Creating Access to Wheelchair Tennis in Your Community
Questions and Answers

Q: What could be examples of dynamic warm up exercises for wheelchair tennis clinics?

A: There are of course many options here, but for starters we like to see the players get their chairs in motion (create momentum) and then use other body parts to keep the chair moving. Examples: swinging their arms as if doing a butterfly stroke in swimming, swinging their arms side to side and engaging their hips to propel the chair, only using one hand to maneuver the chair (make turns, sustain momentum). Also, I personally LOVE using a mini soccer ball from Walmart/Target to promote throwing/catching/moving. Bottom line - engage as much of their body that they have access to for enhancing chair movement.

Q: Does every athlete need to have their own tennis specific chair or does the club / facility needs to provide that?

A: Most athletes will have an "everyday chair" which is designed for everyday life (i.e. one that fits through doorways and is able to be broken down easily for transport). The tennis chair is something that we can help a new program procure. As the athlete becomes more serious about their tennis, you can reach out to us and we can guide you in helping get a tennis specific chair.

Q: Where can I find movement drills, we do offer a wheelchair program?

A: You can simply be creative with adapting some of the footwork drills you use for you able-bodied athletes. Some of the Improve Your Game Videos we included in the resources for this webinar are fantastic and one in particular is a Mobility/HUB video that will help you with understanding the different types of turns we teach. Secondly, you can use YouTube as a great resource. Simply look up "wheelchair tennis movement drills" and the like and you will find them.

Q: It seems like the hardest part of starting a wheelchair tennis program at a club is finding the potential players. Any suggestions?
A: Starting a program can be challenging. I would plan out a time you would like to have the program take place. The next step is reaching out to your section, CTA or TSR, and see if they can help advertise for it. From there, reach out to local rehab hospitals with a phone call or email, specifically to the department with Recreation Therapists. Once they get involved, they will get the athletes to you! Transportation can be a challenge and you can reach out to me for some ideas.

Q: Are there guidelines/rules for High School Tennis where a wheelchair player competes against a non-wheelchair player?

A: The wheelchair athlete has every right to try-out for the team and be allotted the "two-bounce rule". Out of respect to the opponent/teammates, explaining that right of two bounces is important. Transparency is a must. That should also be conveyed to the opposing Coach/Captain as well, simply to be polite. It is a rule in the USTA Friend at Court and the ITF Rules of Play for Wheelchair Tennis that they have the right. So if someone has an issue with it, that is the default answer

Q: I'm a wheelchair player that has been trying to coach. I'm getting more formal and have been asked about insurance coverage. Any resources for me covering my coaching?

A: For most teaching professionals, the USPTA and PTR are the accreditation resources we have all used for acquiring "liability insurance" (comes as a part of your membership fee). It is needed most often by employers for all teaching professionals to work at a club or for example, a city recreation department. Both USPTA and PTR are reputable.

Q: Do programs work well when you have adults and juniors together on the court?

A: Typically yes! As mentioned on the webinar, it's more about ability level than age. You might have a developing junior alongside a newly injured adult, who are both in the same stage of learning the game. Both have things they can teach the other as well. Often times, the adults are great mentors and examples to the juniors. The physically disabled community has always had a unique environment in that way. Simply put, most programs, when possible, offer: Beginner/Intermediate/Advanced
groups. That way it is ability based and age is not so much the deciding factor. Have fun coaching them all!

**Q: How would you go about physically testing a wheelchair athlete to insure they are ready for wheelchair tennis? Is it similar to able-bodied athletic testing?**

**A:** I think I would substitute "evaluate" for "test" and a lot of it will simply be an eye test. First, can the individual independently move the chair and how well. Also, as mentioned on the webinar, moving everyday chair vs a sports chair is a big difference. You would be amazed at how much different a player can look from one day to the next in this department. When we run our All Comer Camps, day 3 looks completely different than day one - I'm often amazed! Secondly, a simple hand-eye coordination evaluation will tell you a lot. A simple game of catch often with a ball other than a tennis ball (I love mini soccer balls from Walmart/Target) easy to throw and catch. Conversation with the player/parent will reveal if they have participated in other adaptive sports and that should tell you a lot as well. Just be aware, people with physical disabilities have more to deal with than people without and it might take a bit more time for them to present their best athletic self.

**Q: Is it okay to mix beginning classes with wheelchair & able body players?**

**A:** This is a tough one. A lot of it would depend on the experience and skill of the coach running the program or court. Feeding wheelchair is unique and has a different rhythm, and of course there is the 2 bounce rule in wheelchair. Where you might think it makes sense at the beginning, it's at that point of a player's development when they need the most individual attention. So, I'm a never say never guy, but I think it is difficult. The opportunity to mix groups might present itself better at an intermediate level. The integration piece of the sport is more doable than it is in other sports, but it takes some creativity and skill. You need to be sure that both groups are getting what they want, and neither is getting frustrated because of the integration.

**Q: Can you give me some examples of home training that a wheelchair tennis player can do while we're quarantining?**

**A:** There many options for home based training and the more creative the player is the greater the opportunity to improve. On the mental performance side of the conversation mindfulness practice can help with awareness and focus (a great app
called headspace, or website called mindful.org are great resources), visualization practice is also a powerful skill to develop skills and remain connected to tennis (we provided a visualization resource with the webinar that was held on 4/13/20 you can access as a starting point). If you are talking about fitness this is a bit more complicated as each wheelchair athlete has unique abilities and limitations. Beyond that, trying to simulate exercises that require similar energy expenditure as tennis would also be valuable.

Q: Are you offering any upcoming trainings for coaches? Particularly in the New England area?

A: Please reach out to Jason Allen on the Grassroots side and see what he had scheduled and if New England can be looked at as a potential host site. His email is: jason.allen@usta.com