

TENNIS SHOE ANATOMY

With tennis shoe manufacturers blitzing the public with a dizzying array of new technologies and technical terms that can - in some cases - serve more to confuse rather than serve, we're happy to provide the following "cliff notes" for shoe anatomy 101. Ever wondered what a "shank" is or where a "vamp" is located? Get educated and become a more discriminating customer by understanding the following physical components of a tennis shoe.

Insole/Sockliner

The synonymous sockliner/insole provides cushioning and can consist of a variety of materials, usually an EVA or PU sheet. It is found directly under the foot and can vary in thickness from the heel to the toe. In more expensive shoes, sockliners are generally removable for washing.

- **BOARD LASTING:** A construction technique in which upper material is drawn around the bottom of the foot form and attached to a cellulose or non-woven board found in many less-expensive shoes. It enhances stability as there is a more firm platform due to the board.
- **SLIP LASTING:** The opposite of board lasting, this method is without the use of a board for more flexibility and lighter weight.
- **LAST:** Designed after the shape of the foot, the form is usually made of plastic or Polyester material. The upper is pulled over this area to give the shoe its overall shape. Lasting refers to the assembling of a shoe. There are three shapes to the last - curved, semi-curved, and straight (for over-pronators).
- **CURVED:** A last is more angled from heel to toe, giving a more pigeon-toe look. Ideal for the supinated foot.

Upper

The area that wraps over the foot, the upper can be made of either leather or a high-quality synthetic material, and can be combined with mesh (to reduce weight). Here you'll find support and breathability. The upper is broken into several sections.

- **COLLAR LININGS:** Here, foam is used to add comfort around the ankle as well as the tongue.
- **HEEL RAKE:** The curved shape of the back of the heel. The more curved, the less slippage and better fit.
- **EYESTAY:** Support area for and around the eyelets.
- **EYELETS:** Shoe strings weave through circles that are either punched, metal or Ghillie Loops (a woven polyester fabric). The top eyelet is considered the most important since it is the one that players need to hold and lock their laces intact without coming undone.
- **TONGUE:** A traditional loose tongue has a lace loop attached to keep the tongue from moving while in motion.
- **ACHILLES NOTCH:** Found in the back of the shoe collar, this area protects the achilles tendon and prevents irritation.
- **VAMP:** Part of the toe box area, it's where the upper bends. This area is flexible, breathable and often perforated, but not always to prevent clay from getting into the shoe.
- **TOE CAP:** The top piece above the toe guard for additional toe drag and/or medial (inside part of the shoe) foot drag protection. With some models, leather is used to retain a classic appearance.
- **TOE GUARD:** Where manufacturers add extra rubber material to the front of a shoe for toe drag protection. It often wraps from the outside to the upper.
- **HEEL COUNTER:** Usually a plastic or composite material that stiffens and reinforces the heel area. A stiffened heel improves fit and stability.

