



Making the top 100- ITF top 10 junior transition to top 100 WTA tour (1996 – 2005).

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated transition from a Top 10 ITF Junior rank to Top 100 WTA Tour rank over a ten-year period between 1996 and 2005. It provides an insight into the development variables of ITF junior win: loss ratios, number of junior and ITF Pro-Circuit events played between 14-18 years of age and ranking in the years prior to entering the Top 100. The results of this study can help to establish a range of statistical benchmarks coaches and Federations can use for players aspiring at a professional career on the WTA Tour.

Key words: Player development, Top 100, Womens.

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INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Achieving a Top 100 WTA rank is a significant achievement in men's professional tennis. Much discussion surrounds the path a player and time a player should take in achieving this goal.

There have been a number of studies that have profiled average age of top-ranked male and female tennis players (Tennis Canada, Treleven & Miley). This study investigated transition from a Top 10 ITF Junior rank to Top 100 WTA Tour rank over a ten-year period between 1996 and 2005. It provides an insight into the development variables of ITF junior win:loss ratios, number of junior and ITF Pro- Circuit events played between 14-18 years of age and ranking in the years prior to entering the Top 100. The intended use of this study was to establish a range of statistical benchmarks coaches and Federations can use for players aspiring at a professional career on the WTA Tour.



METHODOLOGY

ITF TOP 10 JUNIOR TO WTA TOP 100 PLAYER PROFILE (1996 – 2005)						
	Average	St d . Dev	Min	Max	Median	
SENIOR PROFILE						
Highest WTA Rank	32.0	22.5	1.0	94.0	29.5	
Age at Highest WTARank	20.9	2.4	16.2	26.8	20.4	
Age at First Year End Rank	16.3	1.3	15.0	19.0	16.0	
Age at Top 100 Rank	19.0	2.5	15.0	27.0	18.0	
Years in Top 100	3.6	2.5	1.0	11.0	3.0	
Transition Time Top 100 (yrs)	3.7	2.0	1.0	9.0	3.0	
W:L Ratio – Career (MD)	1.6	0.7	0.8	4.6	1.5	
- WTA Tour (MD)	1.2	0.7	0.2	4.5	1.0	
- ITF Pro Circuit (MD)	2.5	1.1	0.7	6.5	2.3	
JUNIOR PROFILE						
ITF Junior W:L Ratio	3.6	1.3	1.8	7.8	3.3	
ITF Junior Matches Played	119	32	32	229	111	
ITF Junior Tournaments Played	35	13	10	80	34	
WTA/ITF Pro Circuit Matches Played	125	33	26	240	116	
WTA/ITF Pro Circuit Tournaments Played	50	14.5	6	77	51	
YEARS PRIOR TO TOP 100 RANK						
Average Year End Rank	535	355	196	135	115	90
APPROX. YEAR END RANK	550	350	200	150	125	Top 100

Table 1. Profiles sixty-five* girls who finished with a Top 10 Junior ITF Year End Rank between 1996 – 2005 who have achieved a Top 100 WTA Senior Rank. (MD) = Main Draw. * - Duplicate names removed.

The study's data was obtained from the ITF and WTA Tour websites:

- www.itftennis.com/juniors / www.itftennis.com/mens / www.wtatour.com

Data was collated on players meeting the criteria of:

- Top 10 ITF Junior year-end rank between 1996 – 2005. (90 players*)
- Top 100 WTA Tour Players as at February 2 2009. (100 players)
- Basic statistical measures of mean, median, standard deviation, minimum, maximum, were used to profile players.

* - Duplicate names were removed as players finished in Top 10 for more than one year in a row. Also some players achieved a Top 100 Rank during the calendar year but failed to stay inside the Top 100 at year-end. These players were included in the study and categorised as having achieved a Top 100 WTA Tour rank.

DISCUSSION

Top 10 ITF Junior Circuit Player who achieved Top 100 WTA Tour Rank

Table 1.0 outlines the profile (mean) of a Top 10 ITF Junior Circuit player (1996 – 2005) who achieved a Top 100 WTA Tour rank. Sixty- five (65) players comprised this group after duplicate names were removed as some players finished with Top 10 rank for more than one year in a row.

ITF Junior Circuit Profile

- An average W:L Ratio of 3.6:1 (min 1.8/ max 7.8) was required in the ITF Junior Circuit to achieve a Top 10 year end rank. Players competed in 35 (min 10 / max 80) ITF Junior Circuit events and participated 119 (min 33 / max 229) matches during their junior career.
- Players competed in 50 (min 6 / max 77) ITF Pro Circuit events and participated in 125 (min 26 / max 240) matches between 15 – 18 years.

ITF JUNIOR PROFILE AGE & NUMBER OF EVENTS PER YEAR						
Years	13	14	15	16	17	18
Mean	0	7	11	12	9	5
Std Dev	0	6	6	5	5	5
Min	0	1	1	3	1	1
Max	0	21	24	29	19	17
Median	0	6	11	13	8	2
%	0%	83%	95%	84%	80%	38%

Table 2. The number of ITF Junior events players competed in by age.

Table 2 illustrates the number of ITF Junior events players competed in by age.

- 83% had begun playing by age 14.
- This peaked to 95% at 15 years and dropped to 88% by year 16.
- It continued to fall, with only 88% at 17 years and 38% by 18 years competing on the ITF Junior Circuit.

WTA + ITF PRO CIRCUIT PROFILE AGE & NUMBER OF EVENTS PER YEAR						
Years	13	14	15	16	17	18
Mean	0	0	5	10	14	21
Std Dev	0	0	4	5	6	6
Min	0	0	0	0	0	6
Max	0	0	13	22	26	34
Median	0	0	5	10	15	22
%	0%	0%	86%	94%	100%	100%

Table 3. The number of WTA Tour and ITF Pro Circuit events players competed in by age.

Table 3 above illustrates the number of WTA Tour and ITF Pro Circuit events players competed in by age. 86% had begun playing by age 15. This rose to 94% at 16 years and peaked at 100% by year 17 and 18.

TOURNAMENT PROFILE (ITF JUNIOR & WTA / ITF PRO CIRCUIT) AGE & NUMBER OF EVENTS PER YEAR				
Age Profile	15	16	17	18
Total Events	16	22	23	26
Junior	11	12	9	5
Senior	5	10	14	21
Junior %	67%	55%	39%	19%
Senior %	33%	45%	61%	81%
Est. %	70	55	40	20
	30	45	60	80
15% shift to Seniors from Juniors at year 16 & 17. 20% shift to Seniors from Juniors at year 18.				

Table 4. Combined number of ITF Junior; WTA Tour and ITF Pro Circuit events players competed in by age.

Table 4 below illustrates the combined number of ITF Junior; WTA Tour and ITF Pro Circuit events players competed in by age:

- At age 15, a total of 15 events were played with a 67/33% proportion to Junior circuit.
- By age 16 this had increased to 22 events with a 55/45% split to Junior circuit.

- At age 17, players competed in 23 events with a 39/61% swing towards Senior circuit events.

- By the 18th year, the Top 10 ITF juniors that achieved a Top 100 WTA rank competed in 26 events with a further swing toward Senior circuit events of 19/81%.

ITF Pro Circuit & WTA Tour Profile

- The first ITF Pro Circuit rank was obtained at 16.3 years (min 15.0 / max 19.0) and a Top 100 WTA Tour rank at 19.0 years (min 15.0 / max 27.0). Players remained in the Top 100 for 3.6 years (min 1.2 / max 11.0).

- The highest WTA Tour rank was obtained at age 20.9 (min 16.2 / max 26.8), with a transition time of 3.7 years (min 1.0 / max 9.0). To achieve this the player initially required a W:L Ratio of 2.5:1 (min 0.7 / max 6.5) on the ITF Pro Circuit, then 1.2:1 (min 0.6 / max 4.5) on WTA Tour. A career W:L Ratio of 1.6:1 (min 0.8 / max 4.6) was required.

- The average year-end rank was calculated for up to 5 years from a Top 100 rank. Results are below with an approximate ranking proposed also.

YEARS PRIOR TO TOP 100 RANK	5	4	3	2	1	(0)
Average Year End Rank	535	355	196	135	115	90
Approx. Year End Rank	550	350	200	150	125	Top 100

Table 5. Year-end rank for up to 5 years from a Top 100 rank.

FINDINGS

Analysis of Top 10 ITF Junior Circuit players from 1996 – 2005 who achieved a Top 100 WTA Tour rank in their career, indicated:

(1) 72% of players who achieved a Top 10 ITF Junior rank between 1996-2005 achieved a career high Top 100 WTA Tour Rank.

(2) First ITF Pro Circuit rank achieved at 16.3 years.

(3) Transition time from first year-end rank to Top 100 WTA Tour of 3.7 years at an age of 19.0 years.

(4) Highest WTA Tour rank achieved approximately two years after entering WTA Tour Top 100 at 20.9 years with an average of 3.6 years inside Top 100 rank.

(5) Players competed in 35 ITF Junior Circuit events and participated in 119 matches between age 14-18 years.

(6) Players competed in 50 ITF Pro Circuit / WTA Tour events and participated in 125 matches between age 15 – 18 years.

(7) Career W:L Ratio of 1.6:1 on WTA Tour, 2.5:1 on the ITF Pro Circuit and 3.6:1 on the ITF Junior Circuit.

(8) The above ranking benchmarks could be used as an indicator prior to a Top 100 WTA Tour ranking.

SUMMARY

The best Juniors' over a 10 year period achieved an WTA rank before their 17th birthday and entered the Top 100 WTA Tour, three to four years later before the age of 20 yrs. They competed in over 50 ITF Pro Circuit events between 15-18 yrs while continuing to compete on the ITF Junior Circuit playing 35 events in the same period. They achieved a win:loss ration of over 3:6 in juniors and almost 2:5 in the Pro Circuit. They approximately halved their WTA ranking every second year over 4 years before entering the Top 100.

DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

It is recommended Federations and Coaches create 'Development Schedules' for players which are underpinned by the findings of this study. The cornerstone of a players schedule should be periods of technical, tactical, physical and mental 'development'. Competition plans should be appropriate to the players' stage of development. Performance benchmarks of win:loss ratios and ranking timelines should be used as a guide to a players overall development.

GLOSSARY

- Age at Highest WTA Rank – The chronological of player at time of highest WTA rank.

- Age at First Year End Rank – The chronological age of player at time of ranking.

- Age at Top 100 Rank – The chronological age of player when first Top 100 rank achieved.

- Years in Top 100 – The number of years a player was ranked inside the Top 100 on WTA Tour.

- Transition Time – The number of years taken to achieve Top 100 WTA Tour rank from first year-end rank.

- Win:Loss (W:L) Ratio (MD) – Calculation of Career (ITF Pro Circuit & WTA Tour) win / loss ratio in main draw matches. Breakdown of WTA Tour, ITF Pro Circuit and ITF Junior Circuit.

- ITF Junior Circuit – The world governing body tournament circuit for age 18/U tennis players.

- ITF Pro Circuit (PC) - The world governing body tournament circuit for over 18 yrs. tennis players.

- WTA Tour – The Woman’s Tennis Association professional tournament circuit.

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RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ACADEMY CONTENT (CLICK BELOW)



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