

USTA Collegiate Wheelchair Tennis Manual



UNITED STATES TENNIS ASSOCIATION



INTERCOLLEGiate TENNIS ASSOCIATION

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF WHEELCHAIR TENNIS

Collegiate Wheelchair Tennis is organized and sanctioned by the USTA and supported by the ITA. The purpose of Collegiate Wheelchair Tennis is three fold:

1. to advance the growth of wheelchair tennis
2. to encourage individuals with disabilities to pursue a college education
3. to give students with physical disabilities the opportunity to compete in an intercollegiate sport as a representative from their institution.

There are many ways to start a collegiate wheelchair tennis program; every program currently in existence has taken a separate route with different results. This guide is designed to give the reader ideas on how and where to begin building a program. There are many resources designed to assist you in creating and growing your program.

HOW DO WC ATHLETES GET INVOLVED?

Individual athletes that are not part of an organized program can still participate in collegiate competition as long as they are currently enrolled in a college or university. Recruiting players is the first step in starting a collegiate varsity tennis program, and there are many ways to find athletes who would like to participate.

1. Recruit current competitive players via a blitz of the USTA membership.
2. Find local wheelchair sports organizations in the area and recruit junior athletes, and start a junior program first.
3. Encourage local athletes to attend local Universities.
4. Contact the Center for Student with Disabilities to let them know about the opportunity for students to play a collegiate sport and encourage start up teams.
5. Piggy back off of other wheelchair sports that are already in existence and promote it as another opportunity to stay involved, keep fit and train year around versus taking away from another sport.



STARTING A COLLEGIATE WHEELCHAIR TENNIS TEAM ON YOUR CAMPUS?

The best avenues for starting programs have been through the existing University club sports programs. Begin by contacting the person who is in charge of Student Disabilities to obtain a list of students, get their emails and begin sending out information to the students. You will also want to contact the intramural club sports director and explain what your goal is and what the process entails, every school is different in their minimum requirements.

Contact the Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Recreational Therapy student organizations and clubs to assist with projects, fundraising, recognition and promotion as well as seeking out volunteers. Contact the school's tennis coach and ask for students who may want to help out, or need volunteer hours. The Athletic Department is also a great place to communicate with the college about your program. Contact the Athletic Director, or the coach for the able-bodied tennis team or a coach for the athletic programs for the disabled students to begin your process. When making contact with these individuals, offer to set up an appointment to discuss the program in person.

The USTA can supply you with support material in the way of documents, DVDs and manuals to help with your presentation to the colleges. Find out if there is some kind of scholarship given to disabled athletes. Sports Clubs on campus are occasionally funded in some ways by the college. (see "Funding")

THE DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER – These centers exist in public Universities having any public funding, as well as most major private universities. One of the major functions of this department is to provide students with disabilities the same opportunities as those for able-bodied students, like wheelchair tennis. While some schools may already have basic athletic programming for disabled students, the USTA is hopeful that they will respond with strong support for the tennis program. We have found that by establishing a working relationship with this department, we can help recruit students with disabilities, as well as help find potential funding sources. The USTA will help contact a TSR (Tennis Service Representative) to help in your initiative to develop your Collegiate Tennis Program and may be available to help with your presentation to University officials.



THE ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT

- The support of this department is usually in direct proportion to the size of the athletic department and the school as a whole. Smaller schools or private colleges usually have supportive athletic programs, which can provide direct support or help with facilities, uniforms, and other types of donations. It is important to have a well thought out plan of what you want from an athletic department. The first step when introducing your objectives is to explain how you plan to achieve your goals, and ask

the representative in the athletic department if they would be willing to help with support of Program Maintenance. Though the representative may be committed and supportive, do not get frustrated if you do not receive direct funding from the athletic department. This type of program can work and can be a beneficial model for adaptive athletics. It can provide valuable information and contacts for potential sponsors and additional support in your community for your program.

THE SPORTS CLUB DEPARTMENT - Sports Club Departments help when athletic departments cannot. Do not let the term "club sport" discourage you from thinking you cannot build a competitive program. "Sports Club" is the status that all sports groups not receiving varsity status are called. Some sports clubs are recreational and have limited competitions, while other sports clubs have recruiting and travel nationally to compete with other collegiate varsity teams. Sports Clubs are vital for many programs because it provides a means for facility reservations, university connections, name recognition, and finally a means to have donations qualify as nonprofit donations.

ADMINISTRATION - At small universities, it is not as difficult to get the attention of the university president or an assistant. However, at larger universities it may be more challenging. E-mail sent to the University President, Vice President, representative of community outreach, or representatives related to minority programming, athletics and campus life may be the best first step. Outline your goals, the importance of this program and ask for any relevant assistance. This should be a simple introduction of your name and your program goals. In addition to contacting key individuals, be sure to contact the USTA. They can help a coach get started by sharing information, manpower and volunteers. In addition there is a USTA Book Store with available publications such as Wheelchair Tennis Drills by Randy Snow and Bal Moore, and Tennis in a Wheelchair by Brad Parks and more. The USTA has a curriculum guide that includes instruction for coaches on how to teach wheelchair tennis. The USTA can put you in touch with tennis instructors. The professional teaching organizations such as the Professional Tennis Registry (PTR) and the United States Professional Tennis Association (USPTA) are available resources with certified instructors who can give clinics for coaches and pros interested in learning to teach wheelchair tennis.

THE USTA - The USTA will also provide you with the Format of Play and The Rules of Collegiate Wheelchair Tennis. They can also sanction your tournament, help with seeding, and keep a current list of rankings. The USTA can help you publicize your event through their website and through additional media. Another great resource is the Intercollegiate Tennis Association, the governing body of Collegiate Tennis. If you have any questions in general of how to get started, please do not hesitate to call the national office at USTA for wheelchair tennis and they can direct you to the appropriate person. Another key person to have on your side as you begin your endeavor is your local and state TSR (tennis service representative) their job is to help you sell your program, support you, provide necessary information to the school administrators and help promote tennis, specifically collegiate wheelchair tennis.

WHAT EQUIPMENT DO I NEED TO PLAY?

WHEELCHAIRS- You can learn to play in everyday wheelchairs but as you progress, you will need to purchase a sports chair. These chairs are specifically designed for playing tennis and are made of lightweight titanium and graphite main frames. The wheels are cambered out at about 20 degrees and allow for sharper and quick turning. New manual tennis chairs cost approximately \$2,500.00. Some insurance companies will provide you with one if you get letters from your doctor or Physical Therapists saying it is necessary to play a sport to maintain good health. You can always try the internet for used sports chairs from other players that upgrade to newer models. Players do not necessarily need sports wheelchairs to begin playing tennis but they will become quickly frustrated if they do not have the proper equipment. New chairs are best, so try to find local support and sponsors and fundraise to help pay for a new chair if possible. Another option is to contact your local USTA district and sectional office and see if there are any active wheelchair tennis programs in the area. If so, contact the director. Most wheelchair programs have some extra equipment. Lastly, contact your local medical supply companies. Typically, they will have some used sports chairs or at least can help direct you to someone who might have contacts to purchase a chair. You can also look into writing a grant to USTA by calling your local district or section office.



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TENNIS BALLS AND RACQUETS- Racquets and balls are critical and are constantly used and replaced over time in an active program. If your program has funding, then it is easiest to purchase balls, but if funding is limited, then consider thoughts on how to have tennis balls and racquets donated. Often times, sporting goods companies are allocated extra equipment they are allowed to donate. If you can show that you are a good endorsee, they may be willing to sponsor you. Secondly, your local pro shops or sporting good stores are usually a safe bet for at least a great discount. If you can show them that you will send business their direction, then local companies know they will receive a more direct return. This also gives you the flexibility to change brands of products as necessary (i.e. Wilson, Prince, and Head) without having to find a new sponsor.

RECRUITING

There are two basic tracks to take when recruiting. One is to recruit current competitive wheelchair tennis players who are actively participating in the sport and the second is to notify the local disabled student population and provide the means to learn and compete in the game. Contacting the disability resource center is one of the key starting points to gain access to the student population on campus. In addition, it is important in finding out what types of disabilities are represented on campus and making those face-to-face contacts and meeting the people that have an interest in either working with students with disabilities, or even attending one of their staff and student meetings. Provide the Center with a short informational proposal of what the tennis program will consist of and what services you will provide. The disability resource center can help you identify current students who may be interested in competing, as well as,

promote your program to potential students considering attending your university.

Recruitment of top wheelchair tennis players interested in college tennis is very feasible when scholarships and sufficient program funding are available. Contact your local, sectional and national USTA office to get more information about grants and scholarships.



FUNDING

Funding is essential in starting and running a collegiate wheelchair tennis program. Look for funding your collegiate program in one of three categories:

- 1) Funding directly from the university 2) funding related to the university and 3) funding unrelated to the university.

FUNDING DIRECTLY FROM THE UNIVERSITY - There may not be large amounts of funding, but some is typically available. Many departments allocate funds

to university projects. Usually physical education departments are willing to donate some funds to an adaptive athletic program if the program will allow interested students to intern and work with the adaptive athletic program. In addition, most disability resources centers have some funds set aside for community programming or athletics. If you have an organized plan and can show commitment many centers are willing to donate a sizeable portion of their budget to you. Finally contact the your university who is in charge university programs.



department or person at
of scholarships and they might be able to help support new

FUNDING RELATED TO THE UNIVERSITY - There are some programs that the university or at least some parts can lend its name and its resources. For example, the collegiate tennis program at Arizona State University puts on a fundraiser with the able bodied team and the wheelchair tennis team demonstrating up/down doubles competition. In addition, sororities, fraternities, many campus clubs, ROTC programs and many dorms require, or at least strongly suggest, some form of community service. Helping with fundraisers or events are a great examples of how you can network and develop working relationships with other university organizations and gain exposure and publicity for the University.

FUNDING UNRELATED TO THE UNIVERSITY - If you are not receiving any support from your university, but have the support of the Sports clubs or your Disability Resource Center, then you qualify for nonprofit status and name recognition of your University as a selling point. One option is to contact local restaurants near your campus and ask each one provide some discount program card to their restaurant, and sell the cards to the student population. When putting on fundraisers, many alumni who are local in a community are more likely to be corporate sponsors when they learn of the university's affiliation. Just as with any fundraising in a community, remember to be creative and realistic. Representing the university in name will help find resources, but remember to check with the correct departments concerning name recognition. Other creative examples include hosting an alumni tennis event with the proceeds going to support the new collegiate program or hosting Texas Hold em' events or even selling 50/50 raffle tickets at a different sporting event at the University.



COACHING

Teaching tennis can be easy and extensive tennis experience may not be required. Tennis is tennis, whether it is played from a wheelchair or standing up. The basics of teaching tennis to wheelchair players are the same as able-bodied tennis, with a few exceptions.

FINDING COACHES - When starting a program and you do not have a coach in mind; do not feel overwhelmed or frustrated. This is actually not as difficult as you might think. First, see if the athletic coaches have any interest in coaching or providing coaching for your program. If not, next look to the college players from your university. They are (depending

on division of school, conference and governing rules), allowed to be employed at a university job for a limited number of hours a week. Despite their age, college students know the game of tennis and make very good coaches. Also, contact the university for professors or adjunct professors that may play tennis on the side and would be willing to help 1-2 hours per week. This will also help you in developing more contacts at the school as well and spreading the word. If this is not an option contact the local pro shops and tennis facilities to see if they have any coaches that would like to work with your program. This may be difficult because they have specific facilities they teach at besides the universities and their time is usually expensive. Lastly, contact your local USTA section or district office, let them know you need a qualified coach or at least a strong player who would be interested in coaching. They usually can help you find someone more than capable of coaching a new program.

TRAINING COACHES - Training coaches for wheelchair tennis starts with networking with professional organizations such as The Professional Tennis Registry (PTR) and the United States Professional Tennis Association (USPTA), these are great resources and can help with one-day clinics to train a coach or simply to gain additional tennis resources. Take the time and financial commitment and send your coach to a wheelchair tennis camp, clinic or tournament when funds become available to gain exposure to teaching and networking. Usually camps always need extra staff, have your coach volunteer his or her services free at a camp to work there. If possible, cover his or her expenses to the camp in return for them taking time out of their schedules. Your coach can learn from other coaches and practice teaching the game. If there are no camps available, then encourage your coach to go to a tournament. Here they can observe the sport while interacting with experienced players and networking with other coaches while studying the game.

HOLDING A KICK OFF EVENT – To start your program with a high level of energy and enthusiasm, consider hosting a kickoff event. Here is where you can generate interest with prospective players, find sponsors, develop a relationship with the media and provide training for your coaching staff from an additional source. Pick a weekend, and pick several committed players/potential players who want to play and have them attend the weekend kickoff event and training session. Next, contact your USTA District or Section office for any possible wheelchair tennis instructors that might be interested in teaching a weekend training camp. Look to sponsors to fund the event, and if possible, find enough sponsors for funding for future operations budgets for your program. Contact the media and your university so that they know about your kickoff event. Starting new players in a weekend camp format will give them knowledge of the game and provide them with enough tennis that they are sure to catch the “tennis bug”.

STARTING & SCHEDULING PRACTICES - Having completed the previous steps, next decide how to begin practice and training, where to hold practice, how often to practice and how to develop a practice. There are no definitive answers but here are some suggestions that might help. A question every coach wrestles with is how often to hold practice. If your program is in the beginning stages and you do



not have players who are active in the sport, then two times a week is best. Experience has shown that holding practice more than twice a week early on; your players might become inconsistent and become burned out until you gain additional players to offer more variety. For programs able to offer scholarships and sizable travel benefits, four days a week of practices are unrealistic. Competitive wheelchair tennis should (at its highest level) be no different from able-bodied collegiate wheelchair tennis. When choosing practice times look initially to early mornings or late evenings, these are

obviously the easiest times around which to schedule practices. If you are able to establish a working relationship with your athletic department, then you might be able to achieve priority registration and reserving courts through them and gain additional exposure at the same time.

GROWING YOUR PROGRAM-Very few wheelchair sports programs, on any level, and in any sport, have ever committed solely to having either only competitive or recreational players involved in a program. Due to the numbers in wheelchair sports, it can be very difficult with limited resources to have only highly competitive experienced wheelchair tennis players in a collegiate program. Flexibility is the key ingredient to a successful collegiate wheelchair tennis program.

BENEFITS OF A COLLEGIATE PROGRAM – Most importantly, students are representing their schools, meeting other students with similar disabilities and learning to be independent. They have opportunities to travel to other schools and compete against other wheelchair athletes on the same playing field and enjoy experiences that all other collegiate athletes get the opportunity to participate in as well. Tennis is a fun sport and a sport for a lifetime even after they graduate, tennis can be played with family, friends and for the rest of your life. You do not need an entire team of wheelchair athletes to go enjoy the game of tennis; it is the sport of a lifetime!



ADDENDUM #1 - TOURNAMENT REGULATIONS

I) TOURNAMENT REGULATIONS – GENERAL

a) PLAYING RULES

- i) All rules will be those of the USTA for wheelchair tennis
- ii) Coaching:
 - (1) A team may have as many as two coaches designated before matches begin
 - (2) A coach may be either a coach or a player
 - (3) A coach may speak at any time between points as long as play is not interrupted
 - (4) A coach must be on the court



b) PROGRESSION OF PLAY

- i) INDIVIDUAL competition will follow the completion of the Team competition. The make up is in THE FORMAT OF PLAY section of the USTA rule book.

c) PLAYER ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- i) Any wheelchair tennis player who is currently enrolled part or full time, in a course of study at a four-year, two-year, Junior or Community college.
- ii) All USA players must show a current Student Enrollment card to the tournament director or assigned committee member before he/she plays a match.

d) SANCTION AND SCHEDULING

- i) Sanctioning and scheduling will be done with the approval by the USTA National Wheelchair committee and USTA national staff.
- ii) A sanction fee must be sent to the USTA office by the host tournament director.
- iii) Draw sheets and results must be sent to the USTA office & ITA office at www.itatennis.com within two days of completion and uploaded onto tennis link immediately after the event is completed.

e) FEES

- i) The entry fee will be pre determined by the host tournament director and paid prior to the players first match competition.

f) SEEDING AND RANKINGS

- i) Seeding and rankings will be done by the tournament committee based on the latest USTA National rankings and must be available for the tournament director two weeks in advance.

g) AWARDS

- i) Trophies will be awarded by the tournament committee with the exception of the national championships.

II) FORMAT OF PLAY–TEAM COMPETITION

Each team must have a minimum of two players, which can include any combination of men, women and quadriplegic players. However, before any match is played, each team must determine whether a woman or a quad will play against a “man” if there are no other women or quads.

a) THE DRAW FOR TEAM COMPETITION

- i) Each “team” must have a minimum of two players.
- ii) The men will each play a singles match.
- iii) The woman will play a singles match.
- iv) The Quad will play a singles match.
- v) The doubles match may be played by any combination of the team players.
- vi) It is recommended that if there are five teams or less, that a round robin be played.
- vii) There will be no “feed in” championship.

b) SCORING

- i) Singles will be the best of three sets with a 12 point tie-break at 6 all in the first two sets and a Super tie-break (the first to 10 points and wins by two) in lieu of a third set.
- ii) Doubles will be an 8 game Pro set with a Super tie-break at 8 all.
- iii) One point for each match won will go towards the TEAM SCORE.
- iv) Defaults are counted as a match won and points awarded accordingly.
- v) In the event of a tie in a championship tournament, co-titles will be awarded.



III) FORMAT OF PLAY-INDIVIDUAL COMPETITION

- a) A. There will be a two-tier system. If there is an uneven number for the women and quad draws, a round robin may be played with up to five players.
 - i) Tier 1 is for men's Open and A players
 - ii) Tier 2 is for Women, Quads and men's B, C, & D players

ADDENDUM #2 EXAMPLE:

USTA NATIONAL EMAIL BLITZ TO ALL PLAYERS:

WOULD YOU LIKE TO PLAY TENNIS AND REPRESENT YOUR COLLEGE? YOU CAN BY SIMPLY BEING ENROLLED IN ANY COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY WHETHER YOU ARE A PART TIME OR FULL TIME STUDENT.

Anyone can play, even if you are only taking one course. The USTA, in partnership with the Intercollegiate Tennis Association, is extending an invitation to all college students who would like to represent their schools in competition against other schools across the country. Varsity collegiate wheelchair tennis has been in existence since 1999. Anyone enrolled in a college course is eligible to play. We encourage all wheelchair athletes who currently compete on the USTA tour or at a local level to consider playing in the collegiate events. There are several levels of play to meet your skill level.

If you would like to participate and represent your college or university, you may play as an individual or as a team member from your school in either men's or women's singles and doubles competition.

The schedule is:

1. Regional Tournament – minimum of two scheduled
2. National Championship

If you would like to participate or need more information, please contact the USTA national office for more information. We look forward to hearing from all students who would enjoy the competition and the camaraderie of collegiate tennis.

