Player Regulations for Orange/Green/Yellow Progression

Overview

The new 10 & Under and 12 & Under systems are developmental divisions that should focus on participation and developing a players competitive skills through match play. The new system places emphasis on participation and promotes play in both Orange ball and Green ball events. The new system is structured to keep young players in Orange and Green ball events long enough to develop technically and tactically. The structure will enable a player to progress through participating in events with little emphasis on winning or losing. It is not a race to the Yellow ball.

Orange Ball Division

A. Orange Ball Eligibility
   1. A player can start competing in Orange ball 10 & Under at any time, as long as the player has not reached the maximum age for the division.
   2. A player may elect to move to Green ball 12 & Under by meeting one of the following criteria:
      a. Earn 10 participation points in singles sanctioned tournaments during a 12 month period and be at least 9 years old.
      b. Win the singles division of four Level 5 or higher Southwest Section tournaments and be at least 9 years old.
   3. Participation points are earned as follows:
      a. One participation point may be earned by competing in any 10 & Under Orange ball singles sanctioned tournament.
      b. One participation point may be earned by completing any USTA Junior Team Tennis league season.
      c. One participation point may be earned by playing a cross sectional team event.
   4. A player may elect to move to Green ball 12 & Under once he or she has reached 10 ½ years of age even if the above criteria has not been met.

B. Orange Ball Match Formats
   1. Matches will be played in accordance to the guidelines of 10 & Under tennis.
   2. Court size: 60 foot court.
   4. Orange low compression balls.
5. Best two out of three short sets (first to 4 games) with a ten point tie-breaker in lieu of a third. Ad scoring applies.

C. Tournament Formats and Rankings
1. No rankings lists will be published. Participation point lists will be published to keep track of the number of points a player has accumulated.
2. It is recommended that Level 6 tournaments should be played in any non-elimination format such as a compass draw or round robin to ensure guaranteed competition. Players should be placed in flights with other players of a similar level.
3. It is recommended that the 10 & Under division at Level 6 tournaments be completed in one day.

Rationale: The Junior Competition Committee emphasizes that it is not a "race" to the Green ball division. The priority is on maximizing participation and playing matches with the Orange ball. This helps in the fundamental development of the child and helps a child progress, as he or she gets older, with learning the correct technique and without picking up bad habits. Additionally, it places a player with correct equipment for his or her size, appropriate court size for his or her age, and a ball bounce that is in the strike zone for his or her height. A player can move up if he or she has satisfied the criteria, as it proves that he or she is ready to move up to the Green ball division. The Junior Competition Committee places no minimum age on when a child can play in the Orange ball Division. Players under the age of 8 are encouraged to play 8 & Under competition using the Red ball, however, they have the option of playing in 10 & Under Orange ball if they are ready or there is no available Red ball division.

Green Ball Division
A. Green Ball Eligibility
1. A player can start competing in Green ball 12 & Under when he or she has satisfied either of the criteria from the 10 & Under Orange ball division, or when the player has reached 10 ½ years of age.
2. A player may elect to move to Yellow Ball 12 & Under by meeting one of the following criteria:
   a. Earn 10 participation points in singles sanctioned tournaments during a 12 month period and be at least 10 years old.
   b. Win the singles division of four Level 5 or higher Southwest Section tournaments and be at least 10 years old.
3. Participation points are earned as follows:
   a. One participation point may be earned by competing in any 12 & Under Green ball singles sanctioned tournament.
   b. One participation point may be earned by completing any USTA Junior Team Tennis league season.
   c. One participation point may be earned by playing a cross sectional team event.
4. A player may elect to play in any Yellow ball age division, for which he or she is age eligible, only after completing the Green ball criteria listed above.
5. A player new to Southwest Section tournament play may elect to play in any Yellow ball age division, for which he or she is age eligible, as long as he or she has reached 12 years of age even if the above criteria has not been met.

B. Green Ball Match Format
1. Matches will be played in accordance to the guidelines of 12 & Under tennis.
2. Court size: 78 foot court.
3. Racquet length: no longer than a 27 inch racquet.
4. Green low compression balls
5. Any USTA approved match format.

C. Tournament Format
1. All Level 6 Southwest Section tournaments shall play Green Ball in the 12 & Under division. No Yellow ball for the 12 & Under division will be offered as an option in Level 6 tournaments.
2. Level 5 and above tournaments will use similar draw types as other divisions for Green Ball 12 & Under divisions.

**Rationale:** The Junior Competition Committee believes that using the Green low compression balls, on a full sized court, will allow players to use the appropriate technique along with learning how to construct points better. In the Southwest, we play at altitude where the ball travels faster than at sea level. The Green ball will serve as a great transition tool to the Yellow ball and will enable players to have longer rallies at altitude. This improves a player’s thinking skills and enables a player to learn how to construct points, a skill which can be transferred when the player starts to compete in Yellow ball tournaments. The length of time a player spends in the Green and Orange ball divisions is developmentally important. Players have the opportunity to accumulate one point for every tournament played and should be encouraged to enter as many tournaments as practical.

**Transitioning to 2012**

**Players caught in the middle**
Players may be eligible to move up to an appropriate division if they have exceptional and notable results. The Junior Competition Committee will decide based on results whether a player is able to move up in division.

**Rationale:** The changes are designed to look forward to the future with the new generation of players. However, we know that there might be a few players "caught in the middle" during the transition phase, which is why the Junior Competition Committee will consider moving exceptional players.

**Conclusion**
The new Southwest Section 10 & Under and 12 & Under systems integrate the USTA National rule change and its philosophy of boosting participation, enabling kids to have more success, enabling small, young participants to have more fun, and developing a new generation of players with sound, fundamental techniques. The 10 & Under system preserves the integrity of Orange ball events; emphasizing participation, experience, the development of young tennis players and, most importantly, having fun! The 12 & Under system provides players with much needed experience and tactical awareness, which is imperative in a high altitude section as well as for overall technical development. The system of progression as a whole helps players gain success from a young age, whether they win or lose, by equating success with participation rather than winning or losing.

**Administration**
The USTA Southwest Section office will monitor entry into the appropriate Orange, Green or Yellow ball divisions.  

**Level 6** - Tournament Directors will be able to view the participation point list starting January 1st, 2012. It is their responsibility to make sure that the players entered are in the appropriate division according to their earned participation points as stated in rules above.  

**Level 3, 4 and 5** – All tournaments will be reviewed by the Southwest section. The JPDM will place players in the appropriate division according to their earned participation points as stated in the rules above.