

# ***COMPETITIVE GUIDELINES FOR QUICKSTART TENNIS***

By: USTA/Texas Junior Competitive Department

As the excitement builds for the new format CALLED QuickStart Tennis, it is important to set up some guidelines for the safest, smoothest, most efficient way to produce the highest quality competitive event. The age appropriate size of the equipment and the playing area can be maximized by a few simple suggestions. These “unofficial” suggestions are not intended to limit, or contain the variety and scope of possible applications of the new QuickStart Tennis (QST) format, but rather to provide some shortcuts to a safe and smooth event.

## **EVENT OPERATIONS**

1. Whether your event is part of an existing tournament, or a stand alone event, try and utilize as much variety as possible for sign-up. These kids may be unfamiliar with the “normal” sign-up procedure, so make it as easy as possible. Make registration available online, by mail, by phone, and especially in-person on the day of the event. Pricing your event in the \$10-20 range is ideal. They are not getting a multi-day experience like a sanctioned tournament, and you don’t want expense to be a deterrent to your introductory event.
2. Begin the process of recruiting volunteer “court monitors” (moms and dads) with all registration information. There is no need for any officials. The success of any event with the 8U and 10U age groups is parental involvement – just like other “little league” sports. These “court moms” can monitor each court and help with scoring, position, and most of all, SAFETY. You may want to prepare a flyer to recruit and train your court monitors. If you have trouble recruiting monitors, older kids that need community service hours are a great resource, as long as you can affiliate their effort with a not-for-profit organization. The Andy Roddick Foundation in San Antonio is great at this, and you can use them as a resource.
3. During your QST event, have your tournament desk within full view and as near as possible to the courts to facilitate sign-in, score reporting, and monitoring capability.
4. When you layout your 36’ courts, try and put no more than four on each 78’ court to allow for maximum separation between courts. Strive to avoid using shared sidelines. This might be OK in an instructional or introductory session. Once you add “competition, scoring, and match play”, safety would require that you open up the space between courts and competitors.

5. Masking or painter's tape works better than throw down lines. It stays in place better and is safer because it can't slide when stepped on. Be sure you test a small area to ensure there is no tape residue left on the court or floor after removal. There is a product called "painter's" masking tape which has a lot less glue than standard masking tape. Extend your 78' sidelines all the way to the back fence to provide baselines for your outer 36' court and to allow adequate spacing from the 36' sidelines closer to the net.
6. You will probably need throw-down lines for clay courts. In any case, this is a GREAT opportunity to de-stress line placement and to stress the importance of the "benefit of the doubt" concept in line calling. Since they are smaller, temporary, or even moveable in the case of throw-downs – calling lines "tightly" is very difficult. Stress to kids AND parents the wonderful self-policing aspect of "the code" as it relates to line calls on 36' and 60' courts. This is an awesome opportunity to plant the seed of good sportsmanship.

## SCHEDULING

1. Your QST competitive event should be a one-day event and should probably be no more than 2 or 3 hours in length - less if possible. The number of registrants will dictate the size, but a round robin or compass draw is the best option. If you have a large # of entries, you may want to have several different divisions of 4 or 5 player round robins, rather than one with 20 players. This offers the opportunity to call more players a "winner". You may also want to use the "up the river/down the river" method of rotating players up and down the courts between rounds.
2. On the subject of "winners", downplay labels like "Champion, 1<sup>st</sup> place, 2<sup>nd</sup> place, Finalists" etc., and stress participation. When planning awards, think of all participants. In the 8U's, consider a ribbon, or certificate for everyone. Trophies or medals can send a negative message, especially if they single out only a few players based on results (Champion, etc.) At this level, you are better off, both developmentally and economically, giving each child two slices of pizza, rather than one kid getting a big trophy. Ensure that whatever your prizes, awards or gifts are that you have them onsite. Part of the process here is "setting the hook", and nothing puts a little kid off more than, "I'll mail you your ribbon!"
3. If your QST event is part of a larger tournament, Sunday afternoon is ideal. Your other draws have gotten down to very few courts, and there are a lot fewer people around making the added event smoother to fit in. Scheduling the event from 1-4 pm, or 2-5 is ideal. Another option is Friday evening before the start of your other events. Since most of your QST participants will be local and not traveling as far, you could run this anytime from starting immediately after school or late

afternoon, up until Friday from around 6-8 pm . Remember, they are much younger kids and shouldn't be kept up as late as a 12U event.

## SCORING

1. The QST standard for 8U is best of 3 games, 1<sup>st</sup> to 7 points wins game, first to win 2 games. For 10U, it's best of 3 sets of 1<sup>st</sup> to 4 games with the 3<sup>rd</sup> set being 1<sup>st</sup> to win 7 points. Feel free to modify this to fit your round robin. If each kid is playing 5 rounds, you'll need to shorten the scoring for each round. For the 8U's, you might want to limit each round to only 2 games since you're totaling their rounds won anyway. Or have them play one 7 point game per round and use alternating serves. For the 10U's, they could play one set of 1<sup>st</sup> to four games. If there are lots of rounds, you could play just a 7 point game, like the 8U's suggestion. Remember to stress the fun and the experience, not the winning and losing. The kids will take care of that part. The 8U's can use an underhand serve or regular overhead motion if they like- and it only needs to land in the court across the net. The 10U's should be serving overhead only and into the service boxes.
2. Think of your event as informative, rather than instructive. One of the best formats for a stand alone QST Competitive event is the "Learn QuickStart Tennis Event", or "QuickStart Tennis Play Day". Bring in the 8U's , spend up to 45 minutes introducing the format, with interactive information and competitive games, (remember- some of these kids have never held a racket or heard the term "backhand"), then start a round robin when the kids are ready. Remember to stress the FUN, not the winning and losing.

These are a few ideas to help you present the best possible QuickStart Competitive Event. Safety is the primary concern, closely followed by the desire that the players have a very positive experience. FUN is the operative word. These young kids are the future of our sport, and QST offers a great opportunity to build tennis players who are safety-conscious, practice good sportsmanship, and are hooked into our sport for the long haul. These guidelines are by no means complete, and as these QST Competitive Events develop, we hope you will share your best practices with us so we can share them with the Tennis Community. Please use us as a resource- by contacting us at [www.texas.usta.com](http://www.texas.usta.com) , or by calling (512) 443-1334.

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