



LEAGUE ORGANIZATION

Now that you have secured your players, you're ready to begin organizing teams and scheduling match play. This entails deciding on such things as the number of teams in your league, team composition, the league's season and schedule of play and whether to establish an opportunity for advancement.

Rating Players:

Whether a new league is established to create competitive play, social play, or both, it is important for the players to be compatible ability-wise. The primary goal of any rating system, formal or informal, is to correctly assess the skill level of players. The following are descriptions of some of the most widely used rating systems and other methods of placing players with similar skill levels on teams:

National Tennis Rating Program (NTRP): Developed by the United States Tennis Association (USTA), United States Professional Tennis Association (USPTA), and International Health and Racquet Sports Association (IHRSA) in 1979. The intent was to create a rating system that would be used nationally to uniformly rate all players. Today it is the dominant rating system in the United States, and NTRP has been used as a model for other rating systems throughout the world.

NTRP has skill characteristics assigned to thirteen different levels, 1.0, 1.5, 2.0, 2.5, etc. up to 7.0. A player rated at 1.0 has never played tennis, while one rated at 7.0 is a world-class player. To establish a rating, players can read the characteristics and self-rate, they can have a USPTA or PTR (i.e., Professional Tennis Registry) pro observe them and suggest an NTRP rating, or they can compare themselves to a player or players who have established NTRP ratings. Opponents that are more than one NTRP level apart generally would not have a compatible match.

Informal Rating: A formal rating system does not have to be used to get a league started. A Sunday afternoon round robin (i.e., a format where each team plays every other team in its group) could be held for all players interested in taking part in leagues. Results from the round robin are then used to split players into the number of leagues required to get all of the participants involved. This works best when a league organizer runs the event and creates the match play necessary to help make the decisions.

Handicapping Systems

Sometimes rating systems alone are insufficient for placing players on teams in a manner that will result in competitive play for all participants. This often happens when there are not enough players of similar skill levels available to play in a league. When this happens, a handicapping system can be used to equalize play. One example of informal handicapping systems follow.

Love-15: The team that is up a game plays the next game down by Love-15.

League/Team Composition:

Establishing your league and team composition entails deciding on how many teams to have in the league, how many players to have on each team, how to assign players to teams vis-a-vis their skill levels, and other issues. Typically, the number of players on a team should be no more than twice the number of positions. For example, a format with two singles and three doubles needs eight positions, which translates to approximately sixteen players on the team. In addition, leagues usually consist of five to eight teams. If there are more teams, the league should consider dividing into flights with four or five teams in each flight, the rationale again being to keep the season's time commitment relatively short, which will in turn help to maintain player interest.