

New Rule Change for “Junior Know the Rules”

- 10 and Under Tennis in Texas -

Overview

The new Texas 10 and under system will align with the 10 and under rule changes for USTA National and the International Tennis Federation which will be effective January 1, 2012. It is the Junior Tennis Council's position that the 10 and Under Division is a developmental division. Therefore, the focus should be on participation and developing their competitive skills through match play. The new 10 and under system places an emphasis on participation and promotes play in both orange ball and green ball events. The new 10 and under system is structured to keep young players in orange ball and green ball events long enough to develop tactically and technically. A young player who is technically advanced and physically competent will be able to progress through the levels in a reasonable time period.

1. Orange Ball Division

a. Eligibility

- i. The minimum age eligibility is the first day of the month of a player's seventh birthday.
- ii. A player may elect to move to the Green Ball Division prior to the last six months of age eligibility by meeting one of the following criteria:
 1. Earn ten participation credits.
 - a. One participation credit may be earned by completing a ZAT.
 - b. One participation credit may be earned by completing any USTA Junior Team Tennis league season in a 10's division.
 2. A player **may** move to the Green Ball Division once the player has won four ZATs in the Orange Ball Division.
- iii. A player will earn a participation credit and/or a tournament win credit only for the division in which they competed.
- iv. A player will continue to accumulate participation credits and tournament win credits until he/she becomes eligible for another division. Once a player becomes eligible for a new division, he/she will again start at zero (0) credits.
- v. During the last six months of age eligibility in the 10's division, a player **must** move to the Green Ball Division if the other criteria are not met.

b. Match Format

- i. Matches will be played in accordance with all six of the QuickStart elements for the 10's:
 1. Court size: 60 foot court
 2. Racquet length: no longer than 25 inch racquet
 3. Net Height: 3 feet at center, 3 feet 6 inches at net posts
 4. Ball: orange low compression balls
 5. Age: 7 to 10 ½
 6. Scoring: 2 out of 3, 4-game sets (first to win 4 games by a margin of 1 game) using no-ad scoring; 7-point tiebreak in lieu of 3rd set (first to win 7 points by a margin of 2)
- ii. A player may serve overhand or underhand but must hit the ball with the racquet before the ball hits the ground.

Rationale: The Junior Tennis Council emphasizes that this is not a “race” to the Green Ball Division. The priority is on maximizing participation and playing matches with the orange ball. Please note that a player may elect to move to the Green Ball Division early if they satisfy the criteria, but they are not required until the player is 10 ½ years old. Players are required to move to the Green Ball Division at 10 ½ years of age, because the Green Ball Division is a critical transition step for young players. Finally, the Junior Tennis Council placed a minimum age for participation in the 10 and Under Division to prevent very young players from being pushed into the competitive arena too early. Players younger than seven can take advantage of the USTA Texas Endorsed Series of tournaments and play the 8's division.

2. Green Ball Division

- a. Eligibility
 - i. A player will be eligible to play the Green Ball Division until the first day of the month of the player's eleventh birthday.
 - ii. In order to move to 12's ZATs (Yellow Ball) prior to the month of eleventh birthday, a player must meet **both** of the following criteria:
 - 1. Must be at least nine years old.
 - 2. A player must win four ZATs in the Green Ball Division **or** a player must earn ten participation credits.
 - a. One participation credit may be earned by completing a ZAT.
 - b. One participation credit may be earned by completing any USTA Junior Team Tennis league season in a 10's division.
 - iii. A player will earn a participation credit and/or a tournament win credit only for the division in which they competed.
 - iv. A player will continue to accumulate participation credits and tournament win credits until he/she becomes eligible for another division. Once a player becomes eligible for a new division, he/she will again start at zero (0) credits.
- b. Match Format
 - i. Matches will be played in accordance with all six of the QuickStart elements for the 10's:
 - 1. Court size: 78 foot court
 - 2. Racquet length: no longer than 27 inch racquet
 - 3. Net Height: 3 feet at center, 3 feet 6 inches at net posts
 - 4. Ball: green dot low compression balls
 - 5. Age: 7 to 11
 - 6. Scoring: 2 out of 3, 4-game sets (first to win 4 games by a margin of 1 game) using no-ad scoring; 7-point tiebreak in lieu of 3rd set (first to win 7 points by a margin of 2)
 - ii. A player may serve overhand or underhand but must hit the ball with the racquet before the ball hits the ground.

Rationale: Using green low compression balls on a full-sized court will allow players to construct points and use appropriate technique.

3. Tournament Format for 10's ZAT Orange Ball and 10's ZAT Green Ball Divisions

- a. No ranking lists will be published, and Orange and Green Ball Divisions will not be seeded in tournaments.
- b. The Orange and Green Ball Divisions will be completed in one day. To increase the number of matches and ensure that the ZATs finish in one day, the following criteria will be followed:
 - i. If nine or more players register, then the players will be placed into draws of 16. First match loser consolation will be offered to guarantee players at least two matches.
 - ii. If six to eight players register, then players will be split evenly into flights for round-robin match play. Inter-flight play will occur with the winners of each flight playing each other, the second place finishers playing each other, and so on. The first place playoff will determine the winner of the ZAT.
 - iii. If less than five players register, then a round-robin format will be used; or other approved format.

Rationale: The proposed ZAT tournament structure will expose players to as many orange or green ball matches as possible in a one day format. Participation credits can only be earned in tournament play through the ZATs.

4. Tournament Format for “Other” Tournaments

- a. Both Orange Ball and Green Ball Divisions will be offered and completed in one day. The divisions will not be seeded.
- b. The match format for the 10 and Under Divisions will be consistent with the match format played in the ZATs; or other approved match format.
- c. To increase the number of matches and ensure that the “other” tournaments finish in one day, the following criteria will be followed:
 - i. If five or more players enter a division, then the players will be placed into draws of 16. First match loser consolation will be offered to guarantee players at least two matches.
 - ii. If three or four players register for a 10's division, then a round-robin format will be played.
 - iii. If less than three players register for a 10's division, then the tournament director may give the players the option to play up one division – orange ball to green ball, green ball to 12's (yellow ball).
- d. **No participation credits towards advancement can be earned playing “other” tournaments.**

Rationale: An important aspect of the 10 and Under Division is the length of time spent in each division. By not allowing points in “others,” players have the opportunity to accumulate only one participation credit per month. However, competition in “others” provides additional valuable match play experience.

5. Transitioning to 2012

- a. Players aged 10 and under who are either in the Championship or Super Championship Divisions on January 1, 2012 will retain their status and be eligible to compete in their qualified 12's division.
- b. Players aged 10 and under who are competing in 12's ZATs will be moved to the following divisions based on their ZAT point totals at the end of December 2011.
 - i. Eight or more 12's ZAT points – eligible for 12's ZATs, 10's ZAT Green Ball Division or 10's ZAT Orange Ball Division.
 - ii. Seven or less 12's ZAT points – eligible for 10's ZAT Green Ball Division or 10's ZAT Orange Ball Division.
 - iii. Any players aged 10 ½ on January 1, 2012 may play 12's ZATs or 10's ZAT Green Ball Division.
- c. Any player competing in 10's ZATs anytime prior to December 31, 2011 will be eligible for 10's ZAT Green Ball Division or 10's ZAT Orange Ball Division.
- d. As of January 1, 2012, ALL players will have zero (0) participation credits and zero (0) ZAT tournament win credits. There are no carryover credits from previous years.

Rationale: This transition will occur only one time as an objective mechanism to integrate players aged 10 and under, who are already competing in the current Texas 10's and 12's ZAT system, into the new 10 and Under Division.

Conclusion

The new Texas 10 and under system integrates USTA rule changes for the 10 and Under Tennis initiative, preserves the integrity of orange ball events, emphasizes participation and experience, and focuses on the development of young tennis players. Our current system requires qualification from the ZAT level to the Championship level and from the Championship level to the Super Championship level. This new system remains consistent with Texas' current structure by requiring a level of qualification to advance from Orange Ball to Green Ball and from Green Ball to 12's ZATs.