

## **AYC AGM 2015**

### **Item 9 Discussion paper re: Proposed motion to adjust grades**

The difference in grading between men and women

The grading limits set by the AYC committee are not part of the rules but are detailed in the roster book.

The current situation:

- The AYC committee have followed the ITF grading assessment of 2004 in giving women a stronger ITN than men for the same playing ability.
- Clubs tend to submit teams to AYC that where men and women have a similar ITN rather than a similar playing ability.

This has resulted in a number of problems including but not limited to:

- Some men have been hesitant to play as hard to the women as they do to men
- Other men have targeted the women to score easy points
- Some women have been offended when the men play more gently to them
- Some players have treated the mixed as just a warm-up
- There have been calls for the grading to be calculated on the ladies/mens doubles only and not include the mixed doubles sets/rubbers
- The need for a grading adjustment when women play in Div X

The Anti-Discrimination Act 1998 makes the different treatment of men and women illegal in Tasmania.

While this Act might have been considered to have focused on the work place there have been some interesting cases in recent years relating to sporting bodies. The Act is about any difference in treatment in any situation based on a range of qualities including gender.

Lawn bowls is an example where women argued that being weaker they were not able to be as good as men at some aspects of the game. Over the years as a result of this perceived difference women had gained preferential treatment. This included being able to play in stronger divisions than they would otherwise have been eligible to compete in. When men lodged a complaint with the Anti-Discrimination Commission regarding the inequitable treatment of men and women their complaint went to court and was upheld by the judge. Lawn Bowls have now had to change to eliminate the difference in treatment of men and women.

In this day and age of gender equality the AYC difference in grading standard between men and women stands as something of an anachronism.

In developing the new ITN grading system the ITF finished with five broad aspects of the game of tennis being key to the measure of a players ability; Serve, Return, Baseline Game, Approaching/Net and Passing The Net Player. Each of these aspects have several sub points describing the detail of the ability required to be developed in a player to achieve each ITN.

Very few of these criteria relate to creating power or being able to handle pace. The vast majority relate to being able to exploit an opponents weakness, having a range of strategies and styles and being able to hit the ball reliably and dependably under stress. On this basis the difference in strength between men and women appears to be only a small part of the game. This appears to put AYC Tennis in a similar situation to Lawn Bowls and suggests that a complaint to the Anti-Discrimination Commission may result in the same outcome.

Preliminary discussions with the Anti-Discrimination Commission indicate that AYC having a grade limit in divisions that are different for men and women contravenes the Act. The AYC committee is perhaps now obliged to consider eliminating this difference.

This will result in some flow-on effects including but not limited to:

- Clubs submitting teams where the men and women have a similar playing ability
- Abolishing the grading adjustment when women play in Div X
- Abolishing the different grading standard for men and women.

For several years now AYC have had a Div X and last season there were two (Div X and Div Y). There has been an accepted adjustment of adding 0.5 ITN to the Ladies grade where they play in this division. Since there has been no official challenge to this there is a prima facie case that the tennis community have accepted this as being close to the correct adjustment.

Some years ago the committee had discussions around who might be a good consistent female player who could be tested against men to get a feel for the difference in grade. Eventually EJ was selected and Sunshine Club engaged a process to assess. Sunshine reported back that EJ was competitive against men with an ITN of +0.5.

This year a women at the weaker end of the grades was a named player in Div Y and also filled in enough in the other divisions to be able to be graded both as a lady and as a man. The difference between her male and female grade varied a little over the season from 0.3 to 0.43 and finished with an overall season average of 0.35 ITN.

From this it is evident that the difference in grading between men and women is approximately one grade across all grades from strong to weaker players.

When the ITN was introduced, AYC did some work testing AYC players over a range of sets against overseas players with an established ITN to determine how to translate

from the old grading system to the ITN. Apparently these were all men so there is a reasonable basis for arguing that the current male grades are close to being correct. At that time ladies were given a one grade advantage of 0.5 ITN. So it is not surprising that it is now being established that women currently have approximately a one grade advantage over men.

Preferably in the future clubs will submit teams where the women are competitive with the men in that team. It may be that some women who currently play Div 1 will then play in Div 2 and so on down through the divisions. It is possible that Div 1 could become another Div X.

#### Recommendations:

- That 0.5 ITN be added to all ladies grades
- Clubs be requested to submit teams where the women have a similar playing ability to the men
- AYC continue to have mixed divisions for those ladies who prefer to play ladies doubles