

Tennis BC

Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD)

Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) is a new approach/philosophy that is being implemented across the country in all sports and is based on empirical study of human development and best sport system practices. LTAD takes into account the development age vs. chronological age of participants thereby helping design programs that more accurately reflect the needs of athletes at their current stage of development. By understanding and respecting the principles of LTAD, Tennis BC will be able to ensure that programs match the stage of development of all tennis participants in the province.

The LTAD will give new and developing players as well as their parents a clear “path” to follow with key “markers” that link age and skill level to events and competition they need be engaged in. Previously this had been left up to interpretation from personal and club/academy coaches as well as word of mouth. This pathway provides a common “language” that players and their parents can use that will be consistent regardless of the club/academy they are in.

Through the systematic identification of LTAD stages Tennis BC is able to maximize the potential of development and increase the enjoyment of participants and athletes in our sport. It provides a framework for developing physical literacy, physical fitness and competitive ability, using a stage by stage approach that respects the physical, mental and emotional levels of the participant.

What does LTAD Provide?

- LTAD is a training, competition, and recovery framework for individuals at stages of involvement in sport at all stages of life.
- LTAD identifies equal opportunities for participation and recreation
- LTAD is athlete centred, coach driven and supported by officials, administrators, parents, sport medicine/sport science, communities and sponsors.
- LTAD focuses on the general framework of athlete development with special reference to growth, maturation, and development.
- LTAD is a framework for full sport system alignment in Canada, integrating health and education with sport and physical activity.

Physical Literacy:

The learning and practice of fundamental movement skills is the basic building block for the development of physical literacy in the same way that learning the alphabet and phonics are the fundamental skills needed to read and write. The development of fundamental movement skills, and fundamental sport skills, is critical if children are to feel confident when they engage in physical activity for fun and for health, or for competition and the pursuit of excellence.

Physical literacy gives children the tools they need to take part in physical activity and sport, both for healthy life-long enjoyment and for sporting success and is a key component of Tennis BC's LTAD

program. Tennis is a sport particularly well suited to develop a variety of fundamental physical literacy skills such as running, catching, throwing, balance, coordination and agility. The first 3 stages of the Tennis BC's LTAD (Active Start, FUNdamentals, and Developing) identify the key physical literacy stages of development.

What does this mean on a practical basis for Tennis?

LTAD ensures that new players have a positive tennis learning experience that matches the technical, physical, mental and emotional level of their development. Progressive tennis with scaled courts size, softer balls, and smaller racquets is an excellent example of LTAD principles being applied to the entry level learning experience for youngsters into tennis. Competitively LTAD means that the introduction, amount, and intensity of tournaments and leagues are appropriate for the stage of development. Examples include introductory tournaments like the Rogers Rix Rookie Tour or Community Team Tennis have a multiple match format with adjusted playing and scoring formats to allow children to have a positive, enjoyable first experience motivating them to continue in the sport.

LTAD gives recreational players the barometer for skills that they can take to coaches and/or share with their playing partners in their on-court sessions.

LTAD also recognizes the development priorities for wheelchair tennis by identifying the specific needs for awareness and first contact to make the entry experience for wheelchair athletes positive and welcoming.

Tennis BC

- As the provincial sport organization responsible for developing and promoting the sport of tennis in the province, Tennis BC uses the LTAD as a guiding framework in ensuring that the programs and activities offered match the needs and desires of the tennis playing population to enjoy the game to the fullest extent.

Tennis BC Vision

- Tennis will be a leading sport of choice in British Columbia

Tennis BC Mission

- With our partners, we will lead the growth of tennis by enhancing the profile, participation, and experience in all regions of British Columbia.

Tennis BC Goals

- Grow Community Tennis
- Enhance Competitive Infrastructures
- Stimulate New & Foster the Development of Existing Facilities
- Expand and Embrace Volunteerism
- Showcase Tennis
- Increase the Consistency and Competency in Coaching & Officiating Programs

Current landscape of Tennis in BC

Based on the Charleton Strategic Research Group 2010 study, the status of the sport is very strong. The research states that BC has now become the hotbed of tennis for the country. It states 19% of the province considering themselves to be tennis players, up from 13% in 2005. In multiple studies, it consistently rates in the top 4 most played sports in the province.

There are over 100 sanctioned ranking events across BC to service players from ages 8 to 75+. There are also introductory half-court and ¾ court size events and for U8 participants. Most of the adult events have seen growth between 30%-100+% since 2005. Organized competitions range from rookie levels through to annual national and international world-ranking events for juniors, adult recreational, seniors, and professionals. The depth of events has helped create a large amount of tournament referees and officials. In 2005 there were 20 provincially certified officials with 4 internationally certified. There are now over 70 provincially certified officials with 7 internationally certified officials that now work at the Olympic and ATP/WTA Tour levels. Training and certification courses occur throughout the year in different regions with development through experienced mentors and on-court work at the larger events.

“First Try” community level activities are plentiful with progressive tennis activities as well known In-Schools program that is delivered to over 40,000 youth across BC each year. Tennis BC has begun to invest in “After-School” partnerships with School districts so that kids can continue play in an easily accessible environment. We have strengthened our partnerships with municipal Parks and Recreation departments by delivering programs through them to ensure quality first experiences.

High Performance initiatives from the past 5 years to paid dividends with three BC players ranked among the world junior top 50 in the past 2 years and Vancouver’s Rebecca Marino moving into the world’s top 50 women’s players and becoming a direct entry into Grand Slam events; Wimbledon, US Open, French Open, and the Australian Open. There are 5 other BC players now competing on the world tours (ATP/WTA) who are gaining entrance to larger events.

This success at the high performance level has stimulated investment from Tennis Canada from a new National Training Program that will be located in greater Vancouver beginning in the fall of 2011.

Challenges

Although most cities across the province have a large amount of accessible free public outdoor courts, the primary challenge to the LTAD lies in the inventory of indoor courts based on the large and complex demand for time. General play, social programs, events, tournaments, lessons for all ages, and other compete for a relatively small amount of covered court time across BC. Although there are thousands of available outdoor courts, there are only 30 facilities that have indoor courts, with very few in the northern and rural communities. This has created the larger challenge to provide the depth of programming for skill development and competition to service players following the LTAD pathway.

There is no shortage of certified coaches across BC, over 550+, although more can be used in rural communities that can develop a player's skill level past the first ages of the LTAD. This will come in time with building of indoor courts providing coaches a home-base for operations and a stable revenue source.

To conquer this challenge, Tennis BC and Tennis Canada both list "development of indoor courts" as a pillar in our strategic plans and have Facility Committees comprised of board members, staff, and volunteers with expertise in this field. Currently Tennis BC and Tennis Canada have additionally partnered to help fund community indoor court initiatives with feasibility study grants and small capital project funding.

These committees and grants have already proved fruitful. As of spring 2011, three new/renovated indoor facilities are beginning their building process. This includes a new public indoor facility in Langley with expanded public indoor facilities in Vancouver and North Vancouver. It is anticipated for 2012 that 1-3 new indoor facilities will open in the Okanagan region.

Core to both Tennis BC's and Tennis Canada's operational plans are to build a Western National Centre in BC in the next 1-3 years in the lower mainland. This will give more players at the "Learning to Perform" to the "Living as a Professional" stages the ability to develop to top international levels.