



The great opportunity of university tennis in the USA.

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the great opportunity of American collegiate tennis; it provides all the necessary information to understand the American system and the process to follow in order to get a tennis scholarship. Beginning with the requirements a player must comply with, in order to compete in university tennis, and then the different options throughout the different organizations, this article includes all you need to know in order to apply for a scholarship and how to study and play at an American university. It also includes a list of ATP players who have played American university tennis before becoming professional players, since there are an increasing number of players that experience NCAA tennis.

Key words: University tennis, Scholarships, NCAA

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INTRODUCTION

American universities represent a great option for hundreds of tennis players all over the world. They offer a number of benefits that cannot be found anywhere else in the world. Tennis players who play at American Universities can play top level tennis while studying at the university at the same time, training and studying every day and competing during the academic year representing the university. These tennis players end up with a university degree, learn to speak perfect English, get a several year international experience, and high level scholarships to cover most of their expenses in the US.

There are over 1,000 universities with male and female tennis teams, and great differences between one university and another. ITF or ATP ranked players usually end up in the best NCAA Universities where the training structure is almost professional, with several coaches, nutritionists, physiotherapists, and a good budget for coaching and travelling. Other universities are not that good and their facilities are not that good either, but tennis players train daily with 8 team mates and travel to regional or national competitions representing the university.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS TO OBTAIN A TENNIS SCHOLARSHIP?

Tennis players who would like to get a tennis scholarship and continue with their academic and athletic development at an American university will have to meet a number of personal, academic and athletic requirements in order to comply with all the existing rules in university sport and in order to get multiple options for their future in the US:

- To have a national or international ranking with the greatest number of competitions and results possible.
- To be an amateur tennis player who has not collected any money nor signed professional contracts.
- To have finished secondary school in their country of origin without having repeated a course.



- To have started university in the US just after having finished secondary school.
- To have passed.
- To complete American admission tests, SAT for American selection, and TOEFL, a test of English as a foreign language.

HOW TO MAKE THE BEST DECISION EACH TIME

Each case is different and each player has to ask himself a number of questions before beginning the process in order to understand his/ her sport, academic and financial objectives. Some tennis players want to make a leap into professional tennis after finishing university, so, it is a must to find a university in which tennis is played at top level and coaches are acknowledged as good coaches. Still, many players want to use their talent for tennis to enter the best universities from the academic point of view, where they can continue playing tennis and where tennis is the door to top quality education. Financial targets depend on the family budget for the American adventure, since low income families have to accept any university that offers a high scholarship while others would rather make an investment in order to go to a better tennis or academic university.

Once the players understand their situation and personal objectives, they start communication with the universities and start receiving information from coaches to decide which programmes and which institutions meet their requirements. They neglect those that do not and focus on those universities that meet the objectives necessary for a future in the USA. University search process can last between 6 and 18 months. It is important to take the time to meet the academic requirements and to be within the coaches' radar when they start offering the scholarships available.

TENNIS SCHOLARSHIPS

American university tennis scholarships cover most of the expenses in the US, coaching, travel and material to train and compete. The scholarships range between 40% and 100% depending on different factors, and these scholarships are destined to cover academic fees, study materials, lodging and meals. Very few students get full scholarships since coaches have to allocate the scholarships available among team players. For women, things are different since there are more scholarships and most girls get full scholarships to fund their education in the US during all four years of their careers.

Number of universities with tennis teams

950 universities have tennis teams for young men and over 1,100 for young ladies, all of them competing in different organizations in the USA (NCAA, NAIA, NJCAA). Not only is there a greater number of universities with women teams, but

there are also more scholarships, particularly at the NCAA Division I in which most women tennis players have scholarships to cover all their expenses.

MEN'S TENNIS	UNIVERSITIES	SCHOLARSHIPS
NCAA DI	263	4.5 per team
NCAA DII	161	4.5 per team
NCAA DIII	314	0 per team
NAIA	92	5 per team
NJCAA	120	5 per team
Total	950	
WOMEN'S TENNIS		
NCAA DI	320	8 per team
NCAA DII	212	6 per team
NCAA DIII	361	0 per team
NAIA	110	5 per team
NJCAA	141	5 per team
Total	1,144	

Ivy League Universities (8 highly rated universities) in Division I and all universities in Division III do not have sport scholarships but they do give other academic scholarships that reduce the total cost of education at these institutions. These universities are recommended for tennis players with high academic profile and a high income.

As to Junior Colleges (NJCAA) there are many options with different regulations for the different regions all over the country. In California, Junior Colleges cost less than \$15,000, but they are not allowed to give sport scholarships. Other Junior College Universities with similar costs do have scholarships but they can only have a limited number of international players in their teams (2). One of the advantages of Junior Colleges, apart from the cost, is that admission requirements are less demanding than at NCAA or NAIA, so, they are the right alternative for some athletes who after 2 years can go to 4 year universities with a higher sport and academic reputation and get sport scholarships.

AN INCREDIBLE OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN'S TENNIS

Women's tennis is the sport that offers more benefits to international players and one of the sports with more foreign players competing in American university sport. Any player with good national ranking or international experience will have the opportunity to play at a Division I university (as long as she meets the personal and academic requirements). This will imply full scholarship for all 4 years, for all coaching, competition, lodging and education expenses in the US. However, the transition to WTA has proved to be more complicated. A recently published article in the New York Times called "Path to Pros in Tennis Rarely Crosses Campus", highlights how few

women have managed to enter the professional tour. In fact, there are no WTA top 100 players who have played university tennis but there are 5 players among the top 200 and some more with a lower WTA ranking (Source:).

On the other hand, the male system has successfully produced ATP players. Tennis players who have passed through American university tennis (Source: www.collegetennisonline.com).

01 January 2013 ATP Ranking				
NAME	AGE	UNIVERSITY	RANKING	BEST RANKING
John Isner	27	Georgia	13	9
Kevin Anderson	26	Illinois	36	28
Benjamin Becker	31	Baylor	65	38
Michael Russell	34	Miami	92	60
Jesse Levine	25	Florida	104	69
James Blake	32	Harvard	124	4
Rajeev Ram	28	Illinois	131	78
Ryan Sweeting	25	Florida	144	64
Bobby Reynolds	30	Vanderbilt	151	63
Steve Johnson	22	USC	175	165
Rhyno Williams	21	Tennessee	194	190
Arnau Brugués-Davi	27	Tulsa	198	135

01 January 2013 ATP Ranking - Doubles				
NAME	AGE	UNIVERSITY	RANKING	BEST RANKING
Mike Bryan	34	Stanford	1	1
Bob Bryan	34	Stanford	2	1
Robert Lindstedt	35	Pepperdine	8	5
Mahesh Bhupathi	38	Ole Miss	11	1
Jean-Julien Rojer	31	UCLA	13	13
Marcin Matkowski	31	UCLA	16	7
Scott Lipsky	31	Stanford	25	24
Treat Huey	27	Virginia	36	35
Eric Butorac	31	Gustavus Adolphus	39	17
Dom Inglot	26	Virginia	40	40
Rajeev Ram	28	Illinois	44	33
Ken Skupski	29	LSU	52	44
James Cerretani	31	Brown	63	45
Andre Begeman	28	Pepperdine	64	70
Frank Moser	36	VCU	68	47
Johan Brunstrom	32	SMU	73	31
Robert Farah	25	USC	74	58

Table 3. ATP Men's Ranking for singles and doubles.

CONCLUSION

No doubt, the American system offers plenty of opportunities to train in a professional environment playing against good level players. It also offers the opportunity to study in one of the best places in the world, with over 1,500 universities to choose from.



According to the list of professional players who have studied in the US, the system does not prevent players from meeting their athletic targets, since the system gives them the possibility of choosing a study based career or make their dreams come true on the ATP/WTA tour. However, it is necessary to be careful when applying for a university, particularly when complying with all the regulations existing in the United States.

It is also important to choose very well among all the existing options, knowing that many universities and tennis programmes are very different in terms of the level of their players, the knowledge of the coach, the sport and academic facilities and the scholarships they offer. Therefore, the decision should be made on the basis of professional, parental or coach advice, considering the personal, academic and sports objectives of the players. The American system offers the American adventure to hundreds of players from all over the world who can benefit from an experience that is unique in the world.

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RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ACADEMY CONTENT (CLICK BELOW)



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