



## 2019 Professional Tennis Pathway

**Rationale/Objectives:** The rationale for the new professional structure of the ATP, WTA & ITF is to create an improved professional player pathway that can be navigated by players who are able to compete, win and earn a living in professional tennis.

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) improving integrity in the sport.

**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 leaders 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.

Over the past 18 months it has been a dynamic process and the working group continues to engage with the ATP & ITF as the 2019 details are being shared and as more details are made available. Additionally, the working group is working collaboratively to create an optimal American pathway for juniors, collegiate and professional players.

### **What is the new pathway of professional tennis? (See attached slides)**

- Beginning in 2019, \$25K tournaments will be the lowest level of tournament to award ATP/WTA ranking points (ATP points only awarded at SF and F rounds at \$25K events). In 2020, ATP points will only be awarded at \$50K + H level and higher.
- \$15K events will become ITF Transition Tour tournaments with their own ITF Entry Points system.
- Women's Pro Circuit
  - \$25K tournament main draws to reserve up to 5 places for best ITF Entry Point-ranked players.



- ITF Transition Tour main draws to reserve up to 5 places for Top 100-ranked Juniors.
- Men's Pro Circuit
  - ITF Transition Tour main draws to reserve up to 5 places for Top 100-ranked Juniors.
- Number of places in ATP Challenger qualifying reserved for players with best ITF Entry Point rankings to be determined by ATP monitoring 2018 activity.
- 7-day tournaments for ATP, WTA and ITF Transition Tour events.

### **What is the draw composition going to be at ITF Transition events in 2019?**

- ITF Transition Tour Draw sizes:
  - Singles: 32 Main Draw
    - 17 Direct Acceptance
    - 6 Qualifiers
    - 4 Wild Cards
    - ~5 ITF Juniors
  - Singles: 24 Qualifying
    - 20 Direct Acceptance
    - 4 Wild Cards
  - Doubles: 16 Main Draw
- Order of priority for Direct Acceptances into ITF Pro Circuit and ITF Transition Tour tournaments:
  - ATP/WTA Ranking
  - ITF Entry Point standing
  - Top 500 National Ranking
  - Unranked players

### **Will there be change 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 WTA will announce any changes to the point structure following the Board meetings in May 2018.
- The ATP has released an updated rankings structure, which will be provided at the Committee meeting.
- The ITF Entry Points standings will be based on a player's best 10 ITF Transition Tour tournament results.



- Many players ranked 300 or higher will play at both ATP/WTA ranking points tournaments and ITF Transition Tour tournaments and will have two rankings (both based on 52-week rolling system).
- Shadow rankings will be made public for players to view beginning in Q2 of 2018.

### **Will there be changes to the operational standards and guidelines for ITF Transition events?**

- Reduced hosting costs for USTA due to no-3 week requirement.
- Officiating standards for ITF Transition tour events needs to be determined. The ITF is considering:
  - Supervisors: concept of an Approved White Badge Supervisor for use at Transition Tour tournaments on a case-by-case basis.
- Chair Umpires: potential to reduce minimum requirement at \$15K/Transition Tour tournaments from 2 White Badge CUs, to 1 White Badge CU, supported by National CUs.

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

- As the working group develops the optimal pathway for American players, we will be analyzing the subsidy model and the related investments in order to provide the required playing opportunities.
- In addition to the introduction of the ITF Transition Tour, the ATP is requiring hospitality (individual hotel rooms) at every ATP Challenger-level event (\$50K +H - \$150K +H).

### **How will current \$15K and \$25K USTA Pro Circuit events be affected by the ATP & ITF changes?**

- The USTA is currently working to determine the optimal pathway, and identifying what level of event and at what week provides the best opportunity for American players.
- The USTA Pro Circuit team will begin having conversations with tournament organizers following the Annual Meeting. A 2019 – 2021 optimal pathway will be developed and then the Pro Circuit team will work with existing partners to fill those preferred weeks.
- Subsidy models will most likely need to be altered to account for the changes. Additional information to be provided at the Annual Meeting.

### **How will the Juniors be affected by the changes?**

- The new professional pathway creates a structure for talented Juniors from the Junior Circuit through to the Top 100.
- There will be up to 5 places reserved in the main draw of ITF Transition Tour events for the Top 100 Juniors.



- The \$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 Junior events (e.g. Easter Bowl, National Clay Courts, National Hard Courts, etc.) to ITF Transition Tour and professional events to be reviewed and most likely expanded.

### **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. NAAs, ITA All-Americans, etc.) to ITF Transition 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.

### **What are the next steps?**

- The USTA working group will continue to have discussions with the ITF, ATP and WTA. Additionally, it will engage with a data analytics company to analyze calendar models and American player performance to determine the optimal professional pathway.
- The USTA working group will develop an optimal calendar that provides the appropriate pathway for American players. An initial draft of this calendar will be presented at the Annual Meeting committee meetings – Junior Comp, Collegiate and Pro Circuit.
- The USTA is also currently reviewing wildcard linkages from junior and collegiate events to ITF Transition Tour and professional events including the US Open. The USTA will also review current wildcard allocation within the USTA system.
- The ITF Pro Circuit Committee meetings will take place March 21<sup>st</sup> in London.
- USTA Pro Circuit team will engage in conversations with existing tournament operators immediately following the USTA Annual Meeting.
- The USTA will work with the Committees to help educate key constituents.
- Draft 2019 & 2020 American player pathways to be finalized by May 31<sup>st</sup> and submitted to the USTA Finance Committee.
- Following the USTA Finance Committee meetings in July, the USTA working group will present the American pathway to the Junior Comp, Collegiate & Pro Circuit committees at the SAMC.
- Upon further review and feedback from the USTA Board, Committees, ATP, WTA & ITF a final pathway and budget for 2019 & 2020 will completed by October 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Final budgets to be approved by the USTA Finance Committee in mid-November.