

Background

Tennis Australia will be implementing some major changes to the way the Australian Ranking tournaments will be conducted from January 1, 2012. The objective of the changes is to provide more competitive match opportunities to our current and up-and-coming athletes. The below Frequently Asked Question sheet is designed to help educate tournament directors, officials, parents, coaches and athletes to understand what changes will be occurring in 2012. Please note that the full explanation of the changes will be documented in the 2012 AR tournament regulations.

Q: How are the Australian Ranking tournaments going to provide athletes with more competitive match opportunities?

A: The Australian Ranking tournaments will change the current draw format of starting everyone at the same position in one single main draw to a separation format, where the higher ranked players are placed directly into the main draw and the lower ranked players are placed into a qualifying event, exactly how the ATP/WTA Tour events and Pro Tour events are conducted.

Q: Why is the Australian Ranking tournaments going to be conducted in this manner?

A: Research and feedback gathered from within the marketplace over the past two years has shown that athletes, parents and coaches are looking for a better quality experience when entering a tournament. A study undertaken that looked at the match results of the Australian Money Tournaments in 2010 showed that the average match lasted only 16.4 games (i.e. a 6-2; 6-2 result). This average was sometimes lower in the early rounds and higher from the QF's. Our definition of a competitive match is for the average number of games to be 19 games (i.e. 6-3; 6-4 result). The theory is that if athletes can play other athletes of a similar ability more often, the matches will be more competitive and they will improve more rapidly and ultimately enjoy their experience at a tournament more.

Q: How many athletes are going to be placed directly into the main draw and is this change being implemented at both the Australian Money Tournament (AMT) and Optus Junior Tour (OJT) levels?

A: Yes, the separation of athletes into the qualifying and main draw will occur at both the AMT and OJT levels. The AMT's have a choice to either conduct a 16 or 24 player main draw and the OJT's have a choice to either conduct a 16 or 32 player main draw. Qualifying draws can accept up to a maximum of 128 players.

Q: How does a qualifying draw work?

A: A qualifying draw operates the same as any other tennis draw, but with a few minor variations with how many seeds are in the event and where they are placed. Athletes play until the number of qualifying athletes is determined and then the draw stops, with those qualifying athletes then moved into the main draw.

Q: Isn't it unfair for some athletes to start at a later point than others in a tournament?

A: The qualifying and main draw formats is nothing new and has been operating successfully within the tennis world for quite some time. The focus of Tennis Australia is to provide more competitive matches for our athletes. As players get better over time, they will increase their ranking high enough for them to be accepted directly into the main draw and avoid the qualifying competition.

Q: How will the main draw events be conducted?

A: In the AMT's, the main draw events will be conducted using the standard knockout draw. In the OJT's, tournaments can either choose to use the standard knockout draw or separate players into round-robin groups with an elimination draw for the athletes that finish at the top of their group and then move into a knockout draw. Also, each OJT main draw will implement a playoff between the two losing semi-finalists for third place and additional AR points. For Platinum and Gold OJT's, the losing quarter-finalists will continue to playoff for positions 5th to 8th.

Q: How are the consolation events going to operate with these new formats?

A: In the AMT's, there will still be the optional sign-in consolation events offered for athletes that lose in the main draw and qualifying, but there will be two separate consolation events, one for athletes that lose in qualifying and one for athletes that lose in the main draw. The consolation events will operate the same way for OJT's, but as in the past, athletes will automatically feed into the consolation events and are required to play the consolation event until they are eliminated.

Q: Will there be changes to the way Australian Ranking points will be awarded due to these draw format changes?

A: Yes, there will be a change, with athletes to earn Australian Ranking points within the qualifying event and qualifying consolation event. Athletes in the main draw and main draw consolation events will also earn Australian Ranking points. The 2012 Australian Ranking rules will be released later this year.

Q: If I am conducting a tournament, will the new draw formats mean more matches?

A: We anticipate that a tournament may have a very small increase in the number of matches that needs to be played, but in some instances it could be the same amount of matches. For example, if an AMT has a 64 player draw this year, they would have 63 main draw matches to play. If an AMT in 2012 received the same numbers, they can choose to operate a 24 player main draw (with 16 accepted directly) and a qualifying draw of 48 players, which will feed down to 8 qualifiers. To feed down from 48 players to 8 qualifiers, a tournament will need to play 40 matches. With the 8 qualifiers then moving to the main draw, to determine a winner of a 24-player main draw, a tournament must play 23 matches. Therefore a total of 63 matches, the same as a 64 player standard knockout draw.

Q: Is a qualifying and main draw separation going to occur for doubles events as well?

A: No, the separation of athletes will only occur in the singles events. The doubles events will be conducted as per usual with all entered teams starting at the same position within the draw.

Q: Will there be any more additional administration for me as a tournament director when preparing to run my tournament?

A: There will be additional administration to inform athletes whether they have been accepted into the main draw directly or are required to compete in the qualifying event. However, we will provide tournaments with an automated system to undertake the process of looking up player rankings and producing acceptance lists.

Q: What more can you tell us about these automated systems?

A: We are developing a new rankings system that will improve the back-end administration system of the monthly Australian Rankings. When tournaments have their final list of entrants, they will then be able to download the latest rankings for these entrants very quickly and then publish an acceptance list that shows who has been accepted into the main draw and who is required to play in the qualifying event.

Q: With an automated Australian Ranking system, does that mean Tennis Australia will be able to generate the rankings more frequently?

A: Yes, with an automated system, our ultimate goal is to generate the Australian Rankings on a weekly basis so that our athletes get full benefit from the results they have just earned.

Q: Is there anything that players have to do from their side to help with the implementation of this new automated Australian Ranking system?

A: Yes, it will be compulsory for all athletes wishing to compete in an Australian Ranking event to enter online via <http://tournaments.tennis.com.au> and ensure that they input their 11-digit My Tennis number that they receive when becoming a member of an affiliated tennis club.

Q: And what is the 11-digit My Tennis number and if I don't have one, where can I get one?

A: The 11-digit My Tennis number is a unique identifier that has been rolled out to all affiliated club members over the last 12 months. The number always starts with "61" and is vitally important for each player to have to help the Australian Ranking tournaments to operate more efficiently. If you do not have a My Tennis number, please contact your local club or State/Territory Association or register online for one via <http://www.tennis.com.au/clubs/my-tennis/players>

Q: Why is it compulsory for athletes to enter online for tournaments?

A: We require all athletes entering an Australian Ranking event via our online system because that is the only way we can reliably obtain all the data we need to automate the Australian Ranking process and produce a quick and easy system for tournaments to generate an acceptance list.

Q: And if every player enters online, does that mean there can be automatic checks in place for players trying to enter two or more tournaments that overlap in dates?

A: Players will still be able to enter two tournaments with overlapping dates. However, as in the past, players cannot compete in both tournaments. With the introduction of the My Tennis database, players wishing to enter two overlapping tournaments will need to list what is their priority order. Players will need to check the acceptance lists and then pull out of all but one of the tournaments. If a player fails to withdraw by the withdrawal deadline, the system will automatically withdraw a player. More details regarding this process will be confirmed soon.

Q: When will a tournament close off their entries in 2012?

A: It is now a mandatory requirement for all tournaments to close their entries 14 days prior to the start of the qualifying event. However, National Junior Championships will still close entries 28 days prior to the start of the tournament.

Q: Can our tournament still produce an entry form for the event?

A: We believe the easiest way to administer a tournament is by promoting online entries as much as possible. The tournament pages on <http://tournaments.tennis.com.au> will give tournaments the ability to complete a fact sheet template that can provide additional tournament information and conditions. If your tournament still wanted to produce an entry form, they can, however it must not contain the ability for someone to enter. In other words, all you need to provide is the front page of your entry form and use it as a promotional poster.

Q: What about players entering non-AR events at my tournament such as Specials or Graded events?

A: Tournaments can still choose to accept offline entries for players that wish to compete in non-AR events like a Specials, graded or mixed event. However, the benefits of online entry, especially the reduced administration workload for tournaments should never be overlooked.

Q: Will there be any up-skilling and education provided for tournament directors and officials by Tennis Australia to further outline the changes being implemented in 2012?

A: Yes, it is a key focus area over the next four years and Tennis Australia and its Member Association staff plan to undertake education workshops for all stakeholders in the lead-up to 2012 and throughout next year to ensure the rollout of these new changes goes as smoothly as possible. There will also be a number of online resources created to help as well.

Q: Do any of the services or officiating levels my tournament is required to provide increase under the new regulations?

A: No, service standards will remain the same. However you do have the opportunity to provide over and above the minimum standards in order to be more attractive to your customers.