



Editorial

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Welcome to issue 91 of the ITF Coaching and Sport Science Review. This issue is the last 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 includes contributions from researchers and experts from all over the world that share their articles related to a variety of topics which include: the ITF WTN, tennis development at ground level, parent attitudes in tennis, public relations in college tennis, biomechanics and skill phases, the benefits of hitting against the wall, and the consequences of the changes made to the pro tennis tour, among others. This editorial will share the activities that the ITF Development Department has implemented throughout 2023 in the different pillars of its strategy.

In the education pillar, close to 600 coaches from 84 nations took part in the first ITF World Coaches Conference in South America in 16 years at the start of November.

The event, held in Bogota, Colombia on 31 October – 2 November saw 58 keynote and workshop speakers impart their knowledge and experience to 587 registered attendees in the first in-person event of its kind since 2019. The conference was themed around the concept of player-centred coaching – a crucial approach in nurturing the next generation of players in placing the player at the forefront of the coaching process, adapting and tailoring instruction to meet their individual needs, aspirations, and unique journey in the world of tennis. In a positive step forward for the event, 33 per cent of the speakers at the 2023 ITF World Coaches Conference were female – including the likes of Brazilian Billie Jean King Cup captain Roberta Burzagli. The ITF is committed to further building on this in the years to come. The biennial conference has been held on 23 occasions since its inaugural staging in Florida in 1982 and continues to provide huge value to participants from across the globe.

The event provided an optimal environment for a memorable interaction between all attendees. After the COVID pandemic, it was observed that the coaches wanted to physically see each other face to face again and share their experiences and knowledge after a period of great challenges. The feedback received to date has been extremely positive as the event has helped inspire and motivate coaches to continue providing the best tennis experience for all their players.

By year end, a total of 65 ITF-supported in-person courses will have been organised by 53 National Associations, as well as one virtual Play Tennis tutor training course for coaches in West & Central Asia. The in-person courses followed the standard ITF syllabi for ITF Play Tennis, Coaching Beginner and Intermediate



Players, Coaching Advanced Players courses and Coaching High-Performance Players courses. Within these figures, fifteen courses were funded by Olympic Solidarity (OS) of which nine were Regional Technical Courses for Coaches, enabling regional coaches to travel to the following nations to train alongside other coaches: Argentina, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Hong Kong, Kenya, North Macedonia, Trinidad, Uzbekistan, and Zimbabwe.

Another key educational programme is the OS Scholarships for Coaches. This year the OS Scholarship programme in Valencia focused on the delivery of the ITF Coaching Advanced Players (CAP) course for former players. In total 21 candidates attended the online delivery of the course, while 19 attended the residential and assessment weeks during May to June conducted in English and Spanish.

The ITF is also taking part in the Women in Sport High Performance Pathway (WISH Programme). The WISH Programme has been developed in cooperation with the IOC/Olympic Solidarity, ASOIF, AIOWF and several International Federations already engaged in projects to increase opportunities and pathways for high performance women coaches. The programme runs over 21 months and allows women who are involved or have the potential to be involved in elite coaching, to access leadership training, leadership mentoring and complementary sport-specific training led by the IF and with the engagements of the National Olympic Committees. To date the ITF has supported seven candidates to take part in this programme.

The ITF Academy, the ITF's education digital platform, continues its growth. ITF Data Sharing Agreements (DSAs) have been sent to 115 NAs who agreed to an ITF Academy NA package, of which 101 have activated their packages and are actively using the

platform to host national certification courses and education workshops or webinars. At the time of writing, the ITF Academy has more than 330,000 users of which over 96,500 are registered users who have access to more than 235 eLearning courses available in up to 12 languages. Over the past six months, more than 3.3 million page-views were recorded, with users spending an average of 22 minutes per session, browsing an average of 18 pages. The Library (former iCoach) content has also increased with more than 1,800 content items currently available online with the World Coaches Conference content to be added over the coming weeks.

In April 2023, the ITF Club Management course was launched while in June and November, the ITF Play Beach Tennis pilot certification course, delivered through the ITF Academy, took place in Brazil and Thailand. Since the start of 2023, eLearning courses for Wheelchair, Officiating, Safeguarding, Integrity, and the World Tennis Tours have been published.

Another programme that is conducted together with OS is the Development of a National Sport System (DNSS). The DNSS project in Bahrain concluded in April 2023. Ongoing DNSS projects include Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Turkmenistan. DNSS allows National Olympic Committees (NOCs) to put into place a medium or long-term action plan to develop and strengthen their basic coaching structures and related sport systems.

Finally, the data from the ITF programme that recognises the Coach Education Systems of National Associations, indicate that to date, six nations have had their coach education system recognised by the ITF in 2023, while four are in progress. There are now 73 nations in total of which 18 are recognised at Gold, 11 at Silver, 23 at Bronze and 21 at White level.

As relates to the administration and resources pillar, the ITF Development department is organising regular specific and plenary meetings with the six Regional Associations to ensure continuous alignment on strategic priorities and effective project implementation. Coordination of the 2023 regional development calendar has also been a focus for discussion so that the department can ensure resources are allocated accordingly.

The 10 Development Officers have resumed their extensive, pre-pandemic travel schedules. The expertise, guidance and support they provide is invaluable to the successful implementation of the development strategy globally. They are the fundamental link between the nations, regions, and the ITF, conducting visits and implementing projects as ITF experts across all six pillars of the ITF Development Strategy.

Furthermore, towards the end of the year, the ITF will be asking its stakeholders to complete a short survey on the current 2021-2024 ITF Development Strategy. The information collected will be presented to the ITF Development Advisors and it will be used to inform the new 2025-2028 ITF Development Strategy.

In the facilities pillar, the application process for facility grants was changed last year so that National Associations can apply at any time during the year. The facility grant panel assesses applications as part of a rolling programme, allowing National Associations to spend more time on their submission without the pressure of a deadline. Since the new application process was launched, Bhutan, Cuba, Guam, and Jordan have all been awarded funding by the facility grant panel to improve existing facilities. The Development Officers are on hand to support National

Associations throughout the process and to introduce them to the ITF's official preferred court supplier California Sports Surfaces, for technical advice and to deliver facility projects.

National Training Centre (NTC) Recognition & Support has been identified as a priority programme for the Department and the target for 2023 is to have 20 more facilities recognised. The more nations that can provide a quality daily training environment for their players, the greater the chance more athletes will continue their journey up the player pathway. In early 2023, Lithuania was recognised at the Silver level, and Qatar achieved Bronze recognition while a further 22 National Associations have submitted their applications and have started the recognition process. The White recognition level, which was introduced in 2023 has been extremely well received, representing 72% of the new applications received.

In the participation pillar, the ITF supports 145 National Associations that are involved in the ITF Junior Tennis Initiative (JTI). Guinea Conakry from Africa, and Poland from Europe, became active nations for the first time in 2023 while Portugal rejoined the programme. Support for nations is in the form of financial assistance to subsidise an appointed National JTI Coordinator; donated ITF-branded equipment; as well as access to the ITF Academy, the ITF JTI online reporting platform, the ITF Toolkit, the ITF Tennis Festivals app, and guidance from the ITF Development Officers. The reporting process is critical, not only for monitoring and measuring the impact of the JTI, but also assessing the return on investment. All active JTI nations have been onboarded to the new reporting platform which provides nations with a digital footprint at grassroots level. The platform is also a national database of all venues and deliverers (schoolteachers and tennis coaches) involved in the national programme and provides insight on all the development activity and competitions organised. Report forms are available in 19 different languages and once submitted can be reviewed by the respective National JTI Coordinator using in-built analytics to see the progress being made, while a sophisticated assessment tool allows the ITF Development Officers to focus on the micro-level insight to identify areas for improvement.

Following a thorough review process, the ITF is developing a new equipment distribution platform for active JTI nations to access and order their respective equipment allocation annually. The new system will be available from 2024 and will allow for more customised shipments to be distributed to active JTI nations, whilst being more cost efficient and sustainable. During this review, the ITF has continued to support all active JTI nations with ITF-branded equipment, as well as grants for nations to purchase equipment locally. The ITF Development Officers continue to meet regularly with their respective National JTI Coordinators, organising regional conference calls - a process that has been in place since the start of the pandemic and has proved a positive addition for engagement across the JTI. The ITF is ensuring that all National Coordinators have access to continuous professional development and will be hosting a face-to-face global workshop for them to attend prior to the ITF World Coaches Conference in Bogotá, Colombia. Through the ITF Academy, all National Coordinators must complete four courses online: 'Understanding the JTI', 'Tennis Festivals', 'Safeguarding in Tennis' and new for 2023 the 'ITF Coaching Beginner and Intermediate Players Course - Introduction to competition'. No assistance is provided unless these pre-requisites are met, and the respective online JTI reports have been validated.

For the past few years, the ITF has been encouraging all active JTI nations to organise tennis festivals as the first introduction for many people to start playing tennis - particularly young people in schools and within the community. Earlier this year, the ITF published an ITF Tennis Festivals app on the Apple App Store to support their efforts and invited several nations to start using it. The ITF will use the feedback received from these nations to support the development of the next phase of the project. The ITF recommends that all National Associations encourage their tennis venues and deliverers to consider organising Tennis Festivals, or similar events, to provide free first-time playing opportunities to as many different people as possible. It is imperative that all participants at the Tennis Festivals know or be aware of when they can next play tennis and to ensure a positive retention from their first experience.

The first version of the National Association Development Framework for tennis has been shared with the initial contributing National Associations. The Framework has been devised following consultation with leaders in participation and performance from 25 nations and conducted by a team of researchers from Victoria University, on behalf of the ITF. The purpose of the project is to create an evidence-based framework for nations to compare and benchmark their current national delivery structures and operations to make improvements for the future. These nations are piloting the framework so that the ITF can refine the model. The tool will be accessible online for all to nations to use.

A new online platform will be available in late-2023 to collate insights on national tennis landscapes directly from all National Associations. This insight will be analysed and then published within the next ITF Global Tennis Report during the second half of 2024.

As per the events pillar, with tennis returning to pre-pandemic levels, of the 51 junior development events planned for 2023, 30 have taken place to date with all remaining events scheduled to be executed. Five 14 & under regional events funded by the Grand Slam Player Development Programme (GSPDP) will be held in 2023 providing more competitive opportunities in Asia, Africa, Central America and the Caribbean, South America, and Pacific Oceania.

At the time of writing, all 19 regional qualifying events have taken place across five regions. Turkmenistan played host to the Central Asia qualifying event in June, which attracted daily crowds of up to 4,000 people and the opening ceremony was broadcast live on national TV. The five regional finals are scheduled to be held between July and October.

Finally, as related to the performance pillar, in 2023, \$1.21 million is being provided as Grand Slam Player Grants to 51 players from 32 countries including two grants of \$50,000 to Juncheng Shang (CHN) and Victoria Jimenez Kasintseva (AND) who are just 18 and 17 years old respectively. Several 2023 player grant recipients achieved historic firsts this year including Rodrigo Pacheco Mendez from Mexico who became the first player from the Central American and Caribbean to reach the junior world No.1 spot since the rankings were combined in 2004 after winning a J500 in Milan. In June, Juan Carlos Prado Angelo made history for Bolivia after becoming the first player from his nation to reach a Grand Slam boys' singles final at the Roland Garros Junior Championships. Lucciana Perez Alarcon from Peru reached the girls' singles final at Roland Garros, becoming the first Peruvian girl to reach a Junior Grand Slam final and less than a month later she was making history again when she became the first girl from Peru to win a Junior Grand Slam match at Wimbledon since 1989.

At the time of writing, 37 of the 51 grant recipients (73%) have seen their rankings progress to date, during the 2023 season.

Nine International Touring Teams funded by the Grand Slam Player Development Programme (GSPDP) were planned for 2023 with four travelling in the first half of the year and the remaining five teams being organised between August and December. Highlights to date include Iliyan Radulov (BUL) who as a member of the 18 & Under team to Australia, reached the quarterfinals of the boys' singles event at the Australian Open Junior Championships while on the B team tour to Europe, Elizara Yaneva (BUL) won two J200 events in Italy and fellow teammate Nicolai Budkov Kjaer (NOR) won a J200 and a J300 event in Italy. As a member of the 18 & Under A team to Europe, Iliyan continued his winning ways on grass, reaching the finals of the J300 in Roehampton and the quarterfinals of Junior Wimbledon.

A highlight of the regional touring teams calendar funded by the GSPDP are the five 14 & Under teams that travel to Europe each year to complete in five tournaments in France, Germany, and Belgium. This year sees 43 players and 11 coaches from five regions travelling to Europe to take part in the tour with several players also being involved in the World Junior Tennis finals in Prostejov.

On January 30, the Africa Regional Training Centre (ARTC) officially opened with 14 full-time players (eight girls and six boys) from eight nations. Players have access to eight onsite hard courts, a fully refurbished fitness room, an onsite classroom, and three clay courts at a nearby facility. Since the Centre opened, players have competed in more than twenty events. Centre and player KPIs have been established and first half reports have been distributed to key stakeholders.

A new talent identification and development programme, the Road to Dakar 2026,

funded by Olympic Solidarity was launched this year in Africa with Kenya, Senegal, South Africa, and Togo being identified and approved to be part of the programme. The long-term goal of the programme is to increase the representation (on merit) of African players in the Dakar 2026 Summer Youth Olympic Games; the 2028 LA Olympics; and the 2032 Brisbane Olympics. Talent identification camps and competitions that have been held by the four nations, with a total of 180 players participating of which 78 players have been identified to start full-time high-performance training programmes in 2023.

The ITF continues to successfully roll out the ITF World Tennis Number (WTN) product with the aim to build a large, engaged community of global players in all nations of the world.

A large and accurate database containing 25 million match records from 70 nations is used to power both a singles and a doubles algorithm that updates globally on each Wednesday of each week.

In January 2023, the Intercollegiate Tennis Association adopted ITF World Tennis Number as its exclusive rating. The WTN and Team WTN is now seen on rosters and player profiles for all US College players.

Alongside the WTN is a programme to bring data consistency, quality, and the best digital tools to all the ITF National Associations. Creating this ecosystem will have long term benefits to tennis as a leading digital sport.

To find out more about ITF World Tennis Number please visit www.worldtennisnumber.com

We hope that you have found this editorial article useful. Its intention has been to present some of the activities that the ITF is implementing to develop tennis worldwide.

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 91st edition of the ITF Coaching and Sport Science Review.

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