



Tennis Australia
National Junior Championships
Structure

December 2013 & beyond

Executive Summary

The structure of National Junior Championships has continued to evolve due to the ever-changing internal and external environment since their conception in the late 1970's (16/u nationals) and early 1980's (18/u and 14/u nationals). Despite the evolution of these events, the objective of these events has remained constant – which is to conduct an event that brings together the best athletes together to challenge themselves under pressure and showcase their skills for the tennis community.

The challenge for these events in the future is to remain relevant, in an environment where the competition to attract and secure the best athletes is as fierce as ever. With an Australian Ranking point's circuit that has doubled in size over recent years, the tournament structure must be simple for parents and coaches, providing reference points throughout an athletes' development phase and reducing the expense burden that remains an impediment for many families. There are many tournaments from which an athlete can choose to play from.

The expected future growth of tennis in Asia/Pacific also provides an exciting opportunity for us to attract the best athletes from this region to Australia for our athletes to compete against.

We have prepared a paper on the structure of the national championships moving forward. In essence we have created three tiers of national and state titles that will assist the Australian Ranking system by providing reference points for families and players along their respective journey.

Tier 1: National Championships

- Australian Championships – December Showdown with Platinum (+) points on offer
- National Schools Championships – The Bruce Cup will be classified as a Platinum tournament, whilst the Pizzey Cup which will offer gold level points. These school events will now be fully integrated with both events hosting a team and individual event.

Tier 2: State Championships (QLD, NSW and VIC)

- Victorian Junior Clay Court Championships - 12&U, 14&U and 16&U (18's optional) platinum event with two ITF Grade 4/5 junior events following. One of these ITF events will be in school holidays, with the second during the first week of term 2. The winner of the 12/u, 14/u & 16/u singles events will receive a wildcard into the December Showdown regardless of residence. Platinum points will be on offer.
- Rod Laver Queensland Junior Championships – 12&U, 14&U and 16&U (18's optional) platinum event with two ITF Grade 4/5 junior events following. One of these ITF events will be in school holidays, with the second during the first week of term 3. The winner of the 12/u, 14/u & 16/u singles events will receive a wildcard into the December Showdown regardless of residence. Platinum points will be on offer.
- NSW Junior Championships - 12&U, 14&U and 16&U (18's optional) platinum event with two ITF Grade 4/5 junior events. One of these ITF events will be in school holidays, with the second during the first week of term 4. The winner of the 12/u, 14/u & 16/u singles events will receive a wildcard into the December Showdown regardless of residence. Platinum points will be on offer.

Tier 3: State Championships (SA, WA, ACT, NT and TAS)

Each of these state and territories will host a 12&U, 14&U and 16&U (18's optional) Gold points level event. These events will be treated by these states as of higher importance, but will still offer gold level points. Winners of these events will not receive a wildcard into the December Showdown.

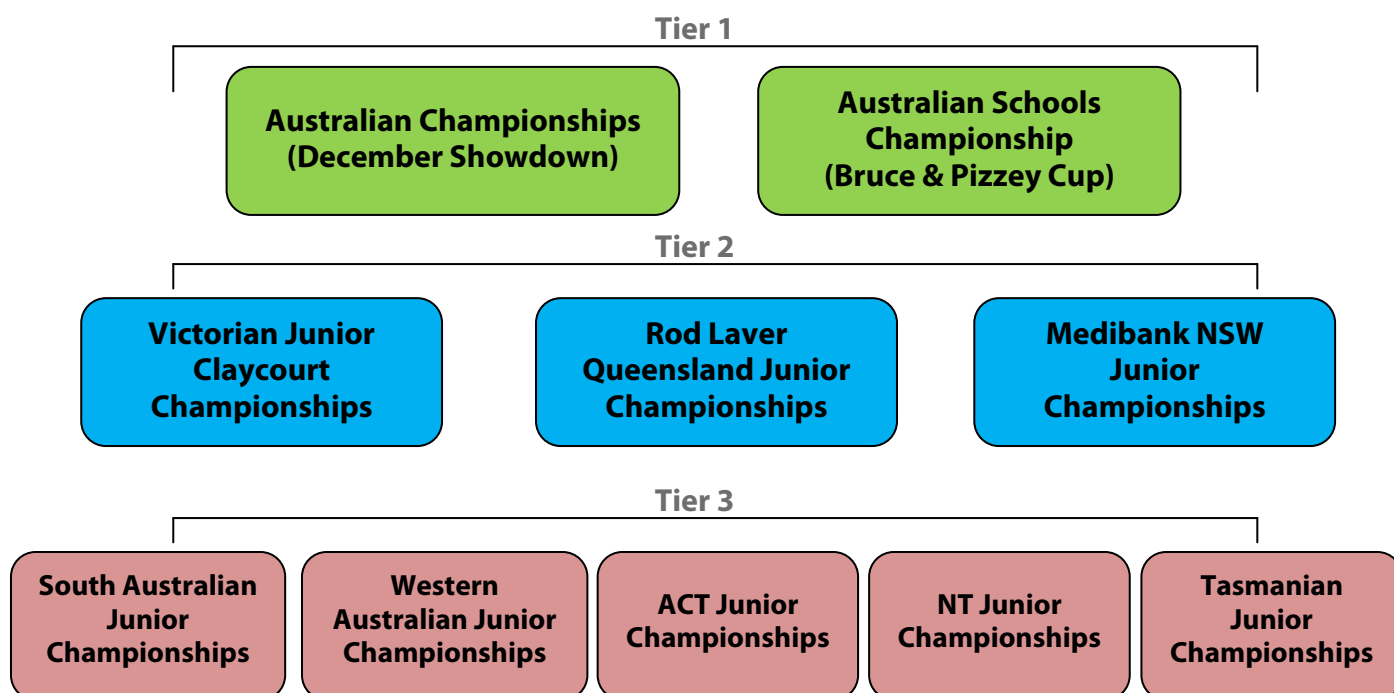
Further notes

- Each MA will retain their discretionary wildcard for the December Showdown (refer to details below).
- The state titles in QLD, NSW and Vic will enable the best players to come together to compete if the players and / or their respective training environments choose to do so plus the two national events.

Objectives

1. To create one “National Championships” during the year for all age groups that is respected by the tennis community, not only in Australia, but across Asia/Pacific.
2. Elevate the importance of already existing State Championship events and traditional team-based events like the Bruce and Pizzey Cups.
3. Minimise the perception of necessary and expensive travel requirements that currently exists amongst external stakeholders (e.g. parents).
4. To ensure that all State Championships are held in school holiday periods (except for Bruce and Pizzey Cups)

Hierarchy of tournaments in regards to Status (not AR points)



The Australian Championships (December Showdown)

Since its inception in 2008, the December Showdown has grown to become an integral part of the Australian tennis season and an important competitive opportunity for the best Australian athletes at each level to showcase their skills for the tennis community.

The event was initially conceived with the intention of bringing the tennis community together, creating an enormous atmosphere at Melbourne Park before the Australian Open. However, the focus of the event will change from one of participation to an event that showcases the best Australian tennis players in the most competitive environment.

The December Showdown also requires a large amount of resources from Tennis Australia. A 24-day event has been held in the past but this is considered unsustainable moving forward. The below recommendations will allow us to host the December Showdown across a 16-day period starting in 2013.

Recommendations

1. The Australian Championships to become an invitational event, with 32 athletes in the 12s & 14s events (please see acceptance criteria format below).
2. Reduce the qualifying draw size in the 16s event from 64 to 32 athletes.
3. Reduce the match length and scoring format of the Optus 12s & 14s Australian Teams Championships to allow the event to be merged together and held over three days.
4. Remove the \$10,000 Tennis Australia AMT Platinum event from the December Showdown to free up court space and reduce the length of the entire event.
5. Implement a series of athlete/parent/coach education workshops during the December Showdown.
6. Investigate opportunities to incorporate the Asia/Oceania region in the event in the future.

Australian Open Wildcard Playoff

- Draw Size: 16 players
- Format: Knockout Draw
- Scoring: Men's: Best of five sets (Advantage in fifth); Women's: Best of three sets (Advantage in three)

Acceptance Criteria Breakdown:

- All positions in the event will be via invitation only – National Selectors to determine these positions

18s Australian Championships

- Draw Size: 16 players (16 players in qualifying, eliminated down to 2 qualifiers)
- Format: Round-Robin format (8 groups of 4 players), with knockout QF's onwards
- Scoring: Best of three tiebreak sets
- Participation in this event is required for NA Full Scholarship consideration

Acceptance Criteria Breakdown:

- 10 x Direct Acceptances (based on ATP/WTA Rankings, then Junior ITF Top 100, then AR)
- 4 x Discretionary Wildcards
- 2 x Qualifiers

16s Australian Championships

- Draw Size: 32 players (32 players in qualifying, eliminated down to 8 qualifiers)
- Format: Knockout Draw
- Scoring: Best of three tiebreak sets
- Participation in this event is required for NA Full Scholarship consideration

Main Draw Acceptance Criteria Breakdown:

- 16 x Direct Acceptances (based on the latest AR at the end of September)
- 3 x Singles Winners from Victorian, New South Wales and Queensland State Championships*
- 5 x National Discretionary Wildcards
- 8 x Qualifiers

12s & 14s Australian Championships

- Draw Size: 32 players (No Qualifying)
- Format: Round-Robin format (8 groups of 4 players), with knockout Round of 16 onwards
- Scoring: Best of three tiebreak sets
- Participation in this event is required for NA Full Scholarship consideration

Acceptance Criteria Breakdown:

- 15 x Direct Acceptances (based on the latest AR at the end of September)
- 8 x National Discretionary Wildcards (ideally one wildcard per state/territory)
- 3 x Singles Winners from Victorian, New South Wales and Queensland State Championships*
- 6 x International Wildcards (Maximum of 3 to NZL and 3 to Asia/Pacific Region). Wildcards to default to additional direct acceptances if not used.

** This will not occur for the 2013 event due to time constraints. These three places will revert to national discretionary wildcards for 2013.*

12s & 14s Australian Teams Championships

- Draw Size: 10 Teams (three athletes per team) – Invitational team from New Zealand and Asia/Pacific region
- Team selection criteria at the discretion of each member association
- Format: Round-Robin format, with crossover semi-finals and then final
- Each tie to consist of 2 singles and 1 doubles match
- Scoring format for singles to be best of two sets, with a match tiebreak (first to 10 points) in lieu of a third set.
- Scoring format for doubles to be best of two sets (with No-Ad scoring) with a match tiebreak (first to 10 points) in lieu of a third set.
- 12s and 14s teams event to be played at the same time (over three days), so must play in their age group.

To reduce the likelihood of some team members selected for the teams event not being invited to compete in the individual Australian Championships, Tennis Australia has sanctioned an additional 14/u Bronze level Junior Tour event to be held at the National Tennis Centre at Melbourne Park (through the Tennis World Department) from December 11 to 14 .

The growth of the Asia/Oceania region presents an opportunity to tap into this market and develop an event for the elite players in this region. The opportunity may not exist to develop an unofficial world championship like the tennis market perceives the Orange Bowl, but there is the possibility that we could create an unofficial Asian Championships for all major junior age groups. But in order to do this, we need to realign the December Showdown first and showcase to the region that the event is geared towards the very best Australian athletes.

Elevate existing State Championships

We currently have four national championship events at the 12/u and 14/u age groups (Ipswich on Clay, Mildura on Grass, Sydney on Hardcourt and the December Showdown, also on Hardcourt). However, most parents consider the Bruce Cup an unofficial national championship for the 12/u age group as most of our top athletes participate and they assume that representing your state is a national event. Thus, in essence we have five national championships, which we believe is too many.

The National Junior Championships were initially created to provide key competitive opportunities for our best athletes during the year. However, with the Junior Tour doubling in size since 2006 and the creation of the Australian Money Tournament circuit in 2005, the current structure of national championships is confusing the marketplace. Parents are unsure as to how many nationals to compete in and constantly questioning whether the costs associated with participating in these events provide value for money.

By elevating the already existing State Championship events, a natural and relevant reference point will be provided for parents and coaches on the development of their child before the necessary requirement of travelling interstate or internationally should be considered.

Due to the majority of the population of Australia set on the east coast (80% of our tennis market), the Victorian, New South Wales and Queensland State Championships must be weighted above the small states and territory events.

The State Championships in the larger states would be*:

- Victorian Junior Championships (Term 1 School Holidays – April – Clay / En-Tou-Cas)
- Rod Laver Queensland Junior Championships (Term 2 School Holidays – July – Hardcourt)
- Medibank NSW Junior Championships (Term 3 School Holidays – September – Hardcourt)

The State Championships in the smaller state & territories could be*:

- Northern Territory Junior Championships (June – Hardcourt)
- South Australian Junior Championships (January – Hardcourt)
- Medibank Tasmanian Junior Championships (October – Hardcourt)
- WA Junior Championships (October – Hardcourt)
- ACT Junior Championships (September/October – Clay)

** Exact tournament names, dates and surfaces to be finalised with the release of the 2014 AR Tournament Calendar at the end of September.*

Whilst we believe it is important for the National Academies to coordinate travel for the best athletes to compete at the major State Championships, the message for the majority of athletes should be not to travel to all these events. Athletes can earn their way into the end of year Australian Championships by winning the Victorian, Queensland or NSW State Championships,

but we must promote a structure to the tennis community that players should compete at their own State Championship event before looking beyond the horizon.

Elevate the importance of the Bruce & Pizzey Cups

These historically prestigious events began to lose their relevance in the early 2000s due to the increase in popularity and size of the Australian Ranking point's circuit. Over recent years, Tennis Australia has worked with School Sport Australia to ensure these events remain relevant as it is the only structured national teams-based event in the country each year.

Over recent years, Tennis Australia has experimented by allocating a small amount of Australian Ranking points on the teams-portion of the event, which has certainly ensured a reasonably strong field for the event. This is perhaps more evident at the Bruce Cup (12/u) than the Pizzey Cup (18/u).

We have outlined a number of recommended changes to the Bruce & Pizzey Cups in a separate document that School Sport Australia has agreed to implement to see these events elevated in status on the tournament calendar and ensure that the best athletes compete each year.

Inclusion of an individual event for Bruce Cup

The most significant of these changes will be the inclusion of an individual event into the Bruce Cup. In doing this, the individual event would carry the Australian Ranking point's equivalent to a national championship with the teams' event not offering any points. The proposed structure will look as follows:

- Bruce Cup (Australia's Primary Schools Teams Event)
- 12/Under Individual National Schools Championship Event
- Pizzey Cup (Australia's Secondary School Teams Event)
- 18/Under Individual National Schools Championship Event

Isolating Australian Ranking points to individual events will serve a dual role in ensuring the top players participate whilst providing a unique team based environment for the team carnival.

Bruce cup is the primary school event and will have platinum points. Pizzey Cup will be the secondary school nationals but we are only likely to add gold level points as there are less of our best athletes participating. This is a great message as one of our two national championships relates to school which is a positive message to stay in school!

Surface

We will be recommending to School Sport Australia that the Bruce and Pizzey Cups must be held on natural grass where possible. The events will still be held on a rotational basis around the country.

Funding

In its current form, Tennis Australia contributes a large amount of funding into each the Bruce and Pizzey Cup without any conditional requirements of its use. Understanding some of the logistics in putting this event on, Tennis Australia is proposing to work with School Sport Australia to determine the exact breakdown of this funding by way of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Some examples of how this funding could be spent are as follows:

- Team coach flight subsidy
- Officiating (increased number of court supervisors for the events)

- Court Hire
- Local Member Association (State involvement) i.e. Act as Tournament Director etc.
- Value Add Initiatives

Team Management and Selection Process

It is understood that the team selection process for the Bruce and Pizzey Cup is handled differently within each state/territory, and in some cases depending on which event it is for. With the added endorsement of this event now fitting with Tennis Australia's development pathway, it will be a requirement that the relevant state/territory tennis body be strongly involved in the team selection process for both teams.

Tennis Australia will insist that the state/ territory Athlete Development Manager, Talent Development Manager (or staff on their behalf) be involved in the team selection process. The structure of these selection processes will need to be endorsed by the relevant state/territory athlete development team before implementation. This will not only act as a team selection process, it will also lend itself well to becoming a scouting process for developing players.

Tennis Australia will also ensure that each state/territory Bruce Cup team has a Tennis Australia Talent Development Coach responsible for on-court matters (to be funded by Tennis Australia). To achieve this, it is of most importance that we facilitate a meeting between our current Talent Development Managers and coaches in the MA environment and the School Sport Australia state coordinators.

Value Add

As an added engagement plan to the event, Tennis Australia will work with School Sport Australia to design and deliver a 'Tennis Educational Expo' which will aim to engage players in the sport for life. Sessions on US College opportunities, professional tennis, opportunities in officiating, career in coaching and nutrition and psychology to name a few could be held. With the Bruce and Pizzey Cup being elevated in the Tennis Australia pathway we believe that there will be significant interest from Talent Development Managers, coaches and personnel in the event.

Tennis Australia believes that this structure will significantly elevate the positioning of the Bruce and Pizzey Cup, as well ensure that the best possible players are participating. With the support of School Sport Australia, it is believed that this will provide the best possible pathway for the sports developing athletes.