



Wimbledon's setting is an ivy-covered stadium with ivy-covered traditions.

# THE WHIMS OF WIMBLEDON

Even the rigid rules of the world's most snobbish tennis tournament can't repress players with penchants for such things as—gorgeous golden panties

By BILL SURFACE



An edge of Karol Fageros' golden panties is visible beneath white ones Wimbledon decreed she must wear.

IN A WORLD that is increasingly familiar with fast-moving change, one of Great Britain's hallowed traditions continues supreme—the snob appeal of a very special tennis tournament currently being played in the London suburb of Wimbledon.

Officially named the All-England Tennis Championships, Wimbledon is governed by rules so rigid that Gertrude "Gussie" Moran (of lace-panty fame) calls the 95-year-old tournament "czaristic and a blow to democracy."

Players' uniforms have been checked for proper starch, and newspapers have been advised to capitalize the "T" in The Wimbledon Championships. Even today, the 500 invited tennis players are chauffeured in Rolls-Royces during the tournament to insure dignity.

British society, from Queen Elizabeth down, finds attendance a must. Places near the royal area in the 17,000-seat ivy-covered concrete stadium are immeasurably precious. Box-seat tickets are included in wills, and prices are listed on the London Stock Exchange.

But the pomp of Wimbledon's annual two weeks of tennis is always enlivened by the wild capers of devil-may-care players. As historians note, the first tournaments at Wimbledon's present arena were "defaced by scandals." An American, John Hennessey, was threatened with expulsion for wearing "shocking striped pants" in-

stead of the standard white ones. Randolph Lycett, an Australian star who did not like the tea stands, planted a pint of gin on the side lines and grabbed snorts between sets.

Jack Kramer, a Wimbledon champion, says: "There are two groups that make Wimbledon such a good side show—the headline hunters and those hit by stage fright. Tennis players aren't used to such crowds, let alone the king or queen out there inspecting them.

"Just as we began playing in the 1947 finals, my opponent and I were told that King George was coming out to see us and to stop the instant we heard the signal. I was so electrified that I couldn't have played worse if I was handcuffed. But it didn't keep me from winning; my opponent was scared, too."

ONE OF THE most embarrassed players in Wimbledon's history was Nicola Pietrangeli. In 1960, Nicola became so excited after upsetting Barry Mackay of the United States (making him the first Italian to reach Wimbledon's finals) that he threw his racket high in the air, shook Mackay's hand, and as he pivoted toward the audience, his racket fell right on his head!

Wimbledon's most recent problems have been good-looking girls and the revolution in tennis clothing. That fad began in 1949 when Gussie Moran—19, shapely, and courting a movie career—appeared in a tight tee shirt and white lace panties under a short ballerina skirt. When an entry clerk questioned her lace, she said: "People

here see your underwear for two weeks, so you might as well have them see something with lace on it. Besides, it helps my tennis."

In Wimbledon's bylaws, there was no restriction against lace panties, and Gussie became an overnight celebrity. The fans enjoyed it, but it was understood that Queen Elizabeth (now the Queen Mother) would not attend during the "panty scandal." Gussie wore plain panties during the Queen's attendance. And she lost.

In 1958, Karol Fageros, a tall blonde from Miami, entered Wimbledon as the self-styled "Golden Goddess of Tennis." A better model than player, she wore a tight knit jersey and gold-lamé panties trimmed in black lace.

The panties were promptly banned. But there was no way to stop rumors that Karol, playing in white-lace panties, would do a strip tease in retaliation. Karol didn't, but she shocked some tennis people much more: she won a match. Her opponent, Silvana Lazzarino, blamed the loss on the fuss created by photographers taking pictures of the anticipated "show."

Last year, after two female players tried to outdo Karol's costume by wearing leopard skins and mink trimmings, Wimbledon finally announced that only plain white uniforms would be allowed. But the whims of Wimbledon probably will never cease. Gardner Mulloy, a star of the 1940s, had his jacket monogrammed: "If You Can't Beat Me, You Need Lessons." And an American girl wore plain white panties—with a Confederate flag sewed on the seat.

## COVER

Jack Zehrt snapped a young tennis player at the high point of elation after she delivered a smashing forehand drive. For a look at the wacky world of tournament tennis, see the Wimbledon story above.

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