

Japan Tennis Association
FY2015 Report on the Tennis Environment in Japan
March 2016

Summary of the Research Findings

(1) Tennis governing bodies in Grand Slam host countries are utilizing TENNIS PLAY & STAY by customizing it to fit their own needs

The Japan Tennis Association is utilizing TENNIS PLAY & STAY, the program recommended by the International Tennis Federation (ITF), as one means of promoting tennis in Japan. This year's special research was conducted to understand programs to promote tennis among children aged 10 and under, employed by each of the tennis governing bodies in countries which host Grand Slam tournaments (that is, the USA, the UK, France, and Australia).

The governing bodies in these four countries are utilizing TENNIS PLAY & STAY by modifying it to conform to their respective situations. The names used are distinct: in the USA "10 and Under Tennis," in the UK "LTA Mini Tennis," in France "Galaxie Tennis," and in Australia "Tennis Hot Shots." The Japan Tennis Association has continued to implement this program, changing the name from "PLAY+STAY" to "TENNIS PLAY & STAY (TENNIS P&S)" in the fiscal year 2015.

(2) In the UK, France, and Australia, there is an environment in place to acquaint children with tennis from a young age

Though ITF standards stipulate that TENNIS PLAY & STAY is for children aged five or over, the tennis governing bodies of the UK, France, and Australia have developed programs for younger children, from the age of three, to become familiarized with tennis.

In the UK, the stage for age 3-5 is referred to as "Tots." In France, "Baby Tennis" is offered to children 3-4 years old, which is followed by the "White" stage using a larger balloon ball and the "Purple" stage with a larger ball than Red ball. These stages lead to the "Red" stage for six years old or above. In Australia, the "Blue" stage is provided for children 3-5 years old.

In the UK, the tennis governing body supports tennis activities in schools by providing teachers with coaching instruction and distributing equipment free of charge. Some 130,000 children aged 5-10 years old – who account for about 3% of the population – participated in the "LTA Mini Tennis" program. In Australia, tennis is included in the curricula established by state governments that have jurisdiction over their respective educational systems. As many schools include "Tennis Hot Shots" in their classes, over 500,000 students experience the program annually.

(3) In the USA, the UK, France, and Australia, TENNIS PLAY & STAY tournaments are offered for children aged 10 and under

In the USA and UK, colored ball tournaments are used to promote tennis among children 10 and under, without official sanctioning by the tennis governing bodies. In France, the governing body holds official tournaments that consist mainly of individual matches. In Australia, the governing body organizes team leagues with Orange and Green balls. In each country, the recommended approach is to provide enjoyment through matches in events and unofficial tournaments, without keeping official records of wins or losses. Efforts are invested in promoting understanding of parents, so that they recognize the importance of having children start the sport using slower, colored balls, and assist a smooth transition to the Yellow ball.

Though the Japan Tennis Association does not sanction colored ball tournaments, in the "First TENNIS

PLAY & STAY Basic Policy” that was decided on by an extraordinary board meeting in December 2015, policy dictates that Green ball team tournaments are preferable for players aged 10 and under.

(4) In the USA, the UK, France, and Australia, there are online portals for registering match results for children aged 10 and under, as well as apps for coaches

The governing bodies of countries that host Grand Slam tournaments each have online portals with systems in place that make it possible to register the results of children’s matches. In addition, tennis businesses can register events and tournament information for the easy access by parents and children. In some countries, governing bodies each developed apps for coaches to review methods of instruction, and simplify the task of drafting and managing their teaching plans.

(5) Work is being done with TENNIS PLAY & STAY throughout Japan to promote the sport

This year’s special research focused on distinctive examples of TENNIS PLAY & STAY being utilized in Japan and conducted onsite interviews. In the city of Hamamatsu in Shizuoka prefecture, there were TENNIS PLAY & STAY sessions held at event space in front of the station where passerby can participate. The event generated positive feedback, as it made participation possible even for children with disabilities. In the city of Fuji of the same prefecture, practice sessions for children were held, and the success from that event were then shared with other municipal tennis associations within the prefecture, paving the way for subsequent successful hosting by other cities as well.

In Okayama prefecture, there is a holistic approach to TENNIS PLAY & STAY that encompasses promotion of the sport, player development, and coaching instruction. A prefecture that has traditionally attached importance to the development of youth players, Okayama is using TENNIS PLAY & STAY to further advance the popularization of tennis among children.

In Shimane prefecture, TENNIS PLAY & STAY has been successfully incorporated into afterschool programs at elementary schools in the city of Matsue. As local government personnel have recognized the favorable influence this has had on children, it is anticipated that these programs will not only be sustained but also increased in number in the coming years.

(6) In Japan, 63.5% of public high schools and 71.7% private high schools have tennis teams; at public high schools, the percentage of schools with tennis teams varies significantly from prefecture to prefecture

This year’s special research investigated the ratios of public and private high schools that have tennis teams, and it turned out that the national average for private schools is higher than that of public schools. At the same time, there is a huge discrepancy among the public high schools, varying from prefecture to prefecture. In prefectures at the higher end of the scale, the percentages of public high schools with tennis teams exceed 90%, but at the lower end the ratio falls below 20%.