



## Issue 90

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## Editorial

Luca Santilli & Miguel Crespo 

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Welcome to issue 90 of the ITF Coaching and Sport Science Review. This issue is the second one of 2023. It is available in the [ITF Academy](#) as well as in the new page of the journal, which can be accessed [here](#).

This issue is dedicated to tennis management at national association or federation levels. These non-for-profit organisations are the governing bodies of tennis in their respective nations and play a crucial role in the context of promoting tennis participation and performance at all levels of the game. Articles in this issue cover topics related to their governance and leadership, their relationships with their National Olympic Committees, their culture and development models, their approach to high-performance, gender inclusion, player development, or mental health programmes, etc. This content will be supporting a National Association Management Course that will be launched in the ITF Academy in due course.

The following sections of this editorial will share the financial results of the ITF in 2022 as well as the programs that implement the ITF 2024 strategy for the development of tennis in the world.

The International Tennis Federation (ITF) is the world governing body of tennis. Founded in 1913, its purpose is to ensure the long-term growth and sustainability of the sport, delivering tennis for future generations in association with its 213-member National Associations. The ITF oversees the rules and regulations that govern international and national competition.

The ITF is responsible for the worldwide development of tennis through its highly regarded global Development Programme, its Science and Technical department which monitors equipment and technology, and its Officiating department which oversees the education and advancement of officials. The ITF organises up to 1850 men's, women's, and junior tournaments on the ITF World Tennis Tour, and manages the ITF junior team competitions, ITF Beach Tennis World Tour, UNIQLO Wheelchair Tennis Tour and the ITF World Tennis Masters Tour.

The ITF is the owner and rightsholder of the men's and women's World Cups of Tennis, Davis Cup and Billie Jean King Cup by Gainbridge respectively, the two largest annual international team competitions in tennis. The ITF manages the Olympic Tennis Event on behalf of the IOC and the Paralympic Tennis Event on behalf of the IPC and the Qualification Pathways for both events at the Games. For further information please visit [www.itftennis.com](http://www.itftennis.com).

### ITF'S 2022 FINANCIAL RESULTS

In a press release published on 19th July 2023, the ITF reported a robust financial health as the tennis governing body and a major increase in funding for international development of the game. The main aspects of this report are included in the following table:

**Table 1**

*ITF's financial health and increase in funding.*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tennis global guardian reveals strong recovery from pandemic with 2022 revenues surpassing pre-Covid levels by double digits.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This enabled a 30.2% year-on-year increase in its investment in the global game, including a 44.9% increase in funding international tennis development.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 95.4% increase in ITF's investment in tennis since introduction of ITF2024 long-term growth strategy.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ITF Annual Review highlights much progress in 2022, including its Junior Tennis Initiative introducing 18% more children to tennis than previous year.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ITF President David Haggerty predicted positive pipeline of commercial developments ahead.</li> </ul>

The International Tennis Federation (ITF) announced its 2022 financial results, reporting that it increased revenues by 47.6% year-on-year to \$98.3 million [2021: \$66.6 million] – exceeding pre-Covid revenues by 10.8% [2019: \$88.7 million].

The world governing body of tennis was able to convert the majority of this income into \$85.0 million of contribution to the global game last year, up by 30.2% from \$65.3 million in Covid-impacted 2021. The ITF's mission is to deliver tennis for future generations, and this includes reinvesting significantly in the sport around the world.

The ITF spent \$12.0 million on international tennis development, marking a substantial 44.9% increase from the previous year [2021: \$8.3 million]. This increased funding supported the work of the ITF's member nations in increasing participation and developing talent from the grassroots up.

The ITF increased post-tax profits from its operating activities by \$13.9 million to \$5.6 million in 2022 from a pandemic-impacted deficit of \$8.3 million in 2021. The ITF Board chose to invest \$3.0 million after tax into strategic projects (including the World Tennis Number and Balanced Calendar Project) and its investment portfolio produced a negative \$5.0 million return in 2022, reflecting global financial market performance.

The ITF maintains significant reserves as part of underpinning its financial sustainability and for use on strategic projects and investments where necessary. As of 31st December 2022, these totalled \$40.2 million.

## ITF2024 STRATEGY DELIVERING TANGIBLE GROWTH

The introduction of 'ITF2024', the ITF's long-term plan for sustainable growth announced in mid-2016, has driven a significant upturn in the ITF's financial performance and enabled record levels of funding for the global game. The ITF's reinvestment in tennis has grown by 95.4% or \$41.5 million since ITF2024 was launched [2015: \$43.5 million -> 2022: \$85.0 million].

ITF2024 has focused on eight priorities, which it has framed as Opportunity (including the World Tennis Tour for men, women and juniors, the UNIQLO Wheelchair Tennis Tour, the World Tennis Masters Tour and Beach Tennis World Tour), Development, Davis Cup & Billie Jean King Cup by Gainbridge, Olympics & Paralympics, Integrity, Investment, Partnerships and Communications.

The ITF Annual Review also reported that in 2022 the progress of the different programmes of its strategy were as follows:

- **Junior Tennis Initiative (JTI)** – The ITF's Junior Tennis Initiative, aimed at introducing tennis to children worldwide, saw impressive results. A total of 251,737 children (51% boys, 49% girls) were introduced to tennis, representing an 18% increase from the previous year. With 142 active JTI nations, matching the record set in 2021, the initiative provided playing opportunities at 2,994 primary schools and tennis clubs, fostering grassroots development.
- **ITF World Tennis Number and Participation** – The ITF has assigned 1.5 million players with an ITF World Tennis Number, facilitating tracking, and ranking of players globally. The association shared 23 million match records with 159 National Associations, providing a potential reach of 90% of players worldwide. This data-driven approach enables the ITF and member nations to assess player performance and enhance engagement.
- **ITF Academy** – The ITF Academy experienced substantial growth, with more than 260,000 total users, a 16% increase from the previous year. Offering 200 online courses and material in 11 languages, the academy served as a central learning hub for 100 National Associations, a notable 43% increase from the previous year. India and Argentina saw the most registered users of the platform in 2022.
- **ITF World Tennis Tour** – which is the main artery to the highest level of the game: The 2022 ITF World Tennis Tour showcased impressive figures, with 10,216 players participating in 1,059 tournaments, split evenly across the men's and women's game (526 and 533 tournaments respectively) and held in 65 countries. They played for a record \$25 million in total prize money in 2022. The tour provided crucial opportunities for players to compete, develop, and progress in their careers.

- **Records set in Davis Cup and Billie Jean King Cup competitions** – The ITF's World Cup of Tennis events both enjoyed record participation, with 145 nations competing in Davis Cup and 110 nations in Billie Jean King Cup by Gainbridge. The revamped Finals of both events continued to settle into their new formats and attract strong TV viewership and good fan engagement in stadiums and online, thanks in part to inspirational first-time triumphs for Canada and Switzerland respectively. For Davis Cup, the ITF and the ATP forged an unprecedented alliance which means that the Davis Cup Finals and Qualifier ties are now an official part of the men's calendar. For Billie Jean King Cup, the ITF achieved its ambition of offering women competing in the Finals equivalent prize money to that available in Davis Cup. The ITF's goals for equity in Billie Jean King Cup are fully supported by its commercial partners Gainbridge, who joined as the event's new title sponsor in 2022, and Tory Burch, who came on board as official outfitter.
- **Tennis for everyone** – Through its Advantage All gender equality programme the ITF is committed to levelling the playing field for women and girls across all areas of tennis. In addition to investing to support a balanced calendar for the ITF World Tennis Tour in 2022 and equivalent prize money between the men and women's World Cup of Tennis competitions, the 2022 ITF Annual General Meeting voted for the ITF Board to consist of a minimum of five women and five men from 2027 onwards as a further important step towards gender balance in the global leadership of tennis.

We hope that you have found this editorial article useful. Its intention has been to present some details regarding the financial results of the ITF in 2022, as well as the tangible aspects that the ITF strategy has carried out to deliver in the development and growth of tennis around the world.

We would also like to encourage new submissions to the ITF CSSR through the new platform. Finally, we would like to thank all the authors for their **contributions**, as well as all of those who sent in proposals. Full guidelines for acceptance and publication of articles can be found in the most recent issue page on the ITF Academy. We hope that you enjoy reading the 90th edition of the ITF Coaching and Sport Science Review.

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## RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ACADEMY CONTENT (CLICK BELOW)





# Analysis of tennis training opportunities in the system of Latvian sport education

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## ABSTRACT

Tennis, a sport that can be played at any age, has become very popular in Latvia, and its prestige and commercialization have promoted the development of the sport in Latvia as well. However, taking into consideration that the tennis infrastructure is still not sufficient in quantity, there are not many opportunities to play it in sports schools. The study's authors wanted to find out why public sports schools do not choose to include tennis in their range of sports sections. Currently, most young tennis players train in private tennis clubs. To clarify the situation, quantitative data surveys were conducted with representatives of sports schools, as well as qualitative interviews with specialists in the field of tennis. The results showed the impact of different aspects - the competence of coaches in the regions, infrastructure availability, and the funding model specifics. Based on the study's results, the authors develop recommendations that should be followed so that tennis is more present in state sports schools. In this way, the mass formation of the sport would be promoted. Thus, there is a higher probability of tending to a sport of increased achievement.

**Key words:** Tennis, sports schools, tennis coach, sports system.

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## INTRODUCTION

The history of modern Latvian tennis began in 1988 when about 50 tennis players established the tennis department of the Latvian People's Front under coach A. Mellups. The department worked until the end of the LTF. At that time, G. Dzelze, a member of the ATP, was the first professional tennis player in Latvia (Mellups, 2005).

From a global perspective, sport plays an increasingly important role in society. This is evidenced by one of the primary messages of the Olympic Charter, where it is stated that an individual can fully develop if he develops both the physical and mental spheres evenly (Olympic Charter, 2004). As the field of sport develops and becomes more commercial, the representative function of athletes has not changed, and the individuals in question still inspire the younger generation to become talented professionals in their field.

Nowadays, the term "sport" is associated with various fields or contexts - school sports, professional sports, and grassroots sports. In connection with public educational institutions, the first evidence was already mentioned in 1860, when sports activities were used as an instrument for developing morality and work ethics in New Zealand. This process was experimental and optional. The changes followed in 1877 when it was recommended to make sports mandatory by alternating the education system, linking it to the military direction (Pope, 2011). At that time, representatives of the field of education wanted to use sports as the primary tool to promote the personal development of young people.

From an economical and financial standpoint, sports, including tennis, have become an important sector of the economy of many countries, and it involves considerable financial resources and workforce. There is continuous improvement in the sports industry, such as its management, financing, and the management of this financing. The increasing tendency to commercialise and professionalise sports, on the one hand, as well as the fierce competition for budget funds, on the other hand, shows how sports must learn to profit independently from the resources it owns.

In terms of national governance, the national federation or association plays an essential role in developing sports. Federations are competent in the development of youth sports, as well as the attraction of financial resources through various support measures. It depends on the federation's activities - which high-level annual tournaments, games, or competitions will occur. In addition, the financial aspect should be noted. In many cases, each federation receives state funding, which is allocated considering various factors - such as achievements. However, state grants are not enough for faster sports development. Thus, one of the primary tasks of national federations is to attract additional funding, which can contribute to the overall development of the sport.

The role of sports in the nation's society is generally clear for many countries. However, for the national tennis federation, the development of the game of tennis is its essential goal. From a pure skill perspective, tennis develops coordination, a sense of balance, and overall physical fitness, and contributes to the well-being and the acquisition of healthy habits by

the participants. Depending on the skills and experience, tennis can be played at different levels - from an amateur to a professional level and at different ages (Pluim et al., 2007).

In the national sport and coaching educational context, the Latvian sports education system is primarily based on professional sports education institutions or sports schools. Their task is to prepare students to the appropriate level to comply with the relevant regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers. Now, the number of students is 305, whereas the number of tennis coaches is 16. For example, the available data point to very different statistics in athletics, which is also an individual sport. It is implemented in 50 sports schools, the total number of students is 6609, and the number of coaches is 280 (Professionally sport, 2021). Unfortunately, to the authors' views, these numbers seem to be quite low.

Therefore, the goal of the present study is to understand the reasons why sports schools have shown some reluctance or lack of capability to include tennis in the range of sports they offer, as according to the statistics, the availability of this sport is low.

## LITERATURE ANALYSIS

The Latvian Tennis Union (LTS) is a national tennis organization that has the right to represent Latvia at the international level and in international tennis organizations: the International Tennis Federation (ITF) and Tennis Europe (TE). LTS ensures the participation of Latvian national teams in international tournaments, takes care of the growth of athletes, raises the qualification of judges and coaches, and works on tennis promotion projects.

According to Article 10 of the Sports Law of the Republic of Latvia, sports organizations are sports clubs, sports federations, and other institutions. A sports federation is an association of sports clubs and other legal entities whose activities are related to a specific sport or field of activity and the purpose of which is to direct and coordinate the work of the sport or field of activity in question, as well as to represent that sport or activity relevant to international sports organizations. A sports federation can represent several sports or fields of activity. In this context, LTS goals and objectives are as follows:

- To manage and coordinate the activities of the persons related to tennis in Latvia, to represent and implement their common interests.
- To develop international relations and take care of increasing the level of tennis players.
- To carry out the promotion of tennis at public activities and events.
- To promote tennis in Latvia as a healthy form of recreation and sports, especially among children and youth, to prevent the involvement of children and youth in activities harmful to their physical and mental health.
- To ensure and support the development of tennis in Latvia and the achievement of high sports results in tennis, as well as to promote the growth of high-level athletes.
- To provide training for children and young people in tennis and provide methodological and material support for such training.

- To organize and support competitions in tennis.
- To study, compile and publish the history of tennis.
- To implement other activities that significantly benefit public tennis and health promotion (Sports Law, 2002).

The role of a coach in the development of sports and the overall process is critical. For instance, among many competences and skills, the coach must be competent in choosing the appropriate methods and evaluating the training process to ensure the player's long-term development (Athanaïlidis et al., 2015). Apart from the technical, tactical and physical elements, the psychological factors should also be considered, especially in top-level tennis. The role of a coach is to stimulate and motivate players to play the game. Players will be stimulated by sessions containing enjoyment, activity, a variety of practices, a feeling of improvement, and the ability to succeed. The game-based approach means that a tennis coach sets up realistic tennis game situations, in either singles or doubles, so that beginner players can learn to play the game. It also allows a tennis coach to give relative technical information so that players can put it into practice immediately (Crespo et al., 2006).

The Latvian sports education system, which has already been mentioned above, is based on sports schools. Government-supported sports schools must meet the relevant criteria to move training groups from a lower level to a higher one (Sports schools financial...2022). By fulfilling these criteria, sports schools receive appropriate financial support to be able to pay the coaches under statutory remuneration. After analyzing the tennis criteria, the authors point out that they are not considered to be of a very high level and are unattainable. For example, only 5-8 athletes are needed in the training group MT-7. Their task is to get ranked between the 1st and the 60th in the Latvian tennis rankings and to fulfill the control standards so that the student, a candidate, could participate in the Latvian national team in a respective age group.

In the case of Latvia, the primary functions related to the development and organization of youth sports are delegated to educational institutions of professional orientation or sports schools. The education to be acquired is not defined as mandatory, and children and young people choose it based on their interests and wishes. The state or municipalities can fund sports schools, but the tasks to be performed should not differ. In order to coordinate and organize the activity of sports schools, in 2015, the Council of Directors of Sports Education Institutions of Latvia (LSIIDP) was established. The primary tasks of the association are as follows:

- To coordinate and manage the implementation of professional sports education programs in the country
- To solve issues related to the operation of Latvian sports schools and sports clubs, to represent their interests in state institutions and other organizations.
- To promote the development of youth sports and improve the sports system in Latvia.
- To promote youth sports in the country.
- To promote the development of sports in Latvia, the implementation of sports programs, the continuity of the learning process, and methodical work in sports institutions.

The selection criteria referred to above concerning the criteria for the fulfillment of athletes do not apply to private sports schools or clubs. However, these organs shall be subject to other provisions relating to the various fields, such as the adequate provision of a ventilation system for sports halls or other safety-related aspects.

There is a different sports education system in countries where tennis is more developed, similar to other sports. In some of these nations a great emphasis is placed on academies. Their primary task is to promote the creation of professionals in the relevant sport. Academies, depending on their goals and capabilities, conduct the selection of young athletes. Two training sessions a day are often carried out in the daily process, while the rest of the time is devoted to rehabilitation and training. One of the most developed systems of sports education is in England. The researchers have pointed out, however, that an athlete is at a relatively high risk of not becoming a professional athlete even if one of the programs offered by the academies is studied daily. Thus, in theory, an athlete may lose his level of education and not become a professional athlete (Pummell & Lavalley, 2019).

The development of the sport is the education and competence of coaches in the respective sport. In order to achieve systematic training of coaches, cooperation with high courts and federations is necessary, which can mutually agree on the necessary competencies that should be acquired by the coaches of the sport in question. Although each country has its educational specifics and differences, some trends are unifying. A system has been set up in Germany, Italy, Spain, and France where the parties - federation, universities, and tennis clubs - will cooperate. The main idea is related to the formation of uniform guidelines and the attraction of former athletes to continue their careers as coaches (Athanaïlidis et al., 2015).

Federations are competent in the development of youth sports, as well as the attraction of financial resources through various support measures. It depends on the federation's activities - what high-level annual tournaments, games, or competitions to organize. In addition, the financial aspect should be noted. Each federation receives state funding, which is allocated considering various factors - such as achievement or scale. However, state grants are not enough for the faster development of the sport. Thus, one of the primary tasks of federations is to attract additional funding, which can contribute to the overall development of the sport. An essential role in developing sports and the overall governance system relates to professionally oriented sports schools. They form the basis for the further development of athletes. Therefore, the sports school must be able to provide students with everything they need - transport to competitions, tournaments, specialists, and relevant medicine.

Considering different management models existing in the Latvian sports system, the primary tasks of sports organizations, which should be performed to develop their activities successfully, have been generated and shown in Figure 1.

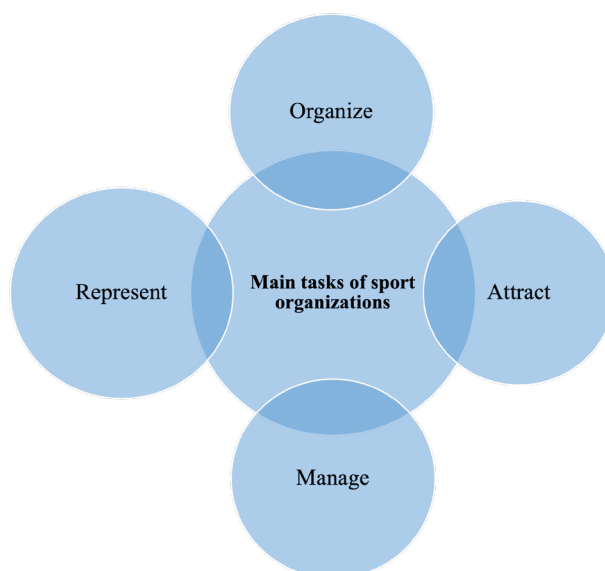


Figure 1. Basic functions of sports organizations (created by authors).

One of the primary tasks of the organization relates to the management function. In sports, education, and other structures, a vital aspect is the successful supervision of employees and the organization's development. Employees should be aware of their roles in the organization and understand their assigned tasks.

On the other hand, the demographics of the organizations are crucial. Table 1 summarises the main data from Latvian tennis.

Table 1  
Data about Latvian tennis.

Items	Count
Members of the federation	42
Coaches	90
Clubs	38
Referees	27
Players	789

This study used a quantitative survey method since it provides advantages that contribute to the quality of the study such as the efficiency in the use of resources (time and financial), the anonymity, and the fact that more respondents can be included (Geske & Grinfelds, 2020). Possible challenges of the survey method were related to the passivity of respondents, the possibility of obtaining spontaneous responses, the possible communication or cooperation between respondents, and motivation to delve into the answers. Also, this method offers no possibility and low probability of establishing personal contact with the respondents (Nind & Lewthwaite, 2018).

The purpose of the study was to identify the reasons why national sports schools did not include tennis in their sports offer. This is motivated because in the current situation tennis has become one of the most popular sports in Latvia. It can be played at different ages, starting from 4 years, but the possibility of learning the game in sports schools is minimal.

The overall tasks carried out in the study consisted of the analysis of the development of the Latvian Tennis Union (LTS), the process and interpretation of the research results, and the elaboration of recommendations based on the conclusions of the research.

The sample of schools that participated in the research consisted of 21 National Sports Schools where tennis was not included in their program and 15 private sports clubs which included tennis programs.

**RESULTS**

Initially, the authors surveyed State sports schools to clarify the most critical aspects related to the offer of tennis training and education opportunities. First of all, in order to be able to implement specialized tennis training, the relevant infrastructure is required. The authors asked for the opinion of sports school managers regarding the tennis infrastructure offered by their cities.

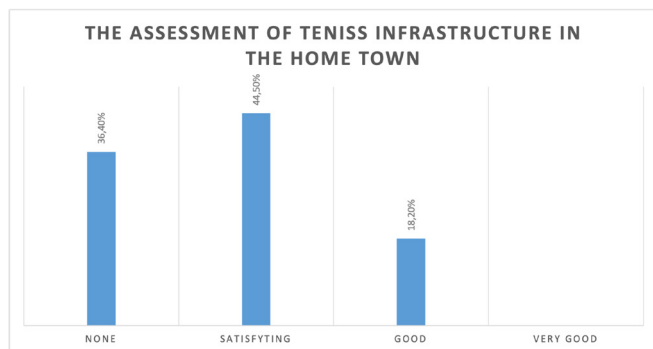


Figure 2. Infrastructure situation - the opinion of state sports schools.

Data in Figure 2 allow to conclude that the overall situation is relatively good. Almost half of the respondents - 44.5% - mentioned that the tennis infrastructure in the city could be considered as satisfactory. However, unfortunately, about over one third of the respondents mentioned that the relevant infrastructure is not there at all.

The authors point out that this is an essential factor in actualizing the insufficient educational opportunities in tennis. The reason for this is the specific infrastructure - tennis courts. The basic of tennis can also be learned in multisport or basketball courts or facilities for other sports. However, the special tennis skills such as the serve, the return of serve, the approach to the net or playing at the net, can only be acquired on the tennis courts. The data shown in our study indicated that the situation is generally satisfactory, but it should be improved if tennis is integrated at the level of sports schools.

For any sport to develop and move forward, the city in question should also have a strong sport tradition. Therefore, in our study the management of sports schools were asked about the tennis tradition in the region they represent.

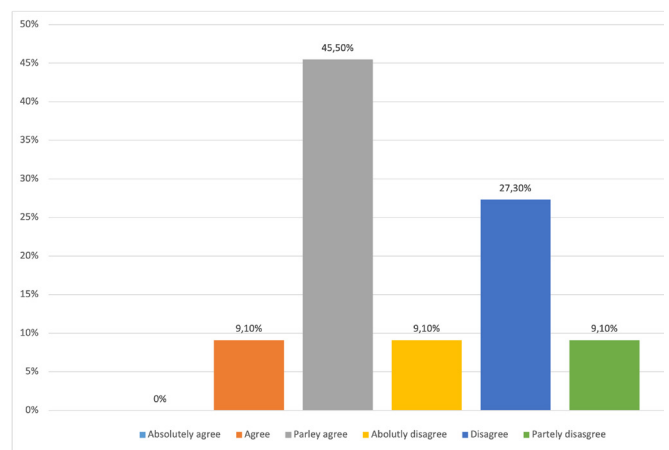


Figure 3. Statement - our city has good tennis traditions.

Sports schools' views on tennis tradition in their city are not rated at a very high level. Most respondents rated their town's tennis tradition as weak or non-existent. However, it's important to understand that this aspect cannot be solved quickly. Several prerequisites are necessary to establish the sustainability and tradition of a sport in a city. For example, high-level athletes, coaches, infrastructure, the "pyramid" of athletes, and the public's tennis knowledge are some of the key aspects to this end. In the authors' view, in order to build a strong tennis tradition, the fundamental aspect is to develop tennis at the level of sports schools.

Considering that it is possible to learn tennis in only five sports schools in Latvia, the aim of this study was to find out the main reasons why sports schools are unable or not willing to include tennis in their institutions. From the overall sample, 36% of respondents mentioned that the main reason was infrastructure problems, while 27% stated that the problem was the absence of specialists or coaches. Finally, 10% stated that there was ignorance or fear about the possible response from young athletes.

At the end of the survey, the respondents were asked to express their opinions or recommendations regarding the tennis education system. The authors collected the most relevant of them:

*"Tennis is a relatively expensive sport and including it in the program of a sports school is an additional expense for the municipality. Likely, the coaches' salaries in the country are also not competitive. Our sports school already has a wide range of sports on offer. In the winter period, no infrastructure is available, only a private indoor court close to the city area, which is fully occupied".*

*"There's an insufficient support in providing funding from the State. Every year, State funding for the salaries of teachers of existing sports decreases for the sports school, and municipal funding increases, even though the number of students is increasing".*

*"There's also not enough provision of infrastructure. There is an outdoor tennis court, but there is a lack of gymnasiums to ensure the training process (the existing ones are full)".*

*"In our city, seven sports are already available in the sports school, let's introduce one more in the sports school! There is a group of tennis enthusiasts in the city."*

When analysing the comments of the representatives of sports schools, several valid reasons for not including tennis in the structure of sports schools can be found out. Considering that relatively many sports disciplines are developed in Latvia, the system of sports schools also includes many types of them. The financing of sports schools, especially in the youngest groups of athletes, is limited in quantity. Therefore, the management of sports schools has logical doubts as to whether, by adding a new sport, there will be enough young athletes for all sports.

The financial aspect is additionally mentioned. In the views of the authors, however, point out that it can be partially considered a myth. Tennis is expensive at the professional level, but initially, at the national level, it can be implemented similarly to other individual sports.

Since tennis education is primarily based on developing private schools or clubs, the authors of the work would also like to find out the reasons that prevent clubs from merging with sports schools.

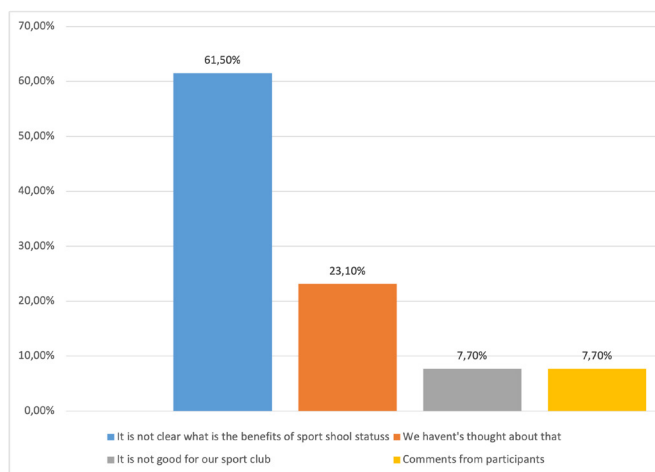


Figure 4. Reasons for sports clubs not to create a state sports school system.

It has been found that sports clubs seem not to be clear about the additional positive factors associated with joining the sports school system. Also, in this quantitative survey, respondents had the opportunity to express other opinions or influences related to tennis development in the final stage.

Representatives of tennis sports clubs understand that the merging with sports schools would contribute to the financial stability of coaches. However, too significant an administrative burden is mentioned as a possible threat. As a result, the process may not be profitable. In turn, almost every fourth respondent has not thought about this possibility.

At this point, it is important to clarify how tennis sports clubs evaluate the available infrastructure.

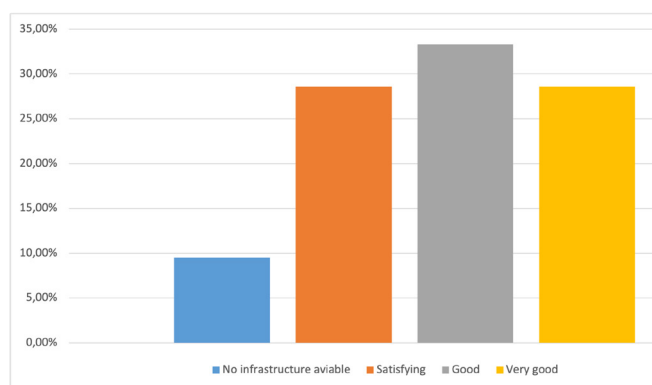


Figure 5. Tennis infrastructure according to sports clubs.

Compared to the respondents' answers about state sports schools, the available infrastructure of sports clubs is higher. In general, the majority of respondents rate the infrastructure available to them as good or satisfactory. The authors point out that a large part of the tennis sports clubs is based within a radius of 50 km around Riga. Therefore, it would be possible for state sports schools located in the vicinity of Riga to cooperate with sports clubs, as the overall infrastructure can be assessed as suitable.

## CONCLUSIONS

The main conclusions of this paper are the following:

- The situation of tennis infrastructure in Latvia can be assessed as satisfactory. It was not defined as the main problem for not including tennis in the system of sports schools. The most significant misunderstanding of sports schools is related to the responsiveness of tennis integration on the part of athletes. Sports schools are not sure there will be a great response when introducing a tennis department.
- Private sports clubs are not interested in merging with sports schools. Although mergers would mean excellent financial stability, private tennis sports clubs point to an overly bureaucratic side.
- Tennis should be integrated into the schools' programs. Firstly, public awareness of tennis traditions should be raised. Afterward, any sports coach or teacher can be educated and get access to the knowledge about setting up the classes without any infrastructure, whether in a city school or a town. Then, the salaries should be competitive enough for the tennis coaches to feel appreciated and valued. Moreover, it is necessary to convey the importance of having tennis in schools to the principals and explain what they will benefit from such classes.
- The LTS should undertake the mutual communication function. The authors of the study indicate that, in some cases, sports clubs should merge with sports schools. This would contribute to a greater possibility of building an internal pyramid of athletes, as well as the stability of the sport.



## CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND FUNDING

The authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest and that they did not receive any funding to conduct the research.

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[RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ACADEMY CONTENT \(CLICK BELOW\)](#)





# Tennis and mental health: The role of national federations in the promotion and prevention of mental health and wellbeing

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Spain.

## ABSTRACT

Until just a few years ago, mental health has been a neglected - but ever-present - issue in the tennis world. In recent months, many tennis players have made their mental health difficulties public. Although it is becoming more and more commonplace, the consequences of common mental health problems such as anxiety, depression and sleep disorders are still unknown. For this reason, this article presents a series of strategies that could be carried out by federations, advocating the implementation of programmes focused on the prevention and promotion of mental health and well-being. Examples of initiatives developed in various countries are also given. Throughout the article, the importance of the involvement of federations in the development of prevention and promotion programmes for early detection and effective intervention is highlighted.

**Key words:** Mental health, prevention, promotion, anxiety, wellbeing.

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## INTRODUCTION

*Mental health is an invisible thing that touches all of us at one time or another. It is part of life.*

*(Kevin Love, NBA basketball player).*

For many, the fact of participating in a sport such as tennis carries with it the transmission of certain values that can be very positive for the personal and professional growth of the present and the future of the athlete who plays it. (Barbosa & Urrea, 2018). However, sport itself does not transmit values, but rather it is the personal experience and the influence of the people around the athlete that truly leave their mark on the values that young people absorb. Similarly, some theories argue that the sporting context is not necessarily stressful in itself, but that stress levels have a fundamental personal and subjective, and therefore cognitive, component (Lazarus, 2000; Szeko, 2000; Szeko, 2000). (Lazarus, 2000; Szabo et al., 2014). Going further, although some research has shown that sport can be a very effective means for the prevention of various psychological problems such as depression or anxiety disorders (Barbosa & Urrea, 2018). (Barbosa & Urrea, 2018; Lawlor & Hopker, 2001; Petruzzello et al., 1991; Scully et al., 1998; Wipfli et al., 2008). There is a growing body of research that shows the strong impact of competitive sport on mental health issues, being common moments of pressure, stress, and numerous conditioning factors that a tennis player lives with on a daily basis.

In the last decade there has been a considerable increase in related research, such as specific studies on the symptomatology of depression and anxiety, and more and more athletes, including tennis players, are making public



some of the difficulties they are going through, with great repercussions in the media. An example of this is the case of Naomi Osaka, who spoke publicly about her anxiety and depression problems, and how exposure to the media placed her in such a stressful position that she was affected on a personal and professional level, hence her refusal to hold a press conference at Roland Garros (2021) after her first-round victory. Osaka was heavily criticised, yet she was giving a lesson in self-care and self-respect, given that, in mental health matters, not everything goes, and knowing how to set limits is an essential tool for prevention.

*"I say put your mental health first because if you don't then you're not going to enjoy your sport and you're not going to be as successful as you want to be."*

*(Simon Bales, gold medallist and 5 times world gymnastics champion).*

Other tennis players have spoken openly about it, such as Mardy Fish, Nick Kyrgios, Paula Badosa, Benoit Paire and Robin Soderling, among others, to which we can add the recent withdrawal of Anisimova at just 21 years of age, citing difficulties in her day-to-day life on court several months ago. Mental health has ceased to be a taboo relegated to the background and has become a subject of growing social and sporting interest, although there is still a long way to go.

## A SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

*"If someone wants to call me weak for asking for help, that's their problem. Because I'm saving my own life.*

*(Michael Phelps, 28-time Olympic medal-winning swimmer).*

Although mental health is an increasingly recurrent topic of conversation, in most cases the actions deployed by representative sports bodies are still not commensurate with the significance of the situation.

Everyone who is involved in the sport to a greater or lesser degree knows how demanding it is. Tennis is inherently competitive, there is a score that puts you ahead or behind on the scoreboard with respect to another person against whom you are constantly measuring yourself. The scoring system itself, the fact of winning and losing -never drawing-, and the widespread and abundant ranking systems (e.g., WTA, ATP, ITF, WTN, UTR, TE, leagues, interclub, national ranking...) put the player in a position where the result, the ranking and winning take centre stage. If these external conditioning factors are not handled in an appropriate way, they can become a source of very high stress that for many people - adults, young people, and children - can be difficult to sustain. It is not only the ranking system, but the day-to-day life of a tennis player also requires a high level of personal and family involvement; from a very young age, those tennis players whose dream is to become a professional player organise their life around training and tournaments. Some change cities or even countries, others stop going to school and go online, there are those who stop studying when they are 17-18 years old because they consider it incompatible to combine both things, and simply because they want to devote all their time to tennis. In many cases, this type of situation means that the young person becomes progressively isolated from his/her group of friends at school and that this group is reduced to tennis, in the best of cases, because not everyone is able to make friends or create spaces of trust around the competition. On the other hand, there is the family involvement, the investment of time and money that tennis entails and that forces adjustments to be made in the family dynamic.

The hyper-competitiveness of western society is not widespread throughout the world, there are very constructive approaches to sport and competition, of oriental origin, which suggest understanding it as a form of personal improvement where the only possible reference of comparison is with oneself. This way of seeing the development of the tennis player places us in a much more friendly position both for the person who practices and for the environment that surrounds him/her. From a simple idea we can derive numerous fundamental actions for the prevention and promotion of mental health.

All the situations mentioned above do not necessarily have to become problems, we are simply raising a reality that often goes unnoticed and that has a direct influence on the mental health and well-being of the protagonists of the racket. And this is where the actions promoted by the institutions involved in the development of tennis players play a transcendental role.

## THE ROLE OF NATIONAL FEDERATIONS IN MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION AND PREVENTION

*"To show weakness, we are told, in so many ways, is to deserve contempt. But I am here to show weakness. And I am not ashamed".*

*Mardy Fish (professional tennis player).*

As previously mentioned, until relatively recently, mental health has been an unknown topic in the world of tennis. Even today, the extent of what can happen if a psychological problem develops is still unknown, and this lack of information leads to concepts such as anxiety, stress or depression being used too lightly.

Research has shown that the most common psychological disorders in high-performance athletes are those related to anxiety, depression, eating behaviour, sleep, and substance abuse (Goutteborge et al., 2019; Gulliver et al., 2015; Rice et al., 2016). Given the serious impact of any of these pathologies and the potential complexities that can arise during intervention, we advocate for prevention and mental health promotion strategies that serve to protect against the symptomatology presented by small-scale gamblers. To this end, the work of the federations is fundamental to achieve a greater and better reach of information and the most effective prevention strategies. These institutions are the main source of information for people linked to tennis, players, and their families; if national and regional federations develop prevention and promotion programmes on mental health, this will cease to be a taboo and we will all have a greater ability to detect cases that arise around us.

There are several programmes implemented in different sport contexts whose main purpose is prevention, some of them are aimed at coaches, such as the English Institute of Mental Health in Sport (Cumming & Ranson, 2021) or the "Read the Play" in Australia (Bapat et al., 2009), others are aimed at the whole athlete's environment, including families, such as the "Ahead of the Game" in Australia (Hurley et al., 2021), a very broad programme that includes athletes, families, coaches, referees and volunteers. The Canadian government has developed a comprehensive prevention and promotion strategy for high performance, the "Mental Health Strategy for High-Performance Sport" in Canada (Durand-Bush & van Slingerland, 2021).

Within the purely tennis context, we echo different proposals, such as the one implemented during the last Roland Garros or the one implemented during the last tournament in Toronto, both of which included a series of activities and resources provided to players for the promotion and care of their mental health and well-being. In particular, the Toronto tournament intervention is part of a broader initiative, "The Mental Time Out Initiative", which develops strategies around competitive and grassroots tennis, and involves high-level tennis players as ambassadors of the project (<https://www.tenniscanada.com/mental-timeout/the-project/>).

Organisations such as the ITF itself, the WTA and the ATP have become sensitive to the issue and in recent times have been developing strategies to provide care for players.

That said, here are some ideas that can be implemented by national and regional federations:

### Intervention strategies for mental health prevention and promotion

- To develop training programmes for coaches, included in the level I, II and III certification courses themselves, in classroom or online mode.
- Promote and facilitate research studies that provide updated information on the situation of tennis players and their close environment in terms of Mental Health.
- Conduct promotion and prevention campaigns during national and international tournaments including information and activities.
- Draft a Handbook with basic information related to detection and possible consequences.
- Provide the tennis player's entourage with a contact line for information and help.
- To carry out informative talks with leading players.
- Conduct training workshops for families.
- To provide the workers of the federation with a helpdesk or a reference person.

### CONCLUSIONS

At the beginning of this article, we mentioned how it is not the sport itself, but the experience you have around it, which provides essential values that will predominate for the rest of your life. Tennis is a wonderful sport with enormous physical and psychological benefits, and it is well documented how regular practice can be beneficial in reducing possible anxious and depressive symptoms and increasing levels of well-being (e.g., Pluim et al., 2007; Yazici, Gul, Yazici, & Gul, 2016).

While mental health affects individuals, it is a social responsibility to provide the necessary resources to detect and intervene early when symptoms begin to appear. In this way, we will continue to enjoy the sport and our involvement in it will continue to be an excellent form of personal and sporting growth. It is in our hands to continue building the history of this beautiful sport in a healthy way in body, mind, and heart.

### CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND FUNDING

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[RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ACADEMY CONTENT \(CLICK BELOW\)](#)





# A business perspective of The United States Tennis Association's American Development Model: Discover, Develop, Play

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United States Tennis Association.

## ABSTRACT

The American Development Model (ADM) implemented by the United States Tennis Association (USTA) has gained significant attention for its player-centric approach and structured framework. While previous studies have explored the impact of the ADM on player development, this approach takes a unique business perspective to analyze the model's efficacy and implications. Drawing upon business management theories and practices, this overview examines the ADM's alignment with strategic planning, resource allocation, talent acquisition, and marketing within the context of the USTA. This article sheds light on the business strategies employed by the USTA in implementing the ADM, highlighting potential areas for improvement, and providing practical recommendations for other National Governing Bodies of sport seeking to adopt similar player development models. Overall, this information contributes to the existing literature by bridging the gap between sports management and player development approaches, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the ADM from a business standpoint.

**Key words:** American Development Model, Long Term Development, Tennis Business Application.

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## INTRODUCTION

The USTA is committed to developing athletes who excel in tennis and adopt a lifelong love for the sport. To achieve this, the USTA has adopted the Long-Term Athletic Development (LTAD) principles as the guiding framework for their ADM. This article explores how the USTA uses LTAD principles to guide business management and tennis programming to attract more young tennis players to our sport, as well as how to support and retain them for a lifetime.

## BACKGROUND

The ADM was launched in 2018 and is based on LTAD principles (Davies, 2018). LTAD is a systematic and holistic approach to athlete development that considers physical, mental, emotional, and social development. It emphasizes the importance of age-appropriate training, skill development, and competition that aligns with the athlete's developmental stage (Balyi, Higgs, & Way, 2013). By doing so, LTAD aims to support athletes who are physically and mentally healthy, have a lifelong love for sport, and can achieve excellence in their chosen sport.

The USTA uses LTAD principles to guide many business management decisions, particularly in player recruitment and retention. The ADM emphasizes the importance of creating a positive and supportive environment encouraging athletes to participate and continue playing tennis (USOPC, 2020). The USTA has developed a comprehensive recruitment strategy that targets children at different developmental stages.



They have also implemented programs that provide ongoing support to athletes, such as coaching, sport science, and sports medicine.

**Attract, Engage, and Retain diverse participants and keep them playing for a lifetime**

Attracting, engaging, and retaining participants are essential components of any successful business model, and the USTA's ADM is no exception. From a business perspective, the ADM offers a strategic framework that aligns with these principles, enabling the USTA to effectively attract, engage, and retain players, coaches, and stakeholders. This section explores the business implications of the ADM in relation to attracting, engaging, and retaining various key stakeholders.

## Attract

The ADM plays a vital role in attracting players to the sport of tennis. By providing a player-centric approach and emphasizing a fun and inclusive environment, the USTA enhances its appeal to potential participants. The ADM's focus on age-appropriate development, skill progression, and positive coaching methodologies creates a compelling value proposition for parents seeking a comprehensive tennis program for their children (USOPC, 2020). Additionally, the USTA's marketing efforts, driven by the ADM's principles, effectively showcase the benefits of tennis participation, capturing the attention of new players and their families.

### • Coaching Tip #1

*Particularly when attracting children in the youngest age groups to learn tennis, consider using modified equipment. This allows for greater success at earlier stages of learning. Doing so creates a positive and supportive environment that encourages children to participate and continue playing tennis.*

## Engage

Once attracted, the ADM ensures active engagement of players, coaches, and other stakeholders. The model's emphasis on skill acquisition, tactical understanding, and holistic development keeps players engaged and motivated to continue their tennis journey. This engagement is reinforced through high-quality coaching, player-centered training sessions, creation of a positive and supportive tennis community, and support of multi-sport play (Roetert, Woods, & Jayanthi, 2018). By aligning with the ADM, the USTA cultivates a sense of belonging and fosters a passion for the sport, increasing the likelihood of long-term involvement.

### • Coaching Tip #2

*As a coach, make sure you provide opportunities for your players to participate in tournaments and events that align with their developmental stage as well as opportunities to participate in other sports.*

## Retain

Retention is crucial for sustained business success, and the ADM facilitates player and coach retention within the USTA's ecosystem. The model's structured pathway allows players to progress through different skill levels, ensuring continued challenges and opportunities for improvement (Hainline, 2012). The USTA's commitment to ongoing coach education and development, guided by the ADM's principles, contributes to the retention of highly skilled and knowledgeable coaches who can effectively nurture player growth (Davies, 2018). Additionally, the ADM's focus on holistic development helps create an environment that values personal growth, social connections, and long-term player engagement.

### • Coaching Tip #3

*Implementation of a developmentally appropriate pathway emphasizes and reinforces the importance of creating a positive and supportive environment that encourages players to participate and continue playing tennis.*

From a business standpoint, the ADM's emphasis on attracting, engaging, and retaining stakeholders aligns with fundamental principles of customer acquisition and retention. By effectively attracting new players, engaging them through meaningful experiences, and retaining their involvement over the long term, the USTA strengthens its brand, builds loyalty, and ultimately generates sustainable revenue streams. Therefore, the ADM serves as a powerful business tool, driving growth, and creating a thriving tennis ecosystem that benefits all stakeholders.

The ADM's business perspective emphasizes the importance of attracting, engaging, and retaining participants in the USTA's tennis programs. By aligning with these principles, the USTA capitalizes on the model's player-centric approach, fostering long-term involvement, and ensuring the continued growth and success of tennis in the United States.

The USTA, as the National Governing Body of tennis in the United States, wants to create a sense of belonging and community, which helps to retain athletes and develop a lifelong love for tennis.

## Coaching

The inclusion of the 5 Cs - competence, confidence, character, connection, and creativity - in the USTA ADM justifies and supports its comprehensive approach to player development and its positive impact on coaches and the delivery system. Competence ensures that coaches possess the necessary knowledge and skills to provide effective instruction and guidance to players, fostering their growth and development. Confidence-building within players is vital for their overall performance and motivation, and coaches play a crucial role in instilling belief in their abilities and creating an environment that encourages risk-taking and continuous improvement. The emphasis on character development promotes sportsmanship, ethical conduct, and values that extend beyond the court, shaping players into well-rounded individuals. Connection focuses on building strong coach-player relationships and fostering a sense of belonging within the tennis community, enhancing engagement and long-term involvement. Finally, creativity encourages coaches to think innovatively, adapt to individual player needs, and create engaging and enjoyable training experiences. Together, the 5 Cs of the ADM empower coaches, enrich the delivery system, and contribute to the holistic development of players, promoting a lifelong love of the sport (Davies & Roetert, 2023).

## Sport Science

The purpose of sport science integration, as it relates to the ADM, is to promote athletes' long-term health and wellness. Sport science provides evidence-based training, nutrition, and recovery strategies that support the athlete's physical, mental, and emotional development (Balyi, Way, & Higgs, 2013). By using sport science strategies to guide training and recovery, coaches and athletes can optimize performance, reduce the risk of injury, and support the athlete's overall well-being.

From a health and wellness perspective, properly integrating sport science principles is significant because it promotes a holistic approach to athlete development. Rather than solely focusing on performance outcomes, sport science considers the athlete's health and well-being.

- **Coaching Tip #4**

*Provide sport science coaching guidance on nutrition strategies to promote healthy eating habits and prevent the development of chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.*

Integrating sport science principles can also provide injury prevention and rehabilitation strategies, which are crucial for maintaining the athlete's health and well-being. By reducing the risk of injury and ensuring a safe return to play after injury, applying sport science concepts can help athletes to maintain their physical and mental health over the long-term.

In addition, sport science can guide the development of mental and emotional skills that support the athlete's overall well-being (Davies, 2018). For example, sport psychology can provide strategies for managing stress, building resilience, and enhancing motivation. By promoting mental and emotional wellness, sport science can help athletes to maintain a positive attitude and enjoyment of the sport.

Using sport science information in the ADM is significant from a health and wellness perspective because it promotes a holistic approach to athlete development that prioritizes the athlete's long-term health and well-being. By providing evidence-based training, nutrition, and recovery strategies, sport science can support athletes in achieving their performance goals while maintaining their health and well-being over the long-term.

### Research

The purpose of research when it comes to the American Development Model (ADM) is to provide evidence-based data that guides the evolution of the model. The ADM is based on the principles of LTAD, which emphasizes the importance of age-appropriate training, skill development, and competition that align with the athlete's developmental stage. Conducting and applying research strategies is essential to ensure that the ADM remains up-to-date with the latest scientific knowledge and best practices in athlete development.

Research plays a critical role in the evolution of the ADM by providing evidence-based data on the effectiveness of various training and competition programs (Davies, 2018). By evaluating the outcomes of different programs, researchers can identify which programs are most effective for promoting the long-term athletic development of athletes. This information can then be used to guide the next stages of the ADM by incorporating new programs that are shown to be effective and modifying or removing programs that are not.

In addition, research is essential for ensuring that the ADM remains age-appropriate and aligned with the developmental needs of athletes. As children develop and mature, their physical, mental, emotional, and social needs change. By researching the developmental stages of athletes, researchers can identify which types of training, skill development, and competition are most appropriate for each stage of development.

- **Coaching Tip #5**

*As a coach, use this information to guide the evolution of the ADM by ensuring that all activities remain age-appropriate and effective for promoting the long-term athletic development of athletes.*



The purpose of research as it relates to the ADM is to provide evidence-based data that guides the evolution of the model. By evaluating the effectiveness of different programs and ensuring that the ADM remains age-appropriate and aligned with the developmental needs of athletes, research plays a critical role in promoting the long-term athletic development of athletes and supporting their lifelong love of tennis (Balyi, Way, & Higgs, 2013).

### Making Tennis FUN

The purpose of fun when it comes to the ADM is to create a positive and enjoyable experience for athletes that encourages their continued participation in tennis. The ADM recognizes that a fun and enjoyable experience is essential for promoting a lifelong love of tennis and retaining athletes over the long-term.

Fun is significant in retention circles because it is critical in creating a positive and supportive environment that encourages athletes to participate and continue playing tennis. When athletes enjoy the sport and have fun, they are more likely to continue playing and develop a lifelong love of tennis. By creating a fun and enjoyable experience for athletes, the ADM can support the retention of athletes over the long-term.

The USTA is actively engaged in several research initiatives aimed at developing a fun and engaging tennis ecosystem that aligns with the principles of the ADM. Through comprehensive studies and data analysis, the USTA is focused on understanding the practical outcomes of implementing the ADM and its impact on player retention. This research-driven approach ensures that the ADM evolves in a way that maximizes enjoyment, fosters player development, and cultivates long-term participation, ultimately creating a vibrant and sustainable tennis community.

- **Coaching tip #6**

*Provide opportunities for athletes within your practice sessions for match play, interact with peers, receive positive feedback and reinforcement while experiencing success and achievement.*

The purpose of fun when it comes to the ADM is to create a positive and enjoyable experience for athletes that encourages their continued participation in tennis. By providing age-appropriate training and competition programs that align with the athlete's developmental stage and preferences for

fun and enjoyment and creating a positive and supportive environment, the ADM can support the retention of athletes over the long-term and promote a lifelong love of tennis.

## CONCLUSION

This article provides an overview of the USTA's ADM from a business perspective, focusing on its impact on player development, coach education, and the overall tennis ecosystem. Through the lens of strategic planning, resource allocation, talent acquisition, and marketing, we have explored how the ADM aligns with fundamental business principles to foster a sustainable and thriving tennis environment.

Initial feedback indicates that the ADM serves as a powerful tool for attracting, developing, and retaining participants, ultimately nurturing a lifelong love of tennis. By adopting the 5 Cs - Competence, Confidence, Connection, Creativity, and Character - the ADM emphasizes player-centric approaches, skill progressions, positive coaching methodologies, and holistic development. This not only enhances the overall player experience but also contributes to the brand image of the USTA.

Moreover, related research has highlighted the importance of coach education within the ADM, as well as the significance of creating a supportive delivery system that fosters player development and engagement. By equipping coaches with the necessary competencies, providing ongoing education, emphasizing connection and character development, and encouraging creativity, the ADM ensures a high-quality coaching experience and fosters positive coach-player relationships.

Moving forward, we recommended that the USTA continues to invest in research and data-driven insights to further refine and optimize the ADM. This includes ongoing evaluation of

its impact on player outcomes, coach effectiveness, and the overall business objectives of the USTA. By continuously evolving and adapting the ADM based on empirical evidence, the USTA can enhance its strategic planning, further refine resource allocation, and maximize the impact of its initiatives within the tennis community.

Ultimately, the USTA's American Development Model serves as a blueprint for success, blending business principles with player-centric approaches to create a dynamic and sustainable tennis ecosystem. Through ongoing research, strategic implementation, and a commitment to continuous improvement, the ADM has the potential to revolutionize player development, elevate the standard of coaching, and inspire a new generation of tennis enthusiasts.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND FUNDING

The authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest and that they did not receive any funding to conduct the research.

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# Diverse and inclusive tennis governance: Threading inclusive leadership practices into director selection

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of our article is to demonstrate how inclusive leadership practices can be threaded into the director selection process as a way to achieve more diverse and inclusive tennis governance. In this review article, we have brought together a growing body of knowledge on inclusive leadership practices for sport boards. We use this knowledge to propose suggestions for the director selection processes. We break down the concepts of diversity and inclusion, as well as director selection as they apply to sport governance to offer tangible ways for tennis boards to become more diverse and inclusive.

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## INTRODUCTION

Commentators and the public are increasingly expecting good global citizenship from our sport organisations. Broader societal goals such as respecting human rights and dignity (International Tennis Federation [ITF], 2023), 'playing for peace' (ITF email signature) and environmental wellbeing (United Nations, n.d.) are now part of sport governance. To address these goals, National Tennis Federation boards need to have their eye on governing in a way that embraces diverse and inclusive practices. This means they need to have the capacity to govern beyond a focus on oversight (compliance/risk management) and foresight (performance/strategy) and toward their insight objective (i.e., intra/extra-organisational reflections on matters such as societal contributions) (Ferkins & Kilmister, 2012; Molloy, 2023).

Such societal goals are lofty, especially when, depending on the size of the National Tennis Federation, the core business of developing and delivering tennis (oversight and foresight), likely captures most of the management and governance time and attention. Capacity may restrict the Federation's ability to promote its insight objective that is more orientated toward 'societal contributions', and related imperatives of diversity and inclusion. How then, to make such an 'insight'-ful aspiration a reality?

In this article, we propose two key strategies for unlocking the potential of the insight objective for a National Tennis Federation board as well as contributing to its oversight and foresight focus. Firstly, the pursuit of board composition that promotes diversity (demographic and thought) and inclusive leadership practices. Secondly, board selection procedures that attract and select people with these capacities. Together we call this 'director selection'. These strategies are about



shining a spotlight on who gets to sit on the tennis board. Within these two director selection strategies, we integrate a growing body of research that is helping to expand an understanding of inclusive leadership practices. Thus, in the sections below, we first offer the benefit of the latest research and insight about diversity and inclusion as it applies to sport governance in general, and tennis boards in particular. We explain the nuanced distinction between diversity and inclusion and relate these ideas to inclusive leadership practices by also threading in concepts of emotional and cultural intelligence. We then focus on director selection in tennis governance, teasing out the component parts of direction selection to reveal how inclusive leadership practices can be embedded into this process. Thus, the purpose of our article is to demonstrate how inclusive leadership practices can be threaded into the director selection process as a way to achieve more diverse and inclusive tennis governance.

### INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP IN SPORT GOVERNANCE

Global interest in creating a culture of diversity in sport governance, especially gender diversity has grown within the past decade (Adriannse, 2016; Burton, 2015). However, recent research has recognised that increasing diversity in organisations does not automatically lead to the associated potential benefits (i.e., increased levels of creativity and innovation) being realised (Cook & Glass, 2014; Giscombe & Mattis, 2002; Randel et al., 2018; Roberson, 2006). There needs to be a deeper understanding of the complexities and processes required to foster the potential value of diversity, through accompanying inclusive leadership practices (Jackson & Joshi, 2011; Randel et al., 2018; Shore, 2011). To advance this understanding we now explore the concepts of diversity and inclusion as well as emotional and cultural intelligence as they relate to inclusive leadership practices within sport governance (and tennis boards).

#### Sport governance – Diversity and inclusion

Although diversity and inclusion are frequently used interchangeably, they are thought to be conceptually distinct and refer to related but differing ideas (Mor Barak, 2019; Roberson, 2006). Cunningham (2015) defines diversity as “the presence of socially meaningful differences among members of a dyad or group” (p. 6) and inclusion as “the degree into which individuals are free to express themselves and have a sense of workplace connectedness and belonging” (p. 7). Or more simply put, “Diversity is what you have. Inclusion is what you do. Accepting and promoting diversity alone is not enough. Diversity is opening the door, but inclusion is the warmth welcoming you in” (Lovett et al., 2020, p. 7).

In terms of diversity and inclusion in sport governance, recent global interest has been tinged with a focus on the associated problems of a lack of diversity and inclusion in organisations such as tokenism, discrimination and bias (Mayo et al., 2016). Another observation is that proactive diversity strategies have often focused on aspects such as gender (Mayo et al., 2016; van Knippenberg et al., 2013). In October 2018, the New Zealand Prime Minister and Minister for Sport and Recreation announced a new strategy, designed to grow female representation in sport governance, called the National Policy of Gender Equity (Sport New Zealand, 2018). The government, together with Sport New Zealand (the government sport agency), committed \$10million NZD over the next three years to ensure diversity and inclusion initiatives were implemented. As of May 2021, 65 out of the 66 qualifying sport organisation partners reached the 40% self-identified female board composition quota requirements and the only non-compliant partner had a plan in place to achieve it.

Tennis New Zealand (Tennis NZ) were among the 65 qualifying partners to achieve the policy with 63% self-identified females occupying director roles within the National Tennis Federation (NTF) board to date. It would appear that the Government’s Gender Equity Policy (with Sport NZ) helped Tennis NZ achieve its own gender equity aspirations as prior to 2021 there were few to no women on the 7–10-member board. Since 2021, inclusive of strategies such as co-option and intern appointments, there has been more than 50% women on the Tennis NZ board (i.e., 5–6). Refer Table 1 below.

Table 1

Year	Females		Notes
	Board members	N	
2001		1	
2002-2004		0	
2005-2008		1	
2009-2011		0	
2012-2016		1	
2017-2019		3	
2020		2	
2021		6	Inclusive of co-option and intern
2022		6	Inclusive of co-option and intern
2023		5	Inclusive of co-option

However, whilst some sport organisation boards are looking to boost representation in broader terms with different ethnicities, LGBTIQ+ affinity, culture, age, disability, and backgrounds, diversity is unlikely to be sustainable without meaningful inclusion frameworks (Buse et al., 2014). Ospina and Foldy (2010) suggest that a diverse representative structure is not enough to foster differences and additional leadership practices need to be implemented to ensure a sense of inclusiveness, openness, and fairness to facilitate bridging the differences. Interestingly, Tennis Australia has reversed its reference to the common discourse of “Diversity and Inclusion” by framing this as “Inclusion and Diversity”, (Tennis Australia, n.d., para. 1), perhaps in an attempt to further emphasise the distinction and importance of inclusion as suggested by the authors above.

The willingness of sport organisations’, and tennis boards in particular, to embrace diversity and inclusive practices, does not come without challenges (Sport New Zealand, 2018; Tennis Australia, n.d). The theoretical knowledge about how to integrate effective inclusive practices into the sport governance context is limited and the tennis leadership and governance landscape is complex. Existing literature and research indicate that inclusion initiatives have predominately focused on strategies and policies at an institutional change level and not necessarily at the intrapersonal and interpersonal level (Cunningham, 2015; Parker, 2019). Perhaps then, in order to ensure the sustainability of diversity occurring through inclusive initiatives, tennis governance practices need to consider how to embed diversity and inclusion practices at a micro level as well (Cunningham, 2015; Parker, 2019).

Creating an environment where members experience a sense of inclusion within tennis boards is therefore potentially dependent on how leaders facilitate this at the micro level, and, enact inclusive behaviours within the board leadership context directly (O’Boyle et al., 2020; Randel et al., 2018). This is supported by O’Boyle et al. (2020) who express concerns

about how leadership behaviours and actions influence decision making processes at the board level. They stipulate that to significantly address the influence of leadership within governance requires an exploration of integration between group processes and dynamics (O'Boyle et al., 2020). Such a process view of leadership shifts the leadership lens from focusing on the individual to a focus on the influencing relationship between and among board members (Ferkins et al., 2018; Jackson & Parry, 2018). Thus, the complexity of group processes and inclusive practices in tennis governance requires appropriate mechanisms, and this potentially could be where the adoption of an emotional and cultural lens could be a means to achieve this.

### Tennis governance - Emotional and cultural intelligence

Developing sustainable and inclusive practices within tennis governance structures requires more than a seamless integration of practices - it requires a system that captures leadership complexities and that addresses thoughts that embody the dynamics of intra and interpersonal interactions. If thoughts, emotions, and culture have been addressed as barriers to inclusion (Gerbert et al., 2017), then embedding an emotional and cultural intelligence lens could potentially be a contributor to sustainable diversity.

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to monitor one's own emotions to guide one's thinking and actions when working with others (Middleton, 2014). EI is about self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Goleman, 2020). Developing inclusive leaders with EI skills and abilities particularly at an intrapersonal and interpersonal level may help to promote healthy environments (Jada et al., 2016; Warrier, 2021), such as within a NTF board.

Cultural intelligence (CQ) is also recognised as a core competence of inclusive leadership (Paiuc, 2021) and is often linked with EI (Darvishmotevali et al., 2018; Richard-Eaglin, 2021; Rockstuhl et al., 2011). CQ is defined as the capacity to communicate, relate and work effectively within environments that are characterised by high cultural complexity (Andreson, 2017; Ang & Van Dyne et al., 2007; Middleton, 2014). This concept of CQ applied to a leadership context has been garnering increasing interest amongst 'Western' scholars (Ang & Van Dyne et al., 2007; Clark & Polesello, 2017; Middleton, 2014; Thomas, 2006). Whilst the CQ literature is evolving, research still tends to focus around CQ as an individual leader construct rather than an integral component of organisational or board leadership processes (Andreson 2017; Moon, 2010). However, Clark and Polesello (2017) argue that a combined application of EI and CQ can influence positive organisational change with respect to diversity and inclusion barriers.

Thus, if EI and CQ are considered powerful elements of inclusive leadership practices, how then might they influence an aspiration for diverse and inclusive tennis governance? For this, we return to our two director selection strategies (the pursuit of diverse board composition through targeted processes). In other words, why not recruit for EI and CQ, so that those who sit on a tennis board can influence inclusive leadership practices to achieve more diverse and inclusive tennis governance?

## DIRECTOR SELECTION IN TENNIS GOVERNANCE

Director selection is the "formal process by which individuals are identified, screened, nominated and elected (or appointed) to corporate boards" (Withers et al., 2012, p. 245). If a NTF wants to achieve sustainable diversity in its board's composition, with directors contributing EI and CQ to inclusive leadership practices, then its director selection processes could be the mechanism to unlock this potential. Importantly, the use of nomination committees (NCs) as part of nonprofit sport director selection processes have recently been recognised for their 'board-shaping' potential (Stenling et al., 2021).

### Tennis governance - Director selection

The critical nature of director selection for sport organisation governance has been captured in a visual representation, referred to as the Expanded Integrated Board Performance model (Molloy, Ferkins & Dickson, 2020) set out in Figure 1.

As captured in Figure 1 above, director selection has important implications for tennis governance. This is because identifying and recruiting directors is the important first step for tennis boards to "enjoy the performance-enhancing benefit of directors with the appropriate backgrounds and skill sets (individual factors)" (Molloy, Ferkins & Dickson, 2020, p. 329), who can contribute to the following board factors:

- Structure - appropriate diversity in board composition;
- Processes - adoption and implementation of relevant practices and policies; and
- Intra-group dynamics - constructive engagement with each other in their oversight, foresight, and insight objectives.

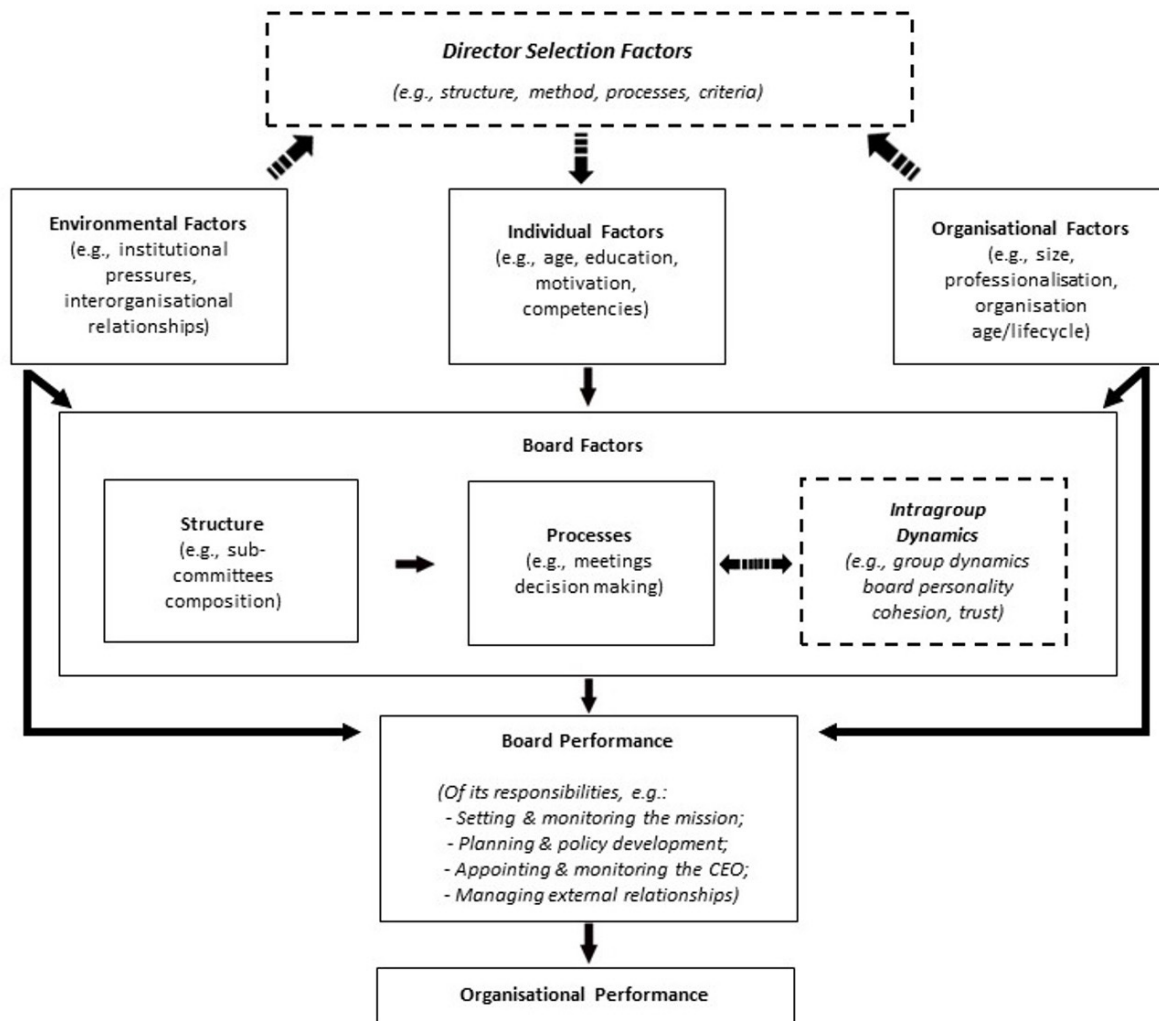
There is very little sport specific research about director selection (Molloy, Dickson & Ferkins, 2020), however we can identify four key features of director selection: the structure/model, method, processes, and criteria (Molloy, Dickson & Ferkins, 2020; Molloy, Ferkins & Dickson, 2020). We discuss each below.

#### Feature 1: Director selection structure/model

In New Zealand and Australia's typically federated sport governance system, there has been a shift away from the traditional "delegate/representative (competitive democracy) model [to] the independent (whole-of-sport) model" (Molloy, Dickson & Ferkins, 2020, p. 338). In the independent model, directors are selected to promote the best interests of the organisation or sport as a whole, not to represent a particular constituency (whether it be club, regional sport organisation, or sport discipline).

#### Feature 2: Director selection method

National sport organisation (NSO) director selection methods in New Zealand commonly include election (by and/or from within the membership), appointment (by a nomination committee or appointments panel) and co-option (by the existing board). For example, the Ferkins and Shilbury (2010) action research project with Tennis NZ records its shift from a 10-person management committee to a 100% appointed board, to a hybrid approach with four appointed and four regionally elected board members. This hybrid approach



**Figure 1.** Director Selection in the Expanded Integrated Board Performance Model.

**Note.** The Integrated Board Performance model was originally produced by Hoye & Doherty (2011) and recently expanded (as denoted by the broken lines and italics) by Molloy, Ferkins & Dickson (2020). From *Routledge Handbook of Sport Governance* (p. 328) edited by D. Shilbury & L. Ferkins, 2020, Routledge. Reprinted with permission.

addressed a sense of “disconnection between the national board and regional perspectives” (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2010, p. 241) associated with the prior 100% appointed board approach.

**Feature 3 and 4: Director selection processes and criteria**

Director selection processes include planning (e.g., identifying board needs, candidate criteria development) and assessment (e.g., interviews, reference checking, suitability synopsis development) type functions/activities (Molloy et al., 2022), with nomination committees (NCs) playing an increasingly visible role. In terms of criteria, Elms et al. (2015) advocate for the importance of achieving an effective balance between ‘role-fit’ criteria (i.e., complementary skills and experience) and ‘group-fit’ criteria (i.e., social compatibility). Sport scholars recognise that “possessing cognitive competencies such as technical abilities, strategic skills or financial skills is not enough to be an outstanding performing board member. Emotional and social intelligence competencies are important pillars in perceptions of competencies” (Balduck et al., 2010, p. 228). However, many sport organisations still favour, in their constitutions at least, an emphasis on the role-fit type criteria.

**Tennis NZ - director selection criteria**

The Tennis NZ constitution requires its NC (or board appointment panel) to make merit-based decisions considering factors such as governance, sport, and occupational experiences “including skills in commerce, finance, marketing, law or business generally” (Tennis NZ, 2012, p. 21). This constitutional focus on ‘role-fit’ over ‘group-fit’ and diversity/EI/CQ type criteria is common but may be overcome by how ‘criteria’ is outworked in practice.

A practical example of ‘group-fit’ and diversity type criteria is demonstrated in recent changes made by the Tennis NZ board to its board needs matrix. The matrix now specifically includes ‘Cultural Competency in New Zealand Context’ as well as consideration of board dynamics and interactions (T.A. Scorer, personal communication, 22 June 2023). Further evidence of Tennis NZ’s practices beyond what its constitution requires can be found in its board charter, which was updated in 2023, some 11 years after the present constitution (Tennis NZ, 2023). The following clauses signal a stronger focus on inclusive leadership practices in relation to board member responsibilities and expectations and state that the board:

- Determines the appropriate culture for Tennis NZ and models behaviours that both reflect and promulgate the desired culture (p. 3).
- Bring[s] a diversity of opinions and views to bear on its decisions (p. 4).
- Board Members must demonstrate high ethical standards and integrity in their personal and professional dealings and be willing to act on - and remain collectively accountable for - all board decisions and speak with one voice on all policy and directional matters (p. 6).

There is also the opportunity for Tennis NZ to continue to evolve its board charter via the mechanism of board agreement, rather than constitutional change. In this way, it may continue to more strongly call out EI and CQ as elements of inclusive leadership practices within the written expectations and responsibilities of board members found within its charter. An evolving board charter, and more overt alignment of the charter content with the board needs matrix and NC briefings, also has the potential to have greater influence in director selection criteria, processes and outcomes.

With NCs being an emerging phenomenon in the sport director selection literature (Molloy et al., 2022; Stenling et al., 2020), we turn now to explore the NC's 'board-shaping' and EI/CQ board capacity building potential.

#### **Sport governance – nomination committees**

NCs are described as the “primary institutional mechanism designed to strengthen director selection processes” (Kaczmarek et al., 2012, p.474) with the overarching role to enhance board composition. Again, there is very little sport specific research on NCs, however drawing from for-profit, nonprofit, and sport governance literature we can examine NCs from structural (composition and powers) and process perspectives.

#### **NC structure - composition and powers**

In terms of NC composition, in the for-profit sector, recent concerns relate to the ratio of independent versus executive directors and/or external experts on the NC (Aperte, 2016; Kaczmarek & Nyuur, 2016; Nachemson-Ekwall & Mayer, 2018). Similar concerns echo in the nonprofit sport sector, with New Zealand NSO NCs being variously composed of a mix of external independents, board member nominees, and NSO member nominees (Molloy et al., 2022). Of significance are the links, in the for-profit sector, between NC gender and 'nationality' diversity and associated board diversity (Kaczmarek et al., 2012). Whilst needing empirical validation, we suggest the same may be true for EI/CQ capacity and inclusive leadership practices and pose the question - if an NTF wants these intra and inter-personal skills on its board - should it have people with, and who can recognise, such skills on its NC?

In terms of NC powers, in the sport sector these include the power (and responsibilities) to identify, recruit, assess, recommend, appoint, monitor and/or evaluate board directors (Bradbury & O'Boyle, 2015; Brunzell & Söderman, 2012; Enjolras & Waldahl, 2010; Ferkins & Shilbury, 2010; K. Ingram & O'Boyle, 2018; Stenling et al., 2021). From a balance of power perspective, Molloy et al. (2022) identified the need to explore the appropriate balance between community (democratic legitimacy) and corporate (professionalisation/efficiency) logics reflected in NC composition. NSO NCs in

New Zealand range from those effectively having the power to select 100% of the board members to those appointing or recommending only the minority (Molloy et al., 2022) with the majority of board members being elected by the voting members.

#### **NC processes**

In terms of NC processes, the for-profit sector has identified a range of decision comprehensiveness (Walther et al., 2017): unplanned (low planning, low evaluation), projecting (high planning, low evaluation) and inclusive (high planning, high evaluation). In the sport sector, Swedish studies have identified NC processes involving minimal transparency and formalisation (Stenling et al., 2021) within an environment where NCs undertake a range of complex rankings of candidate evaluation criteria (Stenling et al., 2020). New Zealand NSO constitutional data (Molloy et al., 2022) suggests a low planning and high assessment approach with an assessment focus on role-fit over group-fit/diversity type criteria (see Molloy et al., 2022, Table 4). Accordingly, there may be an opportunity for NSOs (including NTFs) to better enshrine at constitutional level, as well as in their practices, a more balanced approach to the planning and assessment of candidate evaluation criteria.

#### **Tennis NZ - NC features**

The Tennis NZ (2012) constitution requires its NC to be composed of the Chair (or Deputy or other board member if the Chair is re-standing), a person appointed by the Regional Centre chairpersons and an independent expert (appointed by the board). The NC is responsible for identifying and inviting candidates, advertising for and assessing candidates, determining appointments (up to four directors) and making recommendations for the elected directors (such NC recommendations to be considered by the voting members along with all valid applications). As previously identified, the constitutionally mandated criteria to be applied by the NC has a strong 'role-fit' emphasis however this may differ operationally with 'group-fit' and diversity/EI/CQ type criteria being considered during the actual process.

At the practice level, as noted above, Tennis NZ has more recently undertaken several initiatives to influence a greater focus on 'group-fit' criteria into its NC processes. In addition to updating its board needs matrix and board charter, Tennis NZ has also recently established a 'new to governance' programme (to grow more diverse and inclusive governance capability), as well as invoked its co-option clause to enable a more inclusive board environment for indigenous (Māori) people. A recent board internship has also meaningfully contributed a youth, Māori and Pasifika voice to the Tennis NZ board (T.A. Scorer, personal communication, 22 June 2023).

Another part of its practices is the Tennis NZ diversity, equity and inclusion policy. Approved in August, 2022:

This policy provides a framework for Tennis NZ's current and future diversity and inclusion initiatives and applies to every level and aspect of the sport, including but not limited to the Board and Staff of Tennis NZ and the wider tennis community. (Tennis New Zealand, Te Tēnehi o Aotearoa, p. 3, 2022)

As noted in the scope of this policy, its purpose is to influence board leadership practices, which, as per our argument within the present article, needs to also influence not only what the NC's are looking for but the very composition of the NC itself.

A further key element of the diversity, equity and inclusion policy relates to a stated commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi) by Tennis NZ, to the founding agreement with the indigenous (Māori) peoples of New Zealand (also known as tangata whenua – peoples of the land). For this Tennis NZ (TNZ), recognises Te Tiriti o Waitangi as Aotearoa New Zealand's founding document. TNZ is committed to upholding the mana of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.... This commitment is brought to life in TNZ's partnership with Aotearoa Māori Tennis Association and the Rangapū partnership agreement (p. 3).

A recent Tennis NZ NC report reflected this commitment in noting the diversity of candidates (including eight females, three Māori and four other non-European ethnicities) and recommending that any unsuccessful Māori candidates be approached to explore other ways in which they could contribute to Tennis NZ's bicultural aspirations (T.A., Scorer, personal communication, 22 June 2023). In this way, Tennis NZ is currently navigating its relationship with tangata whenua, Māori, as part of its ongoing practices to create a more diverse and inclusive environment for tennis in New Zealand.

We argue that the success of Tennis NZ's diversity and inclusion aspirations will be heavily influenced not only by a diverse and inclusive board, but by a diverse and inclusive NC. Linking back to the Tennis NZ constitution, the Regional Centre chairpersons and Tennis NZ board have the power, through their NC appointments, to support this vision of a diverse and inclusive NC and Tennis NZ board. They can do this by appointing people who reflect, and can recognise in others, diversity, EI, CQ and inclusive leadership potential.

A final acknowledgement, regarding jurisdictional limitations, relates to the extent to which NTFs may be restricted by their national regulatory context. For example, the Australian Sports Commission (2020) recommends a majority of elected directors (but with all being 'independent' by holding no other 'office' within their membership structure). In Canada, nonprofit legislation requires that directors be elected by the members with the board having limited co-option rights (co-options not to exceed one third of the elected positions) (Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act 2009; Parent, Naraine & Hoye, 2018). In Sweden, for all NSOs belonging to the Swedish sport confederation, their NC "must consist of members elected by the NSO [General Assembly]" (Stenling et al., 2021, p. 6). Notwithstanding any such restrictions, NTFs are encouraged to explore ways in which they can engage with their exiting director selection (and nomination committee) structures, powers, and processes to maximise the diversity, EI, CQ and inclusive leadership capacity in their board composition.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of our article was to demonstrate how inclusive leadership practices can be threaded into the director selection process as a way to achieve not only more diverse, but also inclusive tennis governance. To do this, we brought together a growing body of knowledge on inclusive leadership practices for sport boards which focused first on the nuanced distinction between diversity and inclusion. We then related these ideas to the inclusive leadership practices of EI and CQ. We used this evolving understanding of inclusive leadership practices to suggest considerations for the director selection process as a way to achieve more diverse and inclusive tennis

governance. We argue that the time has come for the board's insight objective (intra/extra-organisational reflections on matters such as societal contributions) to sit alongside its oversight (compliance/risk management), and foresight (performance/ strategy) objectives as 'equal partners' in the governance of sport organisations. Perhaps National Tennis Federations (as exemplified by Tennis NZ) may be able to lead the way as the insight-ful sport within a complex governance landscape.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND FUNDING

The authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest and that they did not receive any funding to conduct the research.

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[RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ACADEMY CONTENT \(CLICK BELOW\)](#)





# Development of national tennis player value chain structure: Statistical analysis of tennis player pathway

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## ABSTRACT

Creating a system of tennis player development to establish and sustain a nation's competitive performance is a problem faced by many countries. This research attempts to implement the value chain structure of tennis player development and the tennis player pathway developed by Cakravastia and Setiawan (2022). This paper develops a partial least squares model by analysing the data of 41 countries from the ITF Global Report (2021). The results of this study identify number of certified tennis coaches and number of tennis courts in a country have significant effect on the number of total tennis players in that country. Subsequently, this study confirmed there is a significant relationship between the total number of tennis players, the total number of junior players, the total number of pro players, and the total number of players representing a country in the grand slam main draw.

**Key words:** Value chain, national performance, statistical analysis, tennis player pathway.

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## INTRODUCTION

To sustain a nation' competitive performance at the global level, efforts have been made in many countries to create a structure for tennis player development from junior to professional players (Gerdin et al., 2020). Each country may have a different strategy to develop and sustain its tennis performance. Different stakeholder groups, relationships between stakeholders, and the structure of the overall system may create varying results for nation-wide performance in tennis.

This challenging problem attracts researchers to study the structure of the national tennis development system from various perspectives. The identification of stakeholders for elite athlete development in tennis has been conducted by Brouwers et al. (2015b). From the angle of country macro policy, Crespo et al. (2022) explain the programme of the Spanish tennis federation. Brouwers et al. (2015) explain country policies and identify factors supporting national tennis performance at the international level. Cakravastia and Setiawan (2022) proposed a value chain structure of stakeholders and a pathway from grass-roots tennis player to professional athlete. In this value chain structure, key stakeholders are the family, education sector, tennis club, national and local government, national tennis federation, international tennis federation, and private and professional sectors. Interaction and collaboration between stakeholders are required to develop a path to international-level performance.

Focusing on the journey of athlete performance, Kovacs et al. (2015) provide an analysis of the milestone ranking of the top 100 ATP athletes. Brouwers et al. (2012) analyse indicators of junior performance to predict the success of future athletes tennis careers. Reid (2007) emphasises the importance of competition structure for national performance in women's tennis.

ITF (2021) published a global tennis report by providing participation and performance data for their country members. This paper is positioned as the subsequent research of Cakravastia and Setiawan (2022). This paper utilises ITF Global Tennis Report data to find important variables and relationships among variables for developing tennis grass-roots players and to find a path from the pool of talent of tennis players into global tennis performance.

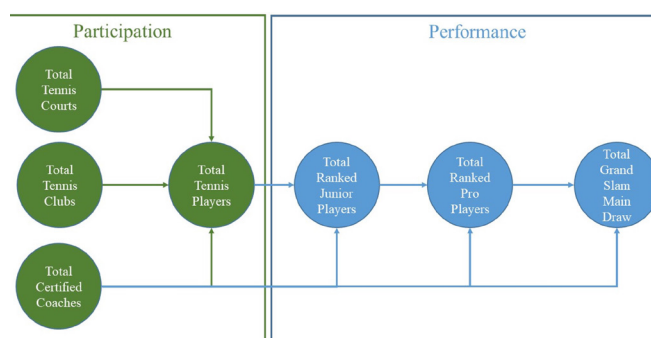


Figure 1. Proposed Model.



PROPOSED MODEL

This research attempts to find variables and interaction among variables of value chain structure of tennis player development and the tennis player pathway developed by Cakravastia and Setiawan (2022). Considering the availability of the data, Figure 1 depicts the model proposed in this paper.

Data for this research was extracted from the ITF Global Tennis Report (2021). The data in this report is divided into two categories: (i) participation data and (ii) performance data. Participation data includes: tennis players (number of players, percentage of population that plays tennis, and player gender balance); access to tennis (total clubs, number of clubs per 1000 populations, and total courts); and tennis delivery (number of certified coaches, number of certified coaches per 1000 players, and certified coach gender balance). The elements of performance data include: ranked players (number of ranked junior and professional players, number of professional players ranked in the top 250, and number of professional players ranked in the top 100), grand slam representation (numbers of main draw and qualifying drawing representation for junior and professional players), and professional players in the top 50 classified by age.

Considering the availability of the data, this paper uses the number of tennis courts, the number of tennis clubs, and the number of tennis coaches as variables related to the development of grass-roots tennis players in a country. Following the tennis player pathway proposed by Cakravastia and Setiawan (2022), this research is using the number of tennis players, followed by the number of ranked juniors, the number of ranked professionals, and the number of Grand Slam main draw representatives, as the path of a tennis player's career. To develop the career of a tennis player from grass-roots player to professional player, the number of certified coaches is considered to have a relationship with the number of ranked juniors, the number of ranked pros, and the number of country Grand Slam main draw representatives.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The ITF Global Report (2021) shows 41 countries with complete participation data. This paper uses all of these 41 countries in its research. Following the proposed model in Figure 1, this paper considers total tennis courts, total tennis clubs, and total tennis coaches as variables relevant for the development of total tennis players in a country. Following the pathway of tennis players developed by Cakravastia and Setiawan (2022), total tennis players, total ranked junior tennis players, total ranked professional players, and total included in the analysis will be the total number of rated juniors, the total number of ranked professionals, and the Grand Slam main draw representation. To deal with the different magnitudes

of the data, player data will be presented in millionths, court data in thousands, and coach data in thousands. This paper use the latest participation of 2018 and the performance data of 2019. The latest performance data is 2020, however the pandemic in 2020 limit the opportunity for tennis players to travel and compete.

A path analysis is applied to show direct and indirect effects between variables as proposed by model in Figure 1. To perform the analysis, this research is using MPlus statistical software. Table 1 indicates that there is multicollinearity between the number of tennis courts and the number of clubs. Availability of tennis courts and coaches are the core element of tennis club. Therefore, in this paper we apply these two variables.

In Table 2, the number of tennis courts and the number of coaches are significantly related to the number of tennis players. Further, there is a relationship between the number of players, the number of ranked juniors, the number of ranked professionals, and the number of tennis players who represent a country in the Grand Slam main draw. The data reveals that the number of coaches in a country has a direct effect on the total number of junior players and the total number of professional players.

From the indirect effect in Table 3 and Table 4, the number of coaches shows an indirect effect with the total players who represent a country in the Grand Slam main draw. Therefore, it can be interpreted that coaches increase the number of ranked professionals, which in turn increases the number of Grand Slam main draw representation.

Based on the result above, number of tennis courts and number of certified coaches have significant role in determining the number of tennis players in a country. Number of tennis courts that can be accessed is the basic requirement to develop pool of tennis players. Some countries build number of public tennis courts, so players at any level can have access to play and practice tennis. Competitive player need to have experience to play in different surfaces and it need to be provided.

Number of certified coaches is important to increase number of ranked player in both junior and professional level in a country. Further, it is potentially increase number representative of the country in grand slam main draw. Therefore, the coach education program in every country is very important, not only to ensure higher participation retention, also to increase the number of high-quality players that can compete in international level. In a tennis-growing country, National Association need to have a coach education structure, managers, and tutors to produce sufficient number of quality coaches for all level of players. A system that includes certification and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) would be the ideal one.

Table 1  
Multi collinearity.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(constant)	125.063	531.367		.235	.815		
1 Total Tennis Clubs	-.687	.183	-1.188	-3.761	.001	.069	14.456
Total Certified Coaches	.128	.123	.112	1.036	.307	.589	1.699
Total Tennis Courts	.266	.048	1.862	5.526	.000	.061	16.455

**Table 2**  
Direct Effect.

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable(s)	Estimate	Standard Error	Est. Std Error	Two-tailed p-value
Total Tennis Players	Total Tennis Courts	0.094	0.017	5.606	0.000*
	Total Certified Coaches	0.240	0.133	1.789	0.072
Total Ranked Junior Players	Total Tennis Players	0.012	0.003	3.848	0.000*
	Total Certified Coaches	0.007	0.004	1.997	0.046*
Total Ranked	Total Ranked Junior Players	0.473	0.051	9.191	0.000*
	Professional Players	0.007	0.001	4.850	0.000*
Total Grand Slam Main Draw Representative	Total Ranked Pro Players	0.097	0.010	9.753	0.000*
	Total Certified Coaches	0.000	0.000	0.689	0.491

\*significant variable.

**Table 3**  
Total and Indirect Effect.

Effects from Total Coaches to Total Grand Slam Representative	Estimate	Standard Error	Est. Std Error	Two-tailed p-value
Total	0.001	0.000	5.271	0.000
Total Indirect	0.001	0.000	4.847	0.000

**Table 4**  
Specific Indirect Effect.

Specific Indirect	Estimate	Standard Error	Est. Std Error	Two-tailed p-value
Total Main Draw Grand Slam Representative	0.001	0.000	4.343	0.000
Total Ranked Professional Players				
Total Certified Coaches				
Total Main Draw Grand Slam Representative	0.000	0.000	1.914	0.056
Total Ranked Professional Players				
Total Ranked Junior Players				
Total Certified Coaches	0.000	0.000	1.582	0.114
Total Main Draw Grand Slam Representative				
Total Ranked Professional Players				
Total Ranked Junior Players				
Total Tennis Players				
Total Certified Coaches				

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

This research attempts to find variables and interaction among variables of value chain structure of tennis player development and the tennis player pathway developed by Cakravastia and Setiawan (2022). This paper identifies the number of tennis courts and the number of coaches as significant variables in determining the number of tennis players in a country. These two variables are important for creating the grass roots of a tennis player. Further investigation is required to find other variables to attract people to playing tennis. The number of tennis players, as a pool of talent, is significantly correlated with the number of ranked junior pros. This research shows that there is a path between the number of tennis players, the number of ranked juniors, the number of ranked professional tennis players, and the number of players in the Grand Slam main draw of a country. Therefore, this research confirms the model of the pathway of a tennis player proposed by Cakravastia and Setiawan (2022).

Further research can be directed towards considering the number of junior and professional tournaments in a country in the model. The resources of the family and the roles of the government and private sectors are interesting to be investigated in the model.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND FUNDING

The author declares that he has no conflict of interest and that he did not receive any funding to carry out the research.

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RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ACADEMY CONTENT (CLICK BELOW)





# Management strategies of the Paraguayan Tennis Association with the Olympic Solidarity Programmes

Larissa Schaerer

Manager of the Paraguayan Olympic Committee and member of the Board of Directors of the Paraguayan Tennis Association.

## ABSTRACT

The National Tennis Federations (NTFs) are the governing organisations of tennis at the national level. They are affiliated to their respective Regional Federations, their National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and the International Tennis Federation (ITF). Olympic Solidarity (OS) is an organisation of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) that helps NOCs to develop the sport in their countries through a range of programmes targeting athletes, coaches, infrastructure, programmes, events, and values. The purpose of this article is to reflect on the importance of an efficient and professional collaboration between the NFs and OS, through the NOCs, to use the available resources to improve the management of tennis development at national level. After outlining some general aspects regarding the different organisations and their programmes, a section is included in which the strategies carried out by the Asociación Paraguaya de Tenis are presented to serve as an example of good practice for other NFs.

**Key words:** IOC, management, development, strategy, structure, strategy, structure.

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## INTRODUCTION

### National Federations

National Tennis Federations or National Tennis Associations (NTFs) are organisations that represent the interests of the national tennis industry within their geographical area. Their tasks are many and varied as they are responsible for organising and managing national and international tournaments, as well as providing technical and coaching services and competitions to players and clubs, among others. The NTFs manage tennis on a national level, while acting as a resource and assistance in developing the structure and programmes of local tennis clubs. The NTFs work to ensure efficient administration and generate appropriate competitive opportunities among their members, while seeking to increase participation in tennis throughout their national territory. In terms of structure, the NTFs are part of bodies such as the International Tennis Federation (ITF), National Olympic Committees (NOCs) or Regional Federations by being affiliated to them (ITF, 2023).

These national governing bodies are responsible for the governance of tennis at their respective level of operation, including overseeing and regulating the national tennis programmes, the schedule of major tournaments at different levels of play, tournament regulations, marketing and promotion of tennis activities, representation of the country in international tennis competitions and their national tennis development programme, including participation projects (Martínez-Gallego, et al., 2022). Their main task is to organise



and coordinate local and national tournaments and leagues, train players, provide specialised instruction to players and organise the training of officials. The NTFs are also responsible for ensuring that all local and national competitions are conducted in accordance with official regulations, approved by the competent bodies. They also develop new initiatives to increase participation, organise social activities to improve awareness of the sport and provide training for players and coaches on the rules of the game.

The NTFs themselves are organised according to "best practice principles" and have varying levels of autonomy and responsibility within each nation. The role of NTFs in the

development of our sport is highly influential and beneficial, as these organisations offer expertise, guidance, and support, as well as access to world-class professionals and facilities (Browsers et al., 2015). These entities create a network of institutional collaboration that spans from the local level to the international stage in a way that helps them play a key role in the governance of world tennis. The numerous initiatives offered by the NTFs promote, develop, and grow tennis at local and national levels.

The activities of the NTFs have a lasting impact not only on the sport of tennis, but also on the entire sports industry. They help to develop strong connections between different stakeholders such as players, coaches, sponsors, officials, and tournament directors. The activities organised by the NTFs are also important for the popularity of tennis as they help to highlight new stars and increase the number of fans.

The NTFs are affiliated to their respective National Olympic Committees (NOCs) who are the representatives of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in each country. Therefore, to access any IOC assistance, the NTFs have to apply through their NOCs.

### Olympic Solidarity

Olympic Solidarity is the IOC's programme to support the development of sport around the world. It was created in 1961 and its mission is to use the resources of the Olympic Movement to help NOCs develop sport in their countries. Olympic Solidarity assists the NOCs in the form of grants, educational programmes and training opportunities for athletes and coaches. It also assists with the organisational and technical aspects of sport and helps the NOCs with the financial aspects of organising the Olympic Games. Olympic Solidarity has a wide range of activities designed to assist the NOCs (IOC, 2023).

Olympic Solidarity awards grants to develop sport through the creation or strengthening of NOCs, providing support to athletes and coaches. It also offers training programmes for athletes and coaches, including courses on sports administration and coaching. In addition, Olympic Solidarity supports the NOCs in organising and hosting the Olympic Games. Olympic Solidarity has been successful in helping NOCs develop sport around the world (Henry & Al-Tauqi, 2008). Since its inception, it has provided more than \$1 billion in grants, training, and educational opportunities to NOCs, helping them to bring the Olympic Movement to their countries.

### The importance of Olympic Solidarity for National Federations

Olympic Solidarity is a fundamental part of the Olympic Movement that works to support athletes, coaches, NOCs and NFs in their development. It is important to highlight the great importance of Olympic Solidarity for NFs, as it provides them with a powerful tool to help broaden the participation of their athletes in international competitions and promote Olympic values (Guzey & Ozbey, 2013). It also enables them to create and maintain the necessary infrastructure, such as sports facilities, and to invest in the staff and organisations needed to sustain a successful national sport system. It also helps to create development and support systems within federations that are critical to identifying the best talent and providing them with the necessary resources to help them play on a world stage.

Olympic Solidarity therefore plays an important role in bringing sport to the far corners of the world and enabling the sport system to flourish at the national level. It motivates and encourages NFs to strive to improve the development of their athletes. By providing both direct support and scholarships, Olympic Solidarity helps NFs to adopt a strategic approach to their management and administration, making it a key player in promoting success at the international level and transforming the Olympic dream into reality (Robinson & Minikin, 2011).

### How does Olympic Solidarity help national federations?

Olympic Solidarity assists NFs through the respective NOCs in each country. The programmes therefore contribute to strengthening their capacities by providing support in different areas, such as finance, education, training, and technical support. The support is generally directed towards athletes, coaches, programmes, events, facilities, and values. Overall, Olympic Solidarity plays a vital role in helping to ensure that the Olympic Movement and its ideals are promoted, and that athletes, coaches and sports officials can develop their skills and knowledge (Chappelet & Bayle, 2005). Olympic Solidarity's support helps to ensure that NOCs can offer their athletes the best possible conditions to excel in their sporting careers.

### What are some of the programmes available?

#### *Development of a National Sport Structure (DNSS)*

The Olympic Solidarity DNSS programme is an initiative developed by the IOC to support athletes, NOCs, and NFs in their efforts to develop and manage their sport programmes. It provides financial and technical support to NOCs to help them build capacity and develop their national sport structures. Funding for the programme comes from a variety of sources, including the Olympic Solidarity Fund, the Olympic Foundation for Culture and Heritage, and donations from individual NOCs. The programme has been running since 2000 and has provided more than USD 800 million in grants to NOCs in more than 160 countries.

The programme includes financial support for team preparation, training, and competition, as well as providing technical support to help NOCs develop their sport systems and structures. It also provides athlete development support, which includes funding for the development of young athletes, coaches, and sport administrators, as well as support for athlete education and professional development.

#### Programme of training courses for coaches

The coach education programme aims to provide training and certification for those responsible for implementing coaching sessions to athletes in the country. In the case of tennis, NTFs are encouraged to align themselves with the ITF coach education programme which is available on the ITF Academy in 11 languages and has written and digital resources for different levels of education and certification (ITF Academy, 2023).

NTFs can contact their NOC to request SO to organise a certification course. However, to facilitate the process, it is suggested that NTFs contact the regional development officer in advance so that the course can also be approved by the ITF.

### Coach training scholarship programme

Coach education scholarship programmes offer grants for coaches of Olympic sports, such as tennis, to participate in courses organised by institutions such as International Federations, High Performance Centres, or Universities.

In the case of tennis, the ITF offers the opportunity for scholarship coaches to undertake courses for advanced player coaches (CAP-Level 2) and high-performance player coaches (CHP-Level 3) in Spain. Coaches must be proposed by their NTF, endorsed by the ITF development officer, and submitted by the NOC to Olympic Solidarity, which in turn requires ITF approval.

Other training opportunities are also available at centres in the USA, Switzerland, and Hungary.

### Why is it important for national federations to maintain good relations with their NOC?

Maintaining a strong relationship between NFs and their NOCs is of great importance. As the NOCs are responsible for coordinating the organisation of national competitions and the entry of athletes into the Olympic Games, the two must work together to achieve success for their countries in international competitions. Working actively with the NOC helps national federations establish better relationships with the governing bodies of international sport, which can lead to greater access to resources, funding, and other support (Ferrand & McCarthy, 2008). In addition, working together creates a more transparent and organised approach to national sport events, which helps to ensure that athletes and coaches are treated ethically and fairly. NFs can benefit significantly from the experience of their NOC.

NOCs can provide advice on financial planning, marketing strategies and sport regulations to guide their NFs. This advice can lead to improved Olympic results, as coaches and athletes will have a better understanding of the regulations and rules set by the governing bodies. In addition, NOCs provide support and funding to athletes that NFs alone cannot facilitate (Camy & Robinson, 2007). The establishment of strong relationships between NFs and their NOCs is important to ensure that countries have the necessary resources to succeed in international sport competitions. NFs benefit from the guidance and support provided by their NOCs, and for their countries to be successful at the Olympic Games, both must establish and maintain a collaborative relationship.

### What has been the impact of Olympic solidarity programmes on the NF landscape?

The Olympic Solidarity programmes implemented by the IOC have had a significant positive impact on the NF landscape. Overall, these programmes have had a positive impact on the development of national sports federations and have increased opportunities for athletes around the world.

The Olympic Solidarity Programme has been particularly effective in helping these countries find the training resources and skills needed to create and develop a high-performance NF. Through this programme, NFs have contributed significantly to the development and promotion of sport in their respective countries (Henry & Cuschieri, 2014). As a result, these national sport federations now play an important role in promoting the Olympic ideals around the world.

The Olympic Solidarity Programmes have had a very positive impact on the development of national sports federations. Countries experience an improvement in sporting standards, see increased sponsorship and marketing opportunities, and strengthen relationships between NFs, the NOC, and the IOC (Parry, 2003). Through better communication and a more fluid exchange of ideas, Olympic Solidarity programmes have advanced the development of NFs considerably.

### What do NTFs have to do to be eligible for support under the Olympic solidarity programmes?

The following is a list of actions that NTFs must take into consideration to access support from Olympic Solidarity programmes. NTFs must:

- Align with the ITF's development strategy.
- Align with the policies of the national sports authorities.
- To have an in-depth knowledge of the regulations of the Olympic Solidarity programmes.
- To know the structure of the NOC and the people in charge of managing each of Olympic Solidarity's programmes.
- Have a development strategy based on evidence-based programmes that is aligned, monitored, and approved by the ITF development officer for the region.
- Submit the application for access to the programme to the relevant sports department of the NOC approved by the highest governing body of sport in that country.
- Provide the necessary and required documentary evidence of the basic organisational structure and its activities since its creation.
- Demonstrate and justify the necessary and required experience in the organisation and management of sporting activities at regional or national level.
- Outline a detailed programme of activities to be carried out over a three-year period.
- Communicate the benefits that the programme requested by the NTF will provide to its members if approved.
- Commit to relevant national anti-doping legislation, good governance, and athlete support measures.
- Provide evidence of financial autonomy, financial transparency rules and develop a strategic financing plan and a budget for activities.
- Understand and adopt the financial regulations of the Olympic Solidarity programme, such as procedures for accessing grants, prerequisites payable, financial management rules and their need for exemptions or exceptions (if applicable).
- Follow the communication, financial and progress reporting guidelines established by the NOC and its relevant sports department.
- Enter the Olympic Solidarity system the monthly updated list of athletes, coaches and team officials receiving NOC support.
- Comply with general ethical codes and provide an informative and interactive website.

- Demonstrate a clear policy on gender equality, child protection and commitment to athlete welfare.
- Show evidence of training activities and programmes in areas such as sport development, athlete and coach education and training, and sport management.
- Emphasise that NF programmes and activities focus on the development of athletes, coaches, and sport administrators, while satisfying gender balance requirements.
- Participate actively in international sport development programmes and initiatives proposed by the IOC.

## PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

### Management strategies of our National Federation

For the Paraguayan Tennis Association, it has been fundamental to use and take advantage of the various Olympic Solidarity programmes to consolidate the work we have been doing in the area of training. The main key is the coordinated and interrelated work between our national federation and all the parties involved. This progress was especially due to the implementation of various strategies and activities that facilitated this improvement, led by our federation.

The strategies implemented for the use and exploitation of Olympic Solidarity programmes are detailed below.

#### **Strategy No. 1: Interrelation of the federation with the Paraguayan Olympic Committee, the International Tennis Federation, and the Secretariat of Sports.**

##### **Objective:**

Promote active communication between the Paraguayan Olympic Committee COP, the International Tennis Federation (ITF), and the National Sports Secretariat (SND), to be fully interrelated to take advantage of the various programmes.

##### **Strategic actions:**

- Relationship and management with the Olympic Committee to be able to take advantage of and carry out at least 2 to 3 Olympic Solidarity programmes every year.
- Early communication and co-ordination with the ITF to set up a calendar for the year with all programmes and projects and the management of the same with SO.
- Early application to the Olympic Committee for the year's programmes ahead of other sports.
- Support from the Secretary of Sports in the adaptation and improvement of the facilities for greater comfort to be able to carry out more projects at the headquarters of the federation.

#### **Strategy No. 2: Professionalisation of the federation**

##### **Objective:**

Recruitment of trained technical staff for the federation, capable of carrying out and managing various programmes, thus achieving the professionalisation of the sport.

##### **Strategic actions:**

- Recruitment of persons responsible for the areas for the elaboration, monitoring, control, and accountability of the various programmes.
- Having national tutors to carry out the training has raised the level considerably, giving us greater reach and coverage at the national level.

#### **Strategy No. 3: Improved communication and wider dissemination of actions in sport**

##### **Objective:**

Reach and reach more people through the right channels with the right communication.

##### **Strategic actions:**

- The various programmes implemented will be successful to the extent that they can be used by students and coaches.
- Clear and concrete communication.
- Opening of other communication channels to publicise the various events.

#### **Strategy No. 4: Enhance the training programme for coaches and their insertion into high performance.**

##### **Objective:**

Our objective within this strategy has been to raise the level of our coaches, from the initiation and development stage, through the intermediate level and up to high performance.

##### **Strategic actions:**

- The incorporation of teachers and/or students of physical education in the various training events has been an extremely important step forward in increasing the number of trainers at the initial or developmental level and for the various projects in schools.
- Ensure training work with the Olympic Committee's interdisciplinary team in the area of applied sciences and sports methodology so that coaches have a general vision in their insertion into high performance.
- Retain or re-incorporate former players in tennis who can add value.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Olympic Solidarity programmes are an important factor in helping NTFs benefit from assistance that will help them improve their services and products. This programme provides increased opportunities for the development of sport in countries that may lack funding and resources. It also supports training, development, and technical assistance in Olympic sport disciplines such as tennis for athletes, coaches and support staff from these nations, in order to achieve better results at the Olympic Games.

The sports development of an NTF supported and funded by Olympic Solidarity can improve the performance of the players, the structures of the NFs and lead to increased organisational performance at all levels. Such programmes can also serve to foster a more professional and effective management and administration of NTFs. We hope that this article will be a practical and useful contribution for NTFs wishing to access Olympic Solidarity support. We believe it is vital that NTFs become more proactive and work together with their NOCs to benefit from such programmes.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND FUNDING

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[RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ACADEMY CONTENT \(CLICK BELOW\)](#)







# The challenge of managing player development in a VUCA environment

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## ABSTRACT

This article attempts to summarise the key factors in managing player development in VUCA environments from the perspective of a sports federation. This complex process, which requires special attention and proper planning at each of its stages, must be supported by the foundations of proper management. The article summarises some of the contents related to the strategic pillar "towards sporting excellence" of the Argentine Tennis Association.

**Key words:** Management, leadership, context, performance, participation.

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## INTRODUCTION

Managing is a constant challenge and creativity becomes the most genuine and effective tool we have. The VUCA and BANI environments that sports organisations will encounter on a daily basis require not only rapid adaptation, but also the personalisation of planning in order to maximise the potential of our athletes.

Opportunities are to be found in the same place as difficulties. To find them, we must first understand our environment.

### Argentine Analysis: "The VUCA environment".

By environment we understand all those factors that condition the organisation's performance. A distinction can be made between the macro-environment, made up of a set of global factors such as policies, regulations, the economic situation or the exchange rate, and the micro-environment, which is made up of those factors that directly influence the organisation, such as competition, customers, and suppliers.

The great economic crisis of 2007 prompted the organisational world to start using a term that originated at the US War College to illustrate the context of the world after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The term VUCA, whose acronym translates as Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity. Understanding this new world is not a problem, but VUCA environments are seen as an opportunity to develop strategies that can cope with stressful situations and turn them into assets for sports organisations.

Highlighting the most important points of the VUCA environment in Argentina, we can mention:

- Volatility: the constant and unpredictable changes in the exchange rate make budgeting difficult in all areas, but



specifically in those that directly involve the disposal of foreign currency. Therefore, the development of tenants is directly affected by changes in costs, with no clear pattern of behaviour.

- Uncertainty: changes in sport consumption habits and specifically in tennis are difficult to predict. In Argentina, the discipline was the first to return to sport and that brought with it a boom in practice at all ages.
- Complexity: tennis development has many interconnected parts, many influencing factors, and variables. At the same time, the development of competitions on national territory does not ensure that locals benefit from them.
- Ambiguity: Ambiguity scenarios are generally referred to when an organisation tries to enter an immature market or a mature market with a new product. In our case, the stakeholders' response to the change of a competitive matrix was totally uncertain.

## THE SPORTS ECOSYSTEM IN ARGENTINA

In recent decades, sport in Argentina has been expressed as a phenomenon generated by the community itself, expressing the need for social integration, belonging to a group and recognition of a cultural identity. This socio-cultural trait has meant that the desire to excel on the international stage has surpassed the barriers of football and has imbued with this impetus countless other disciplines that have traditionally been neglected in Argentina in particular, and in the continent in general. We could mention recognised sporting achievements in basketball, rugby, hockey, handball, judo, swimming, cycling, volleyball, and tennis among many others.

In this ecosystem there are clubs with adequate infrastructure for development, coaches with great knowledge and international experience, quantity, and quality of athletes in various regions of the country, sponsors, private companies and government agencies involved in sports development.

This sporting ecosystem in our country generates a favourable environment and a huge opportunity for sporting development. One of our great challenges is to enhance this favourable environment to develop more quantity and quality of players in our country.

### Finding opportunities in challenges

Peter Drucker (1984) argued that in times of difficulty it is not the problems but the opportunities that are most important. One of the enormous challenges in the development of tennis players is to rethink development strategies because of the high costs of a sporting career.

As we have defined, Argentina is in a moment of profound uncertainty, which the AAT has taken advantage of to implement a change in the competitive matrix. We are convinced that thinking about a new culture and competitions that adapt to the needs and possibilities of the players in the region also means working on the development of players.

## TOWARDS SPORTING EXCELLENCE

One of the five strategic pillars of the Argentine Tennis Association is called "Towards Sporting Excellence" and aims to achieve a world-class sporting system, with a holistic approach, that maximises the potential of tennis players.

To achieve this goal, we have 4 plans in place:

### 1. The tennis pathway: Understanding and reformulating the stages of development and redesigning the categories accordingly.

**How do we understand development and how does competition impact on each stage?**

#### Creating environments conducive to transition

Schonborn (2001) argues the importance of long-term development to produce elite athletes. Several scientific studies have concluded that for an athlete to reach the elite level, he or she must train for eight to twelve years (Bloom, 1985; Ericsson et al., 1993; Ericsson and Charness, 1994) a specific and well organised training, competition and recovery regime will ensure a better development of the athlete

throughout his or her career. We understand development as a long-term period in which short-term shortcuts in a tennis player's preparation should be avoided. Competitions cannot be left out of this concept, so it is key to define the quantity and quality of competitions at each stage of an athlete's development.

Understanding competition as part of a tennis player's development will enable talented young players to reach their potential in time and ensure their long-term participation in the sport. In other words, it means ensuring that limited resources are used efficiently.

As Singer and Janelle (1999) justify, "in sport, competition serves as a quantitative mechanism for recognising excellence".

According to Bloom's studies (1985), competition evolves along the developmental stages. In the first stage, it is of little importance, and should primarily seek to provide positive experiences for young athletes, with the fun factor taking precedence over the performance factor. During the period of specialisation, competition, as well as becoming more important and more performance-oriented, becomes a key factor as an element of their training.

#### Create competitive environments conducive to transition

The transition stage from junior to professional is one of the most important stages of athlete development as it will determine the athlete's future. When an athlete develops or accesses the resources required to cope with the barriers and can cope with the demands of change, it is called a successful transition. Conversely, a critical transition occurs when the athlete is not able to cope with the demands and barriers that the situation presents. There are several reasons for a critical transition, for example: lack of resources and/or recurring barriers, inability to analyse a situation correctly and make a good decision based on the analysis, and low awareness of the demands in the ongoing transition (Stambulova, 2003; Stambulova & Alfermann, 2009).

One of our objectives is to create competitive environments that are conducive to a better transition.

Our competition formats in the transition to professionalism seek to develop Argentine players towards excellence, increasing their chances of competing in the country and the world. Thus, the team of professionals works to achieve the participation of our athletes in a variety of events that give money and points for various rankings, with a calendar that includes all regions of the country, encourages professional competition, and allows the addition of points of our players for the international ranking.

### 2. Laying the foundations: National Competence System

#### Competition Initiation Events

The initial stages present a simple competitive pathway for the children. This model starts with tennis festivals that allow their first experiences in play-oriented participatory events with cooperative games and skill challenges, and then gradually introduces oppositional formats in a constructive way (Figure 1).

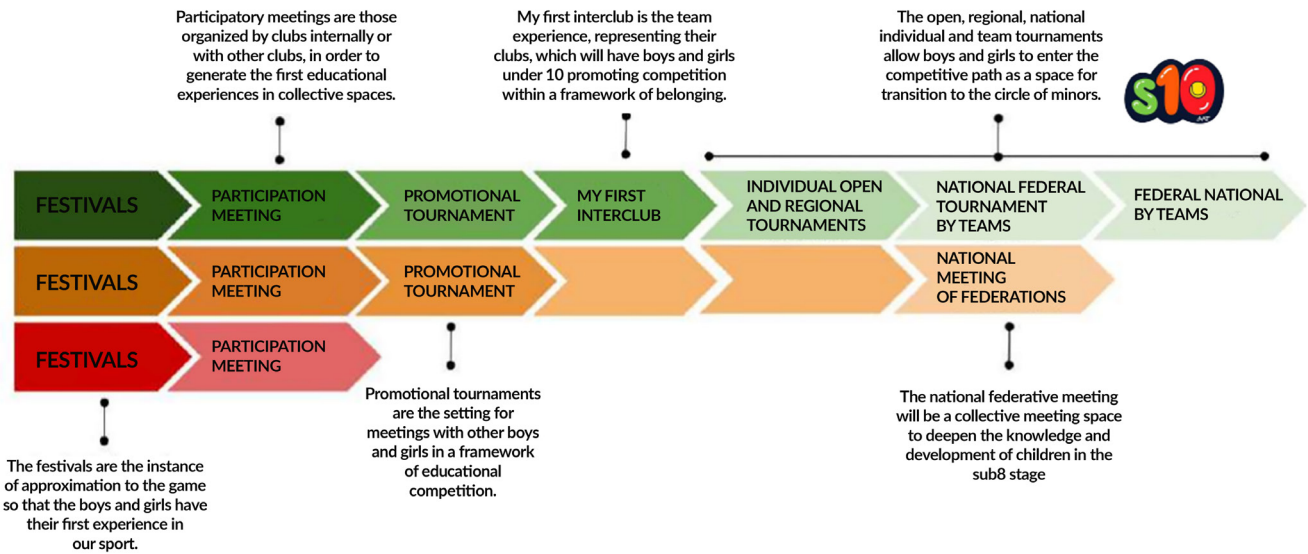


Figure 1. AAT competition initiation events.

**The path of competition in the Juniors stages:**

The categories defined for the competitions of the Circuito Argentino for minors are the following:

- Category U18 (Youth)
- U16 (Cadets) U14 (Juniors)
- U12 (Infants)
- U10 (Pre-Infants U10)
- U8 (Pre-Infants U8)

The tournaments will be classified into different types:

- International
- Nationals
- Regional
- Open

**National competence system (Figure 2)**

We live in an era of constant social, economic, and personal change in which sport cannot remain on the side-lines. The design of the competition structure must consider all these factors and address the need for tennis to be a sport for life, without losing sight of the vision of the organisation: **one Argentinean, one tennis player.**



Figure 2. AAT National Competence System..

**3. Competition at home. Changing the competitive matrix and development strategy.**

**Direct benefits of national competences**

In recent years the economic situation in Argentina and in many South American countries has had a significant impact on the possibilities for players to participate in competitions outside the country. The high costs of travel, accommodation, meals and training expenses have made the planning of competitions more and more exhaustive. As a solution to these problems, we have designed a new competition structure that increases the number of tournaments from junior to professional in the country. This strategy not only has a positive influence on the economy of the players, but also indirectly favours their development. Among the most representative examples we can mention:

- Players can continue to train in their academies together with their entire staff.
- Affective and emotional containment by being close to their loved ones.
- Improvements in rest, health, and nutrition.
- Improvement in performance due to the addition of matches with international exposure.
- Access the possibility of an invitation to major tournaments.
- Obtaining ranking points without high financial cost.

**4. Enhancing the ecosystem:**

The ecosystem is like a chain made up of different links, each of which has a fundamental role in the development of the player. Private and public sports institutions are going through a profound change. Professionalising activities is key in this new era where the demands of the sporting environment, the institutions, and the athletes themselves require new strategies. Teamwork and leadership, among others, are key to carry out this evolution. In this context, the need to improve the professionalisation and training of people working in

sports development, who have the challenge of absorbing the experience of previous management to generate new ideas and/or improvements in the models of sports institutions, is increasingly evident.

The production of quality international events in Argentina generates a virtuous circle. Tennis is once again seen as an industry that generates numerous jobs, the possibility of full-time dedication not only for the players, the improvement of local infrastructure and the involvement of public-private investments that see the direct fruits of their disbursements in crowded stands, successful television broadcasts and young players climbing the international rankings.

## CONCLUSIONS

Leadership from the leadership and professional teams at this time must be able to adapt to changes and guide towards the detection of opportunities. It is our job not to remain in the difficulties presented by the environment and to be able to generate a space in which athletes can reach their maximum potential.

The correct analysis of the environment together with innovative ideas will be the keys to success in the current global scenario, understanding success as the achievement of the National Federation's objectives.

The key is not to copy formulas, but to understand what the right strategy is to develop our players based on 1) the macro-environment, 2) the micro-environment and 3) our resources.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND FUNDING

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest and have not received any funding for the study.

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## RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ACADEMY CONTENT (CLICK BELOW)





# Gender equality strategies at national association level. Examples of best practices in Central and South America

Cecilia Ancalmo<sup>1</sup>, Fabiola Zuluaga<sup>2</sup>, Macarena Miranda<sup>3</sup>, Patricia Castro<sup>4</sup> & Darlene Kahn<sup>5</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Gender equality is a crucial issue that transcends the boundaries of tennis and sport and affects society as a whole. Historically, tennis has been a pioneering sport when it comes to making clear and defending the rights of women in all walks of life. Regarding professional tennis, tennis has had great representatives in this field such as Billie Jean King who has been a pioneer in achieving gender equality in professional tennis. The ITF, for its part, launched the Advantage All campaign to generate a movement that would help visualize the existing situation in our sport. The objective of this article is to present the visions that some women related to tennis in different countries of Central and South America have about the different initiatives carried out. In addition, experiences, opinions, and perceptions regarding the different programs are shared. We hope this collaboration will be useful for all those interested in contributing to achieving gender equality in tennis.

**Key words:** Gender, equality, advantage all, programmes.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Female tennis participation and competition scenario

Female tennis worldwide has a participation challenge, with noticeable gender disparity at competitive and older age groups despite a fairly even split amongst the much younger age groups. The data obtained in different studies suggest that there are challenges in retaining female players in the sport, indicating a need for greater measures to understand and address the underlying causes of this scenario. Gender disparity is a significant issue in competitive tennis, particularly at older age groups, despite a more balanced participation among younger players (Ward & Buscome, 2019). Stereotype threat, which refers to the psychological effect of negative stereotypes, may contribute to the underperformance and demotivation of girls in tennis. However, research has shown that stereotype threat can have both positive and negative effects on performance. Efforts to understand and address the underlying causes of gender inequality in tennis are necessary.

From a pure coaching perspective, one of the key goals is to engage more girls in tennis. To do this, it is important to create an environment that promotes verbal communication and peer learning. Furthermore, encouraging girls to work on problems together in pairs or groups can also enhance their problem-solving abilities. Additionally, scheduling



younger groups on adjacent courts to older ones can provide role models for younger girls to imitate (Regan, 2019). It is also beneficial to encourage verbal fluency in tactics and tennis terminology, and using peer learning by pairing more experienced players with less experienced ones can help build confidence and improve skills.

In this context, motivation is a crucial factor and girls' motivation to play tennis can be influenced by various factors. One major factor is the desire for success and the ratio of victories to defeats (Krolak, 2013). Additionally, girls may be

motivated by the enjoyment of the game and the opportunity for progress and performance (Bykanova-Yudanov, 2018). It is important for coaches to understand the social factors and the individual needs of female tennis players to support their development and maximize their potential (Mouelhi-Ghizani et al., 2023).

## ITF RESEARCH

The ITF's Advantage All strategy, to ensure equal opportunities for women and men in tennis on and off the court, works to generate action to bring about the necessary changes that will lead to parity. In the field of women coaches, data available in the ITF Global Tennis Report 2021 indicates that 22% of coaches worldwide are women, a far cry from the 50% parity sought. To bring about this change, in the coaching area the ITF is working on the ITF Female Coaches Network project. At the end of 2022 we gathered and analysed figures that led us to set goals for 2023 (ITF, 2021).

We found that the participation of female coaches in Play Tennis certification courses or higher that were supported with ITF funds had no more than 30% female participation and we set a target that by 2023 female participation should be no less than 30%.

On the participation of female coaches in the role of captains of the U12, U14 and U16 national teams, we found that their participation ranged from 30% in the younger age groups to 17% in the older age groups. We set a target for 2023 that 30% of the captains in these teams will be women. This goal has been accompanied by the promotion of CBI level 1 and CAP level 2 certification courses for female coaches to have certified professionals in the roles of captains of national youth and senior teams.

Two other objectives have been to increase the participation of women in the ITF World Coaches Conference, both as participants and speakers. By 2023 we aim to have between 15-20% of participants and 33% of speakers.

Actions to improve in these areas have the important participation of National Federations. In this article we want to share the contributions of the Federations of Colombia, Chile, Costa Rica, and Panama, who with clear purpose and objectives are carrying out actions to achieve parity in the participation of women and men in all areas of tennis in their countries.

## COLOMBIA (Fabiola Zuluaga)

Fabiola is a former professional tennis player who reached #16 in the WTA rankings. She is currently a Level 3 certified coach.

In Colombia we have several strategies and programmes that are being developed so that women are increasingly involved and considered in tennis. The process is complete: from training, through the management at different levels of athletes and the accompaniment of them, including in their professional stage. Personally, I have had the opportunity to participate and contribute to all of them.

It has been a great success that we ex-players have stayed in the country and made a career as coaches. Passing on the experiences and knowledge gained over the years as professionals is fundamental for sportswomen who are thinking about or trying to enter this world, which from the

outside looks simple, but living it is completely different to what you have in mind.

Public policies in Colombia demand gender equity. We must have 30% of women in management positions, captainships and in all the events that take place in the country. Today I am the only woman in the technical commission of the Colombian Tennis Federation (FCT); and we are 5 women leading groups such as the BJK Cup, Olympic cycle teams and women's teams participating in the South Americans.

With the support of the ITF and the commitment of the FCT, leagues and clubs, the participation of female coaches in training and refresher courses is increasing. Currently, we have approximately 100 female coaches trained with ITF level 1 (+50), level 2 (35) and level 3 (12) courses, in addition to those who continue in the process, thanks to the work of the FCT Training Directorate. Recently the first Play Tennis tutor course was held with 9 Colombian coaches.

We have a Colombia team that brings together 87 youth players from the country, of which 43 are women, receiving support from the Ministry of Sport for their participation both nationally and internationally.

The effort to hold professional tournaments is an important boost for the development of tennis in Colombia. For several years now, the number of women's tournaments held in the country has increased, giving our players the opportunity to compete at home, saving money, optimising time, and allowing them to spend more time with their work team.

Everything starts from the seedlings. We also have children's festivals where the women's categories are respected, even if there is very little participation or enrolment. The important thing is to give them the opportunity to play and enjoy tennis, so if there are very few participants, we organise an exchange with the boys, ensuring competition and opportunities for exposure in these initial stages, which are fundamental for personal and sporting growth and development.

## CHILE (Macarena Miranda)

Macarena is a former professional player and currently an organiser of women's professional tournaments in Chile.

There are few episodes in my life that can be told without mentioning tennis. I played tennis as a junior and professional, and I was also captain and player for Chile in the now defunct Fed Cup, now known as the Billie Jean King Cup, even organising the event in 2020, being the first woman to do so in my country.

Prior to that I was director of ITF women's tournaments since 2008 and currently I have been directing the WTA tournament in Chile for the last two years. All that experience has allowed me to build an analysis that shows an advance compared to decades ago, this is undeniable if you contrast it with the time when I was playing. However, there is still a lot to be done, and the federations of each country in South America must take a leading role in the pending issues.

As a first task, development programmes should be implemented for our players under 10 years of age. Tennis should not compete with tennis, but with other disciplines that are ahead of us in this aspect and therefore have many facilities in this first stage, especially in the school stage. We must get closer to the schools.

It is also key to be able to generate quality competencies at national and regional level. We need to open up the channels of communication between the different regional associations. Interestingly, between the effects of the health crisis, during and after the pandemic, there was a fluid communication at regional level that I am very happy to see is still going on today.

The result of this are the transition tournaments between juniors and professionals, competitions that, for me, are key. In my opinion, it is very important to be in tune with each other to have a good calendar. Everything that has to do with the exchange of wild cards, generating a route according to the specific purposes of each team, I think it is essential, but without neglecting the macro, the development of women's tennis on the continent. This was done very little and today we can say the opposite. In my country, the Chilean Tennis Federation, the Ministry of Sport, and the National Institute of Sport (IND) have been very important for this.

I cannot fail to mention the South American Tennis Confederation, COSAT, their role in incorporating tennis players in their work commissions I think is a wise decision. The work of the ITF and its president David Haggerty through the Advantage All Programme is commendable. We can all contribute with what was good in our time and what was missing to achieve a circuit that we longed for at the time. I insist. What we see now is not enough, but it is close to what we should aspire to. We are on the right track.

#### COSTA RICA (Patricia Castro)

Patricia Castro is the Manager of the Costa Rican Tennis Federation. This section will present the project for the study and growth of women tennis players in Costa Rica.

The Costa Rican Tennis Federation (FCT) has had a Board of Directors that has complied with the principle of gender parity for more than 5 terms, 100% of the administrative staff are women and it is always the first option that the national women's teams are accompanied by a female captain or coach.

However, at a general level, there is no parity since there is a very significant difference in the number of tennis facilitators, which is maintained and is notorious in each course or training that is given, the female participation rate is 1 woman for every 10 men.

Also, in the game as such, at a competitive, social or recreational level, just by analysing the national rankings in all categories of the National Tournament Circuit, the disparity in participation and the desertion of women as they move up the playing level is tangible.

For this reason, the FCT has among its projects, to increase the participation of women in tennis in all areas, not only at the level of coaches.

The starting point is to know what we have, to know how many women play tennis, since the country's social clubs, academies, cantonal committees, schools and colleges have women's leagues or teams. Therefore, there is a large population of women playing tennis that is outside the database, and that is the information we are going to collect. We are also interested in having data on those who once played and then quit, and knowing this will feed into the strategies to be implemented, which will also be of great help in improving the current processes.

The database will include several details, including the level of play, whether she is a coach, social, competitive or recreational player, where she plays (training or lesson schedule) or used to play (reasons why she no longer plays), whether she has children, whether they play tennis, what her profession is and whether she is practising it (work schedule) and other questions that will help us build the work plan for the creation of programmes for the reincorporation and motivation of the female population in tennis.

The plan is to study this data and thus develop strategies for the development of programmes that are adapted to the needs and availability of the players.

For example, the women interviewed indicate that they are interested in teaching tennis, but for family or professional reasons they cannot be trained for 4 consecutive days in the Play Tennis methodology, so different options will be sought, such as taking the course at different times, or more accessible blocks of time.

We also aim to identify women interested in collaborating with the process from other areas, such as professionals in psychology, nutrition, physiotherapy and other professions related to sport, who want to join the teaching project, but at the specific level of tutors and adapt their speciality to the teaching of existing or new tennis facilitators.

At the competition level, knowing the reasons why they do not participate in national tournaments is the only way to see options for changes or improvements that will motivate them again or keep them in practice.

This survey will be carried out digitally and in person, in order to obtain as many responses as possible. Due to resource limitations, the support of student interns will be sought for the application and tabulation of the data, which will then be analysed internally at the FCT by the different commissions and by the Board of Directors as such.

It is expected that the process of creating the database and drafting development strategies will be completed by the end of 2023 and implementation can start in 2024.

#### PANAMA (Darlene Kahn)

Darlene Kahn is a former professional player, a professional executive, and a CAP level 2 coach. In this section she presents in the following lines the Panama Tennis Federation's proposal to grow women's participation in tennis.

Over the years, we have seen that there is less participation of girls in national and international tournaments. To remedy this situation, the Panamanian Tennis Federation (FPT) has come up with some strategies, which are described below.

The FPT has set a goal of increasing the number of women coaches and getting them ITF certified. On a personal level, I have had the opportunity to obtain ITF Level 1 and Level 2 certifications and there is a lot of interest in Panama, mostly from female players, who want to become coaches and get certified. Recently, five Panamanian coaches obtained the Level 2 CAP in a course held in Panama. This shows the potential we have and the professional quality of our coaches. This programme will continue to be encouraged, as the goal is to have 25% of coaches certified nationally by 2024. This initiative includes the training of coaches in all provinces, targeting former players, players, physical education

teachers, among others, who are interested in this sport and its teaching. The objective is to form a community of coaches and together, improve the quality of teaching throughout Panama and contribute to the development of tennis.

After being trained, very wisely, the Panamanian Tennis Federation asked me to be the Captain of the U14 Girls National Team that would participate in the World Junior Tennis Competition in the Dominican Republic, Santo Domingo. We followed 2 weeks of arduous training, prior to the competition, which was enough to bring a very motivated team to the competition. The team consisted of three young girls, who despite being in their first year in this category, we managed to qualify for the quarter finals. This was a great achievement for Panama and a very positive experience for the girls, as this tournament marked the beginning of a new stage. It is achieved, that parents have more confidence for the girls to travel to tournaments, it is achieved, a team integration, and it is achieved, to have a captain that increases the confidence and motivation of the players. From now on, we hope to have a greater representation of girls in the tournaments to gain international experience and raise the competitive level of Panama.

In conclusion, by encouraging the participation of women in the formation, representation, and development of tennis in Panama, we join forces and close the gap that has been open for many years, in which the competitive level of girls was very low, as there was little representation in international tournaments. With these actions and with the right guidance and leadership in the junior and Billie Jean King Cup teams, we will see favourable changes for Panama in the very near future.

## CONCLUSION

We hope that what has been shared by experts from the Colombian, Chilean, Costa Rican and Panamanian Tennis Federations in this article will serve as inspiration and guidance for other National Federations who are developing their "Advantage All" strategies to achieve equal participation of women and men in tennis.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND FUNDING

The authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest and that they did not receive any funding to conduct the research.

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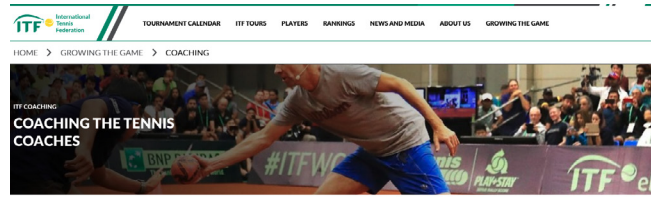
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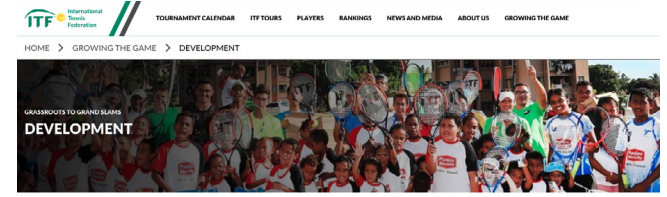


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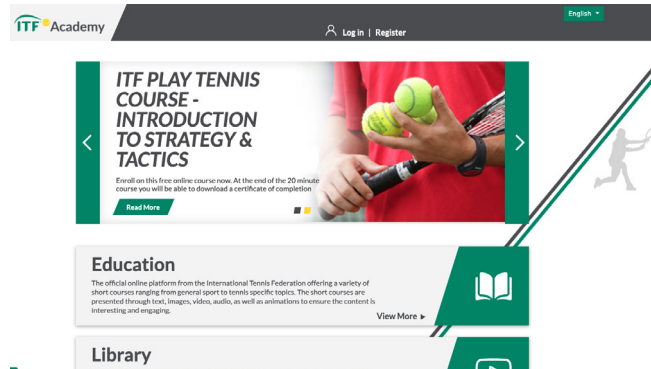


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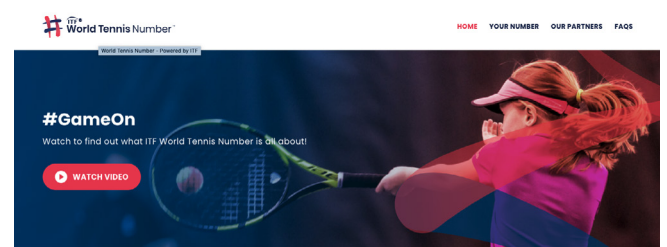
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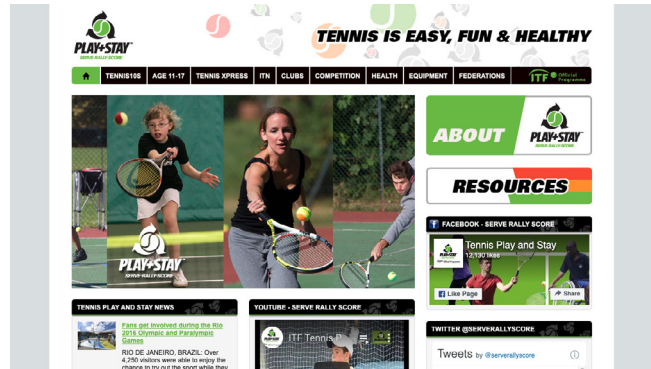
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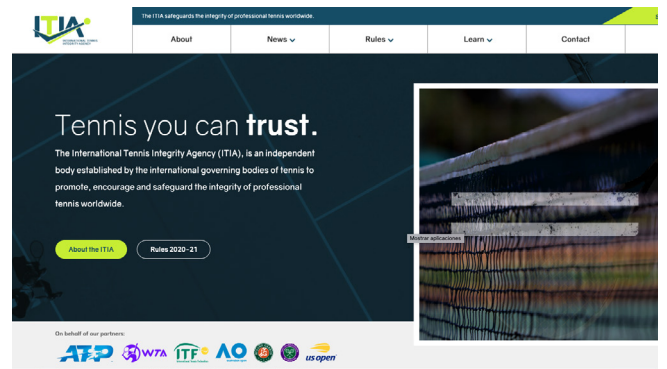
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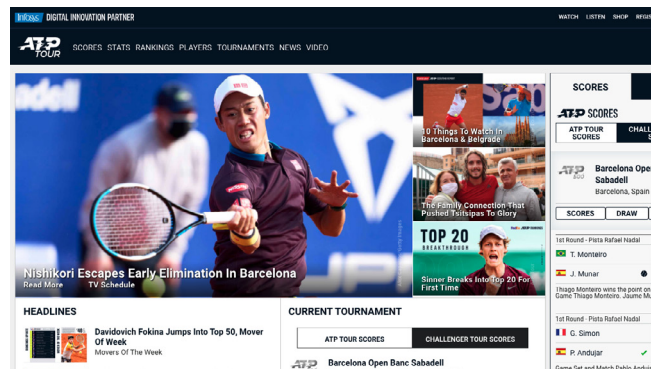
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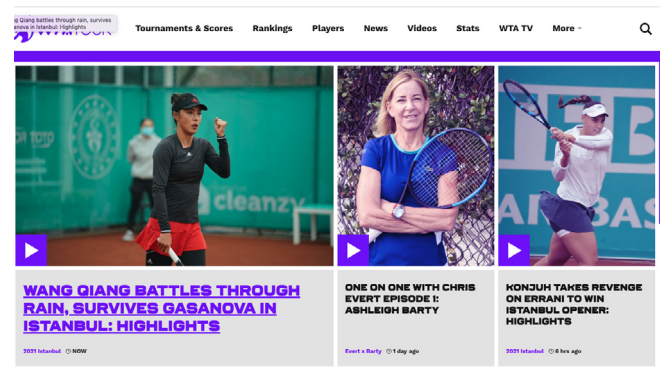
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