



UNITED STATES TENNIS ASSOCIATION

USTA Wheelchair Tennis

Grassroots Guide

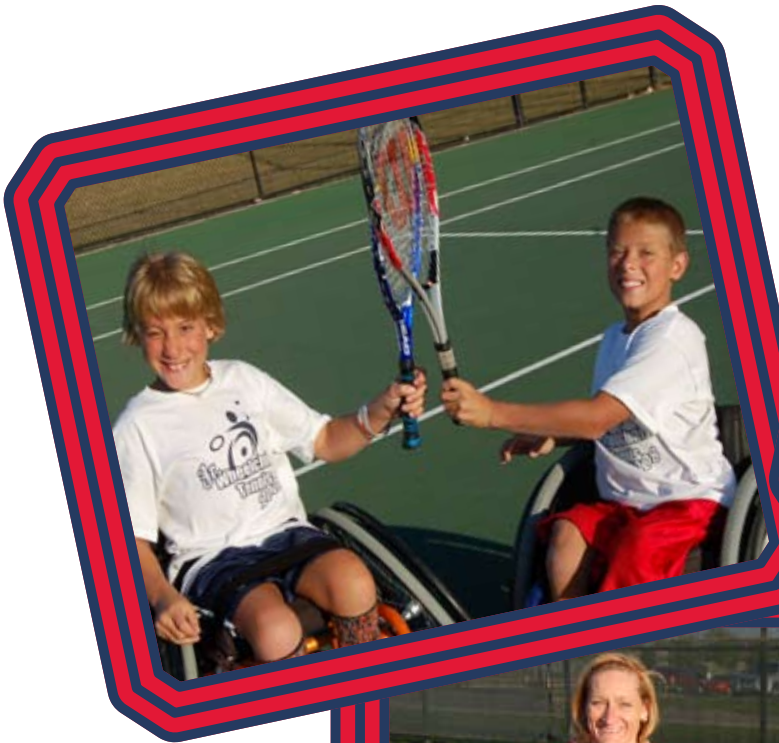


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FOREWORD

The USTA Wheelchair Tennis Grassroots Guide is the culmination of years of wheelchair tennis experience from organizers, players, coaches, and committee members who all share a passion for wheelchair tennis. It takes the best practices from across the nation and makes them available to everyone who wants to start, grow, or improve their local wheelchair tennis programming. Use this guide to help grow the sport we all love . . . WHEELCHAIR TENNIS.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Grassroots Manual is intended to be a how to guide from start to finish of growing your program from the ground up, and gaining a better perspective of programming, teaching, education and promoting the sport of wheelchair tennis.

HISTORY

Created in 1976 in California, wheelchair tennis is one of the fastest growing and most challenging of all wheelchair sports. Since 1979, the sport has been promoted in the United States by the National Foundation of Wheelchair Tennis (NFWT). The Wheelchair Tennis Players Association formed in 1981 under the direction of the NFWT, allowing players to take an active role in the governance of the sport. In January 1998, the NFWT merged into the USTA structure. Since then, the USTA has actively managed wheelchair tennis activities in this country.

In the United States, there are many sanctioned tournaments for players of all abilities from Open level players to Quads. Athletes can compete in local, sectional and national level tournaments. These tournaments offer the opportunity to travel across the country, and meet and compete against other wheelchair players, leveling the playing field for all.

In 2009 the NEC tour, a part of the ITF (International Tennis Federation) prides itself on hosting 150 events in 36 countries. Wheelchair tournaments are held at all 4 of the major Grand Slam events (Australian Open, Roland Garros, Wimbledon and US Open). There are 3 major Super Series events, equivalent of able bodied Grand Slam tournaments as well. In 2009, the total prize money on the NEC wheelchair tennis tour exceeded 1 million dollars. The ITF also



hosts the Invacare World Team Cup which is the annual wheelchair tennis team competition. Athletes also partake in the Paralympics as well with the top US men, women and quad players representing our country and who enjoy staying in the Olympic village, participating in opening and closing ceremonies and medal ceremonies.

Wheelchair tennis players must have a medically diagnosed, permanent mobility related physical disability, resulting in a substantial or total loss of function in one or more lower extremities. Examples of permanent disabilities that meet the eligibility criteria include paralysis, amputation, radiological evidence of limb shortening and joint replacement. Wheelchair tennis rules are the same as stand-up tennis, except

the wheelchair tennis player is allowed two bounces of the ball. The wheelchair is considered part of the body. All applicable rules which apply to a player's body apply to the wheelchair.

BENEFITS

The take away from conducting a wheelchair tennis program is basically three-fold goal. The wheelchair tennis player, the teaching pro and the tennis club that hosts a program will all benefit from getting involved in wheelchair tennis.

From the wheelchair player's perspective, there are three domains that a physically disabled person can tap into: rehabilitative, recreational and competitive. Players can pick and choose what kind of relationship with the sport they want and how far they want to take it. From rehabilitation, the player certainly benefits from the physical aspects but the psychological benefit, one of risk taking, is experienced in a positive way. Recreational benefits are physical, mental, social, psychological and wellness. And finally, if the player chooses, they can take the sport all the way to the Paralympics.

For the tennis professional, benefits occur because from teaching wheelchair tennis, the pro will leave the routine and teaching paradigms they currently comprehend, and explore new ways to produce production with their wheelchair players. They will become better teachers by learning new ways to teach the sport of tennis. These new ways can also be applied as they teach their able-bodied students. Additionally, members of their club will witness the pro working with the disabled population, and will respect the altruism that is demonstrated by their teaching professional. People like to associate with others who are compassionate and giving. Teaching wheelchair tennis will strengthen the relationships the tennis professional has with his or her able-bodied students.

For a tennis club that hosts a wheelchair tennis program, there will be constant media exposure as television



and newspaper coverage happens frequently. The wheelchair program also provides an excellent example of inspiration for club members, and especially junior athletes who can sometimes be a bit ungrateful. And who doesn't want to be a member of a club that is involved in a community program such as wheelchair tennis for adults and juniors. The image of the club will certainly be enhanced through hosting a wheelchair program.

The real message behind wheelchair tennis is more than just tennis. The message that is promoted is one of changing negative stereotypes, achieving goals, and community development. Wheelchair tennis supports

the idea that life is going to change and as represented by the spirit of the wheelchair player, change can be accepted, overcome and converted into a positive.

II. WHEELCHAIR DIVISIONS

RECREATIONAL AND COMPETITIVE DIVISIONS

There are several divisions that identify the levels of play in wheelchair tennis. Wheelchair tennis players play in able-bodied events with two bounces, and can be rated according to NTRP guidelines.



OPEN: This player has had intensive training for tournament competition at the national and international levels. This player has excellent chair mobility.

A: This player has good shot anticipation and has developed power and/or consistency as a major weapon. Can vary strategies and styles of play in a competitive situation. Hits dependable shots in a stress situation. Solid chair mobility.

B: This player has begun to master the use of power and spins. They are beginning to handle pace and vary game plan according to opponents. Good chair mobility.

C: This player has achieved improved stroke dependability with directional control on moderate shots, but lacks depth and variety. Learning consistent chair mobility.

QUADRIPLEGIC TENNIS

Quad tennis is for those players with limited mobility, power and strength in both lower extremities and at least one of their two upper extremities. Included in this category are walking quadriplegics, power wheelchair users and triple amputees. Persons with little or no gripping ability use athletic tape or specially made devices to hold the racquet. Quad players may serve with a bounce or have someone toss the ball for them.

Recreational player – weekly informal practices, playing tennis for fun, fitness, friends, not concerned about ranking points, minimal traveling, maybe attend as a spectator versus a player, no commitments, players show up when they can and when it is convenient for them.

Competitive player – competitive leagues, traveling tournament player, rankings become important, committed to practices, wanting to move up in their division, focused on improving their game, more goal oriented, taking private lessons.

Junior – attends developmental camps, high performance camps, mentoring by adult players in community, playing junior w/c tournaments, playing HS tennis, participating in local parks and recreation programs.

High Performance Player – Goal Oriented, intense training 4-5 days a week, international traveling involved to World team cup, Paralympics and national and international tennis events including the 4 major grand slams. Off court conditioning, training, works specifically with personal coaches.



III. DISABILITIES AND THE IMPACT OF PLAY

This section will cover some of the most common disabilities you as a tennis organizer will encounter as you begin to work with wheelchair athletes and as they become more involved in your program, clinics and tournaments.

1. Amputee – This condition results when a person loses one or both of his or her arms or legs from a vascular disease, trauma or congenital abnormality that requires limb amputation for better function or appearance.

Impact on tennis ability – An individual suffering from amputation has their tennis ability influenced based on the type of amputation. If the amputation occurs in the legs, there is less of an impact on the individual in playing wheelchair tennis. However, if the amputation occurs in the arms, the ability to be competitive singles player is greatly diminished. Amputees also have a huge advantage to wheelchair tennis because they typically have all of their abdominals to help them lean into their pushes and for additional power and core strength.

2. Cerebral Palsy – This is a permanent injury to the brain that affects its ability to send motor impulses to the rest of the body. This in turn causes muscle spasms leading to awkward movement and balance. CP individuals may walk or may use a wheelchair. There exists a wide range of severity from being virtually unnoticeable to compete to complete paralysis and inability to speak.

Impact on tennis ability - Since CP influences sensory motor neurons, the individual will have difficulty holding the tennis racquet, hitting the ball or even maneuvering the wheelchair. Depending upon the severity of the CP in the participant, an individual can be relatively successful in competitive wheelchair tennis. However, the muscle spasms and balance difficulties could hinder the individual's ability to have powerful ball contact and rely on their wheelchair to hit the shot.

3. Osteogenesis Imperfecta – This genetic disorder is characterized by bones that break easily.

Impact on tennis ability – In tennis, there is a lot of pounding on bones and joints because of the constant hitting and movement involved. An individual who suffers from osteogenesis may have difficulty in constantly performing the skills because of their inability to predict when bones will break. The brittleness of their bones makes it important their tennis ability is based on skill proficiency and not on competition, which requires quick movements that could lead to a bone breakage, depending upon their situation.

4. Rheumatoid Arthritis – This autoimmune disease causes the lining near bone, cartilage and joints to become inflamed, resulting in the release of enzymes that digests these areas. RA is progressive with pain, swelling, limited range of motion and deformity of joints.

Impact on tennis ability – A disease that affects the joints means that someone's tennis ability is diminished because pain will occur in every movement to hit the ball or get to the ball. The limited range of motion and deformed joints can pose a significant impact on tennis ability. This is because without full motion of the upper body, it may prove too difficult to hit a shot with the necessary power and the deformed joints could influence how someone holds the racquet or holds the wheelchair wheels to get to and hit the ball.

5. Spina Bifida – This is the most common of birth defects and occurs once in every 4,000 births. Some walk with crutches or have sufficient upper body strength to use a manual wheelchair.

Impact on tennis ability - Any spinal cord disability poses significant difficulty in general in playing tennis. The individuals who have the muscular strength to use a manual wheelchair will not have as significant impact on their tennis game because they can maneuver the chair without much difficulty. An individual who does not have that strength may struggle with properly playing the game.



6. Spinal Cord Injuries – Injuries to the spinal cord can result from trauma, acts of violence, falls, sports injuries, tumors, radiation and infections. An estimated 10,000 spinal cord injuries occur each year. Injury to the spinal cord cuts off communication to some portion of the body causing loss of sensory and or motor function. The level of injury is related to a specific level of paralysis. The higher the level of injury, the more function and sensation that is lost.

Paraplegics - Is the loss of sensation and movement in the legs and in part or the entire trunk. This classification refers to any individual who has a permanent physical disability that results in a substantial loss of function in on or both extremities.

Quadriplegics – Is the paralysis of all four limbs. Quad players represent another area of wheelchair tennis. They are the most severely disabled of all tennis players. Quad players must meet one of the following minimum eligibility criteria:

- A neurological deficit at the C8 level or proximal, with associated loss of motor function
- Upper extremity amputation,
- Upper extremity phocomelia,
- Upper extremity Myopathy or Muscular Dystrophy.

Impact on tennis ability – In looking at the impact on tennis ability, where the injury occurred along the spinal column will be a major indicator. Spinal cord injuries occurring in the lumbar area (lower back) will still maintain a full hitting motion in their upper body allowing them to be an effective wheelchair tennis player. As the vertebra that is affected moves up the spinal column, the impact on tennis mobility will be significant and their range of motion will decrease as well as their grip and fine motor coordination. Some quadriplegics will use a motorized or power wheelchair to compete while others will use some type of assistive device to tape their racquet to their hands or athletic tape so their hand will not slip off the racquet.

7. Stroke (CVA) – This most common form of stroke is the result of a sudden disruption of blood flow to parts of the brain. The oxygen supply is cut off and brain cells die, causing unconsciousness and paralysis to one side of the body. The technical term for this condition is called hemiplegia. Some stroke survivors use wheelchairs for mobility, while others use a cane and can sometimes walk with a limp.

Impact on tennis ability - An individual who has suffered a stroke may have some motor difficulty in their limbs, usually to one side of the body, depending upon where the stroke occurred in the brain. Paralysis to the one side of the body diminishes ones tennis ability because it is difficult to play with one hand. In wheelchair tennis, because of the difficulty in moving the wheelchair and hitting the ball at the same time, depending on which side was effected by the stroke, one would have a significant disadvantage if it were their dominant side effected because they would have to relearn the muscle movements for daily life in using their other arm.

IV.
COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

DESCRIBE YOUR COMMUNITY

- A. I don't know if there are any players or any instructors.
- B. Our community currently has no wheelchair athletes playing tennis. We have no coaches or instructors.
- C. Our community has some players and at least one instructor. There are few organized programs and the players get together a few times a year.
- D. Our community has several players and certified instructors. There are organized programs and opportunities for players to play tennis several times a month.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE CHECKLIST

* If you answer no to several of the questions in this infrastructure section then see the following pages for solutions and tips.

	YES	NO
We have Tennis Courts for our program		
The courts and facilities are wheelchair accessible		
The courts have lights		
There are teaching pros/instructors		
The instructors are wheelchair certified		
There is a local chapter of USPTA/PTR		
There is a Parks and Recreation Department		
We have Tennis Courts for our program		
The courts and facilities are wheelchair accessible		
The courts have lights		
There are teaching pros/instructors		
The instructors are wheelchair certified		
There is a local chapter of USPTA/PTR		
There is a Parks and Recreation Department		
There is an Adaptive Recreation Department		
There is a Community Tennis Association		
There is a Wheelchair Sports Association		
We have Racquets, balls and other equipment		
We have access to sport wheelchairs		
There are adult able body leagues		
There are adult wheelchair leagues		
There are junior able body leagues		
There are junior wheelchair leagues		
There are wheelchair only tournaments		
There are able body tournaments with wheelchair divisions		

We have contact information for the following:	YES	NO
USTA National Staff		
USTA Sectional Staff		
Tennis Service Representative		
CTA Executive Director		
Local League Coordinator(s)		
Jr. Team Tennis Commissioner(s)		
Tournament Director(s)		
School District Athletic/PE contacts		
High School Coaches		
College/University Athletic contacts		
Rehabilitation Hospitals		
Paralyzed Veterans Administration		
Physical Therapists		
Local Wheelchair Dealers		
Media Contacts		
We have a Database of Players and Potential Players		
We have a Database of Volunteers/Potential Volunteers		

V.
Program Components

WHERE TO FIND WHEELCHAIR PLAYERS

1. Veterans Administration Hospitals – Internet search of VA Hospitals and Medical Centers, click on search hospitals by states. Contact person: Director of Rehab Services or Physical Therapy.
2. Rehabilitation Hospitals – Internet search of Rehab Hospitals, click on the national map for a rehab facility nearest you. Contact person: Director of Recreation or Therapeutic Recreation Specialists. Specializing in prosthetic & spinal cord injuries.
3. Shriners Hospital – Internet search of Shriners Hospitals for children. Find a location nearest you. Contact person: Child Life Director.
4. Physical Therapists/Occupational Therapists – Internet search of Rehabilitation Services, find locally and ask to advertise in their company of your local program.
5. Wheelchair Dealers – Durable Medical Supply companies - Check your local listings and phone book.
6. Disabled Sports Programs – Talk to local parks and recreation departments, adaptive recreation community programs, and summer recreation programs. Ask to speak to the Director of Recreation for a comprehensive list of all programs and to determine if they have any adapted sports programming.
7. Churches, youth groups – Ask to speak to the Youth Director as they would know of any kids with disabilities in their church programs as well as any adults.
8. College Campuses - Disabled Students Programs and Services Department. Talk directly with the Director of Disabled students program and services.
9. Schools - Adaptive Physical Education (APE) department. Ask to speak with the Director of the APE program, they can recommend programs to their students but cannot give out names unless they contact you.
10. Amputee Centers – Internet listing of Amputee Centers or Wounded Warriors in the city nearest you.
11. Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVE) – Internet listing of PVE Sports and Recreation. Contact person: Sports Coordinator.
12. Existing Player referrals – friends, relatives, other wheelchair sports programs piggy backing off other wheelchair athletes locally and cross training for tennis. Search other USTA players by contacting your State Tennis Service Representative (TSR) and local wheelchair tennis database of players as well as within your section.
13. Outpatient Clinics – Internet search of Outpatient clinics and injuries in your city, choose location nearest you. Contact person: Director of Physical Therapy.
14. Support Groups – Internet search for spinal cord, spina-bifida and amputee support groups in your local area.
15. Fitness Centers – Talk directly with the Owner or Manager of the club to see if they accommodate persons with physical disabilities or if they have any individuals that come in to their club with a physical disability.
16. Center for Independent Living (CIL) - Internet search of CIL's and search by State and City. Contact Person: Director of the Center.
17. Local newspaper articles, magazines and publications – Contact the editor of that article for more information on that individual or it may have been a human-interest story on a person with a physical disability not pertaining to tennis (doing something else related to sports or simply having a disability).



QUICKSTART TENNIS 8 WEEK LESSON PLAN



The skills necessary for wheelchair tennis do not differ greatly from the skills necessary to play able-bodied tennis. The major difference lies in the mobility necessary to get to the ball and recover after striking the ball. The QuickStart initiative is a perfect way to help a wheelchair player of any age to learn the game of tennis. Below is a simple chart to help explain where to place a new wheelchair player.

QUICKSTART TENNIS - AMERICA'S PLAN FOR BEGINNING WHEELCHAIR TENNIS

Quickstart Tennis was created as a plan for ten and under able-bodied tennis players. It is tennis scaled to fit the size, age and abilities of young players. It is based on six key specifications: court size, net height, age, ball speed and weight, size of racquet and scoring. The court dimensions are different for children under eight and ten years of age. A 36 foot court is used for children eight and under, and a 60 foot court for children ten and under. It has also been found to be the perfect way to introduce tennis to all wheelchair players.

QuickStart Tennis is a collaborative effort between the USTA Player Development and Community Tennis departments, TIA, USPTA, PTR, and Tennis Equipment Manufacturers. The USTA launched Quickstart Tennis across the country in 2008.



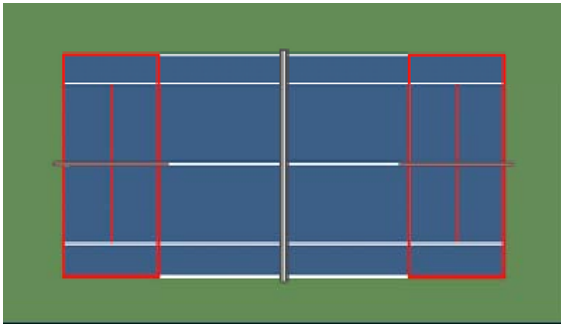
The goals for Quickstart Tennis are to:

- Increase the number of beginning wheelchair players
- Increase the retention of wheelchair players
- Improve the technical, tactical and physical development of wheelchair players
- Develop future champions
- Improve the wellness of people with physical disabilities playing tennis

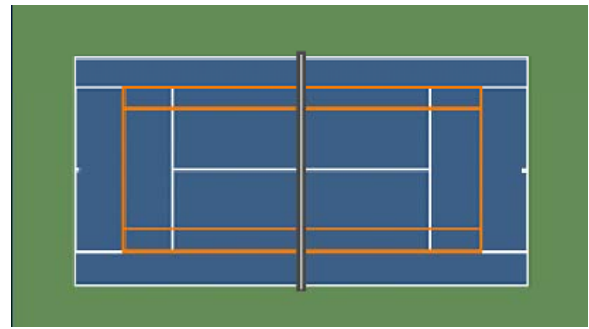
The chart below reflects key specifications that are part of QuickStart Tennis. They relate to the age and ability of the players. It is important that all of these specifications are used together for young players in competitive play and practices.

WHEELCHAIR PLAYERS	COURT SIZE	RACQUET	BALL	NET HEIGHT	SCORING
New Junior Players	36' x 18'	Up to 23"	Foam or very low compression	2'9"	Best of three 1st to 7 point games
New Adult Players	60' x 21' singles 60' x 27' doubles	Up to 25"	Low Compression	3'	Best of three, with the first two sets 1st to 4 games, and a 3rd set of 1st to 7 points

36' COURT LAYOUT



60' COURT LAYOUT



Quality practice plans for coaches, teachers and parents have been developed and are available, as well as an age appropriate competitive structure. Training is available for the High Performance Coach who has a player development program and the Recreational Coach, parent or volunteer who is coaching a tennis team or working with beginning players. All of these lesson plans can easily be adapted to the skills necessary to play wheelchair tennis at all ages.

For more information on QuickStart Tennis go to www.quickstarttennis.com, click on Get Started, and download the 9-10 year old lesson plan where you can find an 8 week lesson plan and other helpful tools to enhance the teaching and learning experience. Below is a list of mobility skills specific to wheelchair tennis that can be added to the existing QuickStart lesson plans. Specific information on mobility can be found in the USTA's Wheelchair Tennis Manual and Drills book or on the USTA's Wheelchair Tennis DVD in the "Mobility" sections.

Week 1

Teach the new players to push the chair holding a racquet with their dominant hand. This includes non-tennis movement just to acclimate to the ideal way to hold the racquet as well as fun pushing games like "Shark".

Week 2

Teach the new players the different turns utilized in wheelchair tennis including the inside, outside, reverse, over, and cross-handed turns. This should be done without hitting balls to learn the turns. Introduce the "hub" (spot 3-8 feet behind the baseline a wheelchair tennis player recovers to after every ball hit).

Week 3

Teach the new players the Hub Mobility Drill without the ball: This can be done by checking the USTA Wheelchair Tennis Manual on page 19. This drill should be done every week without the ball to ensure that each player can move in this pattern without thinking when a ball is added.

Week 4

Continue to utilize the hub mobility pattern explaining how the turns specific to the pattern compliment the biomechanics of stroke production. For example, while on the forehand side the hub mobility pattern requires an "inside" turn. This rotation forward matches correct stroke production. Simulated stroke production can be used to help players understand the turns.

Week 5

Continue to use the hub mobility pattern as the basis for mobility practice. A ball can be added to put the previously learned stroke production together with the previously learned mobility skills.

Week 6-8

Address mobility needs as necessary ensuring the hub mobility pattern is learned. This means that after the eight week session a new player will understand not to use parallel or perpendicular lines to the baseline, to keep the chair in motion the entire time the ball is in play, and has a good understanding of how to utilize a reverse turn during backhand stroke production as well as when turning to address a ball hit behind a player.

STAGING A WHEELCHAIR TENNIS EXHIBITION

Why conduct wheelchair exhibitions? First, it is a great way to expose the game of wheelchair tennis to a large group of tennis fans whether it is hundreds or even thousands of spectators. They all share the same passion and love the game of tennis, while at the same time possibly recruiting potential new players, gaining new tennis volunteers with new excitement and passion, and possible sponsorship opportunities as well.

The organizers of the exhibition must accept the responsibility to ensure the integrity of wheelchair tennis and its athletes. This will ensure the success of the wheelchair tennis exhibition event.

Your USTA sectional office should have a Wheelchair Coordinator in place and can be of assistance and possibly connect you with a local USTA contact. Contacts at the local parks department, local rehabilitation center, public schools, colleges, other established wheelchair programs, and community tennis associations can possibly offer assistance and should be notified about the event.

Please note that it is always good to include an Up/Down play opportunity in conjunction with the exhibition. The actual exhibition can be an Up/Down format as well. Up/Down doubles is a wheelchair player and an able bodied player as a doubles team, playing against a team of the same. Demonstrating integration is essential. Format ideas for success include: 8 game prossets, no –ad scoring, playing one set, or a 45 minute timed event.

TIPS FOR CONDUCTING THE EXHIBITION

1. A person responsible for the wheelchair tennis event is identified. This may be assigned from within the current existing event or possibly appointed as an addition to an existing event. This organizer should begin the communication process with the contacts listed above. Make every attempt to have an emcee for the exhibition, providing them ahead of time with a "quick tip" sheet with facts, history, rules about wheelchair tennis to engage the audience and provide them with more information alongside the event. It is especially important to provide information while players are warming up, during introduction of players or between changeovers, engage the crowd and fans, and have someone knowledgeable of wheelchair tennis doing the emcee.
2. Secure the accessible facility if this is not already in place. Be sure the accessibility is complete (bathrooms, courts, club house, etc.) Establish a prime time slot for the exhibition to take place. This can be done in conjunction with a social, opening ceremony or other. If this is set up solely as a wheelchair exhibition then be sure you are taking the right steps to market the event.
3. If available, hire elite wheelchair athletes and negotiate a fair price for their time. If finances are not available seek other arrangements and extras through sponsors such as: hotel accommodations (if the player(s) are coming from out of town), meals, gifts, and possibly an event your community offers away from tennis. If financial arrangements are a necessity, then secure the funds through a sponsor for appearance fees, meals, travel and lodging if this is not budgeted.
4. Setup other marketing opportunities that market the event such as: speaking engagements for the players, schools programs, media event, etc.
5. Actually make the arrangements and confirm this with the athletes (meals, lodging and other needs).
6. Ensure there is media coverage for the event. Obtain biographies from the athlete(s) and write the press releases for the media.
7. Ensure local travel to the event is covered for the athletes. This is travel that will need the capability of transporting the wheelchair players and equipment (sport chairs, etc).
8. Ensure that the athletes are well taken care of i.e., pre and post events. If possible, assign a liaison strictly for player communication throughout the event.
9. After the event is complete, follow up with contacts to continue the awareness and establish wheelchair tennis programs in the community.

INTEGRATION



Tennis is a great sport that allows able-bodied and disabled friends to play with and against each other. The court, racquets and balls are the same for both. The only difference is the wheelchair player gets two bounces and the able bodied player gets one.

One of the clear advantages of integrated programming is the significant increase of the number of local programs available to the wheelchair player. The following programs are detailed descriptions of standard USTA tennis programs and ideas of how to invite wheelchair players to participate.

Many wheelchair players participate in able-bodied programs and/or USTA League across the US, and participate in tournaments, school teams, colleges, and more. This section also contains stories and/or photos about some of those players.

USTA PROGRAMS – HOW DO WHEELCHAIR PLAYERS PARTICIPATE?

QuickStart Tennis

Quickstart Tennis is an exciting new play format for learning tennis, designed to bring kids into the game by utilizing specialized equipment, shorter court dimensions and modified scoring, all tailored to age and size. It is divided into two different levels-- ages 8 and under and ages 10 and under. The process of introducing new players to tennis is the same with wheelchair players as well. Start them close in with equipment that helps them achieve early success and move them to full size court and equipment based on demonstrated skills. Locate those facilities that offer Quickstart programs and sign them up!

Schools Tennis – PE programs- After School Programs

As part of its mission to promote and develop the growth of tennis, the United States Tennis Association is dedicated to introducing tennis to children of all ages in schools across the country. Starting in 1985 under the leadership of Arthur Ashe, the USTA Schools Program has brought the joy of tennis to millions of students in schools across the United States. Tennis is one of the only sports that kids in wheelchairs can play with their classmates. Find out if your school offers tennis in their PE classes or after school programs and make sure the teachers and organizers know that wheelchair players can participate.

School Teams – No Cut High School Teams

No-cut coaches play a critical role in our sport by allowing young players the opportunity to experience the lifetime sport of tennis as a member of a team representing their school. The USTA thanks you for the special commitment and effort you make to keep all interested players on your teams. When including a wheelchair player, there have been several middle school and high school wheelchair players who have played tennis for their schools. Not-Cut programs can provide wheelchair players the opportunity to play on their school team and play with their friends. Contact your school tennis coach and ask them if they have a no cut program. If so, get your kids signed up!



Junior Team Tennis

USTA Jr. Team Tennis is for girls and boys ages 6 to 18 of all abilities and experience. Whether your child has been playing for years, or has never held a racquet, there's a spot on the team for them. Teams are formed in age groups: 18 & under, 14 & under, 12 & under, 10 & under, and 8 & under. In USTA Junior Team Tennis, the team concept emphasizes fun, fitness, and friends while refining skill development for players of all ages and levels of competition. Players participate at their NTRP level as determined by the player, coach or parent. Teams compete at the local level with winners advancing to State, Section and National Championship play.

National Junior Tennis League

These leagues usually offer instruction and play opportunities. They have various divisions including age, levels and gender. It provides a unique opportunity for wheelchair players to play with siblings and friends. Find the local JTT and NJTL chapters in your area and contact the organizers to receive sign up instructions. The USTA/National Junior Tennis League (NJTL) is a nation-wide network of community tennis organizations seeking to develop the character of young people through tennis and education.



USTA League Tennis

Currently with nearly 600,000 participants, USTA League Tennis is the most successful tennis program in the world. Four divisions are offered nationally, Adult, Senior, Mixed, and Super Senior. Other divisions, such as Combo Doubles and Senior Mixed, are offered by many USTA sections. Players participate at their NTRP level. USTA League brings all aspects of tennis into play—fun, social, fitness, and competition. Teams winning at the local level may advance to championship play at the state, section, and national levels.

Beginner Tournaments (Sanctioned and Non USTA Sanctioned events)

There are many communities that offer beginner adult tournaments. Most of these events pair players by age and gender. They are a great way to learn how to play in a competitive environment. Contact your local district for more details. Also, contact local tennis clubs for charity tennis fundraisers going on in your area as well.

Up/Down Leagues

Organized by your local wheelchair tennis organization. Contact them personally.

Tri-Level Leagues/Combo Leagues

Contact your local USTA district or Section to see if your area offers this type of league.





IDEAS TO CONDUCT WHEELCHAIR TENNIS CAMPS

Tennis camps are a great way to bring new and experienced players for longer sessions, skill development and socialization with other campers. Also there is an opportunity to develop new wheelchair tennis coaches, bring exposure to your program, and raise awareness with regards to fundraising. Here are several tips for running an effective camp.

1. Decide on how many days the camp will run and how many hours per day.
2. Find accessible courts and facilities and reserve them for the camp days.
3. Plan activities for each day and print copies as a guide. There should be a good mix of tennis and non-tennis activities.
4. Determine what ages and levels you are targeting. (beginners to advanced as well as by age) You can target the entire wheelchair community but once the athletes are together, divide players into same skill set groups. This will keep the groups equal as they train, and make it much easier for the teaching professional to run the court.
5. Estimate the number of attendees and recruit enough volunteers to help out with activities. Make sure the ratio of coach to camper is reasonable. Try not to go over five players per one coach. Try to have tennis teachers as your court leaders. Also, designate a Director of the tennis part of the camp so this person can determine with the support of the other coaches, what is being taught and who is teaching it. Try to make sure that groups are moved around so each group can experience each coach.
6. Create a budget for the camp including coach/volunteer fees, court fees, fliers, racquets, balls, food, drinks, sport chair rentals and then determine the per-camper fee. If you are able to negotiate sponsorships/donations for food, drinks, giveaways, etc., you can adjust the fee accordingly (see fundraising section for ideas).
7. Create a flier detailing dates, times, locations, fees, etc. Deliver them to rehab facilities, hospitals, wheelchair dealers, CTAs, local newspaper, e-mail blasts, websites, etc.
8. Capture key data for all campers and volunteers, including medical information, phone number and e-mail addresses so you can add them to your database for future programs.
9. Design follow-up instructional programs that should start immediately after the camp. This is the most effective way of keeping your campers playing.
10. Take pictures, play music, have a pizza party, invite friends and family and hand out awards – make it fun!
11. Have a wrap up meeting with coaches and volunteers to discuss how to make the next camp even more successful. Thank them and pay them. Give them a picture of the entire group.
12. Get creative. Use exhibitions with top local players (see how to stage an exhibition).

IDEAS TO MARKET YOUR PROGRAM



1. Fliers/Brochures – Find someone who is skilled in this area to simply put together something to start with that you can hand out to people in the community and places that you visit. A nice 3-fold colored brochure on what you are trying to promote looks professional. A lot of colleges and school funded programs will do the printing and or layout for a nominal fee.
2. E-mail Blasts – Create a database of healthcare professionals, community contacts, rehab therapists, players, etc., and periodically email them about upcoming wheelchair tennis events and activities.
3. Newspaper Articles/Press Releases -- Know the names and contact information for local area sports writers, and send them press releases, and other news about your programs.
4. Public Service Announcements- Free announcements on t.v stations to promote your program, local broadcasting channels and radio interviews, take the initiative to call them up.
5. Website Posting - Create your own website and/or partner with other organizations and have them provide links to your program.
6. Ice Breaker Card/Business Cards – These can be made very inexpensively and have all the players and/or volunteers in your program have a stack with them to carry to hand out when you come across a potential new player, volunteer, tennis enthusiast, a potential sponsor, etc.
7. Branding – T-Shirts, Caps, sweatshirts with your logo on it, wearing team uniforms make you look more professional when you play, and advertise the sponsor on your equipment or clothing.
8. Signs/Banners - Add stickers, magnets, car signs, bumper stickers, chip clips, banners for the club you practice at, adding a poster or bulletin board at sports retailers or fliers of upcoming events, or even at wheelchair supply companies, doing a face to face introduction, etc.
9. Internet – You Tube, My Space, Facebook, networking with other players around the country, gaining new ideas, watching other videos, or adding ones of your own players and programs.
10. Demonstrations/Exhibitions – Take the initiative to plan, lead and execute. Be assertive and make phone calls to sell yourself and your product, like a sales call. You want the consumer to buy in to what you want the audience to see and take away from it.
11. Medical equipment dealers, wheelchair reps – Contact your local reps, do a meet and greet and sell your program and your product to them. Come prepared with goals, objectives, facts and outcomes.
12. Tennis equipment dealers, sporting good stores and local clubs – Post your information to the right clientele, potential sponsors, volunteers and the right industry.

For more information on how to market your program or to see examples of previous work done by other programs and to gain additional information or to speak with someone directly to help answer questions, please email the USTA Wheelchair Tennis Department at wheelchairinfo@usta.com .

IDEAS ON HOW TO FUND YOUR PROGRAM




1. Sponsors – Create a sponsor packet, which includes the levels of sponsorship you are asking for, what they will receive for a specific level and how it will benefit both parties involved. Be clear and concise in your presentation or the brochure. Make sure sponsors can be included in your advertising on t-shirts, website logos, presentation materials, program books and other advertising that you do.
2. Donations – Follow up quickly with thank you letters and mail out personally, make the letter personal and sign it yourself. Include any newsletters or photos and highlights of your event and personalize the letter so it shows you put thought into it.
3. Grants - Various groups offer a variety of grants to help grow the game of tennis in many ways. Search local, section and national grant opportunities online. Type in various key words into your internet searches to find hundreds of opportunities available. Find someone within your organization or someone you know who has some experience in grant writing that could assist you in the proper writing.
4. Foundations - If you are a 501(c) (3) then you may have access to even more foundations and grant opportunities. Visit the following website for more information: www.usta.com/foundation.
5. In Kind Contributions – Many companies may donate items instead of monetary donations, which may equally help your program if its food donations for an event you are hosting, a printing company that donates copies or paper, sporting goods stores, etc. Make sure you thank them personally as well through a letter and personal follow up.
6. Participant Fees – Some programs require a nominal fee to participate in the programs, keep as minimal as possible, but some income may help cover basic programming costs.
7. Galas-Live/Silent Auctions – Piggy backing off other larger organizations to generate increased income and exposure will help generate more public awareness.
8. Tennis mixers at local tennis clubs – Host an adult doubles tournament at your local club, help them put on the event, have local wheelchair players show up, post fliers, have posters made, wheelchairs on display and an opportunity for meet and greet with local players so they can see the impact of their funds. Get sponsors to cover some minimal expenses such as snacks and a few prizes for winners.


For more information on funding your program or to see examples of a previous programs work and to gain additional information or to speak with someone directly to help answer questions, please email the USTA Wheelchair Tennis Department at wheelchairinfo@usta.com.


VI.
COLLEGIATE WHEELCHAIR TENNIS

Would you like to play tennis and represent your school? You can by simply being enrolled in any college or university whether you are a part time or full time student. The purpose of collegiate tennis is to advance the growth of wheelchair tennis across the country, to encourage individuals with disabilities to pursue a college education, and to give students with physical disabilities the opportunity to compete in an intercollegiate sport as a representative from their institution.

***USTA Collegiate
Wheelchair Tennis Manual***




UNITED STATES TENNIS ASSOCIATION


INTERCOLLEGIATE TENNIS ASSOCIATION

For more information on collegiate wheelchair tennis, or how to start a collegiate program in your local area, please visit www.usta.com/wheelchair and download the Collegiate Wheelchair Tennis Manual on how to get started.

VII.
US NATIONAL DIRECTORY OF WHEELCHAIR TENNIS PROGRAMS

Arizona

University of Arizona Tucson, AZ

California

Biola University La Mirada, CA
 Inland Valley WC Tennis Assn. Upland, CA
 Mission Viejo WC Tennis Mission Viejo, CA
 Northern Nevada WC Tennis Assn. Truckee, CA
 Northridge WC Tennis Northridge, CA
 Peter Burwash Tennis Palm Desert, CA
 Sacramento Capital WC Tennis Sacramento, CA
 South Bay Smash WC Tennis Los Gatos, CA
 WC Tennis San Diego San Diego, CA

Colorado

Colorado WC Tennis Foundation Denver, CO
 Highlands Ranch CTA Highlands, CO

Connecticut

Gaylord Hospital Sports Wallingford, CT

District of Columbia

Blaze Sports Club Washington D.C.

Florida

Blaze Sports Pensacola, FL
 Blaze Sports Club Tampa, FL
 Dom Lasic WC Tennis Tallahassee, FL
 First Coast Tennis Foundation Jacksonville, FL
 Miami Dade PARD Miami, FL
 NWSF Boynton Beach, FL
 Patch Reef Park Boca Raton, FL
 SW Florida WC Tennis Cape Coral, FL

Georgia

ALTA Atlanta, GA
 Blaze Sports Club Augusta, GA
 Blaze Sports Club Savannah, GA
 Blaze Sports Tennis Athens, GA
 WC Tennis Clinic Roswell, GA

Hawaii

Maui County WC Tennis Maui, HI
 WC Tennis Clinic Kaliua/Kona, HI

Idaho

Idaho WC Tennis Assn. Boise, ID

Illinois

Gateway Confluence WC Tennis Alton, IL
 Great Lakes Adaptive Sports Lake Forest, IL

Indiana

RHI Sports Program Indianapolis, IN
 IPFW Fort Wayne, IN
 Muncie YMCA Tennis Clinics Muncie, IN

Kansas

Kansas Accessible Sports Lawrence, KS
 Wheelchair Sports Wichita, KS

Kentucky

Kentucky WC Tennis Louisville, KY

Louisiana

Baton Rouge YMCA Baton Rouge, LA
 Blaze Sports Club Shreveport, LA

Massachusetts

New England WC Tennis Beverly, MA

Michigan

Grand Rapids WC Sports Assn. Grand Rapids, MI

Minnesota

Courage Center WC Tennis Golden Valley, MN
 Courage Duluth WC Tennis Duluth, MN

Mississippi

Access Recreation Hattiesburg, MS

Missouri

St. Louis WC Athletic Assn. St. Louis, MO

Nebraska

Cornhusker WC Tennis Assn. Lincoln, NE
 Lincoln Tennis Assn. Lincoln, NE

Nevada

Stacey Darling WC Tennis Las Vegas, NV

New Mexico

New Mexico State Univ. Las Cruces, NM
 Albuquerque W/C tennis Albuquerque, NM

New Jersey

Magee Rehab Tennis

Cherry Hills, NJ

New YorkBaseline WC Tennis Foundation
USTA National Tennis Ctr.New York, NY
Flushing, NY**North Carolina**Adaptive Sports & Adventure
Bridge II Sports
NC WC TennisCharlotte, NC
Durham, NC
Greensboro, NC**Ohio**Southern Ohio WC Tennis
Greater Cincinnati Tennis Assoc.Springboro, OH
Cincinnati, OH**Oregon**

Northwest WC Tennis

Beaverton, OR

PennsylvaniaLVCIL Freewheelers
Magee Rehab TennisAllentown, PA
Philadelphia, PA**South Carolina**Bluffton WC Tennis
Lowcountry Chair TennisBluffton, SC
Folly Beach, SC**Texas**Blaze Sports Club
Dallas WC Tennis Assn
Houston WC Tennis Assn
St. David's WC Fitness
TIRR SportsSan Antonio, TX
Dallas, TX
Houston, TX
Austin, TX
Houston, TX**Tennessee**Chattanooga WC Tennis
Tennessee WC Athletic Assn.Chattanooga, TN
Nashville, TN**Washington**

Robinswood WC Tennis

Bellevue, WA

Wisconsin

Wis. Tennis Adv. Kids Program

Milwaukee, WI

VIII. **RESOURCES**

- USTA NATIONAL WEBSITE
 - www.usta.com/wheelchairtennis
 - DVD, Manual, Collegiate Guide, tournament schedule, rankings and stories
- BLAZE SPORTS CLUBS
 - www.blazesports.com
- INTERCOLLEGIATE TENNIS ASSOCIATION
 - www.itatennis.com
- INTERNATIONAL TENNIS FEDERATION (ITF)
 - www.itftennis.com/wheelchair
 - See coaches review and resource page for more info
- NATIONAL PARALYMPIC COMMITTEE
 - www.usparalympics.org
- NATIONAL RECREATION AND PARK ASSOCIATION (NRPA)
 - www.nrpa.org
- PROFESSIONAL TENNIS REGISTRY (PTR)
 - www.ptrtennis.org
 - development course
- UNITED STATES PROFESSIONAL TENNIS ASSOCIATION (USPTA)
 - www.uspta.com
 - A specialty course/certification (DVD)

IX. **CONCLUSION**

Utilizing the information provided in this guide is only the beginning. While starting, maintaining, and growing a thriving local wheelchair tennis program is hard work the reward will be seeing your local tennis courts filled with wheelchair tennis players. Some may go on to play the ITF/NEC Wheelchair Tennis Tour. Some may play on their high school tennis teams and some may simply enjoy playing at home with the opportunities you provide. No matter what they choose, they will be playing TENNIS!

If you have further questions contact the USTA Wheelchair Tennis Department at wheelchairinfo@usta.com.