

Head Intelligence i.Radical Racquet Review



Regardless of how successful a racquet is there comes a time when the manufacturer feels compelled to offer a new and improved version. The Head Ti. Radical is a good example. Endorsed by Andre Agassi, it's been one of the most popular selling racquets in recent history. Yet despite its success it's being replaced with a more technologically advanced Radical.

When Head introduced their Intelligence technology last year it was limited to use in game-improvement models (i.S10 & i.S12). However, everyone suspected an Intelligence Radical would soon find its way to market. Everyone was right. The i.Radical is Head's newest Andre Agassi endorsed racquet. It has many of the same characteristics found in the Ti. Radical but with the additional benefits of Intellifibers. Does the addition of Intellifibers make the Radical even better? We play tested both head sizes for 2 weeks. Here's what we learned.

i.Radical Midplus Groundstrokes

From the baseline the i.Radical MP swings easier than its predecessor, the Ti. Radical MP. Although their static weight is the same, at about 10.8 ounces, we measured a dynamic swing weight of 297 for the i.Radical MP compared to 312 for the Ti. Radical. Granville offers, "from the first groundstroke I liked this racquet a lot! Every now and then a racquet comes along that feels like 'butter' in my hands. This was the case with the i.Radical MP. Hit it hard and the ball travels deep in the corner. Roll over the ball for a crosscourt winner -

perfect! Serve the ball wide with spin - ace! Punch the volley crosscourt to within six inches of the sideline - winner! After several games of this I wondered if I could possibly keep up this level of play over an entire match. I also found the i.Radical MP soft on my arm, as well as the ball. The ball seems to sit on the strings longer than any other racquet I've tried. I could hit out and enjoy " Dan comments, "The i.Radical MP is a very comfortable racquet all-around. There was less torque off-center than I expected for a thinner beamed racquet in this category. Less torque always equates to more comfort when you're caught hitting off-center or late. The sweet spot, on the other hand, was cherry! It provided the feeling of hitting with a heavier weighted racquet while still providing good maneuverability, particularly on the run. Controlled slice and topspin are a large part of my game so open string patterns fit my game best. Despite the i.Radical's dense 18x20 pattern, hitting heavier slice and topspin shots was not as difficult as anticipated. I found good spin control, whether hitting a basic topspin forehand crosscourt or attacking with a sliced backhand down the line. The confidence was there and I really never gave the pattern a second thought after a few sets of play."

John says, "Being more comfortable with oversize racquets I was surprised by how much I liked the playability of this racquet. From the first warm-up shot I found the i.Radical MP extremely stable, dampened and maneuverable. It suited my swing speed to a tee. I could wind up and give the ball a ride deep into my opponent's court. I was also surprised with the amount of spin I was able to generate with the dense string pattern. As expected, this thinner beam racquet is more about control than power. However, it was fun to take a big swing and send the ball crosscourt or down the line with adequate pace. The racquet's maneuverability allowed me to return even the deepest and hardest hit shots. Off-center shots resulted in very little torque or twisting. Balls hit high in the string bed, though, did generate some vibration and pushed the racquet head around." Don adds, "similar to the Ti. Radical MP, I was pleasantly surprised with the overall performance of this racquet. Even though it's a little underpowered for my game I enjoyed its maneuverable, yet solid feel, and control. It has a somewhat dampened feel, but was noticeably stiffer than the Ti. Radical. This extends beyond the throat area, where Intellifibers have been added, making me think Head has stiffened the upper hoop too. There's just not the same flexy feel as the Ti.. Radical MP. This seems to improve stability but results in slightly less comfort and feel. Like other play testers, I expected problems generating topspin and slice with the dense string pattern. However, I never found myself lacking for spin control. Granted, our playtest racquets were equipped with 17 gauge string. Some of my best groundstrokes were sharp, angled topspin shots."

Volleys

The i.Radical MP is impressively maneuverable at net but still favors accomplished volleyers. Dan offers, "the mobility of this racquet allows for great movement at net. As with groundstrokes, it has a very comfortable feel; 'plush' might be a good word. The racquet has enough flexibility and give to hit touch angles and effective drop shots but retains enough stiffness to hit penetrating volleys. John adds, "the i.Radical MP was solid on volleys. I had no trouble controlling them but I wasn't able to generate the pace or depth that I'm used to. Again, off-center shots didn't twist the racquet unless struck at the very top of the string bed. Above-average maneuverability made it easy to get up and hit aggressive overheads. Granville comments, "the light weight and head-light balance make this racquet all but lethal at net. The i.Radical MP seems to offer the maneuverability benefits of a lightweight racquet while retaining the stability and solid feel of a heavier racquet. Fast for speed and soft for touch, this racquet is like a scalpel in the right

hands." Don says, "I liked being able to get to almost any shot thanks to the i.Radical MP's nimbleness. The only downside was that unless I was in position and able to move forward many of my volleys lacked punch. Good touch and angle shots though."

Serves

For most of our play testers the i.Radical MP was a good, but not great serving racquet. Don comments, "I loved the feel of swinging this racquet on serves. I could swing it fast and generate pretty good power. Not as much power as with heavier, more head-light racquets, but I was able to place the ball almost at will. Also, I was pleasantly surprised with the amount of spin I could generate on second serves, given the denser string pattern." John adds, "although I was able to generate decent racquet head speed, I couldn't hit serves with as much pace as with my own racquet. The good news is that I could move the ball around well and hit kick and spin serves with depth." Granville continues, "if there is a chink in the armor of this racquet it lies in the serve. Despite my best efforts, I just didn't feel I was getting the same power on first serves that I'm used to. Spin? Yes. Comfort? Oh yes. Blazing speed on aces up the middle? No." Dan offers, "whether it's the construction or weight-to-balance ratio, this racquet has big serving capability in the right hands. Better yet, I found great control whether slicing out wide or serving a kicker to the backhand corner of the ad court. Again, I didn't find the dense string pattern as spin inhibiting as I had expected."

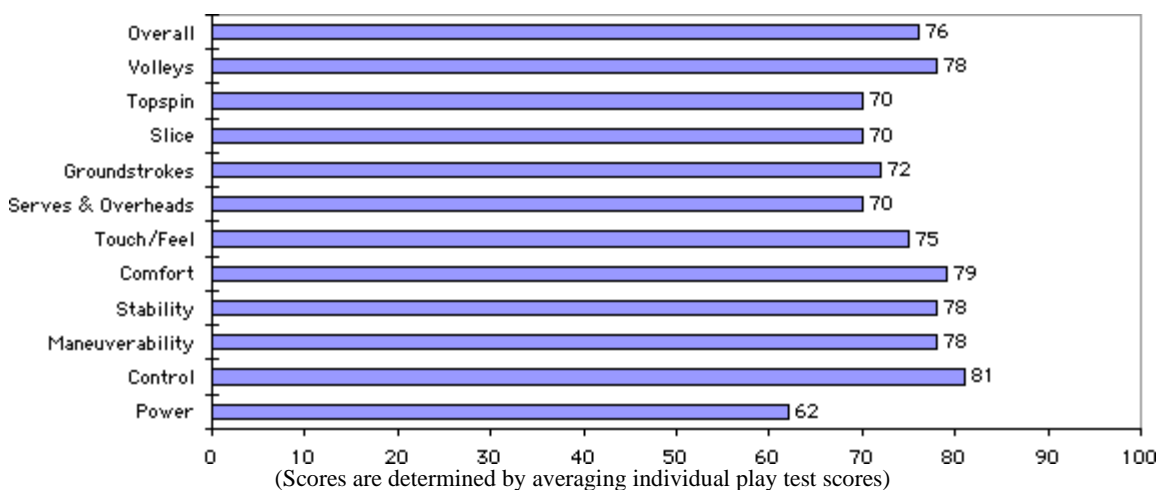
Returns

The i.Radical MP allows for quick response to hard-hit serves but requires the user to provide at least some of the power. Dan explains, "regardless of (or perhaps because of) this racquet's weight, it still requires decent swing speed for depth on returns. Half-swings and blocked returns came up short. Fortunately, the i.Radical MP is mobile enough to take a good swing against most serves." John says, "I enjoyed returning serve with this racquet and was able to get to just about any serve, whether hit directly at me or out wide. Against hard serves I could place the ball well. When I had a good look at slower first or second serves I was able to generate decent pace on my returns. In short, I found a good balance between pace and control." Don offers, "about what I expected on returns. If I didn't take at least some swing my returns were short and weak. This was most evident on blocked, backhand returns. However, I could maneuver the racquet enough against most serves to generate decent power. Against second serves, I found it most effective to swing away rather than attempt to chip and charge. Too many of these shots just didn't have enough sting to pressure my opponent."

Summary

The i.Radical Midplus isn't a lot different than the Ti Radical Midplus, but the subtle changes are noticeable when comparing these racquets side-by-side. The i.Radical MP is stiffer and swings a little lighter, while still delivering a dampened, controlled feel. Players who generate their own power and are seeking stability and control in a lighter racquet should take the i.Radical Midplus for a test drive.

i.Radical Midplus Technical & Statistical Data



Technical Specifications

Length	27 inches	69 centimeters
	98 square	632 square
Head Size	inches	centimeters
Weight	10.8 ounces	306 grams
	13.25 inches	
Balance	34	
Point	centimeters	2pts Head Light
Construction	21 mm Straight Beam	
	Graphite Composite	
	with Piezzo Electric	
Composition	Fibers in Shaft	
String		
Pattern	18 Mains / 20 Crosses	

Babolat RDC Ratings

ScoreGrade

		Range: 0-
Flex Rating	64	100
		Range:
Swing Weight	297	200-400
Maneuverability	89	

i.Radical Oversize

With most new racquets that are offered in two head sizes the spotlight is on the midplus since that's usually the head size endorsed by professional players. However, the i.Radical Oversize is probably going to get more attention than the midplus since this is the head size being used by Andre Agassi. Our play testers gave them both equal time and found that the i.Radical Oversize performed equal to or better than the Midplus in most situations.

Groundstrokes

The i.Radical Oversize swings even lighter than its Titanium predecessor but is no lightweight on groundstrokes. Dan offers, "it's not often that I find an oversize version of a model that rates higher than its midplus counterpart. I did this time. While I found the i.Radical MP very comfortable the oversize is extremely comfortable and had virtually the same maneuverability; a rare find. Better yet, spin control was increased. In a nutshell, I found all the benefits of the midplus with the increased sweet spot advantages of an oversize. For the first time I'm considering a switch to an oversize racquet." John adds, "like its 'little brother', I found the i.Radical OS to be stable and dampened. It does have noticeably more heft, dynamically, than the midplus and other racquets in this 11 ounce category. The larger head provided quite a bit more pop than the midplus. I could still 'swing out', but I didn't have the same confidence level keeping the ball in-court as with the midplus. Fortunately, the more open string pattern allowed me to generate needed spin from both sides for added control. There was good stability on off-center shots and balls hit high in the string bed. The racquet is so comfortable and quiet that a string dampener wasn't necessary."

Granville comments, "the i.Radical OS has the crisp response you'd expect from a midplus racquet. It seems a bit stiffer than the Ti Radical which gives the racquet a bit more 'spice', but my first few shots were landing a bit short. Hitting out is the way to play with this racquet. After finding my groove I was driving the ball deep, down the line and to the corners. Being used to midplus racquets I'm sensitive to the 'floppy' feel when hitting balls off-center with oversize models. The i.Radical has this, but to a lesser extent than the Ti Radical or some other oversize racquets." Don continues, "I felt comfortable from the start hitting groundies with the i.Radical OS. It offers a comfortable feel and good heft, more than I'd expect of a racquet with a 302 swing weight! In fact, I had the feeling I was swinging with a heavier racquet. The power level was just right for my game and I was hitting with complete confidence. Good spin was possible thanks to the string bed being less dense in the 107 square inch head. I liked the dampened feel and added comfort compared to the midplus. Also, I think the i.Radical OS' firmer feel is an advantage over the Ti Radical OS. There's less frame wobble on balls hit high in the string bed and enhanced stability on balls hit off-center."

Volleys

The i.Radical OS is very net-friendly for a variety of player types. John offers, "I had a lot of fun hitting volleys with this racquet. The larger sweet spot encouraged me to come in at every opportunity. I was able to generate more pace and depth than with the midplus without loss of control, and the racquet was relatively stable when I didn't hit the sweet spot. At 11 ounces, the i.Rad OS was quite maneuverable at net and I had no problems getting to most shots." Dan comments, "as with the midplus, mobility was outstanding and the sweet spot was even more comfortable. Although a bit more power was evident, the wider string spacing gave me confidence to produce sharp angles and risky touch shots - with success." Granville says, "the i.Radical OS offers excellent maneuverability combined with a crisp and lively sweet spot. At net I could really feel the extra power afforded by the oversize head. Compared to the midplus it felt a little 'springy', which isn't uncommon (to me) for oversize racquets. Nonetheless, I was able to quickly adapt to this added power and enjoyed this racquet at net." Don adds, "the i.Radical OS is a natural at net. It's maneuverable, yet stable. It's got plenty of punch, yet retains impressive control. I liked the added spin potential too, which allowed me to hit some deft touch and drop volleys. The only thing missing was a 1/2 inch of added length.."

Serves

Serving with the i.Radical OS is a pleasant experience. It delivers adequate power, good spin control and impressive comfort. Granville comments, "I liked the control offered by the i.Radical OS on serves. I was able to generate a bit more power with the oversize than the midplus and still place the ball with confidence. I was pleased with the power and comfort when serving with this racquet." John adds, "having played with an oversize racquet for several years I found a familiar friend when serving with the i.Radical OS. I could generate plenty of racquet head speed for the pace and depth I'm used to. Spin and kick serves were accomplished with ease."

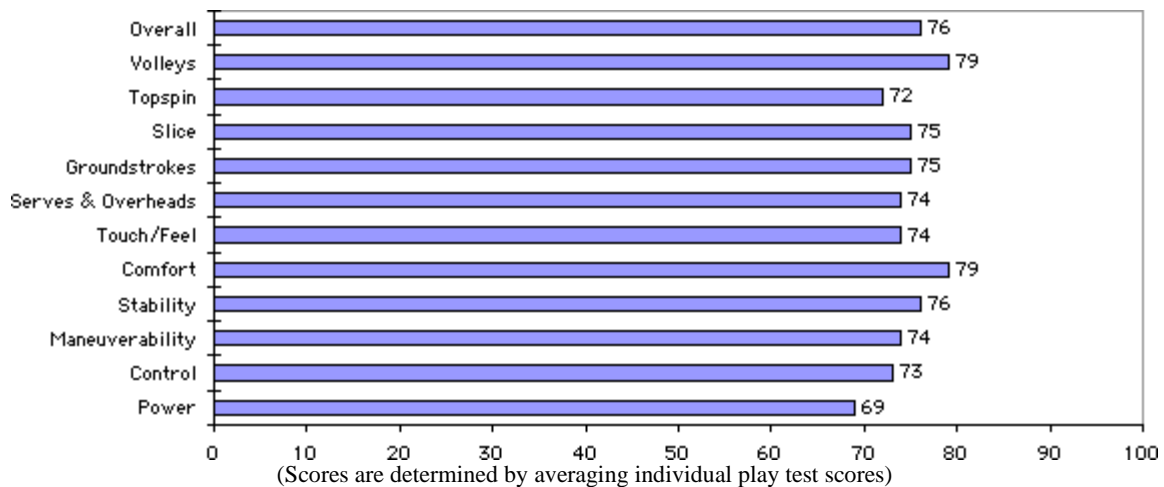
Returns

The i.Radical OS is versatile when it comes to returning serves; it's stable and powerful enough for effective block returns, yet maneuverable enough to take a swing against most serves. John comments, "I was able to hit predictable returns with the i.Radical OS. Despite not being as quick as the midplus, it's still light enough to readily prepare for returns. I was able to hit most returns with the pace and direction I intended." Dan offers, "not surprisingly, I found a bit more power on returns with the oversize compared to the midplus. More importantly, spin control was increased, particularly when it came to playing defense against big serves. I could slice my backhand return with ease at the feet of my net-rushing opponent." Granville says, "control is in your hands on returns with the i.Radical OS. Smart players are going to get the ball back against almost any serve. If you can get this racquet on the ball you should get it back across the net. After limited practice I was blocking back the big serves, punching returns down the line and cross-court, and driving the ball back up the middle." Don adds, "unlike some oversize racquets the i.Radical OS wasn't sluggish on returns. As with volleys it's nimble yet stable. I could set the racquet and block back flat first serves with good pace and placement. Against the majority of serves I could be more aggressive and take a good swing at the ball. It's one of those racquets that boosted my confidence on returns, normally one of my weakest shots."

Summary

The i.Radical Oversize delivers all the benefits associated with a 107 square inch racquet BUT with only a few of the disadvantages. It's more agile and a little stiffer than the Ti Radical Oversize. This isn't better or worse, just different. Regardless, we were impressed with this racquet's blend of characteristics, making it one of our favorites in the lightweight oversize player's category. If you're looking for an oversize racquet that plays like a midplus we encourage you to demo the i.Radical Oversize and experience it for yourself.

i.Radical Oversize Technical & Statistical Data



Technical Specifications

Length	27 inches	69 centimeters
	107 square	690 square
Head Size	inches	centimeters
Weight	11 ounces	312 grams
Balance	13 inches	
Point	33 centimeters	4pts Head Light
Construction	21 mm Straight Beam	
	Graphite Composite	
	with Piezzo Electric	
Composition	Fibers in Shaft	
String		
Pattern	18 Mains / 19 Crosses	

Babolat RDC

Ratings

ScoreGrade

Flex Rating	62	Range: 0-100
Swing Weight	302	Range: 200-400
Maneuverability	85	

Play tester Profiles

Dan	5.5 all-court player currently using a Prince Triple Threat Warrior MP.
Don	4.5 all-court player currently using a Yonex Ultimum RQ Ti-1700 MP.
Granville	5.5 all-court player currently using a Wilson Hyper ProStaff 6.1 95.
John	4.5 all-court player currently using a Prince Triple Threat Warrior OS.

Review date: October, 2001. If you found this review interesting or have further questions or comments please [contact us](#).

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