases, the wire mesh should be attached to the inside of the posts to reduce the number of balls deflected back into the court.

There are several alternatives to a fully enclosed court. If fencing is not installed completely around a single court (or end courts), the standard 10 or 12 foot high fence should extend a minimum of 20 feet, but could extend as far as 30 feet down each sideline from the backstops.

Another option would be to complete the enclosure by continuing the fence line (which extends 20 to 30 feet from the backstops) with a three foot high fence along the otherwise open sides of the court. This will provide ball retention while allowing comfortable viewing for spectators over the low side fence.

In order to break up a long straight line of fencing behind a bank of courts (and make it aesthetically more pleasing), corners of the fence can be angled. Such corners typically have a 10 foot diagonal which cuts seven feet off each corner, or a 14 foot diagonal which cuts 10 feet off each corner. With the 10 foot diagonal, there is no need for an additional line post in the diagonal fence section. These angled corners also provide for the option of additional planting in the space where the corners have been eliminated.

Twenty foot (20') diagonals do not interfere with play and are more efficient in returning balls to the centre. Where courts are 12 feet apart or less, a short divider fence (at right angle to the backstop) should not project out more than five feet (5'), should be a minimum of four feet (4') in height and may be as high as the backstop.

Where courts are twenty-four feet (24') apart, a divider fence can project out ten feet (10'), may be a minimum of four feet (4') in height and may be as high as the backstop.

After several months of oxidizing, galvanized fencing should be painted or at least covered with background curtains to reduce glare. Vinyl-coated fencing eliminates both painting and glare and is aesthetically pleasing. Aluminum fencing, however, is so pliable that it can readily become deformed and unsightly and creates glare if unpainted.

Vinyl covered mesh and framework in green (or black, brown and other colours) is available at a



small additional cost and affords the advantages of easier maintenance with a more attractive appearance.

Installation costs vary and we would suggest you obtain several quotes, based upon common specifications prior to purchasing new fencing for your tennis club. If your local municipality is taking responsibility for the installation, we suggest you work closely with them to ensure the proper specifications are sought. You cannot expect the people making the purchase decision at the municipal level will have any knowledge of what is best for a tennis facility.

Background Curtains (Windscreens)

Important to the game of tennis is a uniform background providing good contrast with the rapidly moving ball. While plantings behind the backstop can help, experience has shown the advantage of background curtains (windscreens). These can also help control but will not stop the wind. Windscreens may also be desirable along the side fencing. However, due consideration should be given to the need to viewing by casual spectators.

Windscreens provide vital colour and visual contrast, which is necessary for play as well as to blend into surroundings. It is truly an important playing background. The darker the background, the better the ball definition.

Additionally, windscreens reduce the reflection of the sun's glare off chain link fencing and posts while screening out annoying distractions such as a passerby, parking lots, swimming pools and highways. They also help provide a shield for the player from the wind.

In colder climates where outdoor courts are not used during the winter months, background curtains should be removed to avoid damaging the fencing and to prolong the life of the curtains.

Selecting the Right Type of Windscreen

A. Background for ball visibility

The more background provided on the fence, the better. Therefore, a 9' open mesh windscreen is the most desirable minimum height for the average fence for ball visibility.

B. Wind Factor

All windscreens create wind resistance, some less than others. Careful consideration must be given to the structure of the fencing. If it is weak, an open mesh should be used. If it is strong, a more closed mesh could be used. Open mesh windscreens allow more wind to pass through than closed mesh. Therefore, the open mesh should be used in almost all circumstances.



For windscreens 9' and over, it is recommended that they have air vents a minimum of 10' on centre, and a grommetted centre reinforced tape or seam so the windscreen can be secured at midpoint.

C. Courts With Outside Distractions

The easy answer is to use a closed mesh windscreen; however, if a fence is not well supported or if strong winds are possible, this alternative is not suggested.

D. Weak Fences

In this case, the most desirable option is no windscreen at all. If, however, windscreens are desired, consideration should be given to a 6' open mesh windscreen. This would not accomplish all of the windscreen objectives, but certainly would help to alleviate some of the wind problem.

When designing a fence that will have windscreens fastened to it, it is wise to consider decreasing the space between fence posts or increasing the diameter of the posts to compensate for the added wind load.

E. Materials and Fabrication

The two materials most commonly used for windscreens are vinyl coated polyester and polypropylene. Bear in mind that there are many different grades of each type of material. Buyers should inquire further concerning the fabricator's experience with a particular material and how long it has been in use as a windscreen.

F. Measurements

Manufacturers will make windscreens in about any length, but for ease of installation, it is recommended they do not exceed 60' in length. Standard heights are 6' and 9'.

The actual measurements of chain link fences are not always the same as the plans. To establish the length, it is necessary to physically measure the fence and determine the actual length from tension bar to tension bar.

G. Fastening Windscreens to Fences

It is important that all grommets be used when fastening to the fence. This distributes the strain evenly. If some grommets are not used, the remaining ones will have undue stress placed on them, and they could pull out of the hems. Also, wind whip can result if all grommets are not used. This can destroy the windscreen. Installations using all grommets



also look better and have a more "finished" appearance.

If wind is a serious problem at your site, then we would suggest using some form of fastener system which will tear away under stress. While replacing a few fasteners every day may become tiresome, it is a lot less painful than having new windscreens destroyed in a strong wind because the fastening system was stronger than the windscreen.