



INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION OF WHEELCHAIR TENNIS INTO THE INTERNATIONAL TENNIS FEDERATION

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Wheelchair Tennis is Tennis

Same court; same racket; same rules.

Background

The International Tennis Federation (ITF) is the world governing body of tennis, one of the few truly global sports.

The objective of the ITF is:

- to further grow and develop the sport worldwide
- to develop the game at all levels at all ages for both able-bodied and disabled men and women
- to make, amend and uphold the rules of the game
- to promote the International Team Championships and competitions of the ITF
- to preserve the integrity and independence of tennis as a sport
- to perform all without discrimination on grounds of colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, age, sex or religion

The ITF has 205 member National Associations - more than most other international sporting federations. Member nations come from every continent, and each association is involved in organising tennis and promoting the interests of the game.

The ITF also has six Regional Associations based geographically, which work within their regions and continents to assist the development and co-ordination of tennis:

Asian Tennis Federation (ATF)
Confederacion Sud Americana de Tenis (COSAT)
Confederation of African Tennis (CAT)
COTECC (Central America & Caribbean)
Oceania Tennis Federation (OTF)
Tennis Europe

In order to achieve its objective of promoting and developing the game of tennis, the ITF oversees the following five areas of the sport:

Administration and Regulation

The administering and regulation of the game through 205 National Associations affiliated to the ITF, together with six Regional Associations. The ITF is responsible for the Rules of Tennis, including the technical specifications for courts and equipment, and it also participates in the running and enforcement of an anti-doping program with the ATP and WTA Tour.

Organising international competitions

The ITF controls the major international team events for all age groups and for Wheelchair Tennis, including the two largest annual international team sports events in the world - the Davis Cup by BNP Paribas for men and the Fed Cup by BNP Paribas for women.

The ITF is involved at the highest levels of the game, including the Olympic Games, to which tennis was reintroduced as a full medal sport in 1988, and the Paralympics.

In addition, the ITF works closely with the four Grand Slams - the Australian Open, Roland Garros, Wimbledon and the US Open - through its presence on the Grand Slam Committee, and supports each event with administrative, officiating and media services.

The most prestigious competitions in tennis, the four Grand Slams, plus the Japan Open, the Italian Championships and the International Championships of Spain are all official Championships of the ITF.

Structuring the game by sanctioning international circuits and events

This includes:

- the ITF Junior Circuit
- the ITF Men's Circuit
- the ITF Women's Circuit
- ITF Seniors Events
- the NEC Wheelchair Tennis Tour
- the Hopman Cup

Developing the game through its worldwide development programme

The Grand Slam Development Fund and the ITF invest more than US\$4 million per annum into initiatives for the growth of the game.

Promoting the game

The ITF markets tennis through television, PR, event management and sponsorship

Wheelchair Tennis

- Tennis was the first International Federation to integrate disability tennis into the activities of the International Federation.
- Philosophy: wheelchair tennis = tennis.
- Focus is the sport rather than the disability.
- Wheelchair tennis is part of the culture of the ITF and is accepted and supported at all levels of the organisation: President, Board of Directors, Staff in all departments at all levels.

History of Wheelchair Tennis

- 1976 Wheelchair Tennis started in the USA
- 1988 International Wheelchair Tennis Federation (IWTF) founded
- 1988 ITF adopt the 2 bounce rule in the rules of tennis
- 1991 Ellen De Lange (NED) appointed as full time executive secretary of the IWTF
- 1998 IWTF is fully integrated into the ITF – 1st sport to achieve such a union at an international level
- Junior Wheelchair Tennis Masters held at Les Petits As, an able bodied event for the top 14 and under juniors in the world.
- 2007 Sanctioned wheelchair tennis events in all 4 Grand Slams
- 2009 ATP Tour event in Rotterdam/Tommy Robredo as a Tournament Director
- 2010 The founder of Wheelchair Tennis Brad Parks was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame.
- 2010 Appointment of ITF Wheelchair Tennis Ambassadors – founder of wheelchair tennis Brad Parks, former ITF Wheelchair Tennis World Champions Monique Kalkman and David Hall, Sven Groeneveld, Jonas Bjorkman and Tommy Robredo.

Benefits of inclusion/integration

- Support and advice from all ITF departments. – Human Resources, Finance, Information and Communication Technology, Professional Tennis, Event Operations, Olympics, Communications, ITF Development Officers, Coach Education, Technical, Anti-doping.
- ITF AGM
- ITF World Champions Awards
- ITF Websites
- Inclusion in ITF Publications e.g. ITF Year (Esther Vergeer is on the front cover of the 2010 Edition), ITF World (wheelchair tennis has featured on the front cover)
- Wheelchair users can play with able bodied family and friends
- Sponsorship – NEC, BNP Paribas, Invacare
- Low cost wheelchair – support from other ITF departments

Integrated/inclusive competition.

- The rules of tennis:
 - f. Wheelchair/Able-bodied Tennis

Where a wheelchair tennis player is playing with or against an able-bodied person in singles or doubles, the Rules of Wheelchair Tennis shall apply for the wheelchair player while the Rules of Tennis for able-bodied tennis shall apply for the able-bodied player. In this instance, the wheelchair player is allowed two bounces while the able-bodied player is allowed only one bounce.

It is common for wheelchair tennis players to compete in able bodied leagues and competitions.

NB Esther Vergeer is coached by Sven Groeneveld who is also coach to 2010 ITF World Champion Caroline Wozniacki.

The Future

- Further integration/co-operation with other ITF Departments/Committees/Commissions e.g. Olympics, Sports Science & Medical Commission, Technical, Event Operations, Professional Tennis, Coaches Commission
- Further integration into National Tennis Associations.
- Further integration at all levels of the game – federations, clubs, schools, parks etc.
- Wheelchair tennis broadcast as part of the TV coverage of Grand Slams.
- Wheelchair tennis matches played on show courts at Grand Slams.
- Large numbers of wheelchair tennis players playing integrated competition in tennis leagues.
- A dramatic increase in the number of people with a physical disability who are active through tennis enjoying the social and health benefits with other wheelchair users and able bodied family and friends.

Summary

Wheelchair tennis is tennis. It is not 'adapted'. The court, net height, rackets, are the same. The only major rule difference is that the ball can bounce twice if required.