

AGE ELIGIBILITY AND PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

XV. AGE ELIGIBILITY AND PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

A. AGE ELIGIBILITY RULE

Player Development requirements and the Age Eligibility Rule (“AER”) are applicable to competition in Professional Tennis Tournaments worldwide, including all WTA Tournaments and ITF Women’s Circuit events that receive ranking points.

1. Definitions

a. Competition in a Professional Tennis Tournament

For the purposes of this rule, competition in a Professional Tennis Tournament is defined as participation in the singles and/or doubles Main Draw, or the singles and/or doubles Qualifying Draw of a WTA Tournament or ITF Women’s Circuit event. Each Tournament in which a player earns ranking points (singles and/or doubles) counts towards a player’s allotment of Tournaments under the AER. However, participation in the draws of the ITF Women’s Circuit events in which a player does not earn ranking points does not constitute competition in a Professional Tennis Tournament under the AER.

b. Age

For the purposes of this rule, a player’s age is determined by her age as of the date of start of a Tournament’s singles Main Draw.

A player 18 years old or older no longer is subject to Part A of this rule but is required to continue participating in Player Development (Part B) until she receives notification of graduation from a WTA representative.

2. Event Participation

a. WTA, ITF Women’s Circuit and Fed Cup Event Participation

i. Players Under 14 Years of Age

A player who has not yet reached the date of her 14th birthday may not participate in any Professional Tennis Tournament on the WTA or ITF Women’s Circuit, or in any level of Fed Cup competition.

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ii. 14 Years Old

A player may earn a WTA Ranking; however, she may not participate in WTA Tournaments by direct ranking acceptance, or participate in a WTA Championships, by direct ranking acceptance or Wild Card.

(a) Number and Type of Tournaments

Between the date of a player's 14th birthday and the day before her 15th birthday, a player may participate in:

- (i) A maximum of eight (8) ITF Women's Circuit events, no more than three (3) of which may be at ITF Women's Circuit \$50,000 and above; plus
- (ii) Fed Cup (any level of competition).

The number of ITF Women's Circuit events in which a player may participate will be reduced, however, if the player receives a Wild Card into a WTA Tournament as provided in sub-Section b below.

(b) Wild Cards

These players are permitted to receive a maximum of three (3) Wild Cards as follows:

- (i) One (1) Wild Card for use into the Main Draw or Qualifying Draw of either a WTA International Tournament or ITF Women's Circuit event; and
- (ii) Two (2) Wild Cards exclusively for use into the Main Draw or Qualifying Draw of any ITF Women's Circuit event.

iii. 15 Years Old

(a) Number and Type of Tournaments

Between the date of a player's 15th birthday and the day before her 16th birthday, a player may participate in:

- (i) A maximum of 10 Professional Tennis Tournaments; plus

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- (ii) The WTA Championships (if she qualifies); plus
- (iii) Fed Cup (any level of competition).

(b) Wild Cards

These players are permitted to receive a maximum of three (3) Wild Cards as follows:

- (i) One (1) Wild Card for use into the Main Draw or Qualifying Draw of any category level of WTA Tournament or ITF Women's Circuit event; and
- (ii) Two (2) Wild Cards exclusively for use into the Main Draw or Qualifying Draw of any WTA International Tournament or ITF Women's Circuit event.

iv. 16 Years Old

(a) Number and Type of Tournaments

Between the date of a player's 16th birthday and the day before her 17th birthday, a player may participate in:

- (i) A maximum of 12 Professional Tennis Tournaments; plus
- (ii) The WTA Championships (if she qualifies); plus
- (iii) Fed Cup (any level of competition).

(b) Wild Cards

These players may receive a maximum of four (4) Wild Cards into any WTA Tournament and/or ITF Women's Circuit event, provided, however, that players do not exceed the WTA and/or ITF Women's Circuit maximum calendar year limits for singles or doubles, Main Draw or Qualifying Wild Cards.

v. 17 Years Old

(a) Number and Type of Tournaments

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Between the date of a player's 17th birthday and the day before her 18th birthday, a player may participate in:

- (i) A maximum of 16 Professional Tennis Tournaments; plus
 - (ii) The WTA Championships (if she qualifies); plus
 - (iii) Fed Cup (any level of competition).
- (b) Wild Cards

Once a player reaches the age of 17, she is permitted to receive the WTA and ITF Women's Circuit calendar year maximums. (See sub-Section 4.a.vi - page 59 and 4.b.iii - page 61 for information on WTA Wild Card maximums.) The number of Wild Cards she is allowed to receive pursuant to the Wild Card Rule is calculated over the course of the Tour Year in which she turned 17 (i.e., any Wild Cards used under the AER by the player in that Tour Year prior to turning 17 will count towards the total number of Wild Cards permitted under the Rules).

vi. 18 Years Old and Older

- (a) Number and Type of Tournaments

Players 18 years of age or older may participate in an unlimited number of Professional Tennis Tournaments on the WTA and ITF Women's Circuit.

- (b) Wild Cards

Players 18 years of age or older are eligible to receive the at-large WTA and ITF Women's Circuit maximum number of Wild Cards.

vii. Top 10 and Premier Player List Eligibility

- (a) Age Requirement

Because Top 10 and Premier List Players must commit to a minimum number of Tournaments, a player may not be included on the Top 10 or Premier Player List until the Tour Year during which she will reach her 17th birthday.

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(b) Ranking Requirement

In order to be included on the Top 10 or Premier Player List, a player under the age of 18 years old must be ranked in the Top 50 (of singles) at the time of selection.

(c) Player Obligations Before Receiving Top 10 and/or Premier Player List Benefits

Prior to the beginning of the Tour Year during which she will be on the Top 10 and/or Premier Player List and prior to determining her Player Commitment schedule, a player is required to meet with representatives of the WTA Operations and Player Development Departments for the purpose of developing and agreeing upon the player's schedule for the upcoming Tour Year.

The player will be permitted to benefit from her Top 10 and/or Premier Player List status once she has:

- (i) Met with representatives from both staffs;
- (ii) Completed her Player Development requirements;
- (iii) Participated fully in Player Development programs; and
- (iv) Acknowledged in writing that she has a full understanding of the Top 10 and/or Premier Player List status and Player Development programs

If the player does not complete any of the above requirements, then she will not be permitted to benefit fully from her Top 10 and/or Premier Player List status.

viii. Merited Increases

- (a) A player aged 15-17 is allowed up to four (4) merited increases per birth year (i.e., birthday to birthday). Merited increases are in addition to a player's allotted number of Tournaments under the AER.
- (b) A merited increase is earned when a player aged 15-17

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has completed all of her Player Development requirements to-date and earned her way into the Main Draw or Qualifying of a Premier Mandatory Tournament or Grand Slam via a direct acceptance. Players may include up to two (2) Grand Slam events in their total number of four (4) merited increases.

- (c) However, if a player is: i) accepted via a Wild Card; ii) 14 years of age; or iii) aged 15-17 and was accepted by direct acceptance but has not completed her Player Development requirements prior to competing in the Premier Mandatory Tournament or Grand Slam event, then participation in such event is counted towards her total allotment of Tournaments under the AER.

b. Wild Cards

i. Wild Card Qualification

In order to qualify for any Wild Card into any WTA Tournament, a player must have: (i) completed the Annual Player Form and the Official WTA Entry Form; ii) submitted all requisite documentation (i.e., proof of identity [copy of player's passport or birth certificate], proof that her minimum educational requirements are being met, etc.); and iii) be current with all of her Player Development requirements.

ii. Wild Cards received at separate Tournaments

Wild Cards received at separate Tournaments count towards a player's total allotment, regardless of whether the Wild Card is for singles or doubles.

iii. Wild Cards received at same Tournament

If a player aged 14-16 receives both a singles and doubles Wild Card at the same Tournament, it will count as only one (1) Wild Card. The singles Wild Card will be used to determine how it is counted (Main Draw or Qualifying).

iv. Doubles Wild Card at Tournament where Singles Entry by Direct Acceptance

In the event a player aged 14-16 is accepted into the singles draw (Main Draw or Qualifying) by direct acceptance and

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receives a Wild Card into the doubles draw, the following guidelines shall apply:

- (a) If the player earns points in the singles draw (Main Draw or Qualifying), the doubles Wild Card will not count towards her allotment permitted under the AER.
 - (b) If the player does not earn points in the singles draw (Main Draw or Qualifying), the doubles Wild Card will count towards her allotment permitted under the AER.
- v. WTA Tournament Wild Card Awarded through Pre-Qualifying Event/Circuit

In the event a player wins a pre-qualifying event/circuit that awards a Wild Card into a WTA Tournament, the player will be permitted to accept the Wild Card if:

- (a) The pre-qualifying event/circuit has been accredited by the WTA (please contact the WTA Legal or Player Development Departments for full details and guidelines regarding accredited events); and
 - (b) Acceptance of the Wild Card does not result in the player exceeding her allotment of Wild Cards permitted under the AER. Under no circumstances will a player be allowed to exceed the calendar year WTA and/or ITF Women's Circuit maximum number of Wild Cards for singles or doubles.
- c. Mandatory Tournaments

As set forth in Mandatory Tournament Entries – page 29 and Automatic Main Draw Entry Tournaments – page 211, all players, regardless of age, who by ranking qualify for acceptance into the Main Draw of a Premier Mandatory Tournament or the Main Draw of a Grand Slam will be entered automatically. Accordingly, players who are subject to the AER are responsible for planning their competition schedules to include these mandatory Tournaments within their allotment of Age Eligibility Tournaments. Players who have reached their maximum number of Professional Tennis Tournaments under the AER prior to a mandatory Tournament, unless they meet the provision for it to count in addition, will not be allowed to exceed their Tournament allotment to play.

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The failure to play a Premier Mandatory Tournament or Grand Slam, even if due to ineligibility under the AER, will result in a fine and/or zero (0) ranking points for such player.

d. Olympic Participation

The Age Eligibility Restrictions with respect to the Women's Tennis Competition will be detailed in the 2012 WTA Age Eligibility Rule and the ITF Olympic Tennis Event 2012 Regulations.

e. Exhibition/Non-Tour Events

There are no age-based restrictions on a player's participation in Exhibitions/Non-WTA Events. However, all players are subject to the Exhibition/Non-WTA Event Rule.

f. Summary Chart

The following table provides a summary of the event participation rules detailed in this sub-Section 2. Note that Premier Mandatory Tournaments and Grand Slam events are mandatory play events, which may impose additional regulations and/or restrictions on players subject to the AER. (See sub-Section c above for further details.)

- ^ For the purposes of the AER and this Tournament Eligibility Chart, a Tournament is defined as any singles and/or doubles Main Draw, or singles and/or doubles Qualifying Draw of any WTA Tournament or ITF Women's Circuit event in which a player earns ranking points. However, if a player participates in the Qualifying Draw and qualifies for the Main Draw, it will count as only one (1) Tournament. Similarly, if a player is competing in both the singles and doubles draws, it will count as only one (1) Tournament.

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Age	WTA [^]	ITF Women's Circuit [^]	Wild Cards [±]	Fed Cup	Olympics	Exhibition/ Non-WTA Events [†]
18	Unlimited	Unlimited	According to WTA & ITF Rules	Yes	Yes	Unlimited, subject to Exhibition/non-WTA Event Rule
17 [‡]	16 + WTA Champs [§]		According to WTA & ITF Rules	Yes	Yes	Unlimited, subject to Exhibition/Non-WTA Event Rule
16 [‡]	12 + WTA Champs [§]		4	Yes	Yes	Unlimited, subject to Exhibition/Non-WTA Event Rule
15	10 + WTA Champs [§]		3 (maximum of 1 for Premier Tournaments and remaining for International Tournaments and/or ITF Women's Circuit)	Yes	Yes	Unlimited, subject to Exhibition/Non-WTA Event Rule
14	0, except by Wild Card	8 [#]	3 (maximum of 1 for International Tournaments and remaining for ITF Women's Circuit)	Yes	No	Unlimited, subject to Exhibition/Non-WTA Event Rule
13	0	0	0	0	0	0

§ A player aged 15-17 is allowed up to four (4) merited increases per birth year (i.e., birthday to birthday). Merited increases are in addition to a player's allotted number of Tournaments under AER. (See the full rule in sub-Section 2.a.viii above for limitations and qualifications.)

± In order to qualify for any Wild Card into any WTA Tournament, a player must:
 i) complete and submit the Annual Player Form and an Official WTA Entry Form;
 ii) submit all requisite documentation (i.e., proof of identity [copy of player's passport or birth certificate], proof that her minimum educational requirements are being met, etc.); and iii) be current with all of her Player Development requirements. Under no circumstances will a player be allowed to exceed the WTA and/or ITF Women's Circuit calendar year maximum number of Wild Cards for singles or doubles.

† There are no age-based restrictions on a player's participation in Exhibitions/Non-WTA Events; however, all players are subject to the Exhibition/Non-WTA Event Rule.

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Players between the ages of 14 and 15 are permitted to compete in a maximum of eight (8) ITF Women's Circuit events, no more than three (3) of which may be at ITF Women's Circuit \$50,000 and above. The number of ITF Women's Circuit events in which a player may participate will be reduced if the player receives a Wild Card into a WTA Tournament.

‡ Players on the Top 10 List must refer to the current Rulebook and contact a Player Development representative in the Florida office for specific details.

3. Player Activity On-site at Tournaments

a. Evening Play

The WTA and WTA Tournaments shall use best efforts not to schedule any player under the age of 16 years for a match after 9:00 p.m. tournament local time.

b. Media Requirements

Players under the age of 18 years are not permitted to engage in an excess of four (4) total hours of media requests and engagements per Tournament. This time is to include: i) one-on-one media requests; ii) WTA requests; and iii) Tournament functions.

c. Personal Endorsement Commitments

A player's personal endorsement commitments are at the discretion of the player, but must not conflict with her: i) match schedule; ii) Player Development requirements; iii) professional appearance obligations of the aforementioned; and/or iv) physiological limitations.

B. PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

1. Program Overview and Process

Player Development programs are divided into the following four (4) phases:

a. Introductory;

b. Rookie;

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- c. Elite; and
- d. Premier.

The specific player participation requirements of each phase are detailed below, but all players under the age of 18 and players still subject to Player Development requirements (regardless of age) are required to check in at each WTA Tournament with the Player Development representative, or as designated by a Player Development representative, no later than the first day of Main Draw, one (1) hour prior to play (or at an alternate date and time as set by the WTA in advance) to participate in Player Development and their respective weekly Player Development activities.

2. Introductory Phase

- a. Eligibility and Timing

The Introductory Phase begins when a player 18 years of age or younger enters in her first WTA Tournament. Requirements for this phase must be completed as she completes the Annual Player Form process and by the end of her first WTA Tournament.

- b. Introductory Player Requirements

- i. Relevant online modules including, but not limited to, “Intro to the Pros” and “Safety and Security”.
- ii. Minimum Educational Requirements

Each player under the age of 18 must have met (or continue to meet) the minimum educational requirements of her country of legal residence and, upon entry into her first WTA Tournament, must submit to the WTA a certificate verifying the fulfillment of this educational requirement. Players must continue to furnish proof of such fulfillment on an annual basis until the age of 18.

- iii. Annual Medical Examination

Each player under the age of 18 must undergo an annual medical examination as specified by the WTA. This medical examination must be submitted to the WTA for continued approval to participate in Professional Tennis Tournaments. This information will be kept confidential and on file with SS&M

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Department.

3. Rookie Phase

a. Eligibility and Timing

The Rookie Phase begins when a player 18 years of age or younger participates in:

- i. Two (2) or more WTA singles events in a 52-week period; or
- ii. A Premier Mandatory singles event; or
- iii. A Grand Slam singles event (Main Draw or Qualifying).

Players must complete their Rookie Phase requirements within two (2) additional WTA Tournaments or three (3) months of the Tournament which has triggered their enrollment in the Rookie Phase, whichever comes first.

b. Rookie Phase Player Requirements

- i. Participate in WTA professional orientation, including:
 - (a) Completing the relevant online Player Development coursework and passing a written examination covering such material; and
 - (b) Participating in and passing the Onsite Activities portion of the 'Rookie Hours' Player Orientation.
- ii. Participate in Educational Programs offered through Player Development.
- iii. Continue providing proof that minimum educational requirements of country of residence are being met (or have been completed).
- iv. Continue to undergo the Annual Medical Examination.
- v. Notify the WTA of any changes in Player Support Team Members. It is the player's responsibility to advise the WTA if there is a change in a coach or agent.

c. Player Support Team Member Requirements

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i. Parent(s)

At least one (1) parent or guardian/chaperone of each player under the age of 18 who has qualified to meet all the requirements of participation on the WTA is required to do the following:

- (a) Complete an online course and pass a written examination covering such material;
- (b) Complete the Player Development orientation coursework within a maximum of three (3) months time;
- (c) Agree in writing to abide by the Rules; and
- (d) Comply with all requirements of any Player Support Team program established by the WTA.

ii. Coaches, Agents and Credentialed Individuals

Coaches and agents of and individuals being credentialed through Player Development players under the age of 18 must:

- (a) Complete the Player Development orientation coursework within a maximum of three (3) months' time;
- (b) Agree in writing to abide by the Rules;
- (c) Comply with all requirements of any Player Support Team program established by the WTA; and
- (d) Sign in at the WTA office on site prior to the beginning of a WTA Tournament.

4. Elite Phase

a. Eligibility and Timing

The Elite Phase begins when a player 18 years of age or younger moves into the Top 100 of singles on the WTA Rankings.

Players must continue to participate and fulfill the requirements of Player Development until notification of graduation.

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- b. Elite Phase Player Requirements
 - i. Continue completion of the relevant online coursework, including, but not limited to, the History Module, and pass a related written examination.
 - ii. Participate in the “Partners for Success” Mentor Program.
 - iii. Continue to undergo the Annual Medical Examination.
 - iv. Continue providing proof that minimum educational requirements of country of residence are being met (or have been completed).
 - v. Participate in educational programs offered through Player Development.
 - vi. Participate in the Career Development Program.
 - vii. Complete Advanced Media Training, to be conducted at designated Tournament sites throughout the Tour Year.
 - viii. Within one (1) month of eligibility, meet with a Player Development representative and a WTA Operations representative to review the annual Tournament schedule via the online Schedule Zone module and agree to such schedule.
 - ix. Participate in a meeting with the WTA CEO or President.
- c. Player Support Team Member Requirements
 - i. Coaches
 - (a) Continue to comply with all requirements of any Player Support Team program established by the WTA.
 - (b) Continue to sign in at WTA Tournaments.
 - (c) Participate in Player Development on-line education, as required.

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- (d) Pass the WTA Rules test.
- ii. Parents and Agents
 - (a) Continue to comply with all requirements of any Player Support Team program established by the WTA.
 - (b) Sign a Code of Ethics.
 - (c) Complete the Orientation.
 - (d) Sign in at WTA Tournaments.
 - (e) Participate in Player Development education, as required.

5. Premier Phase/Players

Any player who is named to the Top 10 and/or Premier Player List or is ranked in the Top 50 of singles at age 18 and younger will participate in Premier Player education and any other relevant Player Development activities.

C. PLAYER PENALTIES

1. Ranking Point Penalty

In the event a player plays in a Tournament that exceeds the number and/or level permitted to be played under the AER, or enters a Tournament that in any way conflicts with the AER, that Tournament will not be counted for ranking points for that player.

2. Fine and/or Ban from Event Competition/Attendance

Additionally, players and/or Player Support Team Members who do not comply with any of the provisions of the AER or the requirements of Player Development are subject to a fine of up to \$25,000 and may be barred from competing in and/or attending WTA Tournaments and ITF Women's Circuit events and Fed Cup for up to six (6) months.

3. Appeals

Fine appeals must be filed within 21 days from the date of notice.

4. Clarification of Player Development and Age Eligibility Rule

For any questions relating to Player Development, including the AER, please contact the WTA Player Development or Legal Departments in the Florida office.