

Frequently Asked Questions

2019 Competitive Pathway



Rationale/Objectives: The Independent Review Panel, which was tasked with reviewing betting-related integrity issues facing professional tennis, released an interim report and record of evidence and analysis, finding that “tennis faces a serious integrity problem” and that “no level of professional tennis is immune from betting-related and other breaches of integrity.” The interim report specifically notes that “the problem is particularly acute and pervasive at the lower levels.”

In response to this report, supported by three years of research conducted by the ITF (supported by the ATP and WTA) which showed the financial pressures facing most players and the increasing time taken for players to break through into the Top 100) the ATP, WTA and ITF decided to restructure professional tennis so that prize money is better targeted, more players have potential to earn a living from the game; and so that there is a clear pathway connecting the ITF Junior Circuit and the senior professional game. Hosting tournaments at the new \$15K level will be cheaper, allowing for more nations to provide opportunities closer to home to more players from more countries.

Professional player jobs, income, and the quality of the professional tennis product will be improved by the changes at the entry-level into professional tennis by: (i) reducing the number of ATP & WTA ranked players from 2500+ to 500 – 750; (ii) to improving player services; (iii) providing a better reflection of professional tennis; and (iv) safeguarding the integrity of the sport.

In the recent IRP Report, the panel noted that the current structures include approximately 15,000 ‘professional’ players. The imbalance between prize money, the cost of competing and the fact that only 250-350 players break even, has put enormous pressure and created temptation for players at the lower levels of the circuit structure.

Process: In 2016/17 the ATP, WTA & ITF initiated a comprehensive research and analysis project to evaluate the current circuit structures, with a goal of making changes in 2019. In addition the Grand Slams, ATP, WTA & ITF appointed an Independent Review Panel to examine the sport’s anti-corruption programmes.

Through the USTA’s leadership on the ITF Board, and as members of the ATP & WTA, the USTA Chairman and senior staff have been in regular communication with the governing bodies to offer recommendations and advocate for American player interests.

In 2017, the USTA created an internal working group consisting of members from the Junior Comp, Collegiate, Adult Tennis, Player Development and Pro Circuit teams. The purpose of this integrated team is to analyze the impact of the ATP/WTA & ITF professional circuit changes and develop an “optimal professional pathway” for our American players for 2019 and beyond. The

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USTA has also collected feedback from private sector coaches (both junior and college) as well as volunteer Committee members.

Over the past 18 months the USTA managed a dynamic process of information gathering and calendar modeling, while the working group continued to engage with the ATP & ITF as the 2019 details were being shared, and as more details were made available. Additionally, the working group is working collaboratively to create an optimal American pathway for juniors, collegiate and professional players.

The USTA recently announced the creation of the Competitive Pathway Department. This department will serve the needs of American players progressing through the high performance pathways, and will work collaboratively with PD to set the strategic direction, create and operate an integrated competitive pathway with the mission of operating and delivering events that make up the high performance junior (ITF Junior competition & USTA Junior Nationals), ITF World Tennis Tour and Pro Circuit tournaments.

Megan Rose will lead the Competitive Pathway Department, which will sit under the Professional Tennis Operations department and will see enhanced leadership support from Stacey Allaster, Chief Executive, Professional Tennis, Martin Blackman, General Manager of Player Development, and J. Wayne Richmond, Managing Director of Major Events.

What is the new structure of professional tennis?

- Beginning in 2019, \$25K tournaments will be the lowest level of tournament to award ATP/WTA ranking points (ATP points only awarded at Final round at \$25K events). In 2020, ATP points will only be awarded at \$50K + H level and higher.
- \$15K events will become ITF World Tennis Tour tournaments with their own ITF World Ranking Points system.
- The new structure will begin in 2019

What changes are being made to the tournament structure?

- All ITF tournaments (Men's \$15K & \$25K and Women's \$15K – \$100K) to have a 32 Main Draw and 24 Qualifying Draw
- All ITF tournaments and ATP Challengers to run from Monday to Sunday, including qualifying.
- All ITF tournaments (men and women) match format in qualifying to be best of 3 sets, with 2 tie-break sets and a match tie-break. Ad-scoring remains.
- No changes to match format in Main Draw (best of 3 tie-break sets)

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What is the draw composition going to be at ITF World Tennis Tour events (\$15K - \$100K) in 2019?

ITF World Tennis Tour – \$15K – Women’s/Men’s	
Singles – 32 Main Draw	
Direct Acceptance	17
Qualifiers	6
Wild Cards	4
Top 100 ITF Junior Spots	5
Singles – 24 Qualifying	
Direct Acceptance	19
Wild Cards	5

ITF World Tennis Tour – \$25K – Women’s/Men’s (men for 2019 only)	
Singles – 32 Main Draw	
Direct Acceptance	17
Qualifiers	6
Wild Cards	4
ITF World Tennis Ranked Players	5
Singles – 24 Qualifying	
Direct Acceptance	20
Wild Cards	4

ITF World Tennis Tour – \$60K to \$100K – Women’s	
Singles – 32 Main Draw	
Direct Acceptance	22
Qualifiers	6
Wild Cards	4
Singles – 24 Qualifying	
Direct Acceptance	20
Wild Cards	4

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What is the draw composition going to be at ATP Challenger events in 2019?

ATP Challengers – ATP 80 – ATP 110	
Singles – 48 Main Draw	
Direct Acceptance	37
ITF World Ranked Players	4
Qualifiers	2
Wild Cards	5
Singles – 4 Qualifying	
ITF World Ranked Players	3
Wild Cards	1

ATP Challengers – ATP 125	
Singles – 48 Main Draw	
Direct Acceptance	41
Qualifiers	2
Wild Cards	5
Singles – 4 Qualifying	
Direct Acceptance – ATP Ranking	3
Wild Cards	1

- Order of priority for Direct Acceptances into ITF World Tennis Tour tournaments:
 - ATP/WTA Ranking
 - ITF World Ranking standing
 - Top 500 National Ranking*
 - Unranked players

*adjustments will be made to the Top 500 ranking calculation to ensure accuracy

Will there be changes to the ranking system?

- The new professional structure will lead to increased incentive for players to play up by entering the appropriate tournaments relative to their ranking, and to a reduction in stagnation in the rankings.
- The ITF World Ranking Points standings will be based on a player's best 14 ITF World Tennis Tour tournament results.
- Many players ranked 300 or higher will play at both ATP/WTA ranking points tournaments and ITF World Tennis Tour tournaments and will have two rankings (both based on 52-week rolling system).
- Shadow rankings are now available on the landing page of a player's IPIN account
- The formal implementation of the new ATP, WTA and ITF World Ranking systems will take place on 31 December 2018. On that date, a player's ATP or WTA ranking points earned over the previous 52 weeks will be converted into what that performance would look like under the 2019 ATP/WTA and ITF World Ranking point structure.

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- ATP
 - ATP ranking: Best 18 tournaments at the later rounds of \$25,000 tournaments and above
 - ITF World Ranking: Best 14 tournaments in Challenger qualifying, all rounds at \$25,000 tournaments, all rounds at \$15K tournaments
- WTA
 - On 31 December 2018, any WTA ranking points earned at \$25,000 ITF Pro Circuit tournaments or higher in 2018 will be retained as WTA ranking points (Best 16 tournaments)
 - Any WTA ranking points earned at \$15,000 ITF Pro Circuit tournaments in 2018 will be formally converted into ITF World Ranking points (Best 14 tournaments).

What changes will be made to Doubles in the new Competitive Pathway?

Doubles Draw Composition			
	\$15,000	\$25,000	ATP Challenger
Doubles Draw – number of teams	16	16	16
Direct Acceptance Places	13	13	11
Places reserved for teams with ITF World Rankings	0	0	2
Wild Card teams	3	3	3

- ITF World Tennis Tour tournaments
 - To be accepted into the Doubles competition by Direct Acceptance, both players need to have been accepted into the Singles Main Draw or Qualifying at the same tournament at the Qualifying Sign-in deadline. Players in wildcard teams are not required to have been accepted into the Singles competition.
 - Players accepted into the Main Draw as Direct Acceptance, Junior Reserved, Junior Exempt, and Special Exempt will have priority status for acceptance into doubles. Players competing in the Qualifying and all wildcards will be ordered after the priority status players.
 - Teams will be ordered by singles acceptance status as follows: 1) Main Draw-Main Draw, Main Draw-Qualifying, Qualifying-Qualifying and then ordered by ranking.
 - Each player on a team will be ordered by ATP Rankings in singles or doubles followed by ITF World Ranking in singles or doubles to determine the order of Direct Acceptance.
 - Teams will earn ITF World Ranking points in doubles
- ITF \$25,000 tournaments
 - Players will be accepted based on ATP Ranking in singles or doubles (best ranking), followed by ITF World Ranking in singles or doubles (Best Ranking) to

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- determine the order of Direct Acceptance (no requirement to participate in singles)
- Teams will earn ITF World Ranking points, except in 2019 players will also earn ATP doubles points in the final rounds.
- ATP Challenger tournaments
 - Each ATP Challenger will have 2 places reserved for teams with ITF World Rankings.
 - The process for selecting the 2 teams with ITF World Rankings will be announced in due course
 - Players will earn ATP Doubles ranking points.

What are the changes to the ATP Challenger events?

- Challengers will feature 48-main draw and 4-qualifying draw
- All Challenger events are 7-day events
 - Play is Monday through Sunday with one exception, Challengers scheduled in the week prior to a Grand Slam and in the same region, may apply for a Sunday through Saturday event.
 - In the case of those events starting on Sunday, there shall be 2 spots allocated for Special Exempts, if needed. No other Challenger events will have the Special Exempt allocation.
- All Challengers are required to provide hospitality for players through the night of their last match and have implemented increases medical services requirements and officiating staffing needs.

How will wildcards be allocated in this new system?

- There is an opportunity to use ITF World Tennis Tour wildcards to strengthen our American pathways of competition.
- The wildcard system will be objective and transparent.
- The wildcard linkage document can be found here: playerdevelopment.usta.com/Competitive Pathway

The USTA has created a comprehensive wildcard linkage system to reward success at one level with opportunity at the next. Examples of wildcard criteria include:

- Next American in (ATP/WTA/ITF World Tennis Tour)
- Junior Results or Junior Rankings
- Collegiate Results
- Next Best Rating
- Pre-Qualifying Events
- Momentum (recent results) / Return from Injury

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- Pathway Juniors (as reflected by Top 100 benchmarks)
- Men's and Women's National Opens

What is the financial impact of the 2019 ATP & ITF circuit structure changes?

- The USTA has adjusted the prize money subsidy program to provide more money to tournament hosts in optimal weeks in order to ensure calendar stability and the financial health of ITF World Tennis Tour events.
- Additionally, substantial financial investment is being made at the Challenger level to mitigate the added costs of hospitality, medical services, and officiating increases.

How will the Juniors be affected by the changes?

- ITF World Tennis Tour 15K tournaments will reserve up to 5 places for Top 100 ITF Juniors. This can be achieved in 2 ways:
 - The player is a current Top 100 ITF Junior at the entry deadline of the ITF World Tennis Tour event.
 - A player who has finished their last year competing on the ITF Junior Circuit in 2018 can carry over their year-end ITF Junior ranking only for the purposes of entering into ITF World Tennis Tour event and only until the player reaches the age of 19. If a player has the same ranking as a current player competing in the ITF Juniors, the current ITF Junior player would receive priority acceptance over the player who has completed his or her ITF junior career.
- If the player can be accepted into the Main Draw of a ITF World Tennis Tour tournament through their ATP/WTA or ITF World Ranking then that is how they will be accepted.
- The ITF Junior Exempt program, which rewards Juniors who finish in the Junior year-end Top 20, will remain in place for 2019 (replacing \$15k exemptions with \$15K exemptions). Junior Exempts will continue to be part of the Direct Acceptance allocation.
- The application of Age Eligibility Rules to boys and girls will be announced later in 2018.
- Within the US's calendar, \$15K and \$25K events will be scheduled around key Junior competitions as to not conflict with those critical dates and allow play in both events.
- Wildcard linkages from USTA Junior National Championships (e.g. Easter Bowl, National Clay Court Championships, The National Championships (Hard Courts), etc.) to ITF World Tennis Tour and professional events to be reviewed and most likely expanded.
- Ratings will be used as criteria for wildcards to ensure that players who are improving, regardless of their financial ability to play ITF junior tournaments or travel internationally, will be given opportunities.
- The USTA will publish a post-tournament report that shows all of the wildcards awarded with the corresponding criteria for each.

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How will this affect the collegiate pathway?

- The optimized USTA player pathway will take into account collegiate players' schedules and place events at the appropriate level during periods of the year when they can play.
- Wildcard linkages from collegiate events (e.g. NCAAs, ITA All-Americans, etc.) to ITF World Tennis Tour and professional events will be reviewed and most likely expanded.
- The USTA will work collaboratively with the ITA and with collegiate coaches to ensure a pathway to professional tennis is maintained.
- College programs have the opportunity to host \$15K or \$25K events on Campus, and will have access to a majority of wildcards.

What are the next steps?

- The USTA it will engage with two independent data analytics companies to analyze calendar models and American player performance to determine the optimal professional pathway.
 - These data analysis projects will provide critical information about new playing patterns, mobility issues, and job opportunities, which will allow the USTA to create an investment and scheduling strategy for ITF Junior, ITF World Tennis Tour and Challenger events in 2020.
- A comprehensive education and communication plan is being created to ensure players, parents, coaches, Committees, Tournament Directors, and other key constituents understand the new structure.
- An email address has been established for all questions: CompetitivePathway@usta.com