

Long Term Player Pathway Guidelines for Juniors.



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Our Vision:

To see someone playing tennis, somewhere, every day.

Our Mission:

To enhance the quality of life for all South Africans of any age group, by growing the sport of tennis at every level, for everyone who wants to become involved.

Our Values:

Transparency,
Personal Accountability &
Sportsmanship.



What is a long-term player pathway?

A long-term player pathway is a systematic approach to maximize potential and increase the enjoyment of participants and athletes in our sport. It provides a framework for developing physical literacy, physical fitness and competitive ability, using a stage-by-stage approach.

The TSA player pathway outlines an optimal development plan based on growth, development and maturation for all individuals to participate in tennis and focuses on six training modes or stages along that pathway.

This document has been developed to ensure South African players, parents and coaches have a clear understanding of the six training models/stages as well as the competencies required for players aged 9 -12 years, 12- 15 years and 15 – 18 years – with a special focus on the U12 – U16 age groups.

The guiding principles of this long-term player pathway document are:

- In tennis specialisation is not really recommended younger than 10 years of age. This is to prevent a possibility of long-term injury and/or burn out.
- It takes between 8 and 12 years of training for athletes to reach elite levels of performance in four key areas: Mental, Technical, Tactical and Physical.
- Physical, Mental, Cognitive and Emotional Development must all be considered holistically. Coaches, parents and administrators must understand that physical; mental; motor and emotional traits all develop at different rates. All aspects of the program must consider the whole athlete, and not focus only on the technical and physical aspects of the sport.
- Good planning is critical for the overall development of the player. Coaches and parents need to review the overall calendar to schedule proper training and recovery to allow quality competition. This will optimise player development.

Tennis South Africa would like to acknowledge the contribution of the following key individuals who have made this document possible – in alphabetical order: Jeff Coetzee, Andre de Beer and Allan Karam.

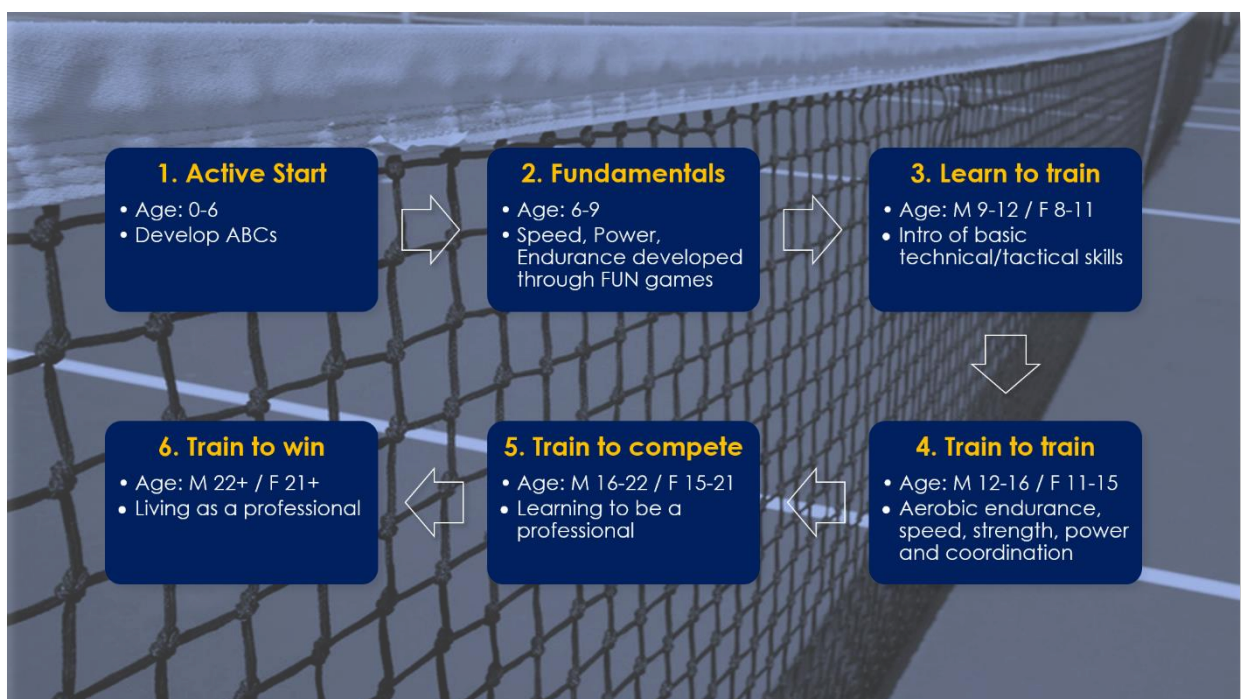


Overview of the player pathway

There are six key training models or stages along the long-term play pathway. They are as follows:

Model/Stage	Age range	Focus areas
1. Active Start	0-6 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop ABC's: Agility, Balance, Co-ordination • Developing ball skills and co-ordination skills • Encourage participating in daily physical activity.
2. Fundamentals	6-9 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall development of the athlete's physical capacities and fundamental movement skills • Develop ABC's of athleticism • Participation in many sports encouraged • Introduction of fun based organised competition • Speed, Power, Endurance are developed by using FUN games.
3. Learn to train	Male 9-12 Female 8-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intro of basic technical/tactical skills • Warm-up & cool-down rituals essential: good habits!! • Stretching, hydration, nutrition, recovery & mental reparation • Training to competition ratio: 80/20 *80% training (including physical work) to 20% competition.
4. Train to train	Male 12-16 Female 11-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of aerobic endurance • Development of speed • Strength and power training • Coordination – continuing to improve coordination • Flexibility

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
5. Train to compete	Male 16-22 Female 15-21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Learning to be a professional</u> • Periodisation with short and long-term goals • Valid fitness testing is essential • Well balanced training program (Tennis and Fitness). • Emphasis on long term development over short-term results continues to be the focus.
6. Train to win	Male 22+ Female 21+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Living as a professional</u> • Correct tournament planning with training blocks • Training may be surface specific • Well balanced training program (tennis and fitness). • With results becoming more important, it is essential that athletes continue to focus on performance goals in competition. <p><u>Emphasis on maintenance during tournaments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize Speed & agility • Emphasize strength & flexibility • Emphasize maintaining endurance.





Focusing on the pathway for U12 – U16

Overview

Weekly training hours – Guidelines:	
U/12:	60-65% or 10-12 hours tennis 30-35% or 5-7 hours non-tennis Physical Activity Time (PAT)
Age 12 & 13:	60-70% or 12-14 hours tennis 30-40% or 6-7 hours non-tennis PAT
Age 14, 15 & 16:	60-70% or 14-18 hours tennis 30-40% or 6-7 hours non-tennis PAT

Physical Conditioning for 14 & under players:

- Flexibility, Stability, Coordination
- Fundamental movements
- Explosive power
- Upper body strength and lower body strength
- Speed
- Endurance: Aerobic (longer duration) and Anaerobic (shorter duration – hard running.)

Growth and maturation:

- Be sensitive for peak growth phase of the player – sometimes growth spurts occur and so it is important to be aware of the age ranges of sensitivity for physical development during this period.
- An athlete's body needs to settle during these growth phases. This is critical to prevent injury and create a platform for good mental health.
- To have a good understanding of: Chronological age – the actual age since birth as well as biological age – determined by measures of morphological, skeletal and dental age.
- Tennis age – the number of years an athlete decided to specialize in tennis.
- Important for coaches, parents, players to be aware of the windows of optimum trainability for a player. This is directly linked to the player's growth and maturation.

Periodisation and planning: Junior HP tennis players U 12's - 16's:

Four critical stages: Preparation, Pre-competition, Competition, Transition/Rest

General preparation: 4-6 weeks:

- Fitness (all components) and technical work. Building endurance and strength priority
- Technical and tactical training – Movement included

Specific Preparation:1-2 weeks:

- Improve technique and tactical objectives
- Develop speed – Transfer strength to tennis specific power!
- High tennis specificity

Pre-Competition:1-2 weeks

- Higher mental and tactical work
- Still work on short high power and speed tennis specific movements

Competitive Phase: 2-3 weeks:

- High mental and tactical work
- Peak performance maintenance
- Use tennis specific short drills
- Pre-match routines
- Continue with physical training, short duration approximately 20 min/day

Transition Phase:

- How long? Depends on time of year and stage of development
- Rest from tennis/time off/take a break!!
- Active rest (other sport-maintain fitness levels)
- Passive rest - complete rest/do nothing-recharge
- Psychological and physical rest

Average amount of Tournaments

The below are guidelines for the average amount of tournaments per year could include national tournaments, club champs, school leagues etc.

Age	Number of tournaments	Matches per Year
9 to 12	10-15	Singles :40 + Doubles:20 +
12 to14	15-22	Singles:60 + Doubles:25 +
15 to 16	20-30	Singles: 60-90 Doubles: 30-50
17 to 18	24-30	Singles: 70-90 Doubles: 50-60

**Depends on player eligibility and national team selection.

Entries and eligibility – ITF Tournaments

Age:	Number of ITF events permitted per player
18	Unrestricted
17	Unrestricted
16	25
15	16 (unless player achieves a top 20 ITF Junior Ranking in which case an additional 4 tournaments permitted)
14	14 (unless player achieves a top 20 ITF Junior Ranking in which case an additional 4 tournaments permitted)
13	10 (unless player achieves a top 50 ITF Junior Ranking in which case an additional 4 tournaments permitted)
11/12	0

Supporting notes:

- The number of tournaments permitted is counted between the date of a player's birthday and the day before their next birthday, not between 1 January and 31 December.
- Participation in an ITF Junior Circuit tournament includes singles and/or doubles and/or qualifying.
- Minors under the age of thirteen (13) shall not be eligible for entry.
- The number of tournaments permitted by the ITF Junior Age Eligibility Rule is in addition to the number of professional tournaments permitted by the Age Eligibility Rule (please refer to ITF Professional Circuit Regulations, and WTA Regulations for details on the Age Eligibility Rule.)
- For the purposes of this Rule, the player's age as of the first day of the tournament's Main Draw shall be used
- Please read the ITF junior circuit regulations on the following link: <https://www.itftennis.com/juniors/tournaments/rules-regulations.aspx>
- Rules are subject to change.

Weekly training and competition programmes for 12 & up

It is important to complete all four components (Technical, Tactical, Physical and Mental) on a daily basis. It is also important to cover all game situations - Serve, Return, Baseline Rally, Approach & Passing.

Key concepts:

1. Managing the training load is key – especially balancing the Physical, Technical and Mental components.
2. Rest and planning are vital.
3. Be sensitive to the growth spurts of a player – Seeking advice from a sport science expert is important.
4. Focus on participating in events that helps develop the player's game – it is not all about earning points.
5. Don't ignore doubles in training or in competition. A combination of singles and doubles will create a more rounded player.
6. Look to expose the player (where possible) to different surfaces.

Conditioning:

Note:

1= Start of training (1-2 times per week approximately)

2= Increase of training (2-4 per week approximately)

3= Performance training (4 or more times per week approximately)

Activity	5-8	8-10	10-12	12-14
Maximum strength.				1
Explosive strength/power-box jumps, med ball, hop squats etc.			1	2
Endurance strength-push ups sit ups, push ups, crawling etc.				2
Aerobic endurance-jogging, cycling, rowing, skipping.		1	1	2
Anaerobic endurance-high intensity, intervals.				1
Reaction speed-tag games, relays, z-ball.		1	1	2
Flexibility, stretching, dynamics & static	2	2	2	3
Co-ordination-catching & throwing, ball games, z-ball, gymnastics.	1	2	3	3
Agility-ball pick-ups, zig zags, lateral jumps, spiders.		1	2	2

Example Weekly training program:

Day	Technical	Tactical	Physical	Mental
Monday	Forehand power, topspin, slice	Aggressive & defensive	Speed, coordination or strength	Decision making targets
Tuesday	Inside out, in forehand	Topsin, power, slice, drop shot	Power, speed coordination	Decision making, targets
Wednesday	forehand half volley	Baseline, mid court	Speed & coordination	Decision making targets
Thursday	Forehand return of serve inside out/in	Tactical options	Reflex , plyometric movements, endurance	Visualisation, decision making targets
Friday	Forehand approach	Tactical options	Endurance: strength & speed endurance	Visualisation, decision making targets
Saturday and Sunday	Match play or Endurance/flexibility via swimming/yoga etc.			

Notes:

1. Power and speed sessions should be early in the week when players are fresher. This will allow for maximum performance potential.
2. Endurance should be pushed more to the end of the week as it can be done under some fatigue.
3. Game based training can be incorporated into daily training.

Guidelines for developing tennis fitness:

Interval or circuit training is very important.

The below are some recommended fitness training exercises. However, consultation is recommended with a qualified sport scientist for more individualised and specific guidelines:

Fitness component	Exercise
Aerobic endurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous running (1 km +) • 15.5 laps around the outside of the tennis court lines equates to 1 km • Team relays/running • Swimming/cycling • Other sports (soccer, hockey, etc.)
Co-ordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catching/throwing • Ball games • Gymnastics • Z ball
Speed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relays • Team tagging games • Short sprints (5m, 10m, 15m, 25m)
Power/Strength/Balance age 9-12: 1 to 2 kg medicine ball age 12-15: 2 to 4 kg medicine ball age 15 and up: 4 kg + under supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own bodyweight exercises, Thera bands • Exercises in pairs • Jumps • Throws • Medicine balls –according to age and strength
Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic routines-static/dynamic
Agility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking/running patters • Hexagon jumps • Jumps and turns • Multidirectional movements • Footwork drills (reactions & patterns.)

Player goalsetting worksheet (General)

Technical Goals:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Tactical Goals:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Physical Goals:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Mental Goals:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Match Play/Competitive Goals:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

4. _____

Obstacles achieving these Goals:

How to overcome these obstacles:

Signed (player): _____

Signature (coach): _____

Date: _____

Player goalsetting worksheet (Overall career goals)

Dream Goals: What would I like to achieve in tennis – In order of importance

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Long Term Goals: (1-3 years)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Mid Term Goals: (e.g. 6-12 months)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Short Term Goals: (e.g. 1-12 weeks)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Action steps for short term goals:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Signed (player): _____

Signature (coach): _____

Date: _____

Parental behaviours

Parents must remember that competition is at junior level is important for improvement and development. It is not all about winning and junior rankings are a guideline.,

Key parental behaviours	
Emotional support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing an interest • Providing support and comfort • Establishing a dialogue • Putting the child first • Respecting their needs • Emphasis on development and performance
Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation of family life • Transport • Nutrition • Logistics
Acting as a motivator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasising hard word and discipline • Setting realistic goals
Acting as a role model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transmitting values • Showing respect for players and other parents, tournament organisers, etc
Providing balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be objective • Introducing the child to a variety of sports
Providing guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing the rules: www.ITFTENNIS.COM • Giving/receiving advice with the guidance of a Coach



Player competency guidelines



9-12 years (Male and Female)

The key development of stroke mechanics is conforming to good:

- B: balance
- M: momentum
- C: co-ordinated movements

TECHNICAL

Serve:

1. Using correct grips
2. Using the correct co-ordinated movements
3. Learning to serve - flat/slice/topspin

Ground strokes:

1. Using correct grips
2. Understanding various stances:
 - a. Open
 - b. Neutral
 - c. semi-open
 - d. semi closed
 - e. closed
3. Developing variations: flat/ topspin/slice
4. Ability to change direction:
 - a. Down the line/ Cross court
 - b. Trajectory
 - c. Various speed
5. Impact point in front at waist height.
6. Set up before the ball bounces.

Overhead:

1. Using correct grips

2. Developing correct and co-ordinated movements
3. Understanding good court position/s at the net
4. Proper set up and impact point, throwing action.

Volley:

1. Using correct grips
2. Developing correct and co-ordinated movements
3. Understanding good court positions at the net
4. Moving in a "V" shape, catching action, recovery.

Footwork:

1. Increase court coverage and ability to set up and recover for each shot.

TACTICAL

Knowing basic tennis game situations:

- Serve and return
- Baseline rally
- Approaching the net
- Passing/lobbing the net player
- Plays doubles and has knowledge on doubles formations

Knowing the tennis strategies:

- Consistency
- Decision making
- Moving the opponent
- Maintaining good court position
- Knowing defensive and offensive plays
- Recognises opponents game style to adapt game plan
- Recognises opponents court positions to adapt game plan
- Using his/her strengths
- Recognising opponent's weaknesses
- Exploits opponent's weaknesses with game plan

MENTAL ATTRIBUTES/SKILLS:

- Motivation, Concentration, Control of thoughts, Emotional control
- Shows enthusiasm and enjoyment
- He/she is coachable and loves to improve performance
- Shows early signs of developing tennis competencies
- He/she shows respect to players/parents.



12-15 years (Male and Female)

The key development of stroke mechanics is conforming to good:

- B: balance
- I: Inertia
- O: Opposite force
- M: Momentum
- E: Elastic energy
- C: Co-ordinated movements

TECHNICAL

- Serve:

1. Using correct grips
2. Using the correct co-ordinated movements: legs/hips/trunk/arm
3. Learning to serve: flat/slice/topspin/power spin
4. Placement of serve to specific target areas
5. The increased use of ground forces and rotational forces to generate ball speed and spin

- Return:

1. Consistency and control of direction - power/topspin/slice
2. Angle returns vs length
3. Attacking vs defensive
4. Ability to approach on the return
5. Developing returns to break or add speed
6. Use of open stance and ability to transfer the weight through the ball from this position.

- Ground strokes:

1. Using correct grips
2. Understanding various stances: open/neutral/ semi-open/ semi closed/ closed
3. Developing variations: flat/ topspin/slice
4. Ability to change direction: (down the line/ cross court) and trajectory
5. Hit groundstrokes on the rise of the ball
6. Player identifies power hitting zone according to style
7. Good use of the legs in the strokes in all forms of movement
8. Controls the following: direction/spin/distance/pace/height

9. Able to play groundstrokes on the run effectively
10. Able to play groundstrokes on one leg laterally/forwards/backwards
11. Ability to hit a “clean” ball with minimal effect, through greater use of the ground, increased rotational forces and great timing.

- Volley:

1. Using correct grips
2. Developing correct and co-ordinated movements
3. Understanding good court position/s at the net
4. Able to control the volley to specific targets with pace and control
5. Develops a drive volley as an approach and or finishing the point
6. Develops good reactive and instinctive skills
7. Developing a quicker hand.
8. Greater use of legs is evident.

- Volley/Overhead:

1. Using correct grips
2. Developing correct and co-ordinated movements
3. Understanding good court position/s at the net

- Footwork:

1. The full repertoire of footwork should be well executed by the end of this stage.

ALL THE ABOVE TECHNIQUES ARE: Co-ordinated, effective and efficient, Injury free or cause no harmful bodily damage.

TACTICAL

Knowing basic tennis game situations:

- Serve and return
- Baseline to baseline rally
- Serve and volley
- Net approaching
- Passing/lobbing the net player
- Plays doubles and has knowledge on doubles formations

Knowing the tennis strategies:

- Consistency
- Decision making
- Knowing when to take risks
- Moving the opponent (side to side / forwards & backwards)
- Maintaining good court position

- Knowing defensive and offensive plays
- Recognises opponents game style to adapt game plan
- Recognises opponents court positions to adapt game plan
- Using his/her strengths
- How to wrong foot the opponent
- Movement is tactically correct according to shot selection/direction
- Recognising opponent's weaknesses
- Exploits opponent's weaknesses with game plan

MENTAL ATTRIBUTES/SKILLS

- Motivation, Concentration, Control of thoughts, Emotional control
- Competing with 100% effort is crucial
- Shows enthusiasm and enjoyment
- Dedicated and disciplined
- He/she is coachable
- Player trains on striving to perform and is self-motivated
- Planning and periodises schedule
- Shows early signs of developing tennis competencies
- He/she shows respect to players/parents/officials
- Takes responsibility and manages ones-self needs
- Player has good all-round communication skills

Playing singles/doubles:

1. Recognises player/s

- Game style
- Strength/weaknesses (technical or movement)
- Player has a good transition game
 - i. defensive to semi aggressive
 - ii. semi aggressive to aggressive
 - iii. all court if necessary

2. Playing doubles

- Knows all formations on the return
defensive/semi defensive/ semi aggressive/aggressive
- Knows all formations on the serve
standard/eye formation/ Aussie formation
- Good leader
- Good communication with partner and or coach in team events
- Aware of court geometry
- Aware of all tactical targets.



15-18 years (Male and Female)

The key development of stroke mechanics is conforming to good:

- B: balance
- I: Inertia
- O: Opposite force
- M: momentum
- E: elasticity, efficiency, effectiveness
- C: co-ordinated movements

TECHNICAL

- Serve:

1. Uses correct grips
2. Player has the correct co-ordinated movements: legs/hips/trunk/arm
3. Ability to hit all types of serves to designated targets:
flat/slice/topspin/power spin
4. Placement of serve is consistent and effective
5. Player develops serve as a strength

- Return:

1. Consistency and control of direction: power/topspin/slice – uses strengths on returns
2. Angle returns vs length
3. Attacking vs defensive
4. Ability to approach on the return
5. Developing returns to break or add speed
6. Good physical movements and adaptable techniques on both fh/bh
7. Developed reactive and instinctive reactions
8. Positional adjusting for various servers

- Ground strokes:

1. Using correct grips
2. Understands various stances:
 - a. Open
 - b. Neutral
 - c. Semi-open
 - d. Semi closed
 - e. Closed
3. Developing variations: flat/ topspin/slice
4. Ability to change direction:

- a) (down the line/ cross court)
 - b) and uses ball trajectory to obtain correct court position and recovery
5. Hit groundstrokes on the rise of the ball
 6. Player identifies power hitting zone according to style
 7. Good use of the legs in the strokes in all forms of movement
 8. Controls – direction/spin/distance/pace/height
 9. Player is able to play designated targets with control/ consistency
 10. Able to play groundstrokes on the run effectively
 11. Able to play groundstrokes on one leg laterally/forwards/backwards
- Net play-Volley/Overhead:
 1. Uses correct grips
 2. Developing correct and co-ordinated movements
 3. Understands good court position/s at the net
 4. Able to control the volley to specific targets with pace and control
 5. Develops a drive volley as an approach and or finishing the point
 6. Develops good reactive and instinctive skills
 7. Able to volley and smash from the $\frac{3}{4}$ court towards the net
 8. Low/middle/ high/half volley/drive volley
 9. Player has ability to adjust grips reactively and instinctively
 10. Player has good plyometric and kinetic movements with correct positioning

ALL THE ABOVE TECHNIQUES ARE: Co-ordinated, effective and efficient, Injury free or cause no harmful bodily damage.

TACTICAL

Knowing the tennis strategies:

- Consistency
- Anticipation and decision making essential!
- Moving the opponent (side to side / forwards & backwards)
- Maintaining good court position
- knowing defensive and offensive plays
- Recognises opponents game style to adapt game plan
- Recognises opponents court positions to adapt game plan
- Using his/her strengths
- How to wrong foot the opponent
- Movement is tactically correct according to shot selection/direction
- Recognising opponent's weaknesses
- Exploits opponent's weaknesses with game plan
- Understands margin for errors in his/her game plan
- Understanding of reflection/ deflection ball patterns
- Player has ability to know when and how to change direction

- Knowing when to take risks

MENTAL ATTRIBUTES/SKILLS

- Key Mental skills to Master:
 - Motivation, Concentration, Emotional Control, Control of thoughts
- Dedicated and disciplined
- Player manages and takes responsibility with parents/coach/federation
- Player is dedicated to achieving goals set forth in planning
- A tournament schedule is planned accordingly
- Player is coachable
- Player trains on striving to perform and is self-motivated
- Planning and periodises schedule
- He/she shows respect to players/parents/officials
- Specialises for ITF juniors/college/ professional
- Player has good all-round communication skills
- Player plays the game with integrity and knowledge

Playing singles/doubles:

3. Recognition

- Player knows his/her game style
- Player has knowledge of:
 - Baseline game
 - All court and style
 - Serve and volley
 - Counter puncher – aggressive/defensive skills
 - And how to play the above

4. Player has a good transition game

- Defensive to semi aggressive
- Semi aggressive to aggressive
- All court if necessary

5. Player has good understanding of:

- Consistency in all aspects of his/her game
- Percentage tennis and the definition
- Player has good control of
 - Speed/direction/distance of shots

6. Player knows court geography/geometry

7. The movement and strokes of the player are effective and efficient and impair no development for future improvement

8. Player has good shot selection and options from various court positions and able to execute control from the various positions

9. Player can apply various strategies on:

a. Serve:

- i. Serve wide
- ii. Move the opponent
- iii. Use strength
- iv. Maintain good court position –all in 2/3 shots

b. Return of Serve:

- i. Uses good direction
- ii. Uses strength on return/s
- iii. Move the opponent out of position
- iv. Uses power/spin/speed to break the opponent's game
Weakness- stroke or movement.

c. Playing doubles:

- Knows all formations on the serve –
 - i. standard
 - ii. i formation
 - iii. Aussie formation
- Knows all formations on the return –
 - I. Defensive
 - II. Semi defensive
 - III. Semi aggressive
 - IV. Aggressive
- Good leader
- Good communication with partner and/or coach in team events
- Aware of court geometry
- Aware of all tactical targets
- Able to serve and volley
- Able to approach return of serve

10. Player has developed good:

- I. Anticipation skills
- II. Recognition skills
- III. Instinctive decision skills
- IV. Emotional control

PHYSICAL SKILLS – DEVELOP:

1. Speed
2. Endurance/stamina
3. Strength
4. Agility
5. Flexibility.