



## AMERICAN COLLEGIATE VARSITY TENNIS AND INTERNATIONAL PLAYERS: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (“FAQ”)

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This FAQ is designed to provide answers to the questions that are often raised concerning international players and collegiate varsity tennis.

The issues surrounding the participation of international players in American collegiate tennis have spurred much conversation among American junior players, their coaches, their parents, our Association, and the tennis world at large. This has been an emotionally charged and often divisive topic. There is a wide range of beliefs regarding these issues, and, apparently, much misinformation. This one issue is part of a very complicated fabric, which is the landscape of American collegiate varsity tennis. This is a very complex, nuanced issue with many intersecting/inter-related variables creating the current situation.

### **1. Why are there so many international players playing tennis?**

The increase in international players is part and parcel of two phenomena: (a) increased globalization (or as author and *New York Times* columnist, Tom Friedman, has described it, a “flatter” world), and (b) the tennis explosion around the world.

The world in general is becoming a much more international place in so many respects. As Friedman has written, “technology and geo-economics” are “fundamentally reshaping our lives -- much, much more quickly than many people realize.” Everywhere we turn, globalization is evident. International communication is becoming instantaneous. Outsourcing is becoming rampant. The ranks of a number of other sports – for example, basketball, golf, soccer, and swimming – are becoming much more international, and these trends are continuing.

The seismic change in tennis began with the advent of Open Tennis, which led to major investments in player development by tennis federations throughout the world. The results of this global interest in tennis began to surface in the 1980’s in Davis Cup, Fed Cup, the Grand Slam events, and in American college tennis. Smaller countries like Spain and Croatia are making their mark in the international tennis arena. The college tennis landscape is a reflection of what is occurring on the world stage. In most countries, tennis is one of the two or three most popular sports and

attracts the most talented athletes. In the United States, tennis is competing for athletes with a host of other sports, including football, basketball, baseball, and soccer.

**2. What is the percentage of international student-athletes playing varsity tennis at American colleges and universities?**

Across all divisions, international players comprise roughly 19% of all women tennis players and just under 27% of all men tennis players at American colleges and universities.

**Percentage of International Players in Varsity College Tennis**

**According to the NCAA’s 2006-2007 Student-Athlete Race and Ethnicity Report (the most recent data available to the public):**

<b>NCAA Division</b>	<b>Men’s Varsity Tennis</b>	<b>Women’s Varsity Tennis</b>
Division I	38.4 %	49.9 %
Division II	30.9 %	20.5 %
Division III	3.6 %	2.7 %
Divisions I, II, and III	26.7 %	19.0 %

**3. What does the current scholarship landscape look like for our best American juniors?**

While many people claim that the number of international student-athletes is limiting the ability of top American junior tennis players to receive tennis scholarships, the data from a recent study suggests that this is not the case. The overwhelming number of the Top 300 boys and girls (approximately 85% of the boys and 87% of the girls) are receiving college tennis scholarships. Some are choosing to attend Ivy League or top Division III Schools, which do not offer athletic scholarships. In addition, some are attending other schools but not on athletic scholarships even though some of them could have accepted an athletic scholarship elsewhere. Men are at a definite disadvantage regarding available tennis scholarships. This is because there are only 4.5 scholarships for men, as compared to 8 for women, allocated for respective NCAA Division I teams. Men are, in fact, at a disadvantage in three non-revenue sports (tennis, gymnastic, and volleyball).

An analysis of the USTA 2007 rankings of the top 300 Boys and Girls 18 revealed the following:

### **Boys:**

- Of the top 300 Boys 18s in the final 2007 year-end rankings eligible to attend college, over 85% received tennis scholarships
- Of the 40 who did not receive tennis scholarships, 19 went to Ivy League Schools (1 to Brown, 1 to Columbia, 3 to Cornell, 2 to Dartmouth, 5 to Harvard, 3 to Penn, 3 to Princeton, and 1 to Yale), which do not offer athletic scholarships
- Eight others chose to attend other Division III schools (including Amherst, Bowdoin, University of Chicago, Emory, Washington University of St. Louis, and Williams), which also do not offer athletic scholarships
- 13 chose to attend other schools (including Boise State, Cal, Florida State, George Washington, Michigan, Notre Dame, St. John, Utah, and USC), but not on athletic scholarships, even though some of them could have accepted an athletic scholarship elsewhere

### **Girls:**

- Of the top 300 Girls 18s ranked in the 2007 year-end rankings, 245 were eligible to attend college (the other 55 were younger than high school seniors)
- 213 of the 245 (87%) received college scholarships
- Of the 32 that did not receive tennis scholarships, 21 went to Ivy League Schools (4 to Brown, 2 to Columbia, 1 to Cornell, 5 to Harvard, 2 to Penn, 5 to Princeton, and 2 to Yale), which do not offer athletic scholarships
- A number chose to attend other Division III schools (Amherst, Carleton, University of Chicago, Emory, Middlebury, Wellesley, and Williams), which do not offer athletic scholarships
- And the remaining few chose to attend Cal, Michigan State, USC, and UCLA, but not on athletic scholarships, even though some of them could have accepted an athletic scholarship elsewhere

It is important to note that a number of female scholarships go unused each year.

#### **4. Why are there so many international student-athletes playing varsity tennis at American colleges and universities?**

First, the United States is the only country that offers significant scholarship support for intercollegiate sports. The combined academic-athletic package is extremely attractive to tennis players seeking to attend college, including international student-athletes. American college tennis is a natural magnet, offering the best of both worlds -- a college degree and the opportunity to compete at a high level.

Second, varsity college coaches naturally want to win, and in many instances they are under a great deal of pressure to win from their Athletic Directors. There is

significant prestige and money involved for programs that finish highly ranked in the year-end Learfield Sports Directors' Cup. Presidents and Athletic Directors are often under tremendous pressure from alumni and trustees to put the "school on the map" with a strong showing. There are examples of coaches that have been fired by their Athletic Directors for refusing to recruit international student-athletes.

Sometimes, due to factors such as type of school, level of program, facilities, location, or climate, American college coaches who want to improve the level of their program have a difficult time recruiting outstanding American juniors. If they are struggling to attract top American talent but can recruit similarly skilled or even better skilled international student-athletes, many coaches will do so.

**5. What does the balance of top international student-athletes to top American student-athletes look like at the NCAA Division I level for both genders?**

In comparing American and international student-athletes in the Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA) Rankings from March 2009 (Top 100, Top 50, and Top 20), the following was noted:

**Men:**

<b>Ranking</b>	<b>Percent (&amp; Number) of Americans</b>	<b>Percent (and Number) of International Players</b>
Top 100	38% (38)	62% (62)
Top 50	36% (18)	64% (32)
Top 20	40% (8)	60% (12)

**Women:**

<b>Ranking</b>	<b>Percent (and Number) of Americans</b>	<b>Percent (and Number) of International Players</b>
Top 100	51% (51)	49% (49)
Top 50	56% (28)	44% (22)
Top 20	60% (12)	40% (8)

**6. What are the benefits of international student-athletes playing American varsity collegiate tennis teams?**

Top coaches contend that international student-athletes enhance the level of varsity competition and increase player development for all concerned. International student-athletes “raise the level of the game,” including for our American collegians. The better players every team has on the court, the argument goes, the better each and all players get. Everyone seems to agree that international student-athletes have raised the level of play tremendously over this past period.

Moreover, the chance for Americans to compete on a regular basis against top players their age from Europe, South America, and Asia provides important benefits for the American collegians who will be facing a significant amount of international competition once on the pro tour. Having international student-athletes as teammates and competing against international student-athletes also broadens the horizons and enriches the life experiences of American college student-athletes.

**7. What are the rules to ensure international student-athletes are age appropriate and have been held to the same amateurism standards that American student-athletes have been held to?**

The NCAA leadership just recently took the bold step of recommending that the one-year “grace period” for tennis should be reduced to a period of six months or less, effective either August 1, 2011 or 2012. This legislation has not yet been finally approved by the NCAA Board of Directors, but a decision is expected later in the spring of 2010. Currently, prospective student-athletes may take a year after high school before matriculating without losing any eligibility (i.e. having to sit out the first year of matriculation and also losing a minimum of a year of eligibility). This legislation encourages tennis playing student athletes to continue their educational path from high school to college, by allowing only a six month hiatus from their studies without penalty. The intent is to create a more level playing field based on age, experience, and opportunity, and in doing so, to discourage coaches from recruiting older and more experienced players who have already had a number of years on the professional tour as an amateur.

NCAA Bylaw #14.2.3.2 also ensures that tennis student-athletes must begin full time collegiate enrollment before their twentieth birthday. If they do not, student-athletes can be penalized by having to sit a year in residence and can run the risk of being penalized season(s) of eligibility. The NCAA Eligibility Center evaluates all Division I and Division II prospective student athletes’ amateur and academic status.

**8. Does the NCAA limit the number of international student-athletes that can receive scholarships on American collegiate varsity tennis teams?**

There are no NCAA limits on international student-athletes. There could be significant, if not insurmountable, legal hurdles for the NCAA to try to limit the number of international student-athletes that can receive scholarships on American varsity collegiate tennis teams. An early attempt by the NCAA to do this in the 1970's in track was deemed discriminatory. Several respected experts have recently advised the USTA that the situation is the same pertaining to tennis and other varsity sports today. Neither the USTA (the governing body of tennis in the U.S.) nor the ITA (the governing body of varsity college tennis) has jurisdiction to institute such a prohibition or limitation on its own. At its own discretion, however, any individual college or university could explore its options in this regard. Certainly, the USTA encourages individual coaches, colleges, and universities to actively recruit outstanding young Americans. Further, it should be noted that there have been a number of highly successful collegiate varsity teams comprised of all American players, including some that have won NCAA championships.

**9. What opportunities are available for junior players to compete with or practice with college varsity tennis players?**

In 2009, over 100 USTA/ITA Campus Showdown events were hosted on college campuses. Campus Showdowns are one day, short format events open to all: juniors, college players, adults, and pros. Junior players and their parents have loved the format and the opportunity to play with and against current college players on a college campus.

In addition, the ITA Summer Circuit presented by the USTA also provides junior players an opportunity to play with and against current collegians, and junior participation has grown over the last few years. The circuit has grown to include 23 regional events with the top players competing in the ITA/USTA Summer National Collegiate Championships in mid August.

**10. What is the USTA's strategy for increasing the American talent pool?**

The USTA has made a strong commitment to improve the quality of competitive play of American junior tennis players, with the goal of dramatically increasing the number of highly qualified American juniors prepared to play college varsity tennis at the highest levels. Patrick McEnroe, General Manager of the USTA's Player Development program and Captain of the American Davis Cup team, has said, "The more outstanding American junior players there are, the more scholarships they will receive, and the fewer international players American college coaches will need to recruit. American junior tennis players simply must continue to get better and better." He has also made it clear that going to college is the one pathway for 99.9% of our

American juniors and a primary pathway to pro tennis for even the very best collegiate players.

Elements of the strategy include but are not limited to the following:

- a. Adopt and fully utilize the QuickStart format to expand and retain the base of the player pyramid.
- b. Create and disseminate a unified coaching philosophy and a common coaching language among development coaches.
- c. Establish Regional Training Centers across the country that will work in concert with our National Training Centers to help identify and develop America's next generation of champions.
- d. Create a national junior competition calendar that affords time for training, is affordable and ensures the healthy development of future college and professional champions.
- e. Administer a comprehensive program that systematically supports and promotes college varsity tennis as the focal point for the vast majority of junior competitive players while also serving as an important developmental opportunity for those aspiring to play professional tennis.
- f. Provide college coaches and communities with player development/advocacy tools to embed college programs in the community. The following tools are easy and inexpensive to incorporate into the fabric of the campus program.
  - Campus Showdowns
  - Campus Kids' Days
  - Campus QuickStart
- g. Increase the number of College Information Sessions, Forums, and Showcases at the Sectional level.
- h. Review, evaluate, and disseminate sport science and sports medicine information relevant to tennis.
- i. Ensure that our juniors and college players are training and competing against each other on a regular basis through the auspices of any and all of the following:
  - USTA/ITA Campus Showdowns
  - ITA Summer Circuit presented by the USTA
  - USTA Pro Tour Transition Camps
  - USTA/ITA Summer Collegiate Team
  - USTA Junior National Team Dual Matches

**11. Where can I learn more information about college tennis?**

- On the website of the Intercollegiate Tennis Association at [www.itatennis.com](http://www.itatennis.com).
- On the website of the United States Tennis Association at <http://www.usta.com/PlayerDevelopment/CollegeTennis.aspx> (for varsity college tennis) and at <http://www.tennisoncampus.com/site3.aspx> (for recreational college tennis).