

# No-Ad Scoring Format Mandate

Effective 4.1.2025

## Why is this needed?

USTA Northern is committed to providing the best experience possible for players, fans, and staff at our events. Our Junior Competition Committee enacted this mandate to prioritize the importance of reasonable match times (eg, not during school hours) while continuing to allow for maximum tournament participation. The consistent use of no-ad scoring was one of several potential solutions considered, and its impact will be monitored during the next several months.

## What is the policy?

All USTA Northern Sanctioned Junior Tournaments (L7, L6, L5, L4, and L3 Closed events) will use a no-ad scoring format, effective April 1, 2025.

## Frequently Asked Questions:

### **Who made this decision?**

Our Junior Competition Committee (JCC) reviews and determines policies that govern sanctioned junior play in our section. Volunteers with a variety of backgrounds and experience in junior competition are appointed to serve for a two-year term. These individuals are typically tournament directors, parents, and former junior players. The 2025-2026 committee voted on this proposed change twice, approving it for implementation both times. The USTA Northern Board of Directors supports this decision.

Each committee is supported by a USTA Northern Staff Liaison. To message this group, please go through Katie Bergmann, Manager of Junior Competition, at [katie@northern.usta.com](mailto:katie@northern.usta.com). We are happy to accept feedback and listen to concerns, but ask that you do NOT send emails to the personal addresses of our volunteers.

### **Will the change to no-ad scoring be permanent?**

As with all changes to policy, we will monitor the impacts of the no-ad scoring mandate to determine its effects. We solicit parent feedback through surveys that are sent out after all events. Of note, scheduling issues are currently mentioned more frequently than any other complaint in these surveys. We will review data collected over the next three months to determine if any change should be made to the current mandate.

### **What else was considered, and why was no-ad scoring ultimately chosen as the best solution?**

With a mission to get more kids playing, our committee chose to find a way to play more matches within a limited timeframe instead of placing limits on tournament participation. A no-ad scoring format accomplishes this goal and has the following benefits:

- Familiar format - used for college tennis, some high school play, and Battle of the Sections

- Injury prevention - shoulder injuries are among the most common tennis injuries, with poor technique and overuse as the primary culprits. The volume of serves hit during a match is decreased with the use of no-ad scoring, thus limiting the risk of rotator cuff, bursitis, and labrum issues for our most frequent players.
  - Predictability in scheduling - no need to start matches during a school day or after curfew
- Partial use of no-ad scoring (eg. backdraw only, indoor events, lower levels) or encouraged use of no-ad scoring was considered, but the committee chose a full rollout to:
- Provide predictability and consistency for parents, players, and tournament directors
  - Collect the most amount of data on the impacts of no-ad scoring in the shortest timeframe
  - Address scheduling challenges during both indoor and outdoor seasons
  - Support our tournament directors, placing the responsibility for this change upon USTA Northern instead of deferring to individual host sites. 10 out of 12 TDs impacted by the change favor the mandate.

### Are other Sections utilizing no-ad scoring?

No-ad scoring is being used at many events throughout the country, both USTA-sanctioned and otherwise (including some L1 events). Each Section has the discretion to utilize no-ad scoring. Some, like Missouri Valley, use it for consolation draws; others, like Middle States, are using it for Level 6 & 7 tournaments. While there is not a consensus on how no-ad is utilized across the board, each section has the ability to use no-ad in a myriad of ways.

### Why can't you offer more tournaments?

USTA Northern does not own or operate any tennis facilities and relies solely on our partners in the industry to host events. With the current demand for tennis, facilities typically prioritize their customers' needs over opening doors to guests for tournament play. We are working on finding new ways to support our host sites, but other programming options are often more lucrative and involve fewer headaches. Please thank the tournament director at your next event!

### How will no-ad scoring impact player development and experience?

- **Concern #1: Shorter matches will de-emphasize the importance of physical fitness.**
  - Endurance/stamina is just one of six primary physical building blocks for athletic skill development, along with agility, balance, coordination, speed, and strength. Endurance, like the other 5 athletic skills, should be part of a player's training routine during practice sessions on and off the court. Match play is not a reliable source to improve endurance/stamina as there is no guarantee of quality control (match lengths differ, point lengths differ, playing styles differ). **Pro Tip:** Make sure your child's program has athletic development as part of its delivery. Look to add athletic skill training to your child's weekly routine if it is not already in place. Consult the [USTA Player Development Resource Library](#) for stages of development and age-appropriate workloads.
- **Concern #2: No-ad scoring will put our players at a competitive disadvantage.**
  - There is no evidence to suggest that no-ad scoring will lead to any disadvantage. It can be equally argued the other way, as there is perceived weight added to deciding points, making mental toughness and good decision making even more valuable in that moment. The scoring is in line with what players will see at the collegiate level. If they

enter college without having quality reps in playing deciding points, then they are missing an opportunity to prepare themselves for that environment. USTA tournament play should make up a fraction of competitive options for young athletes, and experiencing a variety of formats will better equip them for future competition. Ad scoring is available in unsanctioned tournaments, informal play, and through high school tennis.

### **Will this change lead to increased cheating?**

There is no evidence to suggest that cheating will increase. If a player will cheat on a deciding point, then it stands to reason they would cheat in any scoring format on a point deemed important. Changing the scoring format will not fix unsportsmanlike behavior. However, this is a concern that we are working to address in a variety of ways:

- Education and awareness around rules and how to address problem behavior:
  - USTA Northern [Sportsmanship Pledge](#), which acknowledges a commitment to sportsmanship that players are encouraged to sign annually
  - Dos & Don'ts Banners for both players and spectators were distributed for display at all tournament sites
  - [Sportsmanship Matters](#) webpage to promote sportsmanship throughout the country
- Sportsmanship awards to recognize positive behavior
- Recruitment and retention of officials
- Grants available to tournament host sites for officials and newly approved electronic line calling technology

Parents play a critical role in shaping the behavior of our young athletes. We encourage you to familiarize yourself with [Friend at Court](#) and the USTA's Code of Conduct. Prepare your child to know what to do when unsportsmanlike conduct from their opponent occurs. On-site tournament staff and officials are best suited to address on-site behavior, so be sure that your child alerts them of any concerns. Talk to the USTA Northern Manager of Junior Competition if the issue cannot be addressed on-site.

### **Will there be any pricing changes?**

Tournament pricing is set by the host site to cover its expenses for running the event, and this policy change will not impact those expenses. Northern attempts to make tournaments affordable and accessible to all through the enforcement of maximum entry fees and our junior scholarship program. Learn more about applying for [financial assistance here](#).