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Junior Know the Rules -- 10 and Under Tennis

(effective April 1, 2015)

Overview

The Texas 10 and Under system, aligned with the 10 and Under rules for USTA National and the International Tennis Federation, became effective January 1, 2012. It is the Junior Tennis Council's position that the 10 and Under Division is a developmental division with the focus being on participation and developing their competitive skills through match play. The 10 and Under system promotes play in both orange ball and green ball events and is structured to keep young players in orange ball and green ball events long enough to develop tactically and technically. A young player who is technically advanced and physically competent will be able to progress through the levels in a reasonable time period.

1. Orange Ball Division

a. Eligibility

- i. The minimum age eligibility is the first day of the month of the player's seventh birthday.
- ii. A player may elect to move to the Green Ball Division prior to the last six months of age eligibility by meeting one of the following criteria:
 1. Earn ten participation credits.
 - a. One participation credit may be earned by completing a ZAT.
 - b. One participation credit may be earned by completing a 10s Participation Credit Tournament during a month(s) that a ZAT participation credit is not earned.
 - i. A player may only earn one participation credit per month, either in a ZAT or a 10s Participation Credit Tournament, but not both.
 - ii. A player may only compete in one tournament per month, either in a ZAT or a 10s Participation Credit Tournament, but not both.
 - iii. A player will earn a participation credit for the division in which he/she competed.
 - c. One participation credit may be earned by completing a USTA Junior Team Tennis league season in a 10s division and meeting the requirements set by the Junior Team Tennis Committee.
 - i. A player is limited to one Junior Team Tennis participation credit per league season.
 - ii. A player will earn a participation credit for the division in which he/she competed.
 - iii. Participation credits will be posted in June for the Spring season and December for the Fall season, making the player eligible for entry to the next level the month following posting.
 - iv. A player will not receive a participation credit unless he/she is at least seven years old the month the credit is posted.
 2. A player **may** move to the Green Ball Division once the player has won four ZATs in the Orange Ball Division.
 - a. A player will be placed into the Orange Ball Division A Draw once the player has won ~~two~~ **one** ZATs in the Orange Ball Division. (If an Orange Ball Division A Draw cannot be made based on number of entries, all players will be placed in one draw.)
- iii. A player will earn a participation credit and/or a tournament win credit only for the division in which he/she competed.
- iv. A player will continue to accumulate participation credits and tournament win credits until he/she is no longer age eligible. When a player becomes eligible for another division, he/she will start at zero (0) credits in the new division.
- v. During the last six months of age eligibility in the 10s division, a player **must** move to the Green Ball Division if the other criteria are not met.

b. Match Format

- i. Matches will be played in accordance with all six Orange Ball Tennis elements:
 1. Court size: 60-foot court
 2. Racquet length: no longer than 25 inches
 3. Net Height: 3 feet at center; 3 feet, 6 inches at net posts
 4. Ball: orange low compression balls
 5. Age: 7 to 10 ½
 6. Scoring: 2 out of 3, 4-game sets (first to win 4 games by a margin of 1 game) using no-ad scoring; 7-point tiebreak in lieu of 3rd set (first to win 7 points by a margin of 2).
- ii. A player may serve overhand or underhand but must hit the ball with the racquet before the ball hits the ground.
- iii. The USTA Point Penalty System along with the USTA Junior Suspension Point System will be utilized in all 10 and Under divisions.

Rationale: *The Junior Tennis Council emphasizes that this is not a “race” to the Green Ball Division. The priority is on maximizing participation and playing matches with the orange ball. Please note that a player may elect to move to the Green Ball Division early if they satisfy the criteria, but they are not required until the player is 10 ½ years old. Players are required to move to the Green Ball Division at 10 ½ years of age, because the Green Ball Division is a critical transition step for young players. Finally, the Junior Tennis Council placed a minimum age for participation in the 10 and Under Division to prevent very young players from being pushed into the competitive arena too early. Players younger than seven can take advantage of the USTA Texas Future Stars Tournaments and play the 8s Red Ball Division.*

2. Green Ball Division

a. Eligibility

- i. A player will be eligible to play the Green Ball Division until the first day of the month of the player’s eleventh birthday.
- ii. In order to move to the 12s ZAT level (Yellow Ball) prior to the month of eleventh birthday, a player must meet **both** of the following criteria:
 1. Must be at least nine years old.
 2. Earn ten participation credits.
 - a. One participation credit may be earned by completing a ZAT.
 - b. One participation credit may be earned by completing a 10s Participation Credit Tournament during a month(s) that a ZAT participation credit is not earned.
 - i. A player may only earn one participation credit per month, either in a ZAT or a 10s Participation Credit Tournament, but not both.
 - ii. A player may only compete in one tournament per month, either in a ZAT or a 10s Participation Credit Tournament, but not both.
 - iii. A player will earn a participation credit for the division in which he/she competed.
 - c. One participation credit may be earned by completing a USTA Junior Team Tennis league season in a 10s division and meeting the requirements set by the Junior Team Tennis Committee.
 - i. A player is limited to one Junior Team Tennis participation credit per league season.
 - ii. A player will earn a participation credit for the division in which he/she competed.
 - iii. Participation credits will be posted in June for the Spring season and December for the Fall season, making the player eligible for entry to the next level the month following posting.
 - iv. A player will not receive a participation credit unless he/she is at least seven years old the month the credit is posted.
- iii. When a player (regardless of age) wins four ZATs in the Green Ball Division, he/she must move to the 12s Championship level when playing 12s. The player remains eligible for the Green Ball Division until the first day of the month of the player’s eleventh birthday except if the player advances to the 12s Championship level through 12s.
 - a. A player will be placed into the Green Ball Division A Draw once the player has won ~~two~~ **one** ZATs in the Green Ball Division. (If a Green Ball Division A Draw cannot be made based on number of entries, all players will be placed in one draw.)

- iv. A player will earn a participation credit and/or a tournament win credit only for the division in which he/she competed.
 - v. A player will continue to accumulate participation credits and tournament win credits until he/she is no longer age eligible. When a player becomes eligible for another division, he/she will start at zero (0) credits in the new division.
- b. Match Format
- i. Matches will be played in accordance with all six Green Ball Tennis elements:
 1. Court size: 78-foot court
 2. Racquet length: no longer than 29 inches
 3. Net Height: 3 feet at center; 3 feet, 6 inches at net posts
 4. Ball: green dot low compression balls
 5. Age: 7 to 11
 6. Scoring: 2 out of 3, 4-game sets (first to win 4 games by a margin of 1 game) using no-ad scoring; 7-point tiebreak in lieu of 3rd set (first to win 7 points by a margin of 2).
 - ii. A player may serve overhand or underhand but must hit the ball with the racquet before the ball hits the ground.
 - iii. The USTA Point Penalty System along with the USTA Junior Suspension Point System will be utilized in all 10 and Under divisions.

Rationale: Using green low compression balls on a full-sized court will allow players to construct points and use appropriate technique.

3. Tournament Format for 10s ZAT/10s Participation Credit Tournament Orange Ball and 10s ZAT/10s Participation Credit Tournament Green Ball Divisions

- a. No ranking lists will be published, and Orange and Green Ball Divisions will not be seeded in tournaments.
- b. The Orange and Green Ball Divisions will be completed in one day. To increase the number of matches and ensure that the ZATs/10s Participation Credit Tournaments finish in one day, the following criteria will be followed:
 - i. If nine or more players register, then the players will be placed into draws of 16. First round loser consolation will be offered to guarantee players at least two matches.
 - ii. If six to eight players register, then players will be split evenly into flights for round robin match play. Inter-flight play will occur with the winners of each flight playing each other, the second place finishers playing each other, and so on. The first place playoff will determine the winner of the ZAT/10s Participation Credit Tournament.
 - iii. If less than five players register, then a round robin format will be used; or other approved format.

Rationale: The proposed ZAT/10s Participation Credit Tournament structure will expose players to as many orange or green ball matches as possible in a one day format. Participation credits can only be earned in tournament play through ZATs or 10s Participation Credit Tournaments.

4. Tournament Format for "Other" Tournaments

- a. Orange and Green Ball Divisions will be offered (**8s Red Ball Divisions may be offered**) and completed in one day. The divisions will not be seeded.
- b. The match format for the 10 and Under Divisions will be consistent with the match format played in the ZATs/10s Participation Credit Tournaments; or other approved match format.
- c. **The match format for the Red Ball Divisions will be played in accordance with all six Red Ball Tennis elements:**
 - 1. **Court size: 36-foot court**
 - 2. **Racquet length: no longer than 23 inches**
 - 3. **Net height: 2 feet 9 inches**
 - 4. **Ball: red low compression balls**
 - 5. **Age: 8 & Under**
 - 6. **Scoring: 2 out of 3, 7-point tiebreak games (first to win 7 points by a margin of 2). Players shall change ends after each tiebreak game; or other approved scoring format.**
- ii. **A player may serve overhand or underhand but must hit the ball with the racquet before the ball hits the ground.**

- d. To increase the number of matches and ensure that the “other” tournaments finish in one day, the following criteria will be followed **(Red Ball Divisions may vary)**:
- i. If five or more players enter a division, the players will be placed into draws of 16. First match loser consolation will be offered to guarantee players at least two matches.
 - ii. If three or four players enter a division, then a round robin format will be played.
 - iii. If less than three players enter a division, genders will be combined to complete the draw; and if combining is not possible, the tournament director may give the players the option to play up one division – **red ball to orange ball (if age eligible)**, orange ball to green ball, green ball to 12s (yellow ball).
 - iv. All Future Stars Tournament draws will be a round robin, non-elimination format
- e. **No participation credits towards advancement can be earned playing “other” tournaments.**

Rationale: *An important aspect of the 10 and Under Division is the length of time spent in each division. By not allowing credits in “others,” players have the opportunity to accumulate only one participation credit per month. However, competition in “others” provides additional valuable match play experience.*

Conclusion

The Texas 10 and Under system integrates USTA rule changes for the 10 and Under Tennis initiative, preserves the integrity of orange ball events, emphasizes participation and experience, and focuses on the development of young tennis players. The Texas 12s-18s system requires qualification from the ZAT level to the Championship level and from the Championship level to the Super Championship level. The 10 and Under system remains consistent with this structure by requiring a level of qualification to advance from Orange Ball to Green Ball and from Green Ball to 12s ZATs or 12s Champs.