

United States Tennis Association's American Development Model

Introduction

The United States Tennis Association (USTA) is the national governing body for the sport of tennis and the recognized leader in promoting and developing the sport's growth on every level in the U.S.

The American Development Model (ADM) is a concerted effort between the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC), , and its 50 National Governing Bodies to apply long-term athlete development principles in a way that resonates with the culture of sport in the United States.

Designed to establish **fun** and positive experiences for tennis players, the USTA's ADM offers a comprehensive framework for providers, coaches, athletes, and parents. By growing **friendships**, improving **skills**, and maximizing the potential of players at all levels, this framework will keep more tennis participants playing our sport for a lifetime.

For over a decade, the USTA has been applying the principles of long-term athlete development within Player Development Programming as well as in its delivery of youth programming. Net Generation – the USTA's new youth initiative- now provides the platform for ADM to align all USTA stakeholders under the common objectives of curtailing early specialization, developing multi-sport athletes, and increasing youth physical activity, from both tennis skill development and competitive perspectives.

Coaches, organizers, and teachers can gain access to the expertise of the USTA as they work with leading experts worldwide to develop new play formats, curricula, and digital tools. In doing all of this, the USTA will attract and retain more young participants to tennis. We believe tennis can become the model sport that elicits fun and early engagement, athleticism, and life-long participation, while also providing a pathway to elite tennis for those players who excel in the sport.

The USOPC believes that if all National Governing Bodies incorporate an ADM, the future of America will be positively impacted by:

- Growing both the general athlete population and the pool of elite athletes from which future U.S. Olympians and Paralympians are selected;
- Developing fundamental skills that transfer between sports;
- Providing an appropriate avenue to fulfill an individual's athletic potential;
- Creating a generation that loves sport and physical activity – and one that will transfer that passion on to the next generation.

The physical, emotional, and mental landscape of each stage of an ADM enhances the athlete's overall development while creating positive experiences in sport. A significant component of an ADM is the promotion of multi-sport participation, thereby developing the physical literacy of young athletes, leading into a lifetime of sports activity. The benefits of sports sampling as it relates to tennis are the:

- Development of the ABCs of athleticism: agility, balance, coordination, speed, endurance, and strength;
- Introduction to general movement skills such as balance, anticipation, and hand-eye coordination;
- Development of crossover skills from participation in other sports;
- Avoid early burn out from single sport specialization;
- Increased enjoyment of playing sports;
- Focus on a variety of muscle groups and movement patterns which help prevent overuse injuries;
- Diversity regarding in-season training, warm-up, and cool-down activities, as well as off-season training.

Initial Research

In 2018, the USTA sanctioned the University of Central Florida (UCF) to research the level of loyalty to USTA's competitive products. The objectives were to examine the retention rates of USTA youth competition, understand the reasons and benefits for participating, and define the reasons for withdrawing from competition.

The findings of UCF's research provided the USTA with an understanding of how well the USTA competitive products satisfy the respective needs of players, parents, and coaches. These findings have been taken into consideration in the redesign of the competitive pathway. In particular, these findings provide compelling reasons to fully integrate an ADM into youth tennis.

Key Research Takeaways

The following are key takeaways of UCF's research. Incorporating an ADM into youth tennis will provide:

- A more all-inclusive approach to youth player development and a suitable model for adoption;
- A clear, easy, and consistent competitive pathway for players, parents, and coaches to follow nationwide;
- Enhanced opportunities to broaden the overall accessibility and appeal of youth tennis for increased participation of under-resourced families, underrepresented families, and players from non-tennis families;

- Future communication to parents relating to the developmental pathway for their children;
- The critical role of coaches in generating positive and enriching experiences for long-term player and personal development.

Key Principles of the USTA's ADM

As the USTA refines their Long-Term Athlete Development plan, the ADM will form a critical component in how the USTA embraces core athlete development principles. The long-term goal is for American youth to utilize sport as a path toward an active and healthy lifestyle and create opportunities to maximize their full potential. These key principles, tailored to the sport of tennis, include:

- Universal Access - make sure playing tennis is safe, accessible, local and affordable;
- Developmentally Appropriate Teaching and Coaching Methods - emphasize motor and foundational skills through developmentally appropriate teaching and coaching
- Support Multi-Sport or Multi-Activity Participation – build athletes through a multi-sport approach within tennis programming and cross-promotion with other sports and activities;
- Fun and Athlete-Centered – focus on creating a fun, positive, and engaging atmosphere within a team culture rather than wins and losses;
- Trained Coaches – ensure coaches at all ages levels are qualified and trained;
- Parent/Player guidance, Education and Transparency - provide parents and players the information needed to guide their tennis development;
- A Clear Development Pathway - integrate tennis into physical education programs in schools, recreational community programs, and advance into age- and skill-based programs and competitions.

By following these ADM principles, the USTA can create positive early experiences for all athletes, keep more children engaged in the sport longer, and become the model sport.

Development Stages

The three stages recommended for the USTA's ADM are aligned with the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC). Designed to create a healthy tennis experience these development stages support learning and advancement based on physical, social, mental, and emotional levels of the athlete.

*Number of years of athletic experience for an athlete before and after acquiring a permanent disability per US Paralympics.

Stages	Athlete	Athlete with Disability
Stage 1: Discover & Learn	Age: Entry-11	0-3 years of athletic experience*
Stage 2: Develop & Challenge	Age: 12-18	3-6- years of athletic experience*
Stage 3: Play for Life	Age: 18+	6+ years of athletic experience*

Stages

The ADM’s three stages are designed to create healthy sport experiences and support athlete advancement based on their physical, mental, and emotional level, as well as their potential for growth.

In Stage 1, all participants are engaged with a multi-sport participation focus – having fun, being social, and participating in appealing sports opportunities. This stage avoids traditional terminology such as “recreation” or “competition” to promote the objective of Discover and Learn, instead focusing on physical, social, and basic skill development in fun and engaging settings.

Moving into Stages 2 and 3, the ADM pathway model explains how athletes navigate development and competitive expectations as they journey through a sport. The model references key concepts that the players, coaches, and parents should focus on as players grow and develop in their sport experiences.

Consumers can use the pathway model to understand appropriate developmental stages for athletes based on age, gender, and skill development. The model also provides a recommendation for competition formats based on these same factors, as well as the possible transition to elite performance development if so desired.

Key Definitions

Under each stage, the USTA recommends the following key definitions (the 5 C’s) to provide further understanding to the essence of each stage.

- *Competence*: technical, tactical, and performance skills
- *Confidence*: self-belief, resilience, mental fortitude, and a sense of positive self-worth
- *Character*: respect for the sport and others, integrity, self-discipline, and ethical and moral well-being

- *Connection*: interpersonal skills and the ability to build and sustain meaningful and positive relationships
- *Creativity*: provides a unique and imaginative environment that encourages problem solving and promotes individuality and self-reliance

Developing and emphasizing player and athlete-centered outcomes drive the inclusion of these key definitions, and the foundation originates in the facilitation of Positive Youth Development. The 5 C's are majorly influenced by Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Achievement Goal Theory (AGT), along with a variety of other theoretical and empirical sources, and will be showcased under each stage.

Practice and Play Plans (Curricula)

Under Net Generation and Adult Introduction Programming, curricula have been developed in order to assist providers in facilitating skill development through a fun and engaging environment and promote the best tennis experience possible. These pieces have been put together by subject matter experts with collaboration and engagement in mind. Under the "Competence" heading within each stage, references are made to age-specific curricula that can be used by providers, keeping athlete-centered outcomes in mind.

Training and Competition

Within each stage, training and competition recommendations are provided to safeguard youth from an injury perspective. A significant goal is to prevent early specialization, which lead to increased burnout and dropout rates, less enjoyment, higher rates of injury, social isolation, staleness, physiological imbalances, shortened careers, limited range of motor skills, and decreased participation in sports activities into adulthood.

Inside the Stages

Stage 1: Discover & Learn (Age: Entry – 11 years old)

This is the first step of involvement with sports at a young age or when first introduced to a new sport.

Discovery of sport concepts and the motor skills required are critical to learning how the sport is played. Many skills are transferable between sports, and we encourage tennis program providers to accommodate those who participate in multiple sports. At this early stage, our coaching techniques allow these children to learn the basics of tennis and other activities, including fundamental movement skills, through discovery and exploration.

Age: Entry to 4 years old

With Stage 1 incorporating such a broad age range, suggestive home-based strategies are presented for kids ages entry to 4. The emphasis during this age is the promotion of physical activity and the development of athletic skills to begin building their athletic foundation.

- Run, jump, leap, strike, catch, throw
- Single step commands
- Most activity can take place at home or in a group setting
- Practice and Play Plans
 - Schools: Kindergarten
 - Community: Red C1
 - Coaches: Red Pre Rally
 - Practice: 30 minutes of physical activity every day

Age: 5-11 years old

Competence

- Learn the basic rules of the game and sports techniques
- Develop motor skills that are related to tennis and transfer to other sports
- Emphasis on practice over competition; fun and engaging at local level
- Improve physical literacy - agility, balance, and coordination

Confidence

- Age and stage-appropriate play and competition
- Self-confidence through fun and success.
- Sample different sports through unstructured play
- Positive and supportive kid-centered learning environment
- Learning and achievement is part of the process

Character

- Cultivate a passion for sports and a healthy lifestyle
- Love of learning and creativity
- Understand and respect the rules and sportmanship
- Respect for self and working with others
- Learning to handle concept of winning and losing

Connection (Player, Parent, Coach)

- Foster positive friendship and relationships with others
- Importance of qualified coaches
- Ensure a safe environment for children
- Recognize the importance of growth and development

- Awareness of growth mindset for players, parents, and coaches

Creativity

- Provide learning environment that allows for innovation and kid-centered decisions
- Free play to discover sport and new skills
- Allow children to make decisions on practice and play
- Foster independence- play and practice on their own
- Cooperative style of coaching and teaching

Training and Competition Guidelines

Stage 1: Discover & Learn	Training		Competition	
Entry-11 years old	Practice and Play Plans	Recommended Hours per Week	Recommended days per month	Type of event
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools: Kindergarten K-5 • Community: Red 1-3 • Coaches: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Red PR-1 ○ Orange 3-1 ○ Green 2-1 <p><u>Wheelchair</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community: Red 1-3 • Coaches: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Red PR-1 ○ Orange 2-1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active Participation: 1-3 hrs. a week • Strive to Excel: 3-10 hrs. a week 	Active Participation and Strive to Excel 0-1 day	Net Generation Circuit

Stage 2: Develop & Challenge (Age: 12-18 years old)

The second stage of the development process occurs after an athlete has been involved in tennis and wants to explore more organized training options. It also caters to the individual who is taking up tennis for the first time. This stage focuses on refining the skills needed to be successful in the activity or sport and then furthering skill development through challenges such as recreational competition, organized sports programs, or club participation.

Athlete readiness and motivation determine the choice to pursue the next level in the sport. The second stage may begin earlier for some athletes who are quick to develop physically and mentally. Fun and socialization are still key areas of emphasis in order to encourage future participation and avoid burnout.

Competence

- Developmentally appropriate training and competition
- Ongoing development of agility, balance, endurance, strength, and coordination

- Increased awareness of injury prevention
- Best practices of rest and recovery

Confidence

- Emphasize physical education/skill development, and developmentally appropriate play and competition
- Participate in a fun, challenging, structured, and continuous training and competition program
- Help players define success as more than wins
- Use multiple-sport experiences for cross-sport development
- Ask kids what they want to do

Character

- Emphasize 100% effort and love of the game
- Develop a sense of intrinsic motivation
- Listen to the coach and try multiple solutions
- Develop a sense of responsibility/independence
- Good behavior on and off the court

Connection (Player, Parent, Coach)

- Holistic approach to sport development
- Focus on both individual and team as well as social aspects and fun
- Positive approach to coaching and communication
- Learn to work together with mixed abilities, ages, and genders
- Incorporate character development into training and competition

Creativity

- Participate in multiple sports experiences to promote fitness, and skill development in a fun environment
- Encourage free play to discover new sport and skills
- Provide different experiences (e.g. Field trips- pro events, social events, college matches, social competitions)
- Encourage growth mindset as learning
- Encourage student led practice and play to foster new solutions and ideas

Stage 2: Develop & Challenge	Training		Competition	
12-18 years old	Practice and Play Plans	Recommended hrs. per week	Recommended per month	Type of event
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools: G6-12 • Community: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Orange 2-1 ○ Green 2-1 ○ Yellow 2-1 • Coaches: Yellow 2-1 <p><u>Wheelchair:</u> 3-6 years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community: Orange 1-2 • Coaches: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Orange 1,2 ○ Green 1,2 ○ Yellow 1-2 	Active Participation : 2-6 hrs. a week <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strive to Excel : 10-16 hrs. a week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active Participation: 0-2 hrs. a week. • Strive to Excel: 1-2 tournaments a month, 10-16/year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net Generation Rating and Ranking events • Middle and High School • ITF World Tennis Tour-Junior • ITF World Tennis Tour Men's/Women's

Stage 3: Play for Life (Age: 18+ years old)

At stage three, athletes begin to train and compete in a program that matches their personal interests, goals, and developmental needs. Allowances are also made for individuals that are taking up tennis for the first time with developmentally appropriate practices and play. Competitions become more clearly defined in this process with the potential for new experiences in team selection. Maximizing potential becomes an option for athletes as they start to grasp the commitment necessary for specific sports, and the skill sets needed to excel at the next competitive level.

Technical, tactical, physical, and psycho-social development becomes more important for the athlete at this time. This is also the stage to increase tennis-specific training. Recreation and multi-sport play can continue to be used in a cross-training capacity allowing athletes the opportunity to develop more fully.

Competence

- Participate in more structured individual and team competitions
- Focus on the enjoyment of sport and the health benefits of participation
- Ongoing refinement and development of tennis skills
- Increased focus on performance (sports science) related activities

Confidence

- Be active and involved

- Compete for both the challenge and the fun
- Developmentally appropriate training

Character

- Develop as a person with achievement goals
- Focus on the enjoyment of sport and the health benefits of participation
- All participants become lifelong learners of tennis (sports)

Connection

- Develop relationships through tennis
- Family-based play and competition
- Social team events based on playing level
- Positive coaching
- Local, regional, national, and international based competitions that meet athletes' needs and their competition goals

Creativity

- Development of individualized game style
- Motivation to practice and compete
- Differentiation of the wants and needs of the individual
- Coaching practice adapts to level of player

Stage 3: Play & Compete	Training		Competition	
	Practice and Play Plans	Recommended hrs. per week	Recommended per month	Type of event
18 + years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intro to Adult: Session 1 and 2 • <u>Wheelchair</u>: 6 + • Community: Green 1-2 • Coaches: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Green 1,2 ○ Yellow 1,2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active Participation: Based on needs • Strive to Excel: 15-20 hrs a week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active Participation: Based on needs • Strive to Excel: 25-30 tournaments a year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USTA Adult League and Tournaments • Tennis On Campus • Collegiate • ITF World Tennis Tour Men's/Women's • ATP/WTA Events • Grand Slams

Conclusion

In summary, the ADM will provide a framework to inform tennis providers of best practices as they relate to the social, psychological, and developmental aspects of tennis and provide a foundation that will mature from childhood into adulthood.

The ultimate goal of the ADM is to create positive experiences for American athletes at every level.

Glossary

Physical literacy - The ability, confidence and desire to be physically active for life.

Sport sampling - The process of exposing a child to multiple sports to determine his or her interest level, as well as talents and abilities. Also called sport diversification.

Sport specialization - Year-round intense training, competition and coaching in a single sport at the exclusion of other sports. Specialization before the age of puberty is considered early specialization.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice - Perspective within early childhood education whereby a child's social/emotional, physical, and cognitive development is nurtured. is a perspective within early childhood education whereby a teacher or child caregiver nurtures a child's social/emotional, physical, and cognitive development by basing all practices and decisions on (1) theories of child development, (2) individually identified strengths and needs of each child uncovered through authentic assessment, and (3) the child's cultural background as defined by his community, family history, and family structure.[1]
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Developmentally_appropriate_practice

Self-determination Theory (SDT) - is a theory of motivation that addresses intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. It assumes that people have three primary psychological needs: (a) competence (demonstrating ability or mastery), (b) relatedness (being connected to others), and (c) autonomy (being able to act as an individual), which are nurtured via the social environment. When these needs are met, it is hypothesized that people will function, perform, and grow optimally.

Achievement Goal Theory (AGT) - is a theory of motivation that addresses the development of motivation and accompanying achievement-related behaviors and thought processes. AGT posits that individuals can vary in their orientations to achievement, including adopting task (mastery) and ego (outcome or performance) perspectives, which define the person's criteria of success. An individual's orientation is a function of both internal (e.g., thought processes) and external (e.g., culture or climate of the sport situation) factors, as well as the beliefs of other involved people (e.g., coaches, parents, peers). The orientation adopted then impact behaviors and thought processes in achievement situations. In most cases, a task orientation is most adaptive for youth (and for many skilled performers of all ages, as well), although highly-athletic youth can display adaptive behaviors and cognitions with an ego orientation. Coaches and sport leaders can enhance the experience of all participants by creating mastery climates.

References

Buszard, T., Farrow, D., & Westerbeek, H. (2017). Evaluation of the ITF Tennis Play and Stay Campaign since it's inception in 2007. London, UK: ITF Ltd.

Davies, K.M. (2017). Growing the game, the modified way! *ITF Coaching and Sport Science Review*, 72 (25), 10-11.

Hainline, B. (2012). *Positioning Youth Tennis for Success*. White Plains, NY: USTA.

Holt, N. (2016). *Positive Youth Development through Sport (2nd Ed)* . London: Routledge.

Jayanthi, N., Feller, E., & Smith, A. (2013). Junior Competitive Tennis: Ideal Tournament and Training Recommendations. *Journal Medical Science Tennis*: 18(2).

Knight, C.J., Harwood, C.G., & Gould, D. (2018). *Sport Psychology for Young Athletes*. London: Routledge

Memmert, D. (2015). *Teaching Tactical Creativity in Sport: Research and Practice*. London: Routledge.

The Aspen Institute. (2015). *Sport for All Play for Life: A Playbook to get every kid in the game*. Washington D.C.: The Aspen Institute.

University of Central Florida (2018). *Researching loyalty in the Competitive Junior Tennis Market*. Orlando, Fl. USTA.

United States Olympic Committee (2016). *ADM: Rebuilding athletes in America*. Colorado Springs, CO: USOC.

United States Olympic Committee (2017). *Quality Coaching Framework*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

United States Tennis Association (2006). *The Progressive Development of a High Performance Player*. White Plains, NY: USTA.

Vierimaa, M., Bruner M.W., & Cote, Â., J. (2018). Positive youth development and observed athlete behavior in recreational sport. *PLoS ONE* 13(1): e0191936.