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The Cover

In case you have ever wondered how fast a tennis ball can go, the answer is well over 100 km/hour—and when a speeding ball smacks into a player's eye, the result can be disastrous.

No one seems to be keeping score, but two New York physicians point out on p 2723 of this issue that the eye injuries can be serious enough to ruin anybody's summer. Seven of the ten cases they describe required retinal surgery, laser photocoagulation, or both. Naturally, most of the cases where ball meets eye end much more happily because a healthy retina is tough enough to adhere even during a fairly strong jolt.

The speed measurements cited in the article refer to balls traveling over the net. The obvious conclusion is that the forecourt is a more dangerous place than the backcourt, especially for the relatively inexperienced player who is rushing the net. One of the ten patients was not even playing; she was hit while watching the game. Seelenfreund and Freilich also bring up the possibility of using some kind of protective device while playing tennis, especially for persons with a history of eye problems. (Photograph by Joe Fletcher)—JAAN KANGILASKI

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