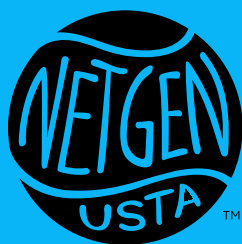


# USTA

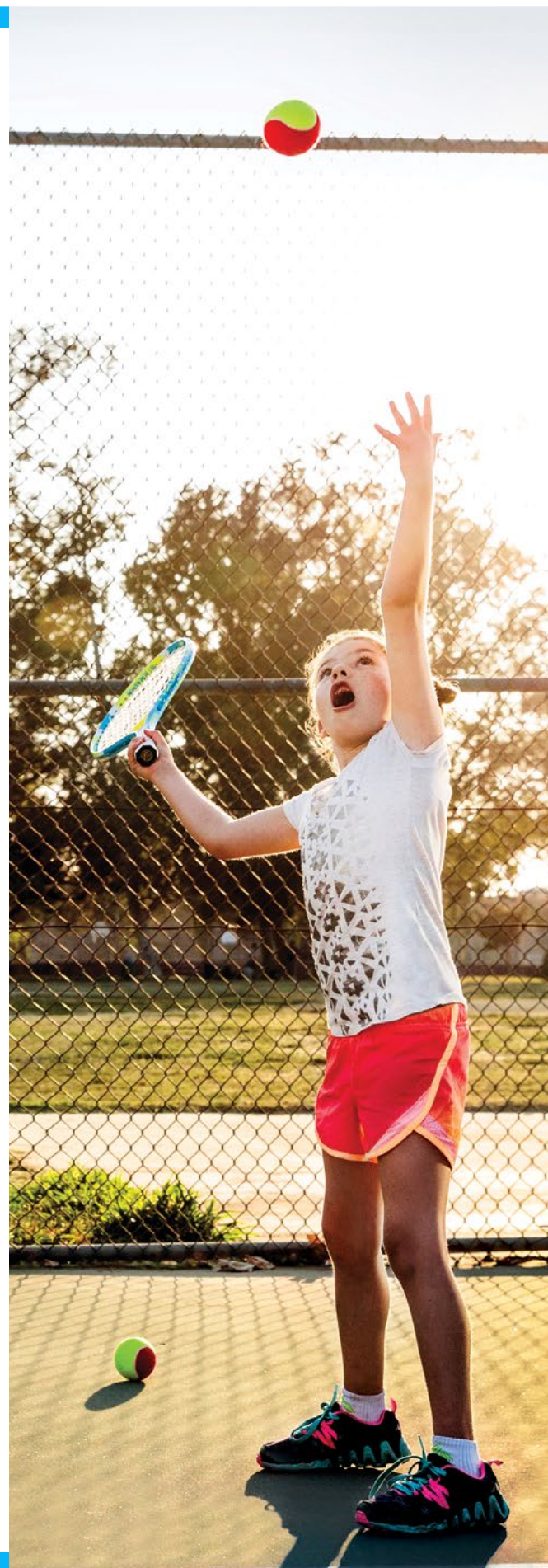
# Junior Playbook

**BUILT ON THE FOUNDATIONS OF  
DISCOVERING YOUR FUN,  
DEVELOPING YOUR PLAY,  
AND PLAYING YOUR WAY**



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# Welcome

I'm excited to introduce the USTA Junior Playbook. This thorough and informative guide to junior tennis is the product of years of research and study, and represents the most comprehensive roadmap this association has ever produced for getting more young people into our lifetime sport.

It is so very important that we make the junior tennis pathway a positive and enjoyable experience for our youngest players. Whatever their goals may be in this game, we need to make the process of realizing those goals easy and fun so that we can keep them in the game. That's not only a crucial element in growing our sport, but for many young people, it can be a critical element to achieving a better—and healthier—life. If we can give these young players a positive start in our sport, our potential for growth is unlimited. And so is theirs.

You'll see that this Playbook is constructed around the "Three P's," Philosophy, Play, and Play into Competition. Those three P's serve as the building blocks for our pathway. Learning, understanding, and practicing each of those ensures that young players can advance more easily, without experiencing the roadblocks or detours of the past. Guided by the principles in this handbook, young players can experience our sport in a fun, safe environment, and make the most of their experience in the game, whether they decide to play it simply for fun or for competition. Our junior pathway now is an unobstructed highway to a more successful and more robust future. The sport for a lifetime now has a definitive starting point.

I congratulate and applaud everyone who had a hand in the development of this Playbook, particularly Craig Morris, Dr. Karl Davies, Dr. Brian Hainline, and the entire Community Tennis Team and Section Staff. This was a project borne of necessity, and completed with particular passion. This is not only a remarkable achievement, but also an indispensable roadmap to the future of our sport, and an important tool for the USTA's mission to grow tennis.

I know that you'll enjoy it and find it useful.



Michael J. McNulty III  
USTA Chairman and President

# Foreward

Welcome to the United States Tennis Association's (USTA) Junior Playbook. We have come a long way from our prior junior playbook – Positioning Youth Tennis for Success. Further research on the latest sport science trends and discussions with stakeholders like yourself have brought us to a more holistic, comprehensive and shareholder-influenced approach to a junior tennis pathway that reflects the best of the American Development Model. This pathway provides a player-centered approach that allows any young player to excel in their tennis journey.

The three P's of the Junior Playbook are Philosophy, Play, and Play into Competition. Philosophy covers the USTA's Youth Brand – Net Generation, the USTA's American Development Model, and SafeSport's Safe Play program. Play speaks to how kids can find their fun in tennis and explore what our great lifetime sport can mean to them. Play into Competition speaks to when, from a play and skill development point-of-view, kids are ready to take that leap into a competition environment that promotes fun, retention, and athletic and tennis skill development.

The mission of the USTA, to promote and develop the growth of tennis, grounds us in our commitment to bettering youth tennis outcomes. The Junior Playbook is a framework on how the USTA can work within a tennis and youth sport ecosystem to not only grow the game, but to also produce life-long tennis athletes coupled with a pathway for elite tennis athlete development. This framework represents an evidence-based long-term strategy to enhance the health, wellness and athleticism of every tennis player. We are confident that each tennis player's experience is enhanced by applying the core philosophy and vision of the Junior Playbook.

We sincerely hope you will rally around our Junior Playbook. By formulating a teamwork approach to growing our game and to creating environments conducive to lifelong tennis enjoyment, more Americans can love and excel in tennis – the model sport of America!



Brian Hainline, MD  
NCAA Chief Medical Officer  
USTA First Vice President



# Where we were

## INTRODUCTION

Competition is an opportunity to evaluate one's ability and a journey seeking reward. The aim is to be the best you can be and the goal is to become an improved tennis player. The competitive format and structure encourage certain habits and behaviors. For this reason, the framework, or what we call a playbook, of a competitive system is vital to eliciting the behavior desired from one's athletes.

This playbook guides a player's progression through the sport, realizing that the desired goals and outcomes of players will vary greatly. Some will choose to play recreationally; some will become serious competitors. Some will strive to play tennis professionally. Ultimately, the hope is that all players will "play for life," reaping the physical, social, and emotional benefits that tennis provides.



# Where we're going

## VISION

Offer individualized play and success to support a lifelong love of tennis.

## MISSION

Seek to attract, engage, and retain players of all ages and abilities by supporting safety, fun, and an athlete-centered approach while developing the champions of tomorrow.

# Competition Trends

In 2017, an internal audit of the junior competition landscape was conducted by the USTA. Here are some findings from that audit:

- Two competition offerings of Tournaments and Team Tennis. Also, in wheelchair tennis, there were hardly any players playing.
- Since 2004, the National Governing body has used a points-per-round system (PPR) to rank players competing in tournaments and incentivize play in those events.
- The lack of nationwide use of a rating tool to construct level-based competition.
- Poor retention figures from one tournament to the next and from one team season to another.
- Lack of a clear development pathway on where players can enter and continue on a player's pathway that they can define. There was no pathway for wheelchair junior tennis.
- Digital challenges by providers in running competition events that promoted a great experience.

The conclusion of this internal audit was to conduct research that would unearth the solutions to establishing a competitive pathway that would promote a fun, engaging, and player-centered experience.



# Research

In an effort to gain a better understanding of the weaknesses of its offerings for juniors and design events that meet their developmental needs, in 2018 the USTA engaged the University of Central Florida (UCF) to do an analysis of its competitive pathway.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The UCF research team was tasked to investigate key questions pertaining to the consistency and delivery of competitive junior tennis, and the overall player experience in an environment of heightened competition for junior sport:

- What are the factors underpinning engagement, commitment, and loyalty to competitive junior tennis and the USTA?
- What are the factors underpinning burnout and dropout in competitive junior tennis?
- What initiatives are other sports implementing to address the above factors in their respective sports?
- What are the views of the players, parents, coaches, and broader stakeholders on competitive junior tennis and the USTA?

We spoke to a large number of American tennis stakeholders to gain a better understanding of the current state of competitive play. We also looked beyond U.S. tennis to other national tennis federations and other sports governing bodies to determine current and future trends in measuring and evaluating competitors' abilities.

## DATA SOURCES

<b>Quantitative survey</b>	<b>2,897</b> Coaches	<b>7,821</b> Parents	<b>15,924</b> Players (aged 13-18)	<b>65</b> YMCA
<b>Qualitative interviews</b>	<b>15</b> Parent interviews	<b>10</b> Stakeholder interviews	<b>15</b> Coach interviews	
<b>International organizations</b>	International Tennis Federation	The Aspen Institute	Canadian Sport for Life	

## National Governing Bodies

US Lacrosse	USA Hockey	French Tennis Federation
British Lawn Tennis Association	Tennis Australia	Tennis Canada
Spanish Tennis Federation	PGA Golf of America	USA Field Hockey





## RESEARCH FINDINGS

Based on the research, players, coaches and parents want:

- Competition events that are local, easy to locate and register.
- Competition events that offer a great experience.
- Availability of ranking and rating competitions.
- Competition that is affordable and supports multi-sport participation.
- Progression through the ball color of modified equipment program that is based on skill development and, adaptations for players with a disability.
- Team competition events that are available to all skills levels.

By focusing on these key pieces, the USTA can position itself with its youth brand, “Net Generation,” to lead junior tennis progressively into the future.

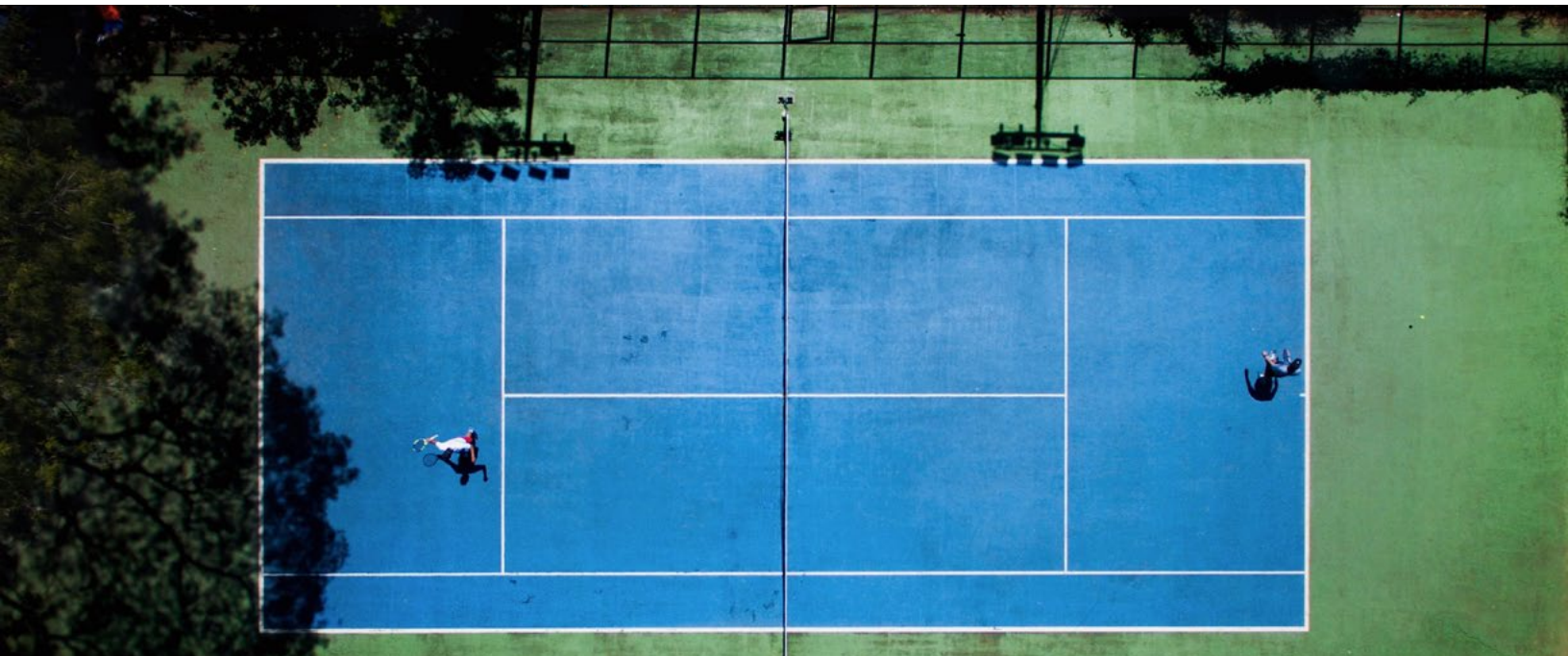
# Task Force

From the findings of the UCF research and a USTA Junior Symposium that took place at the 2018 USTA Annual Meeting in La Costa, California, six task forces were assembled to tackle the pertinent challenges of junior tennis competition. The task forces consisted of competition providers, volunteers, national staff, and section staff, and were focused on the following:

- Team Play
- American Development Model
- Parent Education
- Tournaments
- Youth Progression (10 and under pathway)
- Junior Wheelchair Tennis

# Digital Evolution

The experience for all players participating in tennis is paramount to fostering engagement, and all touchpoints need to be considered. The digital experience was deemed as a high priority in making sure tennis play and competition was easy to find and register. Taking this perspective into consideration, an evaluation of the digital system that ran USTA play and competition events was needed. The result was the development of a new digital competition technology called “Serve Tennis.”



# What guides us: The 3 P's



The USTA used the UCF research, along with engagement with the most respected experts in the field, to develop the USTA Junior Playbook. The resulting practical outcomes can be summarized with aid of a 3 P's methodology - Philosophy, Play, and Play into Competition.

# Philosophy

The first P is Philosophy. Under this method, Net Generation, USTA's American Development Model, and USTA Safe Play program are foundational elements of positioning junior competition to support holistic junior development in making sure all athletes have fun and play for a lifetime.

## NET GENERATION

The USTA, as a National Governing Body (NGB), needed to closely examine and analyze its own impact on American juniors through sport. After extensive marketing and tennis product research, the solution was Net Generation, a youth brand that resonates with and unites all junior tennis programming stakeholders and players ages 5-18 under one umbrella and, for the first time ever, included wheelchair tennis.

Net Generation shows tennis as a game where no child sits on the sidelines; where all children discover, develop, and play at their own pace; and where the skills and lessons they learn on the court can be used for life. With Net Generation, the USTA aims to provide tools that can reimagine what tennis can mean for each player and parent that supports a positive, engaging, and safe environment. All providers who engage with juniors are required to complete the USTA Safe Play program, which involves continued education and a background screening. The USTA whole-heartedly believes in the protection and safety of juniors in sports, and as such, fully pays for each provider Safe Play screening.

With Net Generation, the USTA goal is to spread the love of tennis to a new diverse generation by empowering those who teach them. Coaches, organizers, and teachers can gain access to the expertise of a worldwide network of industry leaders to develop new play formats, curricula, and digital tools. Net Generation is innovation in action. It explores a new generation, has accommodations for those who need extra help, and is manifesting a new era of tennis.



**“The USTA Junior Playbook is brilliant. It represents a major step forward in that it elegantly establishes the importance of play in the development of the competitive athlete – that love of game is not just key to growing broad-based participation in the sport, but achieving success at the highest levels. The Playbook is fully aligned with the Children’s Bill of Rights in Sports, which recognizes the principles under which sport programs should engage kids.”**



*Tom Farrey - Executive Director, Sports & Society Program, The Aspen Institute*

## USTA'S AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT MODEL (ADM)

The overall goal of the ADM is twofold: (a) to increase years of healthy living for all U.S. citizens, and (b) to increase the number of elite-level players in the pipeline. With this backdrop, it is important to look within the competitive landscape that detracts from this goal. Some of these are controversial issues, but they need consideration to ensure juniors can, and will, choose to play sports for a lifetime.

### ***How Is Competition Structured To Reward Developmental Appropriateness?***

For the USTA to offer a developmentally appropriate competitive pathway, a holistic and player-centered approach is required. This holistic and player-centered approach involves the consideration of a variety of concepts, as detailed below.

As junior tennis players move through their tennis journey, their experiences, from both training and play perspectives, should change and adjust to help them improve their abilities. Competition can and should always be a part of that journey, but it needs to be structured appropriately depending on where the player is on the journey.

The following points should be well thought out with regard to modifying competition for juniors and are encompassed within the USTA's pathway:

- Optimal sport-specific competition-to-training ratios are needed for all stages of the ADM.
- The level and duration of the competition should be in tune with the changing needs of the athlete's tennis journey.
- Developmentally appropriate competition is crucial to technical, tactical, physical, and mental development at all stages of the ADM.
- The parent, player, and coach follow a teamwork approach that needs to be on the same page with competition/training choices that are geared toward meeting development goals.
- Traditional, current structures of competition need to be adapted—particularly in the junior space—to be kid-centered and not following an adult approach.
- Rating and ranking events need to be made available for players to make choices on what format best suits them.
- Ensuring that players are having fun, social, and meaningful competition experiences.
- Tournament and team competitions need to be available to all players irrespective of their age and ability.
- No rankings should be used in competitions for 10 and Under tennis.

**“For players of all ages—being challenged, learning, and improving, and having opportunities to compete and ultimately develop into better players—these are the determinants that research has shown makes participating in sport, fun.”**



*Dr. Amanda Visek - Associate Professor George Washington University*

Overall, it is important to consider how to structure and administer competition, as it needs to be relevant to the athlete's development. Introducing children to high-pressure competition before they have developed the skills and capacities necessary for coping will likely have a negative impact and could cause dropout and prevent them from taking advantage of the benefits of tennis as a lifetime sport.

## **SAFE PLAY**

The USTA is committed to providing a safe and respectful environment for athletes to thrive in. Safe Play is the USTA's comprehensive athlete safety program consisting of education, screening, reporting tools, and policies for appropriate conduct in tennis. The USTA works with the U.S. Center for SafeSport and the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee to develop the Safe Play policies, procedures, and educational resources to support the USTA Safe Play program.

### **Safe Play Approval**

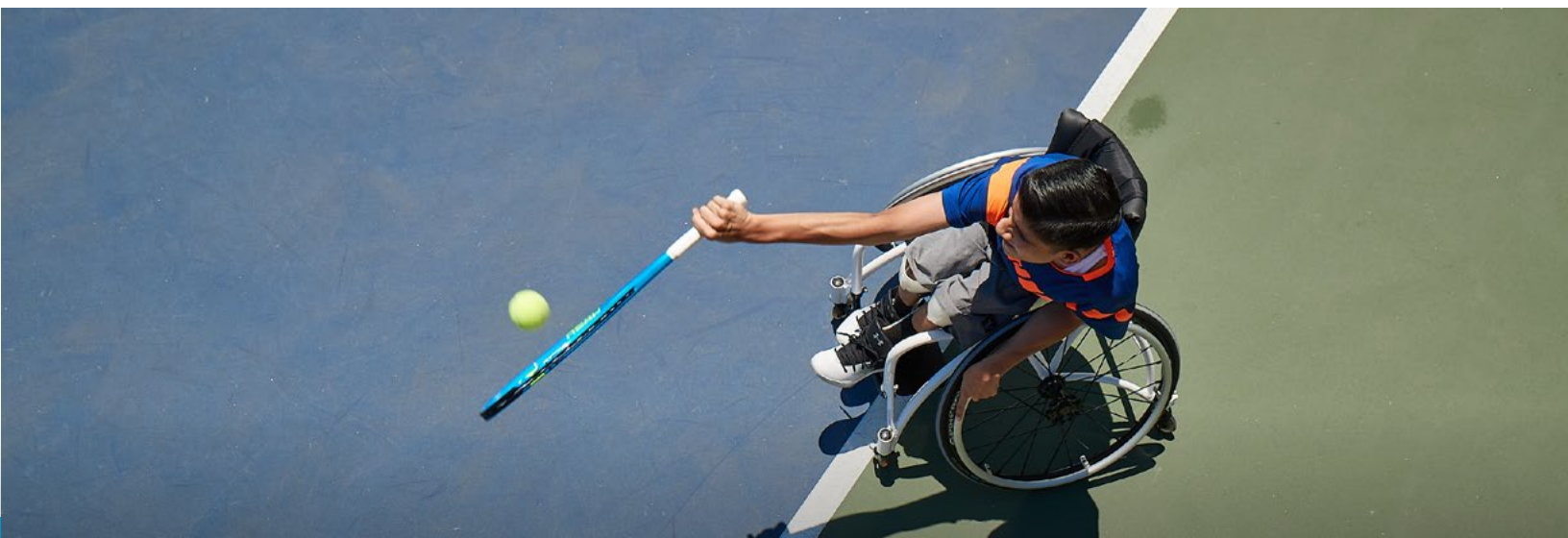
Adults who have regular contact with or authority over minor athletes in USTA, USTA Sectional Association or subdivisions of USTA Sectional Association programs, events, or tournaments must be Safe Play Approved. The Safe Play Approval process includes education about preventing misconduct in sport, background screening, and reviewing the USTA Safe Play Policy. This process can be completed from [www.usta.com/safeplay](http://www.usta.com/safeplay).

### **Safe Play Policy – Proactive Policies**

Governing the Safe Play Program is the USTA Safe Play Policy. The Safe Play Policy provides, among other things, the USTA's Safe Play Proactive Policies to limit one-on-one interactions between adults and minors. Clearly outlined boundaries help foster the safe and respectful environment in which athletes thrive. Please visit <https://www.usta.com/en/home/safe-play/safe-play-policy-highlights-for-parents-and-players.html> for highlights of the Safe Play Proactive Policies for parents and players.

### **Reporting**

Violations (or a suspicion of a violation) of the USTA Safe Play Policy or the Proactive Policies must be reported to the USTA immediately. These reports and any other suspicions you believe the USTA should be made aware of can be made by visiting [www.usta.com/safeplay/report](http://www.usta.com/safeplay/report) or emailing [safeplay@usta.com](mailto:safeplay@usta.com).



## **RECOGNIZING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IS KEY TO CLOSING GAPS IN THE AVAILABILITY AND QUALITY OF SPORT PROGRAMS.**

Developed by the Aspen Institute through its Project Play initiative, with a working group of human rights and sports policy experts, the Children’s Bill of Rights in Sports, **supported by the USTA**, identifies eight rights:

- 1. To play sports.**  
Organizations should make every effort to accommodate children’s interests to participate, and to help them play with peers from diverse backgrounds.
- 2. To safe and healthy environments.**  
Children have the right to play in settings free from all forms of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual), hazing, violence, and neglect.
- 3. To qualified program leaders.**  
Children have the right to play under the care of coaches and other adults who pass background checks and are trained in key competencies.
- 4. To developmentally appropriate play.**  
Children have a right to play at a level commensurate with their physical, mental and emotional maturity, and their emerging athletic ability. They should be treated as young people first, athletes second.
- 5. To share in the planning and delivery of their activities.**  
Children have the right to share their viewpoints with coaches and for their insights to be incorporated into activities.
- 6. To an equal opportunity for personal growth.**  
Programs should invest equally in all child athletes, free of discrimination based on any personal or family characteristic.
- 7. To be treated with dignity.**  
Children have the right to participate in environments that promote the values of sportsmanship, of respect for opponents, officials, and the game.
- 8. To enjoy themselves.**  
Children have the right to participate in activities they consider fun, and which foster the development of friendships and social bonds.



# Play

The second method is Play. Play is engaging in physical activity for reasons of enjoyment and having fun. The following principles support developing more play opportunities for juniors. The USTA has applied these principles to engage more children in tennis play through school and after-school programming.



## PRINCIPLES

- Universal Access and Opportunity – Make sure playing tennis is safe, accessible, local, and affordable.
- Developmentally Appropriate Coaching and Play – Emphasize movement skills through developmentally appropriate coaching and play.
- Support Multi-sport or Multi-activity Participation – Build athletes through a multi-sport approach within tennis programming and cross-promotion with other sports and activities.
- Fun and Player-Centered – Focus on creating a fun, positive, engaging atmosphere within an inclusive team culture rather than wins and losses.
- Educate Coaches and Officials – Ensure diverse coaches and officials engaged with all ages and abilities are appropriately trained..

## APPLICATION

### Schools

Teachers help shape the future of kids every day, and tennis is an excellent sport to help in that mission. Studies show that juniors who play tennis are more likely to engage in healthy behaviors and volunteer in the community. The USTA created the Net Generation suite of tools and resources ,including wheelchair tennis curriculum, with teachers in mind and with their help, we can inspire kids to get active—and stay active!

### After-School programming

After-school programs are a key part of developing future tennis players and fans and also serve as an important resource for juniors. After-school programs keep youngsters safe, providing a positive alternative to the streets or hanging out at home alone without parental supervision. After-school programs also have academic benefits, and engage children by offering a range of creative, hands-on learning and enrichment activities.

Tennis is an ideal sport to introduce play in after-school programs. Successful programs use tennis as a hook to introduce young people not only to tennis, but also to effective life skills, critical thinking habits, and the positive virtues of determination, hard work, and sportsmanship. There are resources available for after-school programs that incorporate tennis through NetGeneration.com, including Tennis 101 curriculum for teaching large groups.



## Coaching

The coach is an integral part of a player’s development and continued engagement with tennis. Quality coaching empowers players to develop their playing skills. The coach can also promote the fun element of discovering the game. Player centering is needed by the coach to develop those skills to build the player’s game and promote them playing for a lifetime. The quality of coaching directly affects the quality of the athlete’s sports experience. Appropriate coaching skills can assist athletes in obtaining their full potential and inspiring a long love of sport and physical activity.

The need to develop the whole athlete should be a consideration for all coaching goals and objectives leading to actions. This requires the coach to understand the person or player first before the techniques of the sport. Coaching for an athlete’s holistic development and well-being requires assessing the emotional, personal, cultural, and social identity of each athlete. The coach is also required to evaluate how the athlete’s identity influences sports development and performance. This applies to the entire athlete development spectrum—from young children to professional athletes. Moreover, for those coaches who do not have much experience with wheelchair tennis, the curriculum provides step-by-step instructions.

Coaches are encouraged to develop their coaching skills that cater to their individual needs. There are many ways to access coaching resources supporting best practice information. We recommend that the educational pathways coaches pursue bring them to certification and guide them to continued professional development, thereby becoming lifelong learners of our great lifetime sport.

## Modified equipment

Starting to play the game of tennis using tennis modified equipment helps individuals of all ages discover fun. Developing skills become easier, as the equipment is appropriate to their level of play. How players progress through the modified equipment program is entirely dependent on the individual. This should be done based on skill development and success.

The justification for scaling sports for children is strong. Consider seven-year-olds playing basketball on a full-scale court with a full-sized ball, or six-year-olds playing tennis on a full-size court, with a full-sized racket, and a ball that bounces over their heads. In both examples, children will experience difficulty in achieving successful play.

**“My parents believed in being multi-sport athletes, and we were lucky enough to have a tennis coach with a passion for competition. All four kids became professional tennis players, with three attaining number one in the world in either singles or doubles.”**



*Emilio Sanchez-Vicario - Former No. 1 Doubles player*

**“Good coaching for youth has to be developmentally appropriate. That is why we have the American Development Model which focuses on long term athlete development, but it is based on fundamentals...with a Capital FUN!”**



*Dr. Brian Hainline - Chief Medical Officer NCAA*

As part of the USTA's Net Generation youth brand, curricula have been created following established competencies for each stage of a modified equipment program. By having competencies for each stage, coaches can guide their athletes as they take their personalized journey to the yellow ball.

The use of modified equipment is an influential component of introducing the game of tennis to beginner and intermediate players of all ages for the USTA's ADM. A comprehensive approach was taken when putting the curriculum together to engage coaches of all profiles from PE teachers, to non-certified coaches, and certified coaches. The progressions in play with modified equipment are also represented in competition events. Team competitions are available in all three balls colors with tournaments available in orange and green. For developmental reasons no 10 and under events offer rankings points.

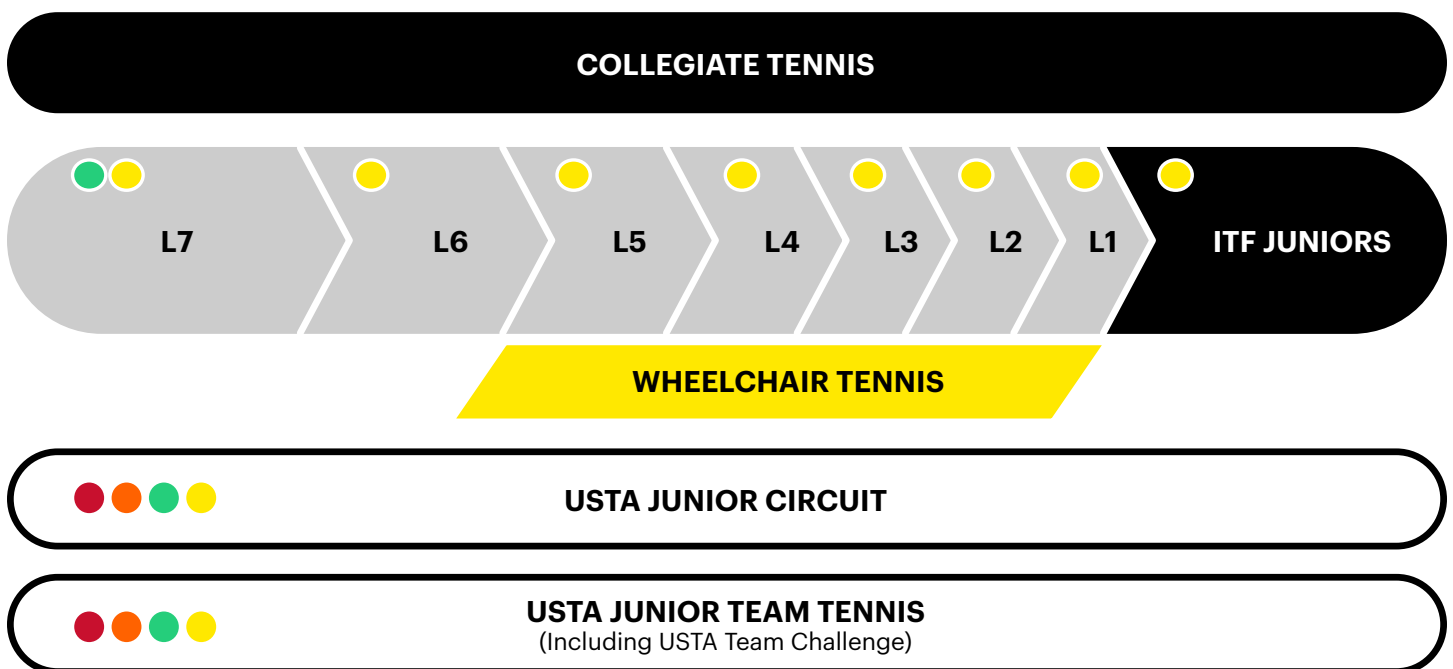
## Play into Competition

The third method is Play into Competition. Once confidence is obtained through developing tennis skills, the natural progression is playing competition. Having fun and developing playing skills contribute to retention in the game. Having information and guidance to choose the right competition and making sure it is developmentally appropriate, helps build that foundation of play for a lifetime.

**"My first coach was very good at the fundamentals. I have become a big fan of modified equipment over the past few years. Red, Orange, and Green balls and smaller courts allow young players the opportunity to develop better technique at a young age. It is very difficult to correct a stroke later in the pathway."**



*Ivan Lendl - Eight-time Grand Slam singles champion*



## PRINCIPLES

- Parent/Player Guidance, Education, Health, and Transparency – Provide parents and players the information they need to guide their healthy tennis development.
- A Clear Development Pathway – Integrate tennis into physical education programs in schools and recreational community programs, and transition into age, skill-based programs, ability-based programs, and play opportunities.

## APPLICATION

### ***Tennis Competition Journey***

Tennis is luck to be able to offer play opportunities in both individual and team formats. A team can range from playing doubles, to a league with 8 other people. Playing on a team offers many opportunities to play with a wide range of people anywhere from brother and sister, to school friends, relatives, or even your next-door neighbor. All-in-all, everyone loves to play on a team as it is a great opportunity to meet new friends and have fun. Also, uniquely, per the rules of tennis, wheelchair players are allowed to compete alongside their able-bodied friends in any facet of competition from tournaments, high school tennis, college, adults, and the pros!

The child's journey starts with developing tennis skills at the local tennis facility under the guidance of the coach. Once a level of comfort is achieved, conversations start on when is the right time to make the leap to competition. This decision should be made collectively with the player, parent, and coach. That first competitive experience should be done in a low-pressure environment. The play format, considering it involves beginner tennis players, should involve modified equipment that is appropriate to the age and ability of the player. With increased competence transition can be made to the next ball color. Once confidence is established play can progress to team competitions at other facilities and playing against different players. The focus needs to be on playing opponents of the same ability. The play format, considering it involves beginner tennis players, should involve modified equipment that is appropriate to the age and ability of the player. With increased competence players can transition to the next ball color. Play formats can be stand-alone or part of a league. Play opportunities can then progress to playing for a school team or for a rating and/or ranking. A potential transition from junior team competition can be collegiate tennis and maybe by way of a scholarship. Even on the professional stage, team competition is very popular with events like Davis Cup, Billie Jean King Cup, World Team Cup (wheelchair tennis), and Laver Cup.

**“It is important at the early stages of kids competing, that the encouragement is about just playing. It’s not about winning and losing, it’s about playing and having a good time.”**



*Paul Annacone - Broadcaster and former coach of Pete Sampras and Roger Federer.*

**“For me, hard work and fun went together. Doing something I loved created the confidence to compete at the highest level.”**



*Ivan Lendl - Eight-time Grand Slam singles champion*

For players who are just starting in the game to those competing at the highest levels, the USTA provides a pathway of programs to give kids the best opportunities to succeed and keep playing tennis. Through the USTA's American Development Model framework, players can learn to compete according to their age and ability. All of these programs offer different levels, formats, and schedules to accommodate growth and development:

### USTA TEAM CHALLENGE

- A fun, social introduction to tennis competition.
- Approx. 60 – 90 minutes long.
- Can sign-up for a single-day-event or series of up to six events.
- Focused more on the play, and not results.

### USTA JUNIOR TEAM TENNIS

- Local co-ed team-based match play.
- Matches are played in singles, doubles, and mixed doubles.
- Seasons typically played over a span of a 1 – 2 month period.
- Focused on team results and developing individual skills.

### USTA JUNIOR CIRCUIT

- A perfect introduction to tournament play.
- A single event, up to a half-day.
- Competitive environment, guaranteeing individual match play for all players.
- Players will play between 2 and 4 matches, based on flight sizes.

**“Fun means something different for everyone. For me, I want the challenge of competition and want to know the score which helps me chase a goal.”**



*Kirk Cousins-NFL  
Quarterback*

**“My parents believed in being multi-sport athletes, and we were lucky enough to have a tennis coach with a passion for competition. All four kids became professional tennis players, with three attaining number one in the world in either singles or doubles.”**



*Emilio Sanchez-Vicario -  
Former No. 1 Doubles player*



## USTA JUNIOR TOURNAMENTS



- Competitive individual match play events.
- Events are grouped by one national standardized point system.
- Can range from 1 to 4 or more days, depending on skill and ranking.
- Focused on individual results.

## USTA JUNIOR WHEELCHAIR TOURNAMENTS



- Ranges from 1 to 3 days
- Formats and scoring to promote more play
- Singles and doubles
- Fun and social!

With smaller courts and lower-bouncing balls, junior players will achieve greater physical activity and success. The tennis journey starts with the red ball and then progresses to orange, green and then ultimately the standard yellow ball. For more information, please visit [www.usta.com/juniorplay](http://www.usta.com/juniorplay).

## HIGH SCHOOL



Approximately 350,000 students play high school tennis each year with around 15,000 coaches leading the way. A minimal number of these high school students (4.9% of boys and 4.7% of girls) go on to play collegiate tennis at all levels from high school and even fewer (1.1% of boys and 1.0% of girls) progress to NCAA Division 1 tennis from high school. While the majority of high school tennis coaches are not certified tennis professionals, the USTA will continue to find ways of supporting all coaches with resources such as practice plans, equipment grants, and digital solutions to help them manage their seasons. And as a reminder, wheelchair players can play on their high school teams, the only difference is, they are allowed two bounces.

### ***The Next Step: Transitioning from Juniors to Collegiate Tennis***

An aspirational dream of juniors is to embark on the Collegiate Pathway. There are numerous options to investigate when looking to take the next step. This may include having the goal of playing varsity tennis, obtaining an athletic tennis scholarship, competing in club tennis, and/or working on a degree that will help achieve a career in tennis.

**“My worry for a lot of the young athletes is that they do mix the results with their sense of being. You have to separate who you are from your results. No matter if you don’t win a match all year, you’re still a great person and treat people with respect.”**



*Mary Joe Fernandez - Former Top 10 professional player, Olympic Gold medalist, and TV presenter*

**“College is not a destination, it is one part of the maturation process.”**



*Traci Green - Harvard Head Womens Tennis Coach*

### **Playing Varsity Tennis**

At the collegiate varsity level, there are over 2,000 programs and 20,000 roster spots. Scholarships are offered in NCAA Division I, NCAA Division II, NAIA and JUCO. Meanwhile, in NCAA Division III where many teams have rosters that look similar to some D-I teams based on player ratings, athletic scholarships are not offered. However, according to the NCAA, "80% of Division III student-athletes receive some form of merit or need-based financial aid."

There are also several collegiate wheelchair tennis programs competing nationally, culminating in the USTA College Wheelchair National Championships each spring where the number of schools and individuals participating continues to grow.

### **Playing Club Tennis**

For players looking to stay active on court yet not compete at a varsity level, USTA's Tennis On Campus club program provides a fun team environment at over 600 college campuses with the season running throughout the academic year.

### **Career in Tennis**

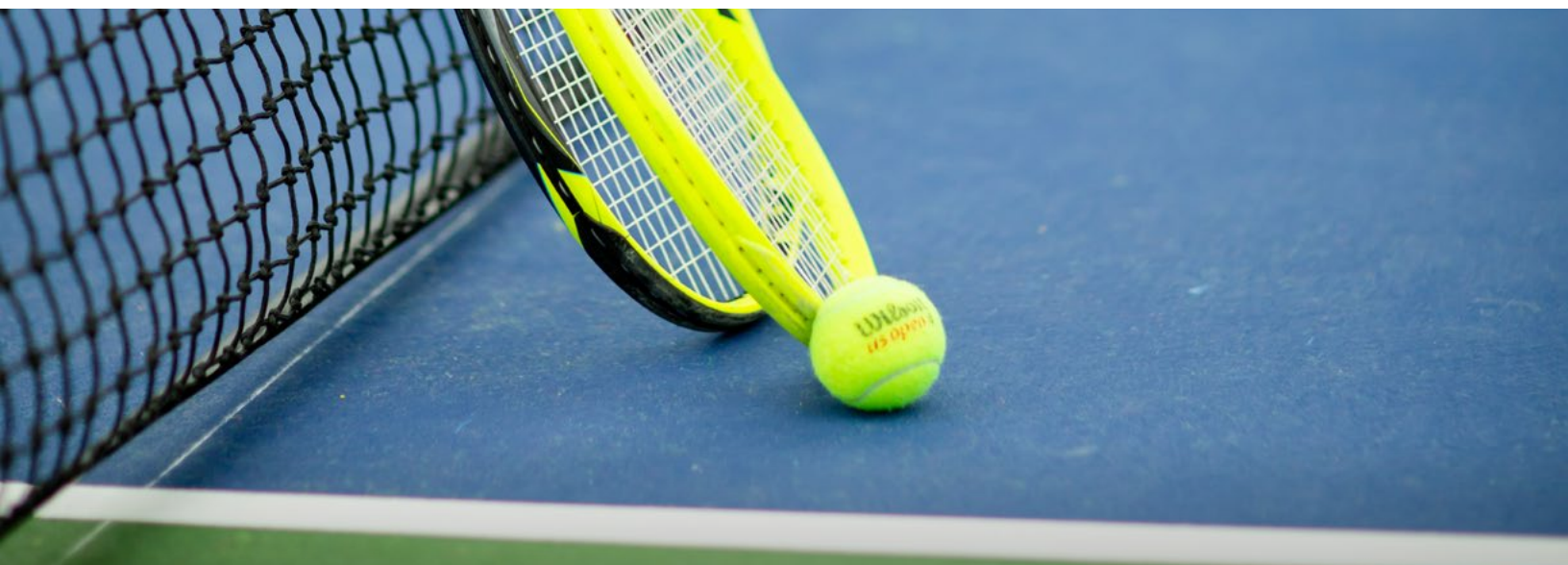
A collegiate tennis experience is certainly within reach for everyone who loves the game.

Students can build their educational knowledge with a Professional Tennis Management (PTM) degree at select schools or by attending USTAU workshops. These, along with several other degree programs at universities nationwide, can act as a springboard for students looking to earn a career in tennis.

**"I was able to transition into collegiate wheelchair tennis. The developmentally appropriate training and competition opportunities helped me make monumental leaps. As a result, I turned professional and was able to qualify for two Paralympic Games. I was also fortunate to have great coaches who were open and willing to figure out how to work with a wheelchair athlete."**



*Shelby Baron - Professional Wheelchair tennis player and Paralympian*



## Learning More

The USTA is committed to providing the knowledge and resources for all players interested in taking the next step. The USTA, through a collaborative partnership with the Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA) works to elevate college tennis for the benefit of the tennis ecosystem. Junior players, parents, and coaches can learn more about the Collegiate Pathway by visiting [usta.com/college](https://www.usta.com/college).

## Wheelchair tennis

As you can see, embedded throughout the playbook are various mentions of wheelchair tennis. The USTA is proud to be one of the few National Governing Bodies in the world to also govern a Paralympic sport. Our approach is to be inclusive, thus, all wheelchair players are allowed to compete in any competition where USTA rules are applied. As depicted above, wheelchair tennis junior players also have an entire competitive pathway from beginner all the way to the pro circuit. Junior tournaments have levels 1-5, there are many opportunities for college scholarships, and the ITF UNIQLO Wheelchair Tennis Tour supports more than 150 professional circuit tournaments worldwide; including all four Grand Slams. Wheelchair tennis is the most professional and integrative of all the parasports.



# What is next

## Rating and Rankings Integration

Ratings and Rankings are very important to the growth of tennis in America and serve as valuable development tools for players, families, and coaches.

Ratings help players and coaches find compatible competition. This reduces the “blow-outs” some players experience and helps foster a love of the game and the enjoyment of competition. Ratings also serve as a valuable measure of development. As a player focuses on skill development, their rating will reflect their improvement.

Rankings are equally important to the growth of the game and player development. Rankings reflect a player’s development as the player progresses through tournaments and reward wins a player earns in various types of competition. Progressing through tournament or league competition demonstrates a player’s skill development and the player’s ability to navigate competition with peers.

Rankings and ratings are essential tools to measure a player’s development. As a player’s skill increases, appropriate competition in tournaments, leagues, and other competitions will be reflected in a player’s ratings. Increases in a player’s ranking will enable the player to experiment with increasing levels of competition, which naturally will lead to higher ratings.

## ITF World Tennis Number

The International Tennis Federation (ITF) World Tennis Number is a new, single global tennis rating for all players, regardless of age, ability, or gender. It will be one of the most advanced and easy-to-use rating systems in tennis and comes with many benefits for those that deliver tournaments and events, as well as players. The USTA, along with over 130 other international governing bodies to date, will be adopting the ITF World Tennis Number.

The ITF World Tennis Number will provide many benefits for tennis players:

- Ability to help identify opponents or partners of a similar skill level.
- Find evenly-matched opponents wherever you are in the world.
- The largest searchable online tennis community.
- Additional entry acceptance criterion for ITF tournaments.



# What does success look like

## Principles

Ensuring an enjoyable and quality experience for players is at the heart of this playbook. To follow through on this promise the following four key principles will be used.

### PERSON-CENTERED

- Stay on course to deliver play and competition that is fun and personalized for each player.

### DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE

- Offer play and competition pathways that are developmentally appropriate to support individualized success.

### EDUCATION & COMMUNICATION

- Educate all stakeholder groups by taking advantage of all means of communication.

### DELIVERY

- Support providers and officials with education and management principles with simple and consistent language.

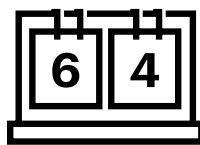
**Every week, regardless of age or ability, every junior player will have access and opportunity to local level-based competitive events that support:**



More junior players of diverse backgrounds playing tennis.



More junior players making a leap from play into developmentally appropriate competitions.



More junior players playing in team competitions.



More junior players retained after competing in their first experience and playing for a lifetime.



### COMING SOON

Online modules and resources will be available when clicking on the education icon throughout this playbook

