

USTA LEAGUE TENNIS BEST PRACTICES

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The Purpose of this Handbook

The purpose of this Timberhill Tennis Club USTA League Tennis Handbook is to provide suggestions for participation on USTA League Teams. The handbook is designed to help Players, Captains and Club Representatives participate in a way that expresses the spirit of the Timberhill Tennis Club. These guidelines are offered with the best interest of the entire club and its membership in mind.

Note from Hunter

When it comes to USTA League tennis, the thrill of victory, and the chance to go to playoffs or national level competition can become very intoxicating. I would like Timberhill Tennis Club to be known as a place where people come first, then the trophies. In many years, the trophies will be put away in the dusty corners of your attic. What will remain is the memory of friends and teammates unified after a common goal, sharing the joys of victory and the bitter taste of defeat. I'd like our reputation in the community and among our members to be that of a caring place to enjoy this great game, while having opportunities to compete and vie for championships. Captains and their teams represent Timberhill, and how they handle themselves will form our reputation, which has more long term value than the results of a match or league. My goal is for the club to have the reputation for great sportsmanship, fair play and a high level of tennis.

Remember: tennis reveals your character – play accordingly!

Multi-Week vs. One-Weekend Leagues

USTA is now offering some league options that compress the entire local league season into one weekend full of team matches. These have become a very popular option for people with time constraints or teams that want to make one strong push for sectionals. Since these leagues do not put a burden on TTC court time, the teams that are fielded by TTC members can form independent of the club and are not constrained by the following rules. The remainder of the handbook applies primarily to the multi-week leagues.

Responsibilities of Players

Communication with the Captain

It is important when playing on a team to communicate with the captain (returning emails and phone calls). If you can't participate in a match you need to contact the captain as soon as possible and, depending upon the guidelines of the team, contact a substitute. It is not fair to the captain or the team to leave them in a difficult situation by not finding a replacement in a timely manner. Captaining is a volunteer job that many people do not want to take on. Those that do take on this great and honorable service to Timberhill Tennis Club and its members deserve thanks and support. This goes a long way towards a positive team spirit and a successful team. Some helpful phrases to learn to say are:

*I have not played well with that person in the past but for the sake of the team **I will play with anyone.***

Sure, I would love to sub at the last minute.

Do you have an alternate for the match?

I will leave my schedule open so I will be your alternate for the upcoming match in case someone can not play at the last minute.

Being a good teammate

A good teammate is always supportive and encouraging. They are interested in building the team up and only say positive things about their teammates whether in their presence or not. A good team member keeps the goals of the team paramount. They allow teammates to have their individuality but realize everyone is contributing for the sake of the team.

Responsibilities of Captains

Communicating with players

The pre-season organizational meeting will determine the captain of the team, as well as the nature of the team (equal play or strength-based). Once these things are decided, the captain will be in charge of communicating policies for running the team to the players. Giving the schedule out and notifying players of their participation in matches well in advance are things that players appreciate.

Timberhill Tennis Club Organizational Meeting

All players should be signed up by the time of the meeting for the team at their rated level that they intend to play on—these players will have priority to be on the team, and these meetings determine whether there is sufficient interest in building teams at a given level. At these meetings, each team's characteristics will be decided upon by the members present, including the size of the team, what constitutes “equal play” or “competitive”, and how lineups will be determined.

Organization of the team

Numbers of Players on team

It is best to have more players than you think you will need for a team. In 18+ and 40+ “straight rating” leagues, 8 players play in a league match so the minimum size team would be 12 players. For combined ratings teams (mixed and seniors) only six players are needed per match, so nine team members would be a minimum size team. Depending upon the commitment of the players you could be alright with fewer or more.

By strength or equality

Some teams play all their players equally and some play by strength. Generally teams that play by equality have a more content team. The equality team works really well when they recognize that they are playing for development as a primary goal, not necessarily vying for a playoff spot. This does not mean the team is not competitive, committed or competing hard. It works well if the average individual ratings of the players on the team are in the lower half of the rating range of the league. Some teams that play “equally” do very well, but to do this they are typically rated near the top of the rating range.

If playing by strength a team simply tries to put team wins ahead of individual playing time. This might mean some players get very little playing time. It is recommended that this is expressed by the captain clearly before players commit to signing up. There are infinite ways of deciding playing time. A captain might decide the rank order of players by either objective (ladder) criteria or subjective (captains choice). This should also be communicated before the season happens so players will know where they stand before committing.

Democratic or Benevolent Dictator

Captains can run teams democratically or dictatorially. Each method has its benefits and drawbacks. If the captain is a benevolent dictator they are in total control of the team and their decisions are final. This type of captain needs to be really good with managing a group of people and have the ability to know what their players want. They still might

get feedback from the team but their decision is final and will be made in the interest of the team. The democratic form has many variations but the idea is that major policies are decided by the group. On a day to day basis the captain will still have to make decisions but they might enlist the help of assistants or co-captains.

Having practices with a coach

Some teams prefer to have a TTC Pro help the team by running organized practices. These practices are set up with the pro so as to fit within the overall TTC programs.

Following Club Rules

Scheduling of Matches

Captains will work in concert with the club and USTA to schedule their team's matches—there should usually be a half-home, half-away balance in their schedule.

Club Policy Regarding USTA Teams

Non-members are allowed to play on Timberhill's teams, although you may only have up to 20% of your team be comprised of non-members. If there are enough TTC members to field a team, TTC members should receive priority to play. To relax this rule captains must petition the Program Committee for permission. Non-members should be strongly encouraged to take advantage of TTC's 90-day membership. Non-members players are subject to a \$30 fee to be on a TTC team, which allows them to play at all home and away matches, and to practice 3 times with team members without a guest fee.

Reserving practice times

Regular reservation rules apply. For practices with a pro, the pro may reserve one of the courts to be used for the practice, within the contracted availability of lesson courts.

Warm-up courts

Warm up courts are the responsibility of the captain/player to book for their respective teams. Rules regarding cancellation and forfeiture of courts still apply.

Following USTA Rules

It is understood that all Timberhill captains will fully comply with USTA rules and regulations. As a captain it is expected of you to have a representative from your team at the USTA pre-season captain's meeting.

Responsibilities of Timberhill Tennis Club

Responsibilities of Programs Committee

The programs committee will monitor USTA League tennis teams and provide consultation for captains and players. It will act as arbiter in situations that are policy driven. It will not step into personal conflicts.

Responsibilities of Tennis Staff

Timberhill Tennis Club will provide courts to the USTA to schedule your teams league matches. The available match times will be Saturdays at 12:00pm, 2:00pm, and 4:00pm, and Sundays at 12:00pm, 2:00pm, and 4:00pm during the assigned scheduling period. In addition, staff will help captains find players to fill out their rosters.

Understanding the USTA Ratings system

The USTA ratings system can be difficult to understand at times, if you need help or have questions about ratings please contact Hunter.

Should I play up to the next level?

When your record is above 66% wins it is time to start to look at the next level of play. So if you are a 3.5 men's player and last year your record was 4 wins and 2 losses playing #1 Doubles it would be appropriate for you to begin to play both 3.5 and find a 4.0 team that is willing to put you in the lineup sometimes. Players with records that are not that strong, such as 2 wins and 4 losses, would be wise to only play at their particular level that year until their level of success increases. It is not helpful for your long term development as a player to carry a significant losing record.

How does my rating change?

When you first start playing USTA league you are asked to self rate. The computer will ask you a series of question and based upon your answer it will assign a rating. Most players begin at a self rating of 3.0 unless they've played for years or have extensive High School / College experience. After your initial year the computer will average your score against the players you competed with. Based upon yours, and their, win/loss record it will assign you a current rating.

What do all these types of ratings mean?

A **self-rating** is an entry rating level determined by the new player based on questions asked in the TennisLink registration process. All players must enter league tennis with a valid computer rating or self rate.

An **early start rating** is a tentative rating for exclusive use by players who register for an early start league prior to publication of year-end ratings. The number is based on the most current dynamic rating at the time of publication. Early start ratings are replaced by year-end ratings. If you play in an early start league with an early start rating, please check with your section to see if you may continue to compete on your team if your year-end rating goes up.

A **dynamic rating** is a calculation based on a single match result. A dynamic rating may change with each match played. A dynamic rating is the result of your current match averaged with up to three of your most recent dynamic results generated.

A **year-end rating** is a NTRP level assigned at conclusion of the league championship year that reflects level of ability. A player's year-end rating shall be used to enter leagues during the following year and will be valid for up to three years or until another rating is generated.

FAQ's

What is the difference between a dynamic rating and a year-end rating?

- Dynamic ratings are not disclosed to players, where year-end ratings are published annually at NTRP levels.
- Dynamic ratings are expressed to the one-hundredth of a point, where year-end ratings are expressed only to the one-half point.
- Dynamic ratings are calculated regularly and based on an average of the previous four dynamic ratings, where year-end ratings are based 50% on one's cumulative dynamic rating during the season and 50% on the comparison to the benchmark players.

Does the dynamic calculation apply to Mixed Doubles League play?

Yes, for players who participate exclusively in the Mixed Doubles Division. Mixed Doubles results will not be part of generating a player's year-end rating except for those players who play exclusively mixed doubles.

Grievance Procedure

The Captain has authority to make decisions concerning the team. If a team member knows the captain has made a decision that is not within their authority they may submit a request to the Programs Committee to investigate the matter. The Programs Committee

may find in favor of the Captain, the team member, or decide it is not an issue for the committee to make a decision about.

USTA Suggestions:

BEFORE THE SEASON STARTS

Forming a team. Teams are formed in many ways. Some are groups of friends who start a team because they enjoy being together. Others are structured by tennis club pros or directors from their membership ranks. If you are looking for more players, check with your facility, local pro shops, and your teammates. They may know of others who would love to join you. Don't limit your team to only those you know. Half the fun of USTA League Tennis is meeting and making new friends.

Getting Registered. All team members must be registered on your roster in TennisLink (<http://national.usta.com>) prior to playing a match. To register, players must be a current member of the USTA and have either a valid computer rating or will need to self-rate.

League Regulations. The captain, as well as all league players, must read and follow the rules and regulations. National regulations are available on the web (www.pnw.usta.com) and in a convenient booklet that you may receive from your local coordinator.

In addition, each section and local league may also have regulations that govern play. It is your responsibility to know and convey these to your players. It is also a good idea to acquire the *Friend at Court* rulebook to use as a general reference for rules of tennis.

Home Matches. Verify all home matches with your facility. Check for court availability, court fees, guest fees, and any other requirements of your home facility. Does your facility provide the balls for home matches or does the team?

Player Availability. Ask each team member to go through the schedule and let you know of any conflicts.

Team Meeting. Have a team meeting and agree on the team philosophy. Is the team playing to win or playing for fun? Will only the strongest players play matches or will everyone participate equally? Who will decide the match lineups? If everyone on the team is aware of these issues and agrees, you will have a much more successful season as captain. Having a coach, pro, or team manager assist you with team lineups may be helpful.

ONE WEEK PRIOR TO MATCH

Contact the opposing captain. Confirm When (day/time); Where (get directions if necessary); Match Duration (will all courts be played at the same time or will this be a split match); Court fees?; Are spectators allowed?; Who is the captain or acting captain for the match?

Verify home matches with your facility again and reserve courts.

Appoint acting captain if you are playing to take care of pre-match details.

DAY BEFORE MATCH

Verify your starting lineup. Arrange alternates.

Check your roster on TennisLink. Make sure all players are registered.

Plan transportation and arrival time. Arrange carpools if necessary.

MATCH DAY – BEFORE MATCH

Print match scorecard from Tennislink. All eligible players, including any last minute additions to the roster, will be listed if you wait until just before leaving for the match to print your scorecard.

Collect money from your team and pay court fees and/or guest fees if necessary.

Provide balls for home matches. Every match should be played with new USTA approved tennis balls appropriate for the court surface.

Meet with the opposing captain and go over any ground rules. Discuss which match will be played on which court; which team will use what color scorecards; format for tie-breaks (Coman procedure or regular); and default procedure.

Exchange scorecard lineups BEFORE players walk onto the courts. All players should be present prior to exchanging lineups.

IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE MATCH

Get the score from each court and record on your scorecard. Note the winner and record the score from the winner's perspective.

Get opposing captain's signature after the match is over. Both captains should agree on the winners and scores.

Meet with your players and air any questions or disputes. If possible, go have a meal together to promote team bonding!

AFTER THE MATCH

Record your match scores in TennisLink within 48 hours of the match. If the opposing captain has already entered the scores, carefully check the entered scores and confirm or dispute the entry.

File any necessary protest/grievance in writing to your USTA League Coordinator.

THROUGHOUT THE SEASON

Have fun! Treasure the camaraderie and friendships with your teammates and enjoy the spirit of competition!