

# **FY2016 Report on the Tennis Environment in Japan**

## **Summary of the Research Findings**

**March 2017**

### **Japan Tennis Association**

This is summary translation into English of the 50-page Japanese language report entitled “tenisu kankyotou jittai chousa houkokusho” (テニス環境等実態調査報告書), which was published by the Japan Tennis Association in March 2017 as a toto-sponsored project. This report features the following five topics:

1. State of Tennis Population in Japan
2. Survey on the Penetration of TENNIS P&S at Prefectural Tennis Associations
3. Survey of Parents on Tennis Playing by Their Children of Elementary School Age and Younger
4. TENNIS P&S and Player Development: The Yoshida Memorial Tennis Training Center Case Study
5. Population and Tennis Associations by Major Cities and Wards for Each Prefecture

### **(1) The tennis-playing population of Japan is 4.39 million, which indicates a recovery in size as well as latent demand**

The tennis population in Japan, defined as the number of people aged 10 or older who played tennis (excluding soft tennis) at least once in the past one year, is 4.39 million (estimate as of FY2016). Compared to a decade ago, the tennis population has stayed at the approximately same level. The playing population had been in a downward trend from 2008 through 2012, but has recovered through a gradual increase since that time: 3.73 million in 2012, 3.99 million in 2014, and 4.39 million in 2016. In addition, adults who gave tennis as a sport they would like to play (or continue to play) was more than twice the number of those who are actually playing, an indication of some significant potential demand. With the lowering birthrate and the aging society, it is even more important to popularize tennis among younger population (including junior players) for the medium- and long-term popularization of the sport.

### **(2) TENNIS Play&Stay (P&S) has taken root at the prefectural association level**

According to the Japan Tennis Association's "Survey on the Penetration of TENNIS P&S at Prefectural Tennis Associations" (2016), 95.7% of the 47 prefectural associations answered that they have a section or committee in charge of TENNIS P&S. And a sizable 87.2% of the associations currently organize tournaments that use TENNIS P&S (i.e., use colored balls). In fact, the majority of associations (55.3%) have secured budgets for TENNIS P&S projects (FY2015). Among the activities offered through using the Japan Tennis Association's "TENNIS P&S special grant" in the fiscal years 2014 and 2015, "instruction classes (in which participants were solicited in advance)" (87.2%) and "equipment purchase" (72.3%) were given by high percentages.

85.1% of the prefectural associations have collaborating/affiliated organizations for TENNIS P&S projects. About 70% mentioned that municipal tennis associations and federations independently implement TENNIS P&S projects, separately from prefectural associations. It indicates that not only the prefectural associations but also the municipal tennis associations and federations within prefectures are making efforts at popularizing TENNIS P&S.

### **(3) Tennis playing experience is handed down by parents to children**

The Japan Tennis Association's "Survey of Parents on Tennis Playing by Their Children of Elementary School Age and Younger" (2017) collected responses from 22,373 parents (guardians) with children in the 3-12 age group (excluding junior high school students). Overwhelming 92.3% of the parents answered that their children in this age group had "never played tennis." Only 6.6% of the parents indicated that their children were "currently playing." The most common response given as the age/grade in which children started to play tennis was first grade in elementary school (18.1%). Of the parents who have children currently playing tennis, 68.1% answered that they or their spouses have played tennis. The parents who have played tennis indicated the period of their tennis experience as "in high school" (44.9%), "in junior high school" (39.6%) or "in university (including graduate school, junior college, vocational college, etc.)" (33.0%) (multiple answers allowed). Also, when asked how their children would continue with tennis if they desired to do so, many of the parents mentioned that their children would probably continue to play "on a school

team” (53.4%) or “at a private tennis school” (49.8%). When asked about where their children would be continuing with school, the majority gave “a public junior high school” (66.7%). Based on this finding, in order to increase the tennis-playing population in the future it will be important to have in place an environment that makes it possible to play tennis at school during the school years from junior high school through university.

#### **(4) How to Facilitate TENNIS P&S and Effectiveness for Player Development– as Seen from a Case Study**

According to the Japan Tennis Association’s “TENNIS P&S and Player Development: The Yoshida Memorial Tennis Training Center Case Study” (2016), the barriers to the implementation of TENNIS P&S are (1) the reluctance of coaches to adopt TENNIS P&S instructional methods that emphasizes autonomy of children and that (2) parents tend to undervalue TENNIS P&S racquets and balls as equipment just for tennis beginners. There are ways to break down these two barriers and move forward. Regarding (1), there is a need to engage coaches to have a common understanding: their role is to support children with objective perspectives. TENNIS P&S is a mean to help children directly experience the joy of tennis through interactive dialogue and to enable each child to autonomously translate their desire to be better at playing into actual improvement. Regarding (2), there needs more explaining for parents to understand physical impacts yellow balls could have on children’s wrists, elbows, and lower backs, and that it is critical to use equipment that suits the fitness level of each child.

Regarding player development, there is no justification for the assumption that the playing of games must be delayed until the player has learned to hit the ball properly, as drills based principally on rallying and games have succeeded in developing techniques. At this training center, children are playing tennis without physical injuries. It has been confirmed that TENNIS P&S could develop all-around players and help them play well-balanced tennis without using excessive force.