



# Tie Breaker: Jimmy Van Alen and Tennis in the 20th Century

*Eleanor Dwight*

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Tie Breaker tells the history of tennis in the 20th century from its grass court, amateur play beginnings to the celebrity, money-driven, and world-televised, professional sport it is today. The story begins with the first national championships at Newport's Casino, the cradle of American tennis and continues to the mid-century when the sport became popular and less exclusive, and concludes by talking about tennis today with its huge money prizes, and appeal as a spectator sport. This beautifully illustrated book also centers on Jimmy Van Alen, an energetic personality, nicknamed the Newport Bolshevik, for both his conservative and revolutionary opinions. A lifelong lover of tennis, Jimmy's goal was to lead tennis into the next century, reforming its traditional and often confusing scoring rules. His solution was VASSS (Van Alen Simplified Scoring System), a scoring system which was easily understood and included the tiebreaker. By 1970, the tiebreaker was accepted and used at the U.S. Open and other major tournaments, and it enabled the showing of matches on TV, which are hugely popular today. In addition to telling how Jimmy saved the Casino in the early 1950's and founded the International Tennis Hall of Fame, Tie Breaker deals with many important tennis personalities of the past, including: Bobby Riggs, Bud Collins, Gardner Mulloy, Rod Laver, and Pancho Gonzales.

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