

Steps to Developing a Social Tennis League

USTA TEXAS

Why the need for a Social Tennis League

The average age of a USTA League player is 45. This caught the attention of not only the young adults working for the USTA around the nation, but also the USTA National Adult Rec team in New York. So they conducted a year-long task force studying and developing a product that would fit the young adult's needs. What they discovered was that this age demographic needs the following:

- A league that is takes no more than two hours to play.
- Play on a week night within a 6 to 8 week series.
- A social hour afterwards (or possibly before or during, depending on the facility regulations) that increases social interaction.
- Co-Ed Teams (with the ability to sign-up on their own or as a team)

Groundwork for Developing a Social League

1. Find a facility that will allow you to rent courts during the hours of 6:30- 9:30PM on a week night. Preferably Monday – Thursday.
2. Come up with a catchy name. Create a logo
3. A catchy EASY TO REMEMBER web url and email are important; e.g. SetsintheCityCowtown.com or SetsintheCityHouston@gmail.com
4. Find a coordinator or assign a board member to organize and spearhead marketing.
5. Create registration that allows for single person or team sign-up. (see below for registration questions needed)
6. Find sponsors for a social "happy hour" that will take place after each night match.
7. Gather any other sponsor that can help with the cost for things like shirts, promo items, drawings etc.
8. Consider whether league software will be used (TennisLink, TennisScore, TennisPoint, etc) for ease of registration, payment, scheduling and entering scores. Though there is an additional expense, it can be an important timesaver and well worth the additional expense.

MARKETING

Once you have created and gathered the above information it is time to market to your consumer. Here are some steps and tips for promoting your social league.

1. Identify groups, stores, businesses that cater to the young professional demographic; e.g., fitness centers, apartments, professional groups.
2. Create marketing materials like 11x17" posters (laminated, hole punch w/ rivets for outdoor use at courts), flyers to leave at facilities, and consider "yard signs" for high traffic areas like running or

bike trails. Though expensive, the 15x20" yard sign is highly visible, especially when printed on both sides.

3. There's no substitute for making personal connections at facilities, or organizations. Get out to meet people at other events with a table set up and flyers to hand out.
4. Make important personal connections with key young professionals who can help you spread the word.

Developing a Player Party, Teams and Play

PLAYER PARTY AND TEAMS

1. Work with your restaurant/bar partner to provide free appetizers or food at the pre-season player party, with happy hour prices on drinks. Schedule party for week before season starts to introduce players to each other, assign teams or hold player "draft." Can also allow players to meet and work out their own teams for first season. After first season, a lot of teams will come back as complete, which makes the organizers work so much easier!
2. Randomly assign players together, though keeping an eye on ability levels to get a good mix of skilled and not-so-skilled players. Allowing players to register as a 6-8 person team (3 girls & 3 boys) is also a good option. Many will develop a team they like after the first season.
3. Once all teams are developed you will send an email to each individual team so that they have their teammates email address.
 - a. Team name or let them know they will need to send a team name prior to the first match
 - b. When and where the league will be held
 - c. Happy Hour location

PLAY: ROUND ROBIN

1. Each social club will be different when setting up the format for their players. Depending on how many teams are registered they are given 6-8 weeks to play all teams in order to advance to the Play Offs. If there are too many teams to play in a 6-8 week season, dividing them into two divisions is an option.
2. Each dual match will be held on a week night and will only last for no more than two hours.
3. The common format for social leagues is one men/women doubles, one men/women singles and one mixed double.
4. Each match will be a six game set or an eight game pro-set.

COORDINATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Create Round Robin for 6-8 weeks worth of matches.
2. Supervise play every week night. (shouldn't be more than two hours)
3. Record scores from all matches
4. Direct players to happy hour location after matches.
5. Email teams each week with their opponents and any new information needed.