



## Editorial

Luca Santilli & Miguel Crespo

Tennis Development, Development Department, International Tennis Federation, London, UK.

Welcome to issue 89 of the ITF Coaching and Sport Science Review. This issue is the first one of 2023. It is available in the ITF Academy as well as in the new page of the journal, which can be accessed here. This issue covers an interesting variety of topics which include a methodological proposal based on learning – moving and competing and a review on theories of skill acquisition, an article on blind tennis, one study on the maturity status of young players and another on the effects of HIIT training in tennis, a reflection on coach leadership, a contribution that explores the role of storytelling in tennis, and a summary of PAT technology applied to the game, among others.

While ITF2024 sets out the eight strategic priorities for the ITF (Figure 1), the ITF development strategy outlines the specific priorities for growing the game. The current ITF development strategy 2021-24 is a continuation of the previous four-year strategy which describes our vision and mission to increase participation and develop talented players. The strategy continues to provide a clear sense of direction and purpose for development while supporting ITF2024.



Figure 1. ITF2024 eight strategic priorities.

The six strategic pillars set out how the development strategy is being rolled out (Figure 2). They also cover the key areas for growing the game, providing the much-needed structure for National Associations to set their national development goals/objectives. A notable change to the strategic areas was made in 2021 when the coaching pillar was renamed education to better reflect the scope and mission of providing more educational tools and opportunities via the Academy which is the ITF’s bespoke digital education platform for all stakeholders across all areas of the ITF.

## STRATEGIC PILLARS

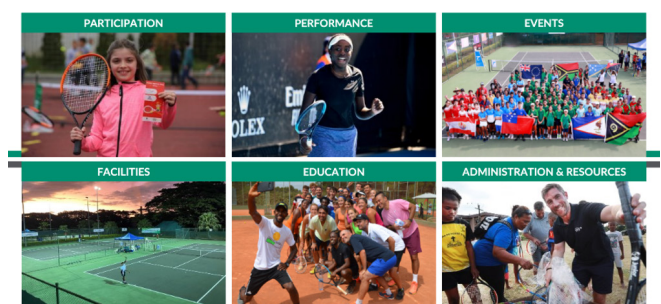


Figure 2. Six strategic pillars of the ITF development strategy.

The nine strategic principles guide the day-to-day work of the development team and stakeholders involved in delivering the strategy (Figure 3). It became evident during the pandemic how important these principles were and still are in directing/supporting development activities globally. Thanks to the effectiveness of these principles and in particular “Technology”, “Engagement”, “Innovation” we were able to take the right decisions since early 2017 and were ready with digital options when the pandemic hit unexpectedly.

## STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES



Figure 3. Nine strategic principles of the ITF development strategy.

Like many other companies, the pandemic has accelerated our digital journey. The ITF Academy is a prime example of that. The ITF Academy and the World Tennis Number are two of our department's most important digital projects, but there are new digital tools to make it easier for National Associations to submit data, but also to manage their own information. COVID-19 was a challenge for everyone and in this demanding environment, the provision of services to the stakeholders was crucial.

Within the strategy area of Education, the ITF Academy was instrumental in ensuring the delivery of education activities didn't stop. We used the ITF Academy to raise the quality of delivery of tennis through the provision of information, education, certification, and professional development to ensure minimum standards are adhered to by the many thousands of deliverers involved and that their skill development is at the heart of what is provided to current and prospective players. The strategy of the ITF Academy, the educational platform of the ITF, its vision and mission fully align with those of the ITF Development Department and the whole company. The principles are a declaration of intent that emphasises the ITF's ambition of being efficient in the delivery of key services to its stakeholders. These services and products allow the member nations to implement a state-of-the-art education system which is sustainable, and evidence based.

In 2017 work started on one of the key projects of the ITF's digital strategy - the ITF Academy. The new library was launched in December 2018, and at the time the ITF had a digital platform (tenniscoach), but it was extremely limited in meeting the department's strategic training objectives. Following months of work - the ITF Academy was fully launched in March 2019 with 1000 library items and 2 online courses, in English only. By the end of the year and the Academy had 4722 registered coaches and 12 nations had signed up to the platform. The KPIs were ambitious but necessary given the anticipated growth of the platform. Face-to-face courses were still being organised, and the ITF remained the most active International Federation in partnership with Olympic Solidarity.

The outbreak of the pandemic demanded an adaptation of this pillar, and the ITF Academy grew rapidly. Content production increased from 11 courses in 2019 to 115 courses by the end of 2020. Courses were offered in four languages and the number of registered users (mostly coaches) grew exponentially to 31,372 coaches from 200 countries by the end of 2020. The adaptation required by COVID-19 produced a considerable growth in the ITF Academy which effectively provided coaches of all levels of expertise with information, education, certification, and continuous professional development. The pillar changed its name from coaching to education, to encapsulate the goal of serving a wider range of stakeholders.

Fast forward to today and certification courses are now being run in a blended format (combination of online and face-to-face learning) with specific emphasis being placed on certifying former players and national team captains this year. In addition to coaches courses we have also launched content for players, parents, managers, and referees and we're gradually adding Wheelchair and Beach tennis content. The constant evolution of the ITF Academy is a clear example of the technological innovation implemented by the ITF to better serve the National Associations.



In 2023 the ITF Academy is the digital tool on which the ITF's entire education strategy is based. All courses are run on a blended-learning basis and more than 100 national associations have signed agreements. To date, more than 90 nations are using the 200 eLearning courses available in 11 languages in the platform as their tool to delivery education and more than 260,000 users from more than 212 countries can benefit from it.

Furthermore, the ITF is pleased to announce that the 2023 ITF World Coaches Conference will take place in Bogota, Colombia from Tuesday 31 October to Thursday 2 November 2023. The event is being organised by the ITF in conjunction with the Colombian Tennis Federation and COSAT. The venue will be the American Club and Hotel Casa Dann in Bogota. The ITF World Coaches Conference is an international coaching conference which regularly attracts over 650 coaches and experts from over 90 different countries around the world. It is the showpiece of the ITF's Coach Education Programme. This 3-day in-person conference returns after a 4-year hiatus and will bring together leading international experts in coach education, player performance and sport science to present on the latest developments in these fields through practical on-court coaching presentations as well as lecture room presentations.

Speakers at previous events have included Grand Slam Champions, touring coaches, and world leading experts such as Alex Corretja, Miles Maclagan, Arantxa and Emilio Sanchez-Vicario, Albert Costa, Wayne Black, and Pat Cash. Keynote speakers at the virtual event in 2021 included Judy Murray (GBR), Paul Roetert (USA), Mark Kovacs (USA), Lucia Jimenez (ESP), Feliciano Lopez (ESP), Machar Reid (AUS), Philipp Born (GER), Jurg Buhler (SUI), Martina Hingis (SUI) and Ruben Neyens (BEL). Further information on the conference programme and hospitality packages will follow in the coming months. Online registration will open by the end of April 2023 and a link will be made available on the ITF website. In the meantime, please follow us on: <https://www.instagram.com/itf.education>; <https://www.facebook.com/ITFTennisAcademy>; [https://twitter.com/ITF\\_Education](https://twitter.com/ITF_Education).

As you are aware, increasing participation for all is one of the two objectives within the ITF Development Strategy. This has not changed since the Strategy was first implemented in 2017. Within our strategy, the importance of being more data-driven to monitor and measure the implementation of the activities was required, thus the need to generate a

more robust understanding of the global landscape of tennis. Through a coordinated membership survey with 195 nations during 2018, the first edition of the ITF Global Tennis Report (the “GTR”) was published in 2019. This report was described as a “game-changer for our sport” and never previously had we been able to present such a complete picture of the sport. The report highlighted our sport as gender equal, not just at the professional level but clearly at the recreation level too, with a 53/47 split across the 87-million people who play at least once per year.

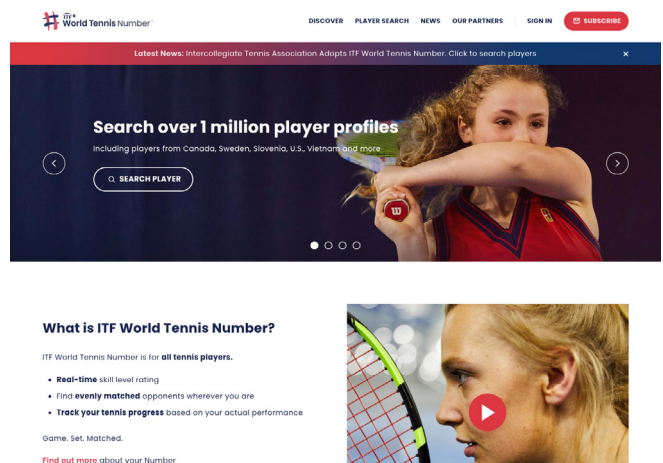
The GTR insight allowed us to establish a benchmark to set a clear strategic direction for participation – target 120-million players globally by 2030, an increase of over 30 million (known as “30by30”). This target was presented during the second ITF World Participation Conference (the “WPC”), held in London with 65 different National Associations represented creating a conversation about participation growth and sharing of best practice. Four editions of the WPC have now been organised, reaching representatives from all over the world from the ITF member nations. The next WPC will be held in 2024.

We are aware that the pandemic catalysed a somewhat greater interest and growth in tennis worldwide. Tennis was positioned as one of the safest activities to participate as research at the time suggested and as restrictions to social activities lifted globally, this offered a chance for many to return or try the sport for the first-time. This was further evidenced in our second published GTR in 2021, which indicated that there had been a 4.5% growth in total players in 2020 - a positive step towards our 30by30 target. The report also showed the resilience and the opportunities from being involved in our sport despite these difficult times and the challenges presented by Covid-19. The next GTR is planned to be published in 2024.

Our largest annual investment into the grassroots of the game is through the ITF’s Junior Tennis Initiative - the “JTI”. The JTI supports 142 active nations, and in 2022 5,350 deliverers provided opportunities for 250K young people to be introduced to tennis for the first time within the 3,000 Primary School and tennis club environments. This focused investment in the JTI will continue through 2023 as more National Coordinators and their deliverers are provided with the opportunities to attend the 2023 ITF World Coaches Conference. The ITF have made it imperative that all National Coordinators involved in delivering their national junior programme attain a basic level of understanding through completing a set of online courses via the ITF Academy. This has enabled a minimum foundation level of delivery is operated globally in the JTI.

In the recent years as normality has returned across the world, the ITF has encouraged all active JTI nations to organise Tennis Festivals, reducing all barriers of entry for people to experience tennis for the first time and providing them follow up playing to be retained in the sport. All National Associations and their deliverers are encouraged to open tennis up to more people in existing tennis venues and/or new locations – and research tells us that the less barriers there are in place, the more new people are to experience the sport in a positive manner, for example, offering free entry, providing equipment to use on site and having someone to play during their festival, such as a coach.

We have embedded key strategic principles such as technology and innovation across the engagement within the nations. The ITF has also fully digitalised the JTI, through its online reporting platform where all nations must report on their activities delivered and so that insight can be tracked against the investment across the work through the programme. All National Coordinators are regularly updated and are provided an online forum to meet the ITF in the ten different regional areas overseen by our ITF Development Officer network. Our JTI equipment distribution is becoming more digitally orientated and customised - his is to ensure a more efficient and environmentally sustainability-focused distribution of tennis equipment globally to support the nation’s junior development programmes.



The ITF World Tennis Number (WTN) project progress has been constant throughout 2022 and 2023. With many nations, regional associations and ITF sharing data and innovation for a common good for tennis. In recent months we have also seen some important milestones including Intercollegiate Tennis making WTN its exclusive rating and great progress in Asia, receiving complete match datasets for the Asian Tennis Federation and India Tennis Association Along with Singapore, Hong-Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Jordan, UAE, Japan, and China, This is an important opportunity for future tennis development in this region.

The ITF World Tennis Number is truly a global product. Malaysia launched in December, we integrated directly with a new local 3rd Party software provider to share data and create WTNs. The Egyptian database had names in Arabic, which ITF translated using ITF software to match to Egyptian players records in other databases. Tennis New Zealand is the first nation in Oceania to launch in and a nation with plans to use WTN in several different ways, including in tournaments, to create rankings and new leagues.

The whole project is founded on safe, secure and efficient data collection. Tournament Desk the tournament management system rolled out at very competitive costs for the ITF NAs by ClubSpark has had lots of encouraging interest. This will enable federations to both seamlessly supply results and utilise ratings in their national tournaments. The idea of a consistent data ecosystem for tennis has been extended to other software pioneers such as Tournament Software in Europe and Tennis Integrado in South America.

The global rating is now very much live with a central database and systems managed by ITF alongside NAs and RAs. 1.5 million player profiles are available on [worldtennisnumber.com](http://worldtennisnumber.com) website. These are freely available to players. Registrations and the ability to self-submit results will be made available with selected national associations to recreational players in 2023. The Database has 22 million match records from 45 Federations including Grand Slam tournaments and down to Local Leagues. ITF WTNs have been used as acceptance criteria in Juniors and Masters Tours from April 2022. ITF is collecting data directly from multiple Technical Partners and from the new Tournament Desk system. To find out more about ITF World Tennis Number please visit [www.worldtennisnumber.com](http://www.worldtennisnumber.com)

From an overall development perspective, our aim this year is to fully return to tennis across all our six strategic pillars and ensure we utilise effectively the entire 2023 budget to increase the number and standard of players across the six

regions. Over the next few months, we have very ambitious objectives and KPIs to meet as well as bespoke digital products to improve and roll out along with some exciting tennis projects to drive.

We do hope that what we have shared in this article shows how the ITF is thinking creatively about how to get more people involved in our sport. Most of all we look forward to working and supporting our member nations as you embark on your digitalisation journey so that we can reach and engage with the millions of tennis players that are not yet known to us and thus create opportunities for all involved.

We would also like to encourage new submissions to the ITF CSSR through the new platform. Finally, we would like to thank all the authors for their contributions, as well as all of those who sent in proposals. Full guidelines for acceptance and publication of articles can be found in the most recent issue page on the ITF Academy. We hope that you enjoy reading the 89th edition of the ITF Coaching and Sport Science Review.

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