

Transition balls have become more widely used in the United States in the last few years due to the USTA's **10 and Under Tennis** and **QuickStart Tennis** initiatives. Since transition balls are very different than standard tennis balls, it shouldn't be too surprising that there is a great deal of misinformation about these balls. The purpose of this Fact Sheet is to concisely present the basic **FACTS** to help teaching pros, coaches, and parents make the best decisions on which balls are best for them. The fact is that all transition balls are **NOT** alike.

The first step is to make sure the balls you purchase meet the USTA or ITF specifications by looking for "approval" markings on the packaging. Manufacturers like OnCourt OffCourt pay thousands of dollars for this testing, but realize one thing. There is a "range of acceptability" within this testing process and therefore balls from different manufacturers will have different qualities in terms of play and durability. Deciding if you need foam, red, orange, or green is the easiest decision you will make since it is based on skill level and court length used. To make your ball selection after that, consider these **FACTS**.

FACT #1: Foam balls – Foam balls are manufactured in different densities, much like foam mattresses. Higher density = More durability = More consistent bounce. Prices on petroleum-based foam balls continue to escalate in recent years alongside prices at the gas pump. Just do the squeeze and bounce test yourself with different brand balls and you will easily feel the differences. OnCourt OffCourt foam balls are top-of-the-line 100% density.

FACT #2: Felt balls ... pressurized or not – At this time, most manufacturers are going with low pressure (**not** pressureless) felt transition balls. The red level balls are so low pressure that they will only minimally lose pressure over time. This is why no company puts them in sealed and pressurized cans. The orange balls will slowly lose some pressure over time but, generally speaking, it will take many months and hardly be noticeable. The green level balls are about half the pressure of regular 14 psi (pounds per square inch) tennis balls and will "soften" the most over time. This is partially why we offer them in buckets and cans. OnCourt OffCourt offers the orange and green balls both in buckets and pressurized numbered cans.

FACT #3: Felt ball durability concerns – One of the manufacturing “secrets” is the type of felt used on the outside of the balls. Polyester is the least expensive and least durable. Acrylic lasts significantly longer but is more expensive to produce. Some companies are experimenting with a blend and adding wool as well. All the OnCourt OffCourt balls are made from the higher quality Acrylic felt.

FACT #4: Felt ball markings – Red and orange are typically two-tone and the green dot is used on 78-foot courts in order to make the ball look more like the standard yellow ball. OnCourt OffCourt has been the industry innovator by putting numbers on all their orange and green level balls in cans. The concept is to help the children to start learning to take responsibility for the balls they are using.

FACT #5: Felt ball packaging – Convenience is the key in this category. Generally, you have 3 choices. Bucket, bag, or can. As mentioned earlier the low pressure green level ball is the only one that really can benefit from being stored in an unopened can.

FACT #6: Are balls profitable? – Ball profit margins are extremely tight. And, with discount programs and increasing freight costs on top of tight margins, it should come as no surprise that manufacturers are tempted to use lower quality materials to reduce their costs. Although it has not been an easy decision, we at OnCourt OffCourt have made a conscious decision to keep our standards high, regardless of shrinking profits on balls. Our decision is based on the goal of keeping our customers long term and satisfied with our products as much as possible.

SUMMARY

We tried to create this “Fact Sheet” to provide concise and user-friendly information to aid in purchase decisions. You may just have to test a few different balls to see which one suits your preferences in terms of playability AND price. Just realize that price is DIRECTLY connected to durability. The longer the balls perform at an acceptable level before needing to be replaced, the better the value. This is WHY we pay more to our factory-partners at OnCourt OffCourt. Our foam balls are denser and our felt balls are more durable.