



Section 3.13 SENIOR EVENTS & COMPETITION

Tennis is a game which can be enjoyed at every stage of life. There are many good reasons to continue to play tennis, or even take up the game, as one grows older. However, none are more compelling than the physical and social benefits. Tennis is an excellent activity to keep one both fit, active and socially involved with ones community.

Today, within the tennis world, "senior" events and competitions begin when an individual has reached the young age of thirty-five. For example, the OTA sanctions a wide variety of senior events in age categories ranging from Over 35 to Over 80.

The International Tennis Federation holds world team championships for women aged over 35 to over 75 and men over 35 to over 80. The ITF also holds individual world championships for women up to over 80 and men over 85 and the USTA holds events for players up to over 90. In Canada, national championships for all those age categories with ITF teams and, with sufficient entries, will hold championships for men over 85 and women over 80.

When one considers that the population in general is aging and that many of today's adults have considerable disposable income it only makes sense (both social and business) to offer programs which meet their needs. As well, when one considers that the most often sited reason for giving up tennis is that it is hard to find partners to play with, then we should all be doing what we can to bring senior players together.

Programming for Seniors

Adults have special needs and require special attention. All too often this group feels that too much attention is being paid to junior programs with little time and effort being spent on keeping the senior club members happy. People, regardless of age, need to feel important, thus any programming designed specifically for your senior membership will be much appreciated by them. The following are some suggestions:

Executive Committee:

Create a new portfolio on your executive to take responsibility for adult and senior programming. It may be beneficial if this individual is a senior in order to help identify the needs and requests of the senior membership.

Senior Club Championships:

Run "senior" events in conjunction with your club championships. By offering a club championship for one or more senior playing categories you may find that overall involvement with the event increases. Depending upon the number of players and their ages you might want to consider Over 35, Over 50 and/or Over 60 playing categories.

Combined Age Tournament:



A century doubles tournament is one where the combined age of each team is at least 100 years old. This can be done as either a mens' and womens' or a mixed doubles event. You may choose to add the requirement that all entrants be at least a certain minimum age or may change the combined age to 80,90,110 or 120.

Fundraiser:

A final twist of the Century Tournament idea is to allow all teams to enter but have those teams which do not meet the combined 100 year requirement buy years. For example, two 35 year olds could enter as a team, however, they would be required to "buy" an additional 30 years to reach the 100 year requirement. As an additional equalizer for the competition, handicaps (see bulletin on handicaps) may be considered. This has proven to be quite successful in raising funds for special programs or capital improvements.

Round Robins:

Offer a regular weekly seniors round robin. If this was targeted towards retired adults it could be offered during midweek daytime hours. Not only would this serve to attract senior players to a special event allowing them to meet new partners, but it could also increase court utilization during non-prime time playing hours, potentially reducing the load during the prime time hours. Daytime programs for retirees are great!

Interclub Round Robins:

Liaise with other local clubs and offer round robins and programs together. You may not currently have enough senior members at your club to fill some of these events. However, by combining with a neighbouring club and rotating the event responsibility you may find sufficient interest to get the programs started. It won't take long before both clubs have enough interest to sustain some programs on their own.

Senior Leagues:

There are seniors leagues available in some areas, for example the Intercounty Tennis Association has a mid week daytime over 55 mixed league.

Ontario Senior Games; Canada Senior Games:

Targeting the recreational player over 55 years of age, these Ontario Senior Games is held biannually and the Canada Senior Games Biannually. These games cover events in 16 different sports with tennis being one of the most popular. In order to compete, individuals must enter in their district playdowns....there are a large number of districts in Ontario. For more information on this the Ontario Senior Games Association has a web site www.ontarioseniorgames.ca the 2010 ontario senior games are in Oshawa.

Successful competitors in the Ontario games are invited to the Canada senior games. Information on these games can be found at www.canada55plusgames.com . In 2010 Brockville is hosting these games.



World Masters Games:

Tennis is one of many sports offered in the World Masters Games. In 2009 Sydney Australia hosted these games. Competition is in both recreational and competitive levels of tennis for age categories from 30 up. These games are held every 4 years. Edmonton hosted in 2005.

Lessons and Racquets:

Encourage senior members to take some lessons. Proper form will enhance shots and decrease the chance of injury. Strategy tips will help them get more fun out of their tennis too. Encourage seniors to take advantage of the new racquet technologies. If used properly they can add to their game and save the wear and tear on the body.

Clay Courts:

Many seniors prefer to play on clay courts because they are kinder on the body both from a movement and impact of the ball on the racquet perspectives. If your club has the luxury of clay courts you may wish to consider developing special programming to recruit and retain senior players. If your club is considering installing clay courts you should contact Clay Court Tennis Ontario www.tennisonclay.com who provide support specifically to encourage the proper installation and maintenance of clay courts.

OTA:

The OTA supports the [Tennis Canada National Seniors Committee](#) through OTA's VP of Player Development. This portfolio takes responsibility for initiating and supporting the participatory opportunities and the development of competitive opportunities for all seniors, recreational or high performance. We anticipate that over the next few years program offerings for the senior categories will be increasing to meet the ever growing number of people qualifying as seniors. We encourage all member clubs to get involved with these programs. Remember, if we do not meet the needs of these people they will not become more involved or stay involved with tennis.

Ontario has two representatives on the National Seniors Committee.

COMPETITION FOR SENIORS

Who Qualifies:

Whether you started playing as a youngster or if you have just recently taken up tennis, tournaments are a great opportunity to assess your level of play and also to meet additional playing partners.

As designated by the OTA, a Senior player shall be any player who has attained, or will attain the age of 35 years by December 31st in the year of competition (ie. if a player turns 35 in April then they are eligible to compete in the Over 35 category beginning January 1st of that same



year). The OTA sanctions a wide variety of senior events in age categories ranging from Over 35 to Over 75.

The specific age divisions offered for Senior Men and Women are: Over 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60, 65, 70, 75 and over 80. There are a number of OTA senior sanctioned tournaments offered each year, including Senior Provincials and Senior Nationals. Try your luck at one or two, you'll be amazed at how well you do.

Additional Options:

At the club level it is important to keep in mind that our population is growing older and programming for this category is very important. Ask your adult members what they want, expect and need from your club. At the end of the year when club championships are being held be sure to offer some Senior categories where they are needed and wanted. Encourage them to help in the organization of events for their group. In this way, even if there is not enough seniors signed up, they may be more willing to transfer into another category, and not feel left out.