

## Poor Sports, Good Spectacle? A Case Study of an Engaging Wimbledon YouTube Drama

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### ABSTRACT

In the 2021 Wimbledon tennis tournament in the third round of the women's singles, there was a significant dispute between Jelena Ostapenko and Alja Tomljanovic. Several YouTube clips were posted within a day, all capturing in varying ways an intense dispute revolving around a claim of injury and the need for a medical time out at 4-0 in the deciding set. One clip in particular gained many more views than others, and this is used for a qualitative case study of an engaging sporting dispute. Through close attention to detail, insights are realized about the practical interpretive resources used to make judgements about 'good' and 'bad' sports practice. The fine detail of what is visibly and audibly available is key, suggesting that study of the interaction order is indispensable to sociological approaches to sport as engaging spectacle.

**Keywords:** YouTube, rules, sports, interaction, drama

### INTRODUCTION

What gains our attention when choosing which online sports highlights to watch? How we begin searching for material is obviously important. For example, if a tennis fan wanted to follow progress in any of the Grand Slam tournaments and simply googled the name of the current tournament—Australian Open, French Open, Wimbledon, US Open—they would find the official tournament website high on the list of google results. Opening any of these and clicking on 'video' will almost universally result in a list of highlights of between two to four minutes duration. Given this relatively limited length, the highlights will be of key points in a match, usually including the final point as this shows who won the match (often overlaid with the final score). However, if a tennis fan scrolls further down in the results of a google search, alongside such official and traditional fare they will find much more varied material, including disputes with umpires and between players, arguments and interaction with spectators, racquet smashing and tantrums, amusing incidents, and so on. This paper is a case study of the first category, that is, a heated dispute between two players, which also included dispute with the umpire.

My familiarity with the case material began much as described above. In July 2021 after watching several of the match highlights on the official Wimbledon YouTube channel, I saw an enticing clip titled 'Full Ostapenko-Tomljanovic drama, from build-up to press conference'. Whereas this started with some of the match, it was soon obvious that its 'selling point' was not the tennis itself. The key moment in the 'drama' occurred when Tomljanovic was ahead 4-0 in the deciding set, at which point Ostapenko moved to the courtside, sat down, and asked for a medical time out. She claimed an acute abdominal injury, and whereas such halts to play, whether due to injury or 'toilet breaks' (Reuters, 2021) are not unusual, there are rules supposedly governing these events. It soon became

apparent that Tomljanovic felt these rules were not being correctly followed, and despite her questioning of the match officials, Ostapenko was allowed to leave court for treatment by a physiotherapist. After this delay, play resumed with Ostapenko taking the next two games. Thereafter, Tomljanovic regained her dominance triumphing 6-2 in the third set, with most of the crowd highly appreciative of this result. However, this was not the end to the drama, as upon shaking hands at the net a highly charged verbal spat developed. The characteristics of this led one match commentator to comment, 'I do hope the two of them don't come face-to-face in the locker-room any time soon'. We do not see the players in the locker-room, instead the clip ends with about four minutes of the post-match interviews. The players are interviewed separately, seeming more composed, nonetheless, both account for the action by strongly arguing it was their opponent who acted disgracefully. By the time the video ends no compromise is reached.

Following this event, I used it as discussion material in a course on everyday life, making a copy of the clip and following subsequent media reportage and online commentary. In the process I learnt two important things. First, after three weeks this clip amassed over 1.1 million views, making it at that moment the most-viewed YouTube of the tournament (Tennis Forum, 2021). Second, not long after this highpoint in viewership, the video was removed due to copyright issues—an increasingly common constraint facing online creators (Bondy Valdovinos Kaye and Gray, 2021). These days, just over one million views may not qualify a video clip as 'viral', nevertheless, it clearly was a highly engaging YouTube clip. It was successful at gaining high viewership of a sports match, without solely focusing on the tennis itself. In my view, the question of how this was achieved invites thinking about the dynamics of attention as a sociological phenomenon. Given that the clip is titled as a 'drama', what actually makes it dramatic, and how is its engaging effect accomplished in just over 11 minutes? I will show that this effect is partly due to the undergirding of an elite sporting activity with everyday assumptions about proper conduct in sport. Miller and McHoul (1998) frame this broader point well when they say,

Sport is neither completely separate from everyday life; nor is it quite *ordinary* life as usual. Rather, the two leak into each other on particular and specific occasions; and where they do, we're called upon to exercise line calls, to make decisions and interpretations (89).

The notion of being 'called upon to exercise line calls' is apposite for the following case study, precisely because morality and the normative dimension are at the heart of the drama. Lynch (2020) identifies common elements of viral videos of police shootings and beatings, including amongst these the finding that 'what is happening seems transparently obvious "at a glance" and morally overwhelming' (2020: 188). Whereas there are significant differences between videos of police shootings/beatings and tennis disputes, this point has resonance for the current case study. By careful selection, the clip puts in front of us actions that 'naturally' call out for judgment and evaluation: who is the hero and villain amongst the two players, and what role do the supporting actors play?

The paper begins below with a summary of the data, before proceeding to the analysis proper. One final point before proceeding: difficult as it may be, I am going to bracket my own judgement about the drama. I do not side with Tomljanovic that Ostapenko had no injury, and that she called a medical time out to try to put her off her game, effectively employing gamesmanship (or 'cheating'). Nor do I side with Ostapenko's view that she really was injured, needing physiotherapy at that moment, with Tomljanovic's voiced doubt of that being disrespectful. I do not need to make such a judgement because my approach is primarily descriptive (Katz, 2002; Liberman, 2013), geared towards showing what the material itself puts before a viewer as engaging drama.

### **Description of the Data and Analytic Presentation**

The Wimbledon match of interest was on July 4, 2021, between the Latvian Jelena Ostapenko and the Croatia-born, but now naturalized Australian, Ajla Tomljanovic. The winner of the third-round match stood to win US\$162, 320, plus Women's Tennis Association ranking points, so understandably the tennis is played in a highly competitive manner. The YouTube clip 'Full Ostapenko-Tomljanovic drama, from build-up to press conference' (hereafter 'The Drama') appeared within 24 hours of the live match. The clip could be called 'naked', that is, it selects from and re-presents the initial broadcast footage—in this case from the BBC—without any overlaid or additional commentary. The editing work that went into this process is inaccessible; we can note though that this selection process<sup>1</sup> employs practical reasoning about what is readily presentable and understandable (Broth, 2014; Perry et al., 2019). Thus, there is a realm of practical action based upon skills and everyday reasoning that has occurred prior to any viewing of the clip (for analysis of such see Fele and Campagnolo, 2021; Perry et al., 2019).

As noted above, The Drama is no longer available on YouTube. Despite this, I have stuck with the decision to use it as data, using screensnaps from it and transcriptions of the dialogue, in the following analysis. It is

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<sup>1</sup> As detailed below, the amount of match coverage we see in The Drama, including the medical time out, is seven minutes 35 seconds, whereas it can be calculated from the live scoring of the match that the actual elapsed time this covered was 47 minutes (calculated from Wimbledon live score website, at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-iHFMVBW0GE>).

unfortunate that the reader cannot access the full clip, nevertheless, there is a ‘workaround’ here: at the time of writing there are still available several (8) YouTube clips from the same broadcast footage, and the lengthiest of these<sup>2</sup> offers seven minutes 26 seconds of *The Drama*. This available clip differs in that it begins slightly later in the match, and edits out a few other portions, but does show exactly the same extract from the post-match interviews, hence readers can still see most of what is presented in *The Drama*.

Below, several graphic transcripts and standard transcriptions of dialogue are used to ground the analysis. A relatively simple transcription technique is used which eschews the complexity of Conversation Analysis style transcription (for discussion, see Laurier, 2019). It should also be noted that especially with regard to what is said to and by the umpire, and tournament supervisor, not all is clearly audible, nonetheless the key gist of the interaction does clearly emerge. Also note that *The Drama* preserves the original match commentary by one male and one female commentator, and sometimes their commentary is included in the transcripts (MC for male, FC for female commentator).

## ANALYSIS

The *Drama* has four main segments, and the analysis will proceed through these in chronological order:

1. Initial play: Losing it, on the way to defeat (0 to 1.23).
2. Rules in action: Ostapenko’s sit-down and call for a medical time out (1.23 to 4.28).
3. Resumption of play (4.28 to 6.22); final point, move to net, handshake, and dialogue (6.22 to 7.35).
4. Post-match interviews (7.35 to 11.11).

### Losing It, On the Way to Defeat

We can begin by making a reasonable assertion about the usual way in which YouTube clips are watched. That is, upon opening YouTube a menu of clips appears that offers a list based on a combination of thumbnail image (preview) and title. Much as newspaper headlines guide the reader about the type of story about to follow (Lee, 1984), the clip’s title, especially the key word ‘drama’, establishes initial guidance about the forthcoming content. Sensibly then, subsequent viewing is expecting details of what is typical in a drama. Such an interpretive process is well-known from Garfinkel’s (1967) *Studies in Ethnomethodology* as the ‘documentary method of interpretation’. As stated,

The method consists of treating an actual appearance as “the document of,” as “pointing to,” as “standing on behalf of” a presupposed underlying pattern. Not only is the underlying pattern derived from its individual documentary evidences, but the individual documentary evidences, in their turn, are interpreted on the basis of “what is known” about the underlying pattern. Each is used to elaborate the other (1967: 78).

This melding of pattern and particular is one reason why social life mostly appears so unproblematic, so taken-for-granted and routinely understandable. Of course, this does not mean that everything is pre-determined, rather, as later ethnomethodological work around the term ‘gestalt contexture’ (Garfinkel, 2002; Watson, 2009) clarified, the emphasis is on the contingent, local accomplishment of order. The documentary method and its contingent application is a key part of this orderliness, even when dealing with uncertainties, for when there is uncertainty, we typically wait for sense to emerge from the ongoing course of events.

This latter point may be partly at stake when upon immediately opening *The Drama* we simply see the two players engaged in playing a point, without any prior narrative introduction to the match. We wait, and the pattern and evidence soon develop together. Consideration of the first graphic transcript is the best way to get this across.

**Figure 1** summarizes the first ten seconds of *The Drama*. Panel 1 shows Tomljanovic returning serve with a winner, with the professional commentary added. Even in the choice of ‘ruthlessly’ to describe how the shot has picked off Ostapenko, the commentator encourages a view that Tomljanovic is now dominant. It is not just a good shot, but a shot that Ostapenko does not even get near to, hence the choice of ‘ruthlessly’. Panel 2 shows the immediate upshot: Ostapenko’s scream-like utterance (possibly in Latvian) of frustration. This is reiterated a moment later, as seen in panels 3 to 5, where there is a full-body movement with another exclamation (not captured on the video audio track). In short, the mounting tension of being nearly 2-0 down in the deciding set sees Ostapenko unable to fully control her emotions: she lets go, both orally (the yells), and corporeally (the bent body posture). By starting here, *The Drama* institutes the pattern that Ostapenko is on the way to defeat. The particulars of the tennis itself, and as shown on the scoreboard<sup>3</sup>, establish this at-a-glance. Ostapenko seems to be reflexively

<sup>2</sup> See ‘Wimbledon DRAMA: Jelena Ostapenko & Alja Tomljanovic’ at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Id9HR-SdG8>

<sup>3</sup> Because the transcripts are cropped, the scoreboard is sometimes partly or fully invisible, however, in the actual clip it is very often fully visible, thus the viewer can quickly see where things are at in the match.

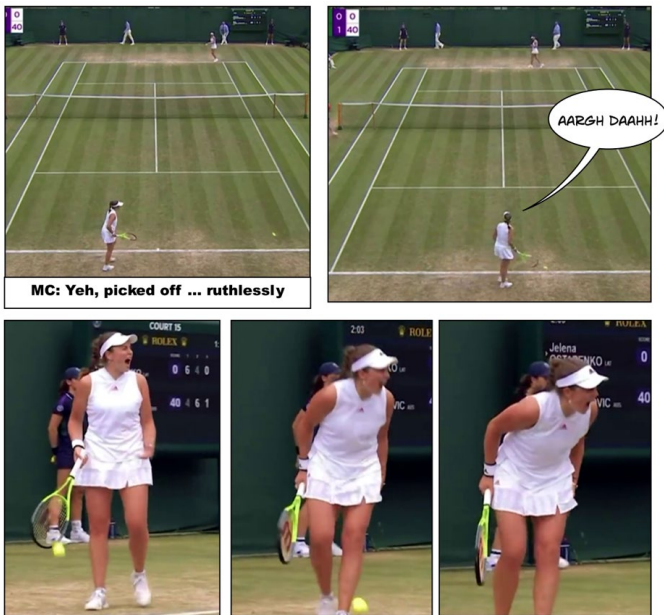


Figure 1. Tension mounts in the third set.



Figure 2. We all know what 'it' means.

aware of this: her display of 'bodily glosses' (Goffman, 1972: 31) are clearly interpretable as showing signs of worry and frustration about her position. These heightened emotional outbursts continue, as further seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2 is a selection from 15 seconds of the action in the next game. Panel 1 shows Tomljanovic serving an ace, which immediately elicits another loud exclamation from Ostapenko. In contrast to this, we can see in panel 2 that as she prepares for her next serve, Tomljanovic has an upright, controlled, body posture. This is interpretable as the embodied stance of a confident player currently in a dominant position. The seamless availability of this

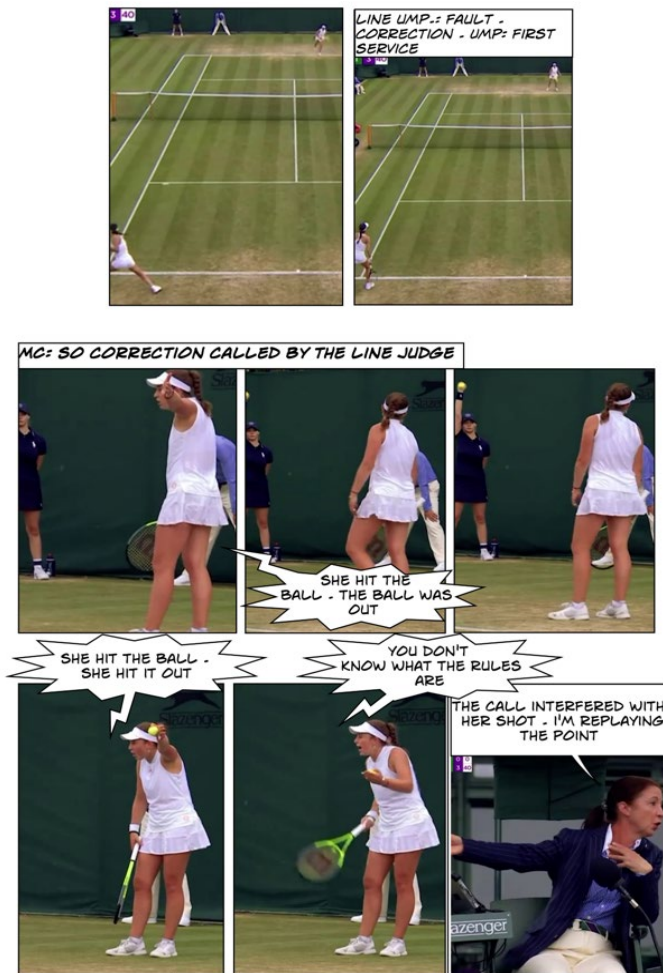


Figure 3. Dispute with the umpire.

interpretation is reinforced by the commentators, who both point out that Tomljanovic has won 13 points in a row, which is a naturally available explanation for Ostapenko's outbursts. Ostapenko seems well aware that she is rapidly sliding into a losing position, however, this does not mean that she has fully lost control. As shown in panels 4 to 7, she does not sufficiently 'lose it' to such an extent that she actually breaks her racquet. It is important that she does not, as breaking a racquet can incur a warning from the umpire, and the deduction of a point if repeated, thus exacerbating a decline into a loss. So, from the details, the pattern being established is that Tomljanovic is dominant, and Ostapenko is on the way to defeat. Whereas the latter is seen to alarm Ostapenko, it does not mean she has lost control and is not continuing the fight to win.

In due course, Tomljanovic wins the third game, and then as Ostapenko serves there is another interesting development of the self-annoyance and admonishment clearly seen in Figure 2. Consider Figure 3.

Here we see further bodily display of agitation, but a key thing to note is that in the dispute with the umpire Ostapenko simultaneously tries to make a rational argument to get the umpire to overturn her decision to replay the point. The argument being that the umpire's correction was wrong, as Tomljanovic's service return was out, hence the point should not be replayed. This point is strongly pressed, but in this case, she cannot sway the umpire. There are two significant things to realize here. First, even though Ostapenko has shown self-admonishment and a quick bodily expression of frustration, as noted above, she is still fighting to win, with everything she has. Unlike some players who may see the 'writing on the wall' and quickly slide to a more rapid defeat, Ostapenko still wants to win, and must be strategizing about how to do this. Second, it is worth noting that the umpire here is dealing with an agitated challenge to her refereeing of the game; in this case, Tomljanovic does not need to enter into the dispute as it is between the umpire and Ostapenko. Panel 8 is a brief glimpse of the umpire doing this in a controlled manner, concisely giving the grounds for her decision. It is done very quickly, and perhaps hints at procedures that umpires learn, that is, once a decision is made, not to go back on it, even in the face of strong player reaction. The actions of the umpire become key in the hinge point of the match, discussed in the next section.

### Rules in Action: Ostapenko's Sit-Down and Call for a Medical Time Out

Panel 1 of Figure 4 shows the final point of the fourth game of the final set, with the commentary clearly framing Tomljanovic as 'closing in for the kill'. But then as the female commentator so aptly puts it, 'in the blink

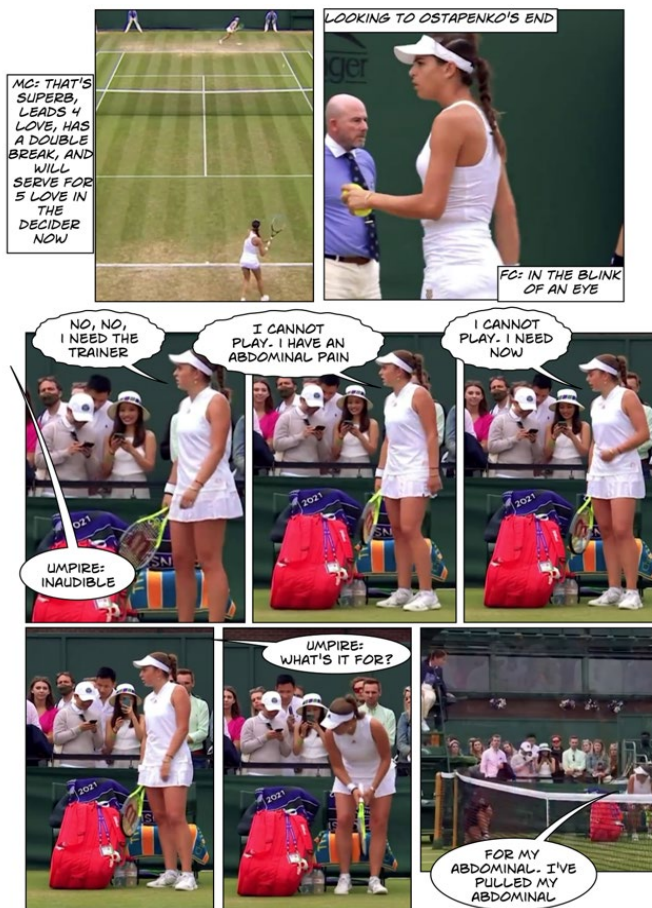


Figure 4. The moment of interruption.

of an eye' the match is dramatically interrupted. As she says this the camera shot is of Tomljanovic (panel 2), whose knitted eyebrows clearly show that she is perplexed about what is now happening in the match, as at 4-0 there is not supposed to be a change of ends (Ostapenko has gone to courtside). The utterance of the umpire at panel 3 is inaudible, but by Ostapenko's 'no, no' reply it is probably a statement to the effect that Ostapenko cannot call a break at 4-0 in the match. Shown across the remainder of the figure, we see Ostapenko's verbal assertion that she cannot continue playing, coupled with the bodily action of sitting down. Perhaps alerted by the umpire's initial clarification of the rule, in contrast to her previous dispute with the umpire ('you don't know what the rules are'), Ostapenko is relatively polite, simply insisting that her abdominal injury necessitates the trainer being called. Interestingly, it is when the umpire asks, 'what's it for?', that Ostapenko quickly sits and repeats her prior utterance that it is for her 'abdominal'. So, by panel 8 of the figure there is a clear halt to play, corporeally managed by Ostapenko sitting down, the umpire remaining in her officiating seat, and Tomljanovic (out of shot) standing close-by undoubtedly interested in the whole development.

Thus, from a position of sliding towards defeat, Ostapenko has managed to put at least a temporary halt to Tomljanovic's progress to victory. It all seems to have been done in a matter of fact and relatively controlled manner. Furthermore, in this there seems no visible hint of a strong experience of pain. In panel 5 we can see Ostapenko raise her left arm to hold her hand over her stomach, presumably showing where the abdominal injury is located, but there is neither any verbal nor facial expression of associated pain, consistent with the claim that she 'cannot continue'. This brings to mind Wittgenstein's (1958) well-known comments on pain, specifically that 'only I can know whether I am really in pain; another person can only surmise it. –In one way this is wrong, and in another nonsense ... other people very often know when I am in pain' (89). Thus, while logically only the experiencing person in pain has the experience, the converse of Wittgenstein's (1958) point is that it is not uncommon for others to doubt an individual's claim of being in pain. This is exactly what Tomljanovic does shortly after the actions seen in Figure 4. Interestingly, there is clear evidence from the umpire's bodily expression that she now knows the situation, and the decision she makes about it, has considerable import and salience. To see this, another graphic transcript is useful—consider Figure 5.



Figure 5. Beginning of rule debate.

The first three panels are a close up of the umpire just after Ostapenko has sat down declaring she needs the trainer for her abdominal injury. In panel 1, the umpire is looking towards Tomljanovic, indicating that she is well aware that Ostapenko's opponent, who had just prior been expecting to serve to potentially go 5-0 up, has a significant interest in what now transpires. In short, the key decision for the umpire is whether the trainer will be called, a decision probably being made during the one second that elapses across the panels. As seen in panel 3, the umpire does indeed pick up the phone to call for the trainer, but the middle panel offers some quite remarkable detail on this decision. The image is slightly hazy due to close-cropping but seems to show a facial expression close to regret, or at least an acknowledgement of difficulty<sup>4</sup>. The mouth displays a semi-grimace. All the while, Ostapenko sits calmly at courtside re-hydrating, however, as shown in the final panel, as soon as the dialogue between the umpire and Tomljanovic begins, she is seen turning towards them being attentive to their talk. This is not surprising, as she has to wait to see what will transpire when the 'trainer' arrives to assess her bodily state. Also note here that across panels 4 and 5 there is a significant form of comment from the female commentator. Slowly, she enunciates prior utterances of Ostapenko: 'I've pulled my abdominal. I cannot play. I need the trainer now'. Whether these are exactly accurate is not the point; we know from everyday knowledge that when a quote is offered without explicatory comment, we are called upon to evaluate the status of what has been said. It is not offered as a repetition in case the viewer had not heard, rather it formulates the status of this utterance as the key matter at hand in the developing drama: in effect, do we believe what we are seeing and hearing?

The final panel of Figure 5 shows the beginning of significant involvement by Tomljanovic in the developing drama. Clearly, she has seen and heard what has transpired and she has now moved directly beneath the umpire to engage with her about what is happening. Tomljanovic leans on the net openly facing the umpire, showing an argumentative posture, clearly consistent with her talk. She begins by referring to a recent precedent in one of her own prior matches, which the umpire attempts to close down with 'alright. The physio will decide'. The reaction from Tomljanovic is immediate: three repetitions of no, a pause and then a final *no!* Research by Stivers (2004) suggests that 'through the production of a multiple saying, the speaker proposes that the course of action be halted'

<sup>4</sup> Contrast facial expression here with panel 8 of Figure 3, where umpire is explaining her ruling with clarity and confidence.

(269), and this seems exactly what Tomljanovic is attempting to do. She rejects the umpire's decision that 'the physio will decide', instead wishing to take the current course of action back to clarification of 'what's the rule?'. What the umpire says in response is not always clear, but the gist is that she sticks with her decision to call for the trainer. Not satisfied with this, Tomljanovic clearly states her own view of this situation: 'but you know she's lying, right, we all know'. This gains an immediate comment from the MC, 'goodness me! stern words from Tomljanovic. 'You know she's lying, right', is what she said'. In a similar manner to the preceding 'quote' from Ostapenko, this also calls for evaluation, and so we are now in a situation where both players' actions, as narrated by the commentators, invite evaluation.

About here, Tomljanovic asks the umpire to call the tournament supervisor, and elaborates the reason behind her claim that 'we all know' Ostapenko is lying: 'are you taking into consideration that she was fine for an hour and thirty, and now there is an acute injury?' Clearly a bit exasperated by the continued dialogue from Tomljanovic, the umpire says, 'can you just sit down and wait', which is immediately rejected by Tomljanovic's reply, 'I'm not sitting down'. Soon we see the trainer arrive and begin assessing Ostapenko who is now laying down courtside. Having had no luck with the umpire, here Tomljanovic presses her inquiry with the supervisor, asking 'how can it be, in the middle, when I'm serving, how can she do that?' The reply from the supervisor is remarkably honest, reflecting his absence from direct witness of the prior events: 'I don't know, I don't know what she did in the situation'. Not satisfied with this, Tomljanovic continues, but unfortunately from her perspective an 'it depends' response is reiterated: 'depends on the situation'. 'If she [the umpire] feels that there is something serious, she has to call'. Here Tomljanovic replies, 'Yeh, so it's her call in the end', to which the supervisor finishes, 'No, it's the physio's call in the end. It's the physio's call in the end'.

Note here that none of the participants to the developing drama are holding in front of them a hard copy of the rules of professional tennis. Presumably, they are familiar with the rules, but now of course they must be put into effect, opening up the difficult question of what constitutes acting in accordance with a rule (Sharrock and Dennis, 2008). In doing so, the result is not so much close to the idiomatic expressions that the 'law is an ass', or the authorities are 'passing the buck', but it certainly does show that a fundamental paradox has developed in this situation: it takes two minutes from the umpire's call for the trainer to arrive on court, meaning that initiating the due process of deciding whether a medical time out is justified, is *itself a break to play*. This means that even if the trainer's assessment of Ostapenko had been 'no injury, continue play', at such a point the play had been stopped for two minutes. Moreover, during these two minutes quite different embodied experiences have arisen: Ostapenko sits at courtside, rehydrating, resting, and no doubt thinking about how to reverse her slide to defeat. In contrast, Tomljanovic, who had been ready to play, presses for clarification of the rules from the umpire and supervisor, to which she gets no real clarification ('it's up to the trainer'). She is then told to sit down, instead of which she paces around in an understandably agitated state. Irrespective of views on how the rules should correctly be applied, the pragmatic result of this is that Tomljanovic has had her 'flow' broken. During this action, the commentators reflect on the situation, summing it up thus, 'FC: she has taken advantage of a legitimate rule that's in place, but has used it in a way that really should not be used'; MC: 'Yeh, rather used it and abused it'. All of the above, which clearly does not involve actual playing of tennis, is visible and mostly audible in *The Drama*. It is a key part of its highly engaging effect. Whether or not viewers see the paradox, as detailed above, there is little doubt that we are given intimate access to a highly charged tennis drama.

### **Resumption of Play; Move to Net, Handshake, and Dialogue**

It is perhaps no surprise that when Ostapenko returns to court and play resumes, it is she who wins the next two games. For good dramatic reason, *The Drama* takes time here to show nearly two minutes of the play that ends the match. Moreover, adding to the engagingness at this point is inferential flexibility within the 'documentary method of interpretation'. Viewers are once again in a position of interpretive variation: on one hand, perhaps the physio's treatment of Ostapenko's acute injury really did help, so she was able to play better upon resumption; on the other hand, perhaps Tomljanovic was so agitated about Ostapenko calling for and being given a medical time out at 4-0 in the deciding set, that her play was adversely affected. Either way, with the resumption of play, both commentators clearly offer their own summation of the situation: MC says, 'the last point. was ah. 11 minutes and 50 seconds away'<sup>5</sup>, to which FC immediately evaluates, 'that's an outrageous interruption'. This highly evaluative stance is tempered though in other parts of the match description. When Ostapenko plays a winner to take the match to 2-5, MC says, 'that's good tennis from Ostapenko. She may not be the most popular player in these parts right now, but she's hitting good ball'. Ultimately, given the tenor of the commentary, it is no surprise that upon the final winning point MC almost jubilantly exclaims, 'It's over! Tomljanovic gets the win. And you have to say, richly deserved'.

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<sup>5</sup> The choice of '11 minutes 50 seconds', rather than 'about ten minutes', is a good example of what Sacks (1992) called a 'precise rather than approximate number' (183). It suggests that the MC is showing his expertise, being careful about the means of description, and suggesting that the exact measure is important given the current situation.





Figure 6. Still engaging at the end of play.

The crowd too seem to share this view, with loud clapping and hoots of support breaking out upon the final point. To gain a feel for the atmosphere at the shaking of hands at the net, we can consider [Figure 6](#).

Again, not all of the dialogue between the two players is clearly audible, however, there is no doubt that the players are in disagreement about the rightfulness of calling for the medical time out so late in the match. Moreover, we can see from the figure that the crowd are highly engaged in the debate playing out before them. As Tomljanovic moves to the net where Ostapenko is waiting to shake hands (panel 1), she says something that is inaudible. Certainly, from the staring look and sarcastic tone of 'I hope you feel better', there is no reason to believe that Tomljanovic has made a pleasantry on the way to shake hands at the net. Throughout this intense action, we can see that gathered behind the umpire's chair there are a good number of spectators watching the ritual ending of the match. Ostapenko's utterance in panel 2 suggests that on coming to the net Tomljanovic has made some reference to the dispute over the medical time out. The term 'faking it' connects to Tomljanovic's dialogue with the umpire, specifically the claim 'we all know she's lying', but the more interesting detail to note here is that as soon as Ostapenko has attempted to defend her actions, there is an immediate, and very audible, 'ohhh, huh huh huh' from a member of the crowd. The spectators' engagement with the spectacle unfolding before them is well captured in these last moments of The Drama. In this case, the interpretation is the opposite of what Ostapenko wants, that is, some spectators make audible their belief that Ostapenko was indeed faking it.

At this point, with some of the crowd audibly against her, and Tomljanovic obviously not well disposed to her position, Ostapenko's 'terrible, terrible' seems to be talk to herself. But then as she continues trying to defend herself, she looks up to the umpire (panel 3) exclaiming 'What? I have an injury. So bad, so bad'. This does not constitute a 'meltdown' or 'tantrum', which are known to occur during tennis matches, but it is all highly engaging to the spectators, exemplified in panels 4 to 6. The tall male, the male with a cap, and the woman with a smartphone are a trio, obviously engrossed in what is happening right in front of them. The smartphone is clearly being held in a recording position, and there is little doubt from her facial expressions that the woman holding it is delighted to have captured this footage. Just what she did with her recorded footage is unknown, but through close attention to the detail of The Drama we have a small insight into this other side of the engaging drama.

### **Post-Match Interview: The Reality Disjuncture**

The post-match interview section comprises three minutes 36 seconds of the full clip (as noted above, the full amount of this section is still available to view). Both players, are interviewed singly, with Tomljanovic appearing in shot for one minute 24 seconds, and Ostapenko for two minutes 12 seconds. A simplified transcription is presented below, beginning with Tomljanovic:

She can say she was injured. I don't think there was. There was nothing wrong with her the whole match ... I've played her. I've played many people. I know when someone's injured, and when they're not. Then to top it all off for her to call me disrespectful, at the end of the match, is just, at that point it's laughable. And I think is disgraceful behavior from someone that is a Slam champion, because kids look at her and, and what, they see that. I'm sorry, if she was injured, she could have gone about it in a way better way. She could have waited one more game, and got the physio, and if she did that at 4-one, or 5-zero, I would probably have a smirk, wouldn't say much to the ref. I would just ask, 'what's the injury?', but the fact that she did it at 4-zero, when I was about to serve, that's to me, that's just disrespectful, it's not what you do. Especially at Wimbledon.

After this Ostapenko appears and speaks:

First, she cannot say anything because she knows zero about my injury. She doesn't know anything. Second, in my opinion it was very, very, very disrespectful from her side, because every single player who is playing tennis, or any other sports, can get injured. I had a problem with my abdominal already in the second set. I pulled it and I couldn't really serve well because I had pain, when I was serving, when I was doing one motion. So, she cannot say anything unless she knows anything, and she's not me, so she cannot feel the pain. I'm the one who feels the pain. And I really felt I needed the physio, and I don't know, the tape or something, any help, right at that moment, because I was really dealing with the pain for a long time, but I should have called the physio earlier, I think. And I think my level today was not good, after the first set, because if I played at least 50 per cent I would have beaten her. If I have an acute injury, I need the physio right now, and I saw that many players did it, not like on the changeover, if you really need the physio, you can call it, so that's what I was telling her. I think it was very disrespectful what she did. I mean how can you say 'liar', or something, if you know zero about it. Maybe it's not new pain or something. How can you say this? You cannot say that in front of everybody, calling me a liar. I don't think it's respectful from her side.

Tomljanovic's account is shorter, with the only new element being contained in the inferential work around the category 'Slam champion'. Here she refers to the fact that Ostapenko is a previous winner of the French Open (2017), inferring that a winner of one of the top tournaments should be held to the highest standards of sportsmanship. Thus, in her view, Ostapenko's action during their match was 'disgraceful behavior', setting a poor example 'because kids look at her', reiterated in her final words, 'that's just disrespectful, it's not what you do. Especially at Wimbledon'. A key thing to note here is that Ostapenko also mobilizes 'disrespect' as a characterization of Tomljanovic's actions. Her main point is that, for her, being called a 'liar', 'in front of everybody', 'was very disrespectful'. This is perhaps of no surprise to sociologists familiar with Goffman's (1972) work, for as Strong (1988) has cogently summarized, 'A central argument in much of Goffman's (1972) work is that the ceremonial order of the encounter, the etiquette that can be found on any social occasion, is not some trivial matter ... but has instead a profound importance for the viability of the micro-social order' (231).

Secondly, it seems that both Ostapenko and Tomljanovic have read their Wittgenstein (1958), but they take different emphases from within the famous passage on pain. To repeat: 'only I can know whether I am really in pain; another person can only surmise it. —In one way this is wrong, and in another nonsense ... other people very often know when I am in pain' (89). Ostapenko's account sides with the first part of this quote: 'she cannot say anything because she knows zero about my injury ... she's not me, so she cannot feel the pain. I'm the one who feels the pain'. In contrast, Tomljanovic emphasises the second part, having previously made this point in her statement to the umpire, 'but you know she's lying, right, we all know', repeated here as, 'there was nothing wrong with her the whole match ... I've played her. I've played many people. I know when someone's injured, and when they're not'.

Overall, then, even though at this point the players have had a break to freshen up, during which they may have taken the chance to reflect upon their open and charged conflict, there is no conciliation on view in the post-match interviews. As such, The Drama here presents a wonderful example of what Pollner (1975) calls a 'reality disjuncture'. Though bearing upon complex ontological and epistemological issues, the gist of this is easily understood: 'Some persons see what other persons do not' (Pollner, 1975: 411). Because commonsense assumptions about the world have it 'the world is 'out there' and [is a] perceptually shared domain of objects'

(Pollner, 1975: 411), this makes reality disjuncture's puzzling, albeit relatively common, events. Actually, the post-match interview situation qualifies as what Pollner (1975) calls a 'full-fledged reality disjuncture'. As he puts it, 'in the full-fledged disjuncture, each participant treats his experience of the world as definitive and, hence, as the grounds for ironicizing his opponent's experience' (419). If there is no abandonment by one of the proponents of the use of 'experience' as incorrigible, there will be no resolution of the disjuncture. This seems exactly the situation with Ostapenko and Tomljanovic—neither are moving from their position. That there is no apology, no shaking hands and making up, or even a 'let's agree to disagree' ending, only serves to add to the compelling spectacle of The Drama, helping explain why it became a most-watched Wimbledon YouTube.

## CONCLUSION

To reiterate a point made in the introduction, the aim here has not been to reach judgment on who is right or wrong in the dispute between Ostapenko and Tomljanovic. Nor, for that matter, is there any suggestion being made that the umpire and tournament supervisor were incompetent or confused in their handling of the rules around medical time outs. Accepting that professional sport as an embodied activity is highly skilled and elite, we have seen here that nonetheless it is undergirded by everyday, ordinary social dynamics. Shortly after Ostapenko institutes the halt to play, a key moment that crystallizes this concern is Tomljanovic asking the umpire 'what's the rule?'. Garfinkel's (1967) famous insights on rules and trust are most powerful here. Given that sports games, like professional tennis, are rules-based, any player trusts that both they and their opponent are mutually committed to the same game, based on the rules<sup>6</sup>. Any player accepts the possibility that they or their opponent can be injured during the course of play, and therefore accedes to the existence of rules that apply in such a situation; however, this depends upon a constitutive expectancy of honesty about 'real' injury. Given our inability to step inside another's body to directly experience their bodily sensation, we must trust what any other competitor claims about being injured. When there are grounds to doubt such honesty, *and* when there are difficulties in clarifying and applying rules, as in the Tomljanovic-Ostapenko dispute, we have the ingredients for a highly engaging spectacle. We all hope that disputes in this order are justly resolved, with 'poor sports not prospering', but of course poor sports are seldom black and white characters. The best way to see this is to view the lengthier YouTube of the dispute that is still available (see dipnote 3 above). Up to the post-match interview section, it is easy enough to see Ostapenko's actions in a bad light, and this is amplified by the commentator's descriptions ('outrageous interruption', 'used and abused the rule' etc.); at the same time, it is possible to see Tomljanovic's attempts to get clarification as too strident, and indeed her statement 'we all know she's lying' as tactless. In the post-match interview when we see and hear Ostapenko sticking to her argument, the previously 'convinced' viewer may find themselves wavering in their judgement: perhaps after all Ostapenko did have an injury and was not lying?

Via what was probably a quick editing job, the content creators of The Drama managed to include enough detail to show a dramatic spectacle. In the process they avoided a narrative judgment about who in the sporting dispute was the 'villain, fool or hero' (Lines, 2001). If this is accepted, a contribution the above analysis makes is to show how such common social media productions inescapably depend upon our everyday understandings of people interacting together. When both sides of a dispute mobilize a similar characterization of the other as being disrespectful, we have the equivalent of what Goodwin (1990) called 'he-said-she-said' arguments. Goodwin (1990) showed that with children such arguments can last a whole day but will then dissipate for the next day's play. An insight from Simmel (1949) may help to explain the salience of similar disputes for adults:

For even when play turns about a money prize, it is not the prize, which indeed could be won in many other ways, which is the specific point of the play; but the attraction for the true sportsman[woman] lies in the dynamics and in the chances of that sociologically significant form of activity itself. ... that it is played not only *in* a society as its outward bearer but that *with* the society actually "society" is played' (258, original emphasis).

The playing with 'society' has as its stake the 'implicit social contract', hence why the ordinary details of the dispute between Ostapenko and Tomljanovic are so visibly powerful and engaging. The presence of normative forces in any implicit social contract does not mean, however, that sports viewership is inevitably guided towards a 'nice guy' framing. As can be inferred from the diversity in online audience reactions, some viewers will opt to celebrate the 'bad boys and girls' of tennis, suggesting that such people add spice to the sporting scene. Academics do not need to pass judgment on this, rather as shown here the interesting analytic question is how such 'poor sports' is always possible despite the heavily rule-governed nature of professional sport. Hence, poor sports will

<sup>6</sup> On this see the early ethnomethodological work of Kew (1986, 1992). Also see Kendall and Lenten (2017) for a good discussion of how even when sports rules are changed, there are always unexpected consequences, emphasising that rules lie in their practice, which is consistent with Kew's (1986, 1992) early work.

continue to make good spectacle, especially given the ability of online creators to quickly post material that fills out the picture offered by official sports websites with their relatively sanitized fare.

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