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Wilson nSix-One Tour 90 Review

The racquet that won Wimbledon, the Wilson nSix-One Tour 90, became world famous almost immediately after its launch.

While we first witnessed professional players such as **Roger Federer** using the nCoded racquets at the **French Open**, it was at **Wimbledon** where Wilson's latest flagship player's racquet was thrust into the limelight. As Federer skillfully wielded his nSix-One Tour 90 to dispatch all-comers and defend his Wimbledon title, we got a good look at the latest offering from Wilson to take the racquet world by storm.

Federer's racquet of choice, the nSix-One Tour 90, retains much of the same design as the Pro Staff Tour 90 that it replaces. The same 17mm straight box-beam design, headsize, leather grip, and 9 points head light balance are retained. Gone is the predominantly black look and textured paint around the upper hoop. Instead, the nSix-One Tour 90 features the bright red and white used throughout the nCode line. More importantly, it is under the paint where the most significant modification occurs. The nSix-One Tour 90's main technological feature is Wilson's nCode construction process.

The nCode construction process adds material to the frame at the nano level. According to Wilson, in an nCoded racquet, nano-sized silicone crystals permeate the voids between the carbon fibers. Wilson claims that their exclusive nano technology creates racquets that are two times stronger, two times more stable and up to 22% more powerful than ordinary racquets.

To see if the nCode technology could meet our tennis needs, we hit the courts with the nSix-One Tour 90 for a three-week playtest. Read on to find out if our playtesters were able to unlock their potential.

Before hitting the courts we strung the nSix-One Tour 90 with Wilson NXT 17 string at 57lbs (2 lbs above mid recommended tension).

Groundstrokes

For the most part, our team found the nSix-One Tour 90 to be a demanding racquet during baseline play. Perhaps finding the best match for his game was **Josh**. "I enjoyed hitting with this racquet. If nothing else, the challenge of playing with the nSix-One Tour 90 was appealing. Initially I had a tough time hitting deep with the racquet, but I had the same experience the first time I took the Pro Staff Tour 90 out. My backhands and forehands were very controlled, despite the occasional framer, and I could swing away without fear of hitting long. However, I had a hard time getting past the weight of the racquet. I found myself thinking more about the racquet and hitting the perfect ball rather than just hitting. Even when I was in a groove I had to work with every stroke. The playtest gave me a greater appreciation of Roger Federer's talent."

Chris also gained a greater appreciation of the talents of Roger Federer when hitting with the nSix-One Tour 90. "It became blatantly obvious from the first swing with this racquet that I do not have Roger Federer's game. I really struggled from the baseline with the nSix-One Tour 90. For some reason, I was just unable to generate racquet head speed. It couldn't have been due to the weight, as my Yonex RDX 500 Mid is weighted at a similar 12.5 ounces and I used to use a 13 ounce HEAD Prestige 600. It also couldn't be due to the balance, as the nSix-One Tour 90 is 9 points head light. However, when trying to swing this racquet I felt like I'd missed my morning Wheaties. When hitting my forehand, it felt like I had left the racquet cover on. Hitting a flatter stroke seemed to work better. I had much more success getting the racquet going forwards in a straight line, rather than trying to brush up the back of the ball. To make things even more of a challenge, the sweetspot felt pretty small. Catching the ball even slightly off-center produced little of anything except a harsh feel. The redeeming quality hitting from the baseline with this racquet was that it felt nice on slice shots. There's enough weight and heaps of mass to punch slice backhands and forehands deep to the corners. Sliced approach shots also felt solid, and I felt like I was getting a lot of control when pushing forward towards the net."

Wendi was pleasantly surprised by how well she played with the nSix-One Tour 90. "At first, I wasn't too excited about this racquet. With its small headsize and heavy weight, I knew it would be a hard match for me. To my surprise, it wasn't as bad as I thought, but it was definitely a tough racquet for my skill level. It had impressive power, considering it is only 90 square inches. I had trouble hitting the sweetspot consistently; one shot was beautiful, hit right in the center, followed by a frame shot. I also thought it was a little heavy and stiff for my liking, and maneuverability was a little limited. I'm learning my slice and I really had trouble getting any kind of results. Off-center and frame shots don't make the best slices."

Granville would have also liked some more maneuverability with the nSix-One Tour 90. "I struggled with this racquet, and it bothers me. I can't quite put my finger on it - it feels sluggish, as if balanced head-heavy (but it's not). Perhaps at this weight I need something 12-14 points head-light. So, the biggest drawback for me was the lack of maneuverability on groundies. Furthermore, I didn't have the 'feel' I've

become accustomed to after so many years with the 6.0 85 and the 6.1 95. Given that the balance was not to my liking, I struggled to get any pace on my forehand and backhand. If not in my absolute best physical condition, I do not see myself playing with this racquet."

Casey found a lack of power with the nSix-One Tour 90 from the baseline. "This is a difficult racquet to play with. For the first 5 minutes I didn't mind it much. I had a lot of control, and it seemed to slice the ball well. However, once I tried hitting all out, I felt like I was driving a VW Bus up a 45% grade. I had no juice, and I was being pushed around the court. When I contacted the ball clean on the dime-size sweetspot I could generate a decent amount of pop, but anywhere shy of that dime I could kiss the point goodbye. I was unable to play off my back foot, and had to exaggerate watching the ball into the sweetspot. It seemed as if I was playing with a training tool. In a way it was kind of fun when I did hit a decent ball. In my opinion, it is good for practice and bad for the ego."

Drew really liked hitting groundies with the nSix-One Tour 90 but it took its toll. "I was able to hit hard, penetrating shots with excellent control but I got tired over the course of a couple sets. You need to be in shape for the nSix-One Tour 90, and it's not for the casual player. I felt like I had to keep my arm under a constant load when swinging this racquet. It's not a lot different from the Pro Staff 6.0 85. The nSix-One Tour 90 might have a bit more pop, but both are racquets that reward the player who plays with them on a regular basis. When I got pushed back behind the baseline with the nSix-One Tour 90, all I could do was hit defensively. When in an aggressive situation I could hit out most of the time as I found good control. I tended to hit low, hard aggressive shots with this racquet, not looping topspin shots. The nSix-One Tour 90 is not a whippy racquet and felt more suited to driving the ball. Overall, I played consistently with this racquet and found the feel to be predictable."

Mark was more comfortable at the baseline with the nSix-One Tour 90 than when hitting from other areas of the court. "I liked hitting my backhand slice with the nSix-One Tour 90 and it also felt good when hitting a topspin forehand. I was able to drive my backhand, but wasn't getting a lot of feel. I had to work with the racquet to get good results and it is definitely a player's racquet, not a game improvement racquet. When I stepped in and took the ball early I could be very aggressive. When backing up, it was difficult to be aggressive, as there was not much power."

Volleys

The low power level and 12.4 ounce weight of the nSix-One Tour 90 had the majority of our team struggling at net. **Drew** said, "the racquet felt a little slow and lacked maneuverability at net. I volleyed better on close volleys compared to when I had to reach, but I never felt rally comfortable with this racquet at the net." **Granville** also found the nSix-one Tour 90 challenging at net. "Once again the lack of maneuverability presented some challenges at the net. While I could knock off the volleys when in position, I didn't get the same 'pocketing' I've been so accustomed to in other racquets, like the ProStaff 6.0 and 6.1. This heavy racquet seems best suited for only the strongest of players. The 'feel' is diminished unless you are really smacking the ball."

Casey continued to find a lack of power with the nSix-One Tour 90. "The pop I lacked off the ground seemed just as lacking at the net. I had to really punch my volley to keep it deep, and when I contacted the ball shy of that dime-size sweetspot, the ball just seemed to flop off the strings. I did have good control, and could come up with some mean drop shots, but that didn't do me much good on a serve/volley. Once again, it would be a good training tool, but I wouldn't be expecting to play my best tennis with this racquet." **Wendi** also struggled to find any power on her volleys. "At the net the nSix-One Tour 90 had good control but not the pop that I like. My volleys were decent, but I wasn't completely confident at net. The stability was great, but I wasn't charging the net, either."

As from the baseline, **Josh** found he had to be on top of his game to be successful with the nSix-One Tour 90 at net. "The racquet doesn't offer much margin for error with any stroke, including volleys. The racquet is solid, though, and easy to direct balls with. It felt a bit cumbersome if I had to make a last-second stab at a passing shot. Doubles players looking to use this racquet may struggle during quick exchanges at net." **Mark** also found he had to supply the power when volleying with the nSix-One Tour 90. "There wasn't much power at net with this racquet. On soft floating balls I had to swing too much to generate power, which caused a few unforced errors. I also didn't find much feel at net. On low volleys I had to block the ball deep and didn't have the confidence to attack. On the plus side, there was no torque or twisting when volleying. If you like a low powered racquet for volleying, this one is well suited to your game."

Enjoying the nSix-One Tour 90 the most at net was **Chris**. "At net the racquet felt somewhat more maneuverable. I liked the solid feel at impact and had no problems keeping volleys deep. I was able to hit some nice, short volleys, too, with a little bit of touch thrown in. Again, the weight seemed to work in the racquet's favor on high and low volleys as it kept everything stable. I was able to punch through the ball even when off-balance and felt pretty comfortable with this racquet at net."

Serves and Overheads

Our team had mixed results serving with the nSix-One Tour 90. **Casey** said, "I was most comfortable serving, but I had some trouble maneuvering the racquet. It felt a bit heavy, and I had trouble generating the racquet head speed I normally get. We were all scratching our heads, wondering if it really was 9 points head light (to my surprise, it was!). With a little extra effort I could hit a heavy kick, big slice, or a decent flat serve, although it wasn't easy." **Chris** also found the serve to be his best shot with the nSix-One Tour 90. "The serve was by far my favorite shot to hit with this racquet. I was getting some good pop on first serves and some nice action when throwing in a little junk. Second serves came off the racquet with decent spin and I felt like I was controlling the ball well. I think I noticed more feel and feedback on the serve than from any other shot with this racquet." **Josh** also had good results on serve. "Serving was the best aspect of this playtest. I was surprised at the amount of kick I could generate with the racquet, and I definitely hit a heavier ball than usual. Serve and volleyers will appreciate the control of the nSix-One Tour 90. I didn't generate too many aces, if any, but I could place the ball where I wanted to and confidently charge the net behind the majority of my first and second serves."

Wendi continued to struggle with the nSix-One Tour 90 when serving. "Serving with this racquet gave me pretty average results. I didn't have any trouble keeping my serves in play, but I didn't feel they were very threatening either. I had fairly good pace, but again, the pop off the strings wasn't there. I wasn't hitting my spots very accurately, but with such a small sweetspot I wasn't surprised." **Mark** found little power but some good consistency serving with the nSix-One Tour 90. "Again, the racquet offered very little power while offering good resistance to torque and twisting. I was hitting a good kick serve and I was finding some good placement. To serve well with this racquet

you need good form. You can't just muscle the ball, as your arm will get tired." **Granville** also struggled to find a groove on serve. "The serve was perhaps the one stroke where all the issues stated above come into sharp focus. This racquet is so heavy that it's tough to get around the ball. The lack of head speed resulted in a very noticeable lack of power."

Drew found the nSix-One Tour 90 better suited to hard, driving serves rather than looping spin serves. "I felt like I couldn't hit big booming serves with this racquet, but my serves definitely had good weight to them. When hitting kick serves the ball seemed to have a lot of spin. I hit a lot of hard kick serves, and again, I wasn't looping the ball, but was hitting with good pace and spin. Like the Pro Staff 6.0 85, this is not a racquet you can serve your best with when only playing casually. You need to be in good tennis shape to play with this racquet - it requires some arm and shoulder stamina."

Return of Serve

On the return our team felt the nSix-One was stable and offered good control. However, power was lacking. **Chris** said, "On the return, I had the most success hitting either with slice or hitting flat. When sticking to slice and flat shots I was able to hit nice and deep, with plenty of control. However, being unable to comfortably come over the ball (topspin) prevented me from returning as aggressively as I would have liked." **Wendi** also found it hard to be aggressive on the return. "When returning serve, I felt completely defenseless. It was like sitting at the baseline with a stick in my hand. Fortunately, I didn't come up against extremely hard serves, but it was a challenge nonetheless. I was grateful to put a decent return into play and then concentrate on trying to pull off the point." Like Chris and Wendi, **Casey** found the most success hitting defensively on the return. "The racquet felt immobile, and totally flat off-center. The only comfortable return I could come up with was a chip. I chipped well off both the forehand and backhand, but shanked more topspin forehands than I could count. It also had no punch when blocking back a return."

Josh got plenty of stability on the return from the nSix-One Tour 90. "I had a decent return game with this racquet. It felt hefty enough to absorb big serves to the forehand side and generate enough depth to keep my opponent near the baseline. The heft also worked against me if I was late on a forehand return down the line. I couldn't get the racquet around fast enough. On the backhand, I felt comfortable slicing returns back because they stayed firm and low." **Granville** found good results when given time to set up for his returns. "With weight comes stability (usually). This is true with the nSix-One Tour 90. When in position and out in front the racquet is stable enough to get just about anything back short of a bazooka shot. Hitting out and taking the offense was not an option as I struggled simply getting the head around."

Drew had the most success driving his return deep with the nSix-One Tour 90. "I felt like I had to take a good swing on the return with this racquet. If I tried to just place the ball, I had mixed results. I was more confident driving returns deep to the middle of the court than going for a cross-court angle." **Mark** offered, "On the return, I could run around second serves to hit a big forehand or step in and slice the backhand equally well. I felt like I could place my forehand return wherever I wanted, and the racquet felt very stable. Hard, wide serves gave me trouble. When pushed wide, if I missed the sweetspot I found the bottom of the net."

Last Shots from our playtesters

Chris - "Just not my cup of tea. I think a more classic striker of the ball would find a better match-up with this one."

Casey - "I was a bit disappointed in this stick. It feels good in your hand, the specs look about right, but it just doesn't play like I hoped. I guess it goes to show how good Federer really is."

Wendi - "I think the nCode Tour was made for Federer. Considering my level of play, it isn't surprising that this racquet is a challenge for me. For more experienced players, I still think the stiffness could be a problem... unless you are Roger Federer!"

Josh - "Despite the molecular technology, I thought the original ProStaff Tour 90 offered a bit more punch on serve and groundies. Otherwise, the two racquets play very similar and demand your "A" Game."

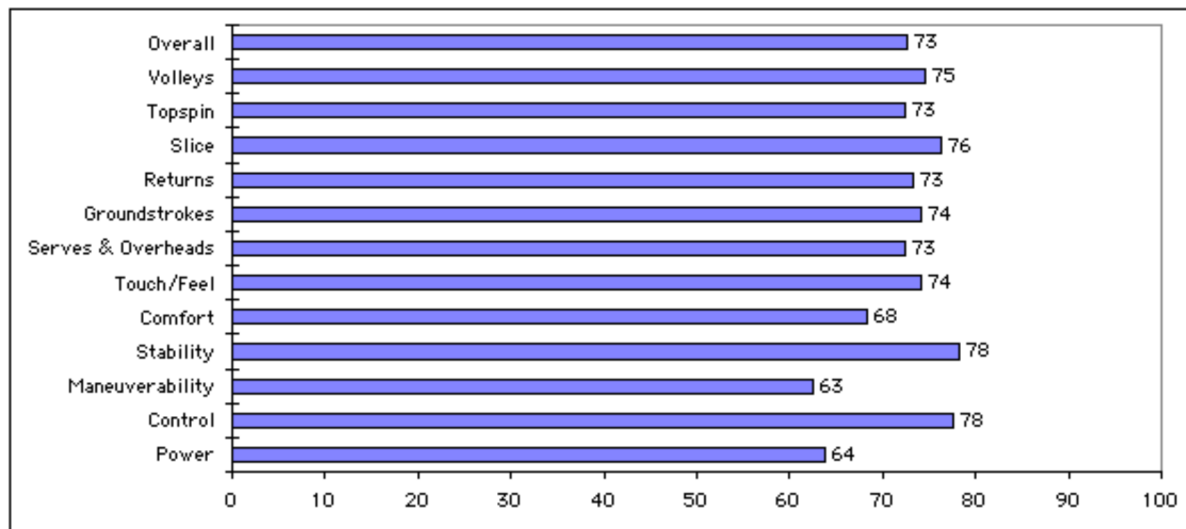
Gran - "In addition to the weight and balance issues I have with this racquet, the experience was such that I found myself focusing on basic stroke mechanics to "adjust" to the racquet, rather than on how to better dismantle my opponent."

Drew - "I thought this was a good racquet that had a similar feel to previous generation ProStaffs. It is not a weekend warrior racquet and you have to keep yourself in shape to get the best from this one."

Mark - "I found this racquet performed better for me from the baseline than at net. It wasn't a great fit for my serve and volley game, but I think a lot of baseline players will like the nSix-One Tour 90."

Overall

We found the nSix-One Tour 90 to be the most demanding racquet we've playtested in 2004. We think this one is definitely best suited to advanced players who take to the court on a regular basis. With its hefty 12.4 ounce weight the nSix-One Tour 90 rewards strong and accomplished players who can regularly find the sweetspot. If you are a classic striker of the ball, have good mechanics and are looking for a racquet that offers a lot of heft, plenty of control and that can be swung aggressively without fear of over-hitting, you might want to take this one for a test drive.



(Scores are determined by averaging individual play test scores)

Technical Specifications

Length	27 inches	69 centimeters
Head Size	90 square inches	581 square centimeters
Weight	12.4 ounces	352 grams
Balance Point	12.375 inches 31 centimeters	9pts Head Light
Construction	17 mm Straight Beam	
Composition	10% nCoded Hyper Carbon / 70% nCoded High Modulus Graphite / 20% Kevlar	
String Pattern	16 Mains / 19 Crosses	

Babolat RDC Ratings

	Score	Grade
Flex Rating	66	Range: 0-100
Swing Weight	330	Range: 200-400

Playtester Profiles

- Casey** 5.0 all-court player currently using a Volkl V-Engine Tour 10 Mid. Casey uses a full-western forehand grip with a fast swing speed, and hits with a two-handed backhand.
- Chris** 5.0 baseline player currently using a Yonex RDX 500 Mid. Chris uses a full-western forehand grip, has a fast swing style and hits a one-handed backhand.
- Drew** 5.0 baseline player currently using a Head Liquidmetal Radical Midplus. Drew has a long, loopy swingstyle, hits with a one-handed backhand and a semi-western forehand.
- Granville** 5.5 all-court player currently using a Head LiquidMetal Prestige Midplus. Granville is an aggressive player who uses an eastern forehand grip and goes continental on everything else, hits with a flat swing and a one-handed backhand.
- Josh** 4.0 all court player currently using a Wilson ProStaff Original 85. Josh has a long, loopy swingstyle, hits with a one-handed backhand and a semi-western forehand.
- Mark** 5.5 serve & volley player currently using a Prince Thunder 820. Mark has excellent volleys, hits with a one-handed backhand and an Eastern forehand.
- Wendi** 3.0 player currently using a Babolat Pure Control Plus. Wendi is a steady but aggressive player who hits with a semi-western forehand grip and a two-handed backhand.

Review date: August 2004. If you found this review interesting or have further questions or comments please [contact us](#).

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