

Innovative iPhone Applications for Tennis Players Who Seek to Advance Their Games

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If you've spent any amount of time browsing the iPhone App Store, it doesn't take long to realize that for any given category – especially sports such as tennis - there are dozens of related applications, all with varying degrees of usefulness. While sifting through the many choices, serious players may be skeptical that applications actually exist that can genuinely help them better understand their games.

Such players may want to track a history of their matches, study results (perhaps see how they have fared against a particular player, etc.), and identify trends, streaks, and other indicators. Through statistics that reveal whether they have been able to close out matches (after initially being ahead), or successfully win tie-breaks, or escape with victory (after initially struggling), players

can zero in on their strengths and weaknesses.

Having this data available can impact a player's motivation and confidence, and equip him or her with the direction to take for corrective action and for developing strategies.

Interestingly, few applications out there furnish these core capabilities. The offerings tend to lack basic tracking of match results or at the other end of the spectrum (and price range) may be oriented toward capturing every last stroke made in a match. One application, My Tennis Buddy, created by Opus Mobile Technologies, seems to have gotten it right.

Through interviews with tennis professionals (and via having a life-long advanced player as one of the application designers), the company has homed in on the functions that serious players truly find useful. Customer feedback from players who have already discovered My Tennis Buddy consistently echoes this.

The company's love and obsession with the game is further evident in their follow-on product, My Bullet Serve. This is a completely unique application and prime example of

the innovation and creativity the iPhone has fostered. Amazingly, the application actually allows players to measure and track their serve speeds – functionality that was previously only available via a radar gun.

In this article, we take a look inside of My Tennis Buddy and My Bullet Serve, and highlight the features that allow iPhone-owning tennis players to advance their games.

My Tennis Buddy

My Tennis Buddy (MTB), the flagship application from Opus Mobile Technologies, is a powerful tool for tracking players and matches, and analyzing match results. It enables you to keep a history of your matches and to selectively view: a list of all of your matches, head-to-head matches against a given opponent, or summarized and detailed statistics of match results.

Getting started with MTB is easy. From the primary screen that holds a list of all matches (shown in Figure 1), you begin by either adding a new match, or by pressing the Player tab bar icon to access/input player information. If you decide to initially go directly into the entry of new matches,

you can also easily add player information within that context as well.

Information that can be entered for players includes: name, gender, ranking, and stroke types. Also, a category of “Favorite” or “Opponent” can be specified, making selection of that player quicker when choosing players for future matches, viewing head-to-head results, or viewing statistics.



Figure 1: MTB’s main screen holds a list of all matches.

Matches

When entering matches, the thoroughness of the information captured by the application is impressive. Items that can be entered are: match type (single or double), the players, date, type of match (friendly, practice, tournament, or league), event, location, and scoring rules. These last two items are excellent examples of the flexibility offered by MTB.

Details that can be saved for each location include: name, address, court type (indoor or outdoor), surface type (hard, clay, grass, or synthetic), and access type (public or private).

Scoring rules can be customized as follows: number of sets (1, 3, or 5), number of games (3 – 10), match tie-breaker on/off (if on, super tie break replaces the last set), and if tie-breaker is set off, a final set tie-breaker setting of on/off can be specified.

Once matches have been entered, the details can be readily viewed or changed at any later date, by simply selecting the match from the primary match list screen. Doing so will take you to the match information screen from which you can edit the detailed

information, delete the match, or export the match data. By choosing the Export option, you can have a report of match results in CSV file format automatically sent via email. This is an elegant touch, as the email recipients you specify can instantly view the results or import them into other applications such as Excel.

Players

The master list of all players, broken out by “Favorites” and “Opponents,” is displayed whenever you press the Player tab bar icon. Tapping the disclosure button adjacent to a player’s name, allows you to edit all the information for that player. Or, you can tap on the player name to select the player and you’ll be greeted with a screen from which you can select all matches for the player, or specify an opponent for whom you would like to see a “Head-to-Head Summary” of match results and match list. These can also be exported and emailed – perhaps to an opponent or coach.

Tracking matches and players and having the ability to store and share this information is probably worth MTB’s \$3.99 price tag on that basis alone, but the most outstanding benefit of the

application can be found in the statistics that it mines from your match results. These can assist you in truly knowing and understanding the way you play the game of tennis. Subtle positive or negative tendencies and other game outcome-influencing elements that may have otherwise not been noticed or considered can be uncovered by the analysis of long-term match data.

Viewing statistics is one of the other options available to you once you have selected a given player. Match statistics for the player can be viewed in summary or detailed form.

Statistics

The Summarized Statistics screen, shown in Figure 2, lists wins/losses and winning percentage for all matches, singles, and doubles. It also brings to your attention any current winning streak, and a quick view (neatly indicated via green and red tennis ball icons) of how you fared in your last five matches. Customers have enthusiastically mentioned that the streak feature provides extra incentive to keep streaks going as they move into new matches.

Tie-Breaks won/lost and success rate, as well as Bagels served (6-0)

and eaten (0-6) are also shown. These are compelling numbers that may either reinforce that your hard work is paying off or incite a sobering call to action. And while these are significant, it's MTB's Detailed Statistics section that will give you the most valuable insights into exactly what's happening in your game.



Figure 2: MTB's Summary Statistics for a given player provide an excellent snapshot of match results.

The Detailed Statistics screen, shown in Figure 3, brings to light a player's "Comeback Power" and

“Finishing Power.” These two indicators are derived from a combination of win/loss results within a variety of the match scenarios listed in the bottom portion of the screen.



Figure 3: MTB’s Detailed Statistics illuminate a player’s ability to comeback after initially being down and the ability to finish off matches.

The list lets you clearly see how many times you’ve won or lost after either starting strong or struggling from the onset of the match. In the case of positive starts, you’ll see wins/losses (and percentages) after winning the

first set (or the first two sets in the case of five set matches). For cases where you’ve stumbled out of the gate, you’ll see these numbers for when you’ve lost the first set (or the first two sets in the case of five set matches).

Also listed are the results for those times where the match was even (one set each for three set matches or two sets each for five set matches), or where you went down in flames in straight sets or where you dominated and were victorious in straight sets.

A glance at these wins/losses is telling. You may have always had a feeling that you tend to win after winning the first set and that when losing a set at first you’re able to sometimes pull out the match, but you may be surprised at the actual totals that have accumulated over time. Your perception may have been clouded by recent match results or particularly colorful matches of old – those that tend to get your inner critic (or inner champion) chattering away while overshadowing the hard facts.

And you won’t have to try to piece together all the results from all the columns as you attempt to make an assessment of your ability to snatch victory from the

brink of disaster or your ability finish off matches when leading. The “Comeback Power” and “Finishing Power” percentages at the top of the screen do this for you, providing a statistically proven verdict of where your strengths or weaknesses currently fall.

MTB: Knowledge is Power

Having this knowledge may get you thinking about why tend to fall into one category or another, and as a result, technical adjustments, drills to hone key shots, or even sports psychology exercises to improve patience, focus, etc., may become immediately apparent as actions you need to take for improvement.

Similarly, if your power percentages are already high for coming back or finishing off matches, you’ll have that much more confidence when those situations present themselves in the heat of battle.

Clearly, with MTB, Opus Mobile Technologies has put together a set of powerful functions for tracking matches, players, and statistical results. It’s one of the rare applications that should be

genuinely beneficial to serious tennis players.

Beyond these capabilities that can impact many aspects of your game, the company has also delivered a specialized application that focuses solely on serving – specifically the speed of serving.

For more information, visit <http://www.opusmt.com/mtb>

My Bullet Serve

If you've ever wondered what your serve speed is, but haven't been in an environment where a radar gun was at your disposal (which is probably the case for most of us), a solution for taking this measurement is now as close to your iPhone. Opus Mobile Technologies' most recent application, My Bullet Serve (MBS), turns your iPhone into a powerful tool for measuring serve speed.

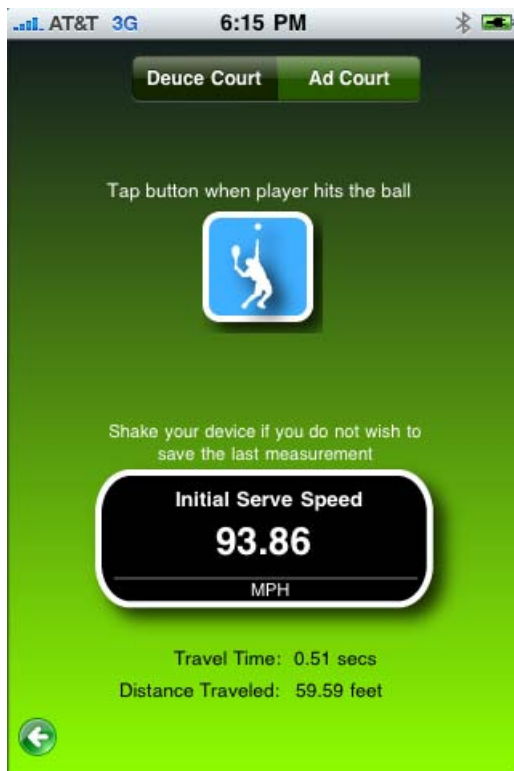


Figure 4: Measuring serve speeds with MBS starts by tapping on this screen when the player hits the ball.

Getting started with MBS is quite simple. Have a friend or coach assist you by running MBS on your iPhone while you make a serve. Your assistant first selects your starting location (deuce court, or ad court) from the MBS serve screen (shown in Figure 4), and then taps the serve button when you initially hit the ball, and again when the ball lands on the ground. MBS will then prompt for the outcome of the serve (In, Net, or Out). If the "In," button is tapped, a graphical representation of the court with a moving scale of feet and inches is displayed. From this screen, the approximate bounce location in the service box can be specified.

That's all there is to it. Using these data points, MBS calculates the travel time and the distance traveled, and then applies a sophisticated algorithm that also takes into account the player's height and the resistance of the air on the tennis ball. The resultant serve speed is then displayed. A settings option allows you to specify if speeds are to be shown in MPH or KM/H.

If the serve speed measurement just taken, happens to be among your top 10 serves, MBS will alert

you and store the measurement. The MBS database tracks your top 10 serve speed measurements giving you a powerful frame of reference as you progress toward faster serves.



Figure 5: MBS stores your top 10 serves in its database.

You can view this list (as shown in Figure 5) at any time and this may give you a newfound incentive and rejuvenate your practice as you attempt to best your own top 10 serves. And, you can gain further motivation by comparing your serve speeds against those from other players. MBS allows you to measure and store serve speeds for multiple players and view a ranking list of these players

based on their fastest serves.

Certainly, a faster serve speed can be a key ingredient in firing aces. And the importance of a strong serve in general can't be overstated. This shot, that sets the opening tone of the match, and sustains you throughout pivotal moments of momentum, can be all the more effective as speed is increased.

Getting a calibration of where your serve speed is today and keeping a record of your speed measurements is an excellent way to start making progress toward a faster serve. Priced at only \$1.99, My Bullet Serve may be just the tool you need to accomplish that.

MTB and MBS: Parting Shots

As an iPhone user and ardent fan/player of the game of tennis, you'll naturally spend time paging through the listings of tennis-oriented applications up on the App Store. If you're a serious player looking to advance your game, don't overlook these gems from Opus Mobile Technologies.

For more information, visit <http://www.opusmt.com/mbs>