

AGE GROUP ELIGIBILITY (July 2018)

Tennis Canada and our Provincial Tennis Association partners currently use the calendar year to determine age group eligibility for sanctioned national and provincial events. This process has worked very well over the years as it follows the International Tennis Federation (ITF) lead along with the majority of tennis nations. It also follows the same process used by many leading Canadian sports like hockey, soccer, baseball and basketball. Despite the above, we have been working with our Provincial Tennis Association partners to review our current practice for age group eligibility to assess the data available related to date of births and how this relates to player results and the overall retention rates for junior players.

With the above in mind, age group eligibility is an important process to keep an eye on as it determines the age group that a junior competitor will compete in. The following is an update on our recent review of our current practice, process and data related to age group eligibility as it relates to player results and retention rates.

Background

Tennis Canada and our Provincial Tennis Association partners initially looked at this process during the design of the new integrated ranking system implemented in 2014. Some international studies have shown that participants who are born earlier in the year have an advantage over those who are born in the later part of the year. This is known as the “Birth Month Effect”. The 2014 analysis indicated that the “Birth Month” did not have a negative impact on our players. In addition, we looked at our overall pool of players and Canadian conditions that have limited draw sizes and depth for each age group. Based on the research conducted, Tennis Canada and the PTAs determined that using “Calendar Year” to determine age group eligibility was the appropriate process for our sport provincially and nationally.

In 2018, we reviewed the data again and more specifically looked at the effect that this has on the performance and results of the players in the Canadian competitive landscape.

The latest review conducted included the following:

1. Analysis of the Canadian Future Star circuit (U10 competitive circuit) to determine if there is an advantage to the players born in the first half of the year.
2. Analysis of the effect that the “Birth Month” has on our players who are dropping out of the Canadian competitive landscape.
3. Analysis of the “Retention Rate” in the Canadian competitive landscape to determine if our current “Age-Up” policy promotes retention or attrition.
4. Reviewed the “Age Group Eligibility” process followed by other leading sports in Canada including Ice Hockey, Soccer, Baseball and Basketball.
5. Conducted an understanding of what the other Grand Slam nations and the ITF are doing.

Entity	Current Policy	Example
Canada	Calendar Year	A player can play in the U12 category until 31st Dec of the year that they turn 12 years of age.
ITF	Calendar Year	A player can play in the U12 category until 31st Dec of the year that they turn 12 years of age.
French Federation	Calendar Year	A player can play in the U12 category until 31st Dec of the year that they turn 12 years of age.
LTA	Seasonal Cut Off (7 months and 5 months)	A player can play in the U12 category in a particular season as long as they do not turn 13 years of age on the last day of that season.
USTA	Monthly Age Up	A player can play in the U12 category up until the previous month, from the month in which they turn 13 years of age.
Tennis Australia	Monthly Age Up	A player can play in the U12 category as long as they do not turn 13 years of age at the end of the month in which the tournament finishes.

Findings:

1. Player results were not skewed in favour of the players born in the first half of the year.
2. Players dropping out of competition were spread more or less evenly across Q1 to Q4.
3. Our overall retention rate was high and there was barely any difference between retaining players born in each of the 4 Quarters of the year.
4. The other leading sports in Canada like Hockey, Soccer, Baseball and Basketball also have a calendar year age up policy for their junior competition.

Based on the research conducted, we feel that the current “Calendar Year Age Up Policy” to determine age group eligibility for sanctioned national and provincial events is appropriate and meets the needs of our Canadian tennis competitive landscape.